The role of destination branding in the tourism stakeholders system. The Campi Flegrei case

Marcello Risitano
Business Studies PhD
Research Fellow at Marketing Laboratory
Department of Business Management
Faculty of Economics - University of Naples Federico II
Via Cinthia – Campus of Monte S. Angelo
80126 – Naples (Italy)
Phone +3981675355
Mobile +393479077241
E-mail risitano@unina.it

Abstract

The aim of the paper is to analyze the place branding strategies finalized to growth the competitive of the tourist destinations. Therefore, the following main issues are developed: 1. the role of branding management in tourism industry, analyzing the place branding literature review on marketing theory and the main destination brand models existing in tourism and vacation marketing academic area; 2. configuring a proposal model of destination branding, with the identification of the main brand value driver as key dimensions to define the brand identity and the brand knowledge in the tourists perspective. 3. validating this model of destination branding, verifying - through an empirical research - the descriptive capacity of this framework to explicate the destination branding process in a specific geographical context, the area of Campi Flegrei.

Campi Flegrei is a tourist destination located in the west side of Naples city and its province (southern Italy). This is a destination with high intensity of cultural and landscape resources.

1. Introduction

The tourist destination product (TDP) is a composite offering system based on the relationships among the contextual resources, the destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and the enterprises involved in the building and marketing of destination tourist services: these links are several and interdependent (Weaver, Oppermann, 2000; Grängsjö, 2003). However, the constellation of stakeholders involved – in the “tourism stakeholders system”, as defined by Weaver and Oppermann (2000) – which has to be coordinated in a co-evaluative dynamic, makes the approach to the development of a tourist destination a complex aim. In fact, the several local stakeholders could have different goals and strategies, different visions of the destination’s growth, different resources, competencies and knowledge base; in other words, a different approach to tourist destination marketing. The reason that will be developed the paper will concern the tourist destination and the tourist destination management

---

1 I thank Prof. Luigi Cantone – Full Professor of Marketing, Federico II University – that is a irreplaceable source of ideas, methodology and support in my growth of marketing researcher. Particularly, this research was born by our reflections during my PhD Course on Business Studies; moreover, I want thank him because in this work are presented some results of a field research project on Campi Flegrei area direct by Professor (Cantone, 2005). Finally, I want thank also Dr. Pierpaolo Testa, that was co-author - with Professor and me - of a precedent paper on “Heterogeneity resources and Destination Management” presented in another International Conference (Cantone, Risitano, Testa, 2005).
in a customer-based perspective, more generally in the perspective of the stakeholder-based theory (Freeman, 1984).

In particular, in the paper will be analysed one of the most valuable resource of a tourist destination, the destination brand (Hankinson, 2001, 2004; Cai, 2002; Gnoth, 2002; Kaplanidou, 2003); it gives expression to the identity and the distinctive characters of the TDP. The destination branding is a management process in the tourism industry that play its role upon two level: first of all, it’s the cognitive linking pin with the perceptive and evaluative system of the customers; moreover, it is a mean to align the behaviour of the several stakeholders involved to market the area as an unified tourist destination product. In other words, the brand has seen as a relational resource, both towards the customers and towards the other several local stakeholders (local firms and other tourist destination organizations) involved to offer the single elements of the TDP.

The ideas of the proposal paper will be based upon the assumptions of Resource-Based Theory (Barney, 1991; Peteraf, 1993; Grant, 1991; Prahalad and Hamel, 1994). More specifically, the aims of the paper are fundamentally three:

- defining the role of branding management in tourism industry, in primis analyzing the place branding literature review on marketing theory, defined in two major domains: urban planning and tourism and vacation marketing; in secundis analyzing the main destination brand models existing in tourism and vacation marketing academic area;
- configuring a proposal model of destination branding, with the identification of the main brand value driver as key dimensions to define the brand identity and the brand knowledge in the tourists perspective. This latter, in a customer-based approach, could be an useful mean to increase the value of the local heterogeneous resources system under the point of view of the potential tourist.
- validating this model of destination branding, verifying - through an empirical research - the descriptive capacity of this framework to explicate the destination branding process in a specific geographical context, the area of Campi Flegrei. It will be analyzed the destination brand identity projected by Campi Flegrei tourism stakeholders and it will be evaluated the main destination brand value drivers (awareness, image and free association) perceived by tourists.

The aims and reasons of the paper will be developed even on the base of some evidences of 1. an explorative research that involved 15 local stakeholders – policy maker (6), tour operator (4), destination marketing organizations (1), cultural resources managing organizations (CRMOs)(3), entrepreneurs organizations (1) – in the destination of Campi Flegrei, to analysing the destination brand equity projected by tourism stakeholders system; 2. a pilot survey (face-to-face methodology) on a sample of 400 tourist – Italian and foreign - interviewed at local sites (Solfatara Vulcan, Castle of Baia, Greek city of Cuma), using a questionnaire with open and closed questions, to measuring the destination brand equity perceived by tourists. The area of Campi Flegrei is a destination positioned at the west side of Naples city and its province. It’s formed by several municipalities (Pozzuoli, Bacoli, Monte di Procida, Quarto) and districts of Naples city (Bagnoli and Fuorigrotta). It is an area with an high intensity of cultural, landscape and environment resources (place-specific resources), in which – at present - there is an economic development related to tourist and rural regeneration.

2. The branding management in tourism industry: a literature review.

In many business industries, characterized by complex offerings that drive functional, symbolic and experiential benefits, the brand represents the main relational resource (Ambler, 1995; Fournier, 1998; Codeluppi, 2000) to create and to maintain a competitive advantage. Moreover, in the actual hyper-competitive markets – with the decreased effectiveness of traditional marketing tactics and the emergence of new marketing tools (Keller, 2003a) - the brand becomes one of the most important
assets for the organization that intends to build and manage significant relationships with all business player presents in own value constellation (Normann, Ramirez, 1994), mainly with the final customer. As regards the consumer products, place products are more complex and therefore they present a significant challenge for the destination marketer (Morgan et al., 2002). First of all, places exist both as holistic entities or nuclear products and as collections of contributory elements or individual services and facilities\(^2\). Secondly, the place product can be assembled uniquely by each visitor from their experiences of a chosen set of individual contributory elements (Ashworth and Voogt, 1990). As a result, the destination marketer may not have full control above the product experience\(^3\). Thirdly, places are multi-functional. The same place can offer historical buildings, shopping facilities, sports facilities and entertainment venues (Hankinson, 2005). In accordance with Cai (2002), place branding results in a consistent attributes-based image across multiple communities - in mountain cooperative sites - as perceived by tourists, but it builds stronger linkages of the image to the brand identity and more favourable affective and attitudes-based brand associations for a region than for individual communities.

Clarke (2000) has identified six benefits of branding related to tourism destination products (TDPs): 1. as tourism is typically high involvement, branding helps to reduce the choice; 2. branding helps in reducing the impact of intangibility; 3. branding conveys consistency across multiple outlets and through time; 4. branding can reduce the risk factor attached to decision making about holidays; 5. branding facilitates precise segmentation; 6. branding helps to provide a focus for the integration of producer effort, helping people to work towards the same outcome.

Brands are generally considered to be a marketer’s main tool to creating product differentiation. Brands differentiate products and they represent a promise of value. Brands incite beliefs, brands evoke emotions and prompt behaviour. Brands have social and emotional value to users. They have personality and they speak to the user (Kotler and Gertner, 2002).

Afterwards, therefore, is analyzed particularly the role of branding in tourism destination marketing, explaining: 1. a place branding literature review on marketing theory; 2. the main destination brand models existing in literature;

### 2.1 Place branding literature review on marketing theory

In marketing literature, the most important studies above branding – in customer-based approach - were proposed by David Aaker (1991, 1996 and 2000), Jean-Noel Kapferer (1992, 2001, 2004) and Kevin Keller (1993, 1998, 2001 and 2003b). The main goals of these works were defining brand identity and building, managing and measuring brand equity. These are two main brand constructs to define branding strategy and to position brand in customer’s mind (Risitano, 2004). Several studies (e.g. Ambler, 1995; Fournier, 1998; Busacca, 2000) have extended the role of branding to conceptualize the relationships that consumers form with brands.

Instead, the literature on the places marketing can be found in several academic areas; it is most systematically defined in two major domains: urban planning and tourism and vacation marketing (Hankinson, 2004). However, these two domains take a very different approaches:

- **the urban planning perspective.** The urban planning literature focuses on the nature of the place product, its historical development (Ward, 1998) and the marketing implications of its distinctive features (Van den Bergh, Braun 1999; Ward, Gold, 1994). Sleipen (1998) argues that the place product is dualistic, and he distinguishes the ‘nuclear’ product (the place as a holistic entity) from the product’s contributory elements (the services, activities and features of which the place has comprised). Van den Bergh and Braun (1999) divides the place product into three levels: the individual good or service (e.g. a tourist attraction), clusters of related services (e.g. urban commercial centers), and the entire place (Van den Bergh and Braun, 1999).

\(^2\) Thus, a city can have an overall reputation as an old industrial city, while individual (contributory) elements, for example sports facilities, museums or shopping centres, can have their own individual reputations for totally independent reasons (Hankinson, 2005)

\(^3\) The tourism destination product (TDP) is made up of an amalgam of tourism products, offering an integrated experience to consumers (Buhalis, 2000) of not only the service providers — hotels and guesthouses, restaurants and travel companies — but also the informal contacts with local people (Foley, Fahy, 2004).
tourism) and urban agglomeration, referring to the collection of goods and services which make up the place;

- **the tourism and vacation marketing perspective.** To the tourism marketer the location is a destination, a place that people (and organization) visit. As such, tourism is a distinctive aspect of the economic development of a location. The literature in this area emphasises the importance of establishing a balance between competing objectives and environmental objectives relevant to the tourist (Walker, Hanson, 1998).

In this research, the definition and role of branding – and the destination brand model proposal - is analyzed in second literature perspective. According to Hankinson (2004) - that classified several research on branding in tourism perspective - in this paper are identified three main streams of destination brand conceptualisation.

1. **Destination brands as communicators.** The works take this perspective focus own research mainly on formulation and implementation of branding strategy. Gnoth (2002), for example, sees destination branding as a management process that leads to a strategic plan to build a brand identity based upon destination attributes selected on the basis of competitiveness, uniqueness and desired identity. Hall (1999) defines the core objective of destination branding as the production of a consistent, focused communication strategy, based upon the selection of a collection of core intangible values existing in the mind of the consumer. Contrasting, Pride (2002) combines a communicator perspective with a relationship perspective in which tangible attributes play a key supporting role within the communication framework, providing reasons for the consumer to believe. Other articles also link these perspectives. Kotler and Gertner (2002), for example, adopt the American Marketing Association’s definition of a brand, but they link this to a brand personality that speaks at the consumer. Morgan et al. (2002) argue that increasing product parity requires destinations to create unique identities in order to differentiate themselves from their competitors. In addition they set out a brand equity, that includes the development of a personaliety, as the focus of consumer relationships with the brand.

2. **Destination brands as perceptive entity.** Brand image or perceptual perspectives dominate the literature. The literature above destination images includes studies of specific destinations and studies identifying common attributes across a sample of destinations at regional national and international levels. This perspective is also reflected in several conceptual models (Echtner, Ritchie, 1991; Baloglu, Mc Cleary, 1999; Gallarza, Saura, García, 2002; Larsen, George, 2004; Hankinson, 2005). Destination image has a key role for tourism marketers; several researchers (e.g. Mayo 1973, Mayo and Jarvis 1981, Woodside and Lysonski 1989) have illustrated that destination image and tourist’s purchase decisions are positively correlated. Woodside and Lysonski (1989) set out a general model of traveller destination choice. The model suggests that intentions to visit reflect a destination’s level of traveller awareness, its propensity to become part of the choice set and its affective associations or level of perceived emotional attraction. Therefore, destination image results an important issue in a individual’s travel purchase related decision making and that the individual traveller (dis)satisfaction with a travel purchase depends on a comparison of his expectation about the destination or a previously held destination image, and his perceived performance of the destination (Chon, 1990).

3. **Destination brands as relationships.** This perspective was illustrated by Sirgy and Su (2000) who argue that a destination’s environment influences the formation of stereotypic images of the kinds of people which typically visit the destination. The propensity to visit is due to a match between the destination visitor image and the tourist’s self-concept. Westwood et al. (1999) analyse the destination

---

4. These are not independent of each other. Indeed, they are arguably inextricably linked to each other through input-output feedback relationships Hankinson (2004).

5. In this analysis perspective, Pike (2002) has defined a systematic review of 142 papers on destination image published during the period 1973-2000.

6. Echtner and Ritchie (1991) set out a conceptual model of the components of a destination image based upon three categories of brand association; individual attributes versus holistic impressions, functional versus psychological characteristics and common versus unique characteristics.
brand equity in the relationship perspective, arguing that the role of brands is building a meaningful relationship with the consumer in order to secure higher profits. The conceptualisation of brands as relationships is arguably part of the increasing acceptance of the relational paradigm of exchange. The relational exchange paradigm characterises exchange as a continuous process focused on the creation of value through relationships with all stakeholder groups not just consumers (Payne, Holt, Frow, 2001). These include employees, suppliers, alliance partners, shareholders, government agencies, and so on. This conceptualisation puts brands at the centre of marketing activities. It also widens the focus of branding activities beyond communications to include behaviours, a focus of considerable relevance to destination branding (Hankinson, 2004).

2.2 The main destination brand models in tourism studies

A destination brand is a brand relating to a defined geographical region that’s understood by its tourists as an unique entity, with a political and legislative framework for tourism marketing and planning (Buhalis, 2000). Destinations are amalgams of tourism products, offering an integrated experience to the consumers. This amalgam of tourism products and services offered by a destination is consumed by tourists under the brand name of the destination during their period of stay (Buhalis, 2000).

Instead, Cai (2002) defines destination branding as “selecting a consistent element mix to identify and distinguish it through positive image building”. And further, he explains that the main aim to create value to the destination is building a brand image amounts to identifying the most relevant associations and strengthening their linkages to the brand.

In another studies, Kaplanidou and Vogt (2003) define destination brand about “how consumers perceive the destination in their minds”. It is about capturing the distinct elements of the destination in the brand and communicating these elements through the brand’s components.

Kaplanidou and Vogt identify a destination brand model to create and manage the place value in the tourist perspective. It incorporates many components that work together to form the destination brand concept. The core of the model is the defining and building of brand identity. This is how brand strategists want the brand to be perceived. In the Kaplanidou and Vogt’s model (2003), destination brand identity is founded by a set of unique brand associations: these associations imply a promise to customers from organization members. Brand identity should help establish a relationship between the brand and the customer by generating a value proposition involving functional, emotional or self expressive benefits (Aaker, 1996). In this framework five bases are defined to manage destination brand identity: brand image, brand personality, brand essence (or soul), brand character and brand culture. Managing these components, the DMOs define the principal factors of the own destination brand strategy, creating an unique positioning of the destination brand in the consumer's mind (Kaplanidou, Vogt, 2003).

Moreover, the main studies on place marketing literature which explain destination brand models, in primis it defines the core brand value (or brand identity) promise to customer, in secundis it examines: a. the process communicating this value (or identity) to the tourists (Cai, 2002); b. the role of all business local player and internal/external stakeholders creating and managing this value (or identity) in DMOs perspective (Hankinson, 2004).

In the first case, Cai’s model (2002) considers destination branding as a recursive process that revolves around the central axis formed by brand element mix, brand identity – the core of the model - and brand image building. The process described in the model starts with carefully choosing one or more brand elements to serve as trademarkable devices. These factors distinctly identify the destination and begin the formation of strong and consistent brand associations that reflect the

---

7 As emphasized previously, a place - continent, country, region, city, attraction - differs from other products in that it is a composite product comprising of a number of different brands (and/or components of brands). Consequently, those involved in branding a place face a number of unique challenges as there are many, diverse stakeholders, little control of the varying components and more often than not, an underdeveloped identity (Morgan, Pritchard and Piggott, 2002).
attributes, affective, and attitudes components of an image (3A of the model). This makes it possible to assess the gap between the perceived and the projected. The assessment then provides input in building the desired image that is consistent with brand identity and through marketing programs, marketing communications, and managing secondary associations (3Ms in the model). Moreover, Cai (2002) defines four components on the model’s outer circle specify the contextual preconditions (4Cs) in which destination branding takes place: existing induced image, destination size & composition, positioning & target market and existing organic image. Therefore, the model is recursive, centring on building destination identity through spreading activation, which results from dynamic linkages among brand element mix, image building, brand associations (3As), and marketing activities (3Ms). The model also specifies that spreading activation take place under the four conditions of existing organic image, existing induced image, destination size and composition, and positioning and target markets (4Cs).

Instead, in the second case, Hankinson’s model (2004) - referred to as the relational network brand - is represented by a brand core and four categories of brand relationships. These relationships are dynamic and evolve over time. Stakeholder partners may also change as the brand develops and repositions. The brand core represents a place’s identity, the blueprint for developing and communicating the place brand. It may be the vision of one or a number of organisations, and it could be defined by three elements (Hankinson, 2004):

- **brand personality.** This is characterised by functional attributes, symbolic attributes and - most importantly in the context of tourist destination products - experiential attributes;
- **brand’s positioning.** This defines the brand’s point of reference with respect to the competitive set by identifying the attributes which make it similar to other places and then identifying the attributes which make it unique within that set.
- **brand reality.** Developing the core brand is not about creating an image that presents an highly selective identity like a means of selling the place, as suggested by some authors (Barke, Harrop, 1994), or it is a sales pitch that sees the place through rose-tinted spectacles. The successful branding of destinations results from a combination of imaginative marketing supported by investment in the key services and facilities required to deliver the experience on offer. Unless sufficient funds are invested in the brand and its services and facilities, there will be no reinforcement of the core brand values and no repeated consumption.

In Hankinson’s model (2004), the ultimate success of a place branding strategy relies on the effective extension of the core brand through effective relationships with stakeholders, each of which extends and reinforces the reality of the core brand through consistent communication and delivery of services. The model groups these relationships into four macro-categories of stakeholders: primary services providers, the infrastructure services providers, the media and communications players and the consumers of the destination.

---

9 Several studies emphasize either how perceptions of a destination are formed on the part of tourists (Baloglu and McCleary 1999) or what factors affect formation of a destination image. In Cai’s model (2002), image formation goes beyond the tourist-oriented approach to encompass what image a destination marketing organization (DMO) wants to project through each of the 3As.

9 In the context of destination branding, marketing programs such as tourist experience enhancement, attraction development, channel selection (for instance, push vs pull channels of distribution), cooperative advertising, and value pricing are designed to enhance the brand identity through spreading activation. Marketing communications are concerned with selecting an optimal mix of media (including television and magazines) and other options (like direct response advertising, trade promotions, and event marketing and sponsorship) to support marketing programs and enhance brand identity through spreading activation. Associations are considered secondary in destination branding when this relationship with a place as perceived by tourists do not result from a DMO’s direct marketing programs and communications, and are usually beyond its direct control. In this sense, secondary associations resemble (Cai, 2002).

10 Drawing on the concept of spreading activation (Anderson, 1983), the model explicates that a brand image, which consists of three hierarchical components, is indeed only one part of destination branding process. To brand a destination, an image must be built by choosing an optimal brand element mix and identifying the most relevant brand associations. Associations and their linkages to the brand identity must be consistent and strengthened by equally consistent and effective marketing activities. Further, destination branding must be preceded by taking into consideration the four conditions of existing organic image, existing induced image, destination size and composition, and positioning and target markets. The model facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the role of destination image in the overall scheme of destination branding, it emphasizes the importance of selecting a brand element or element mix to represent the brand identity (Cai, 2002).
3. A proposal of Destination Branding Model

The most important phases of destination branding processes are based to define and communicate to the tourists the main brand value driver of place. To achieving these aims, the first step of branding strategy is the definition of destination brand identity, identifying the principal element that compose it (e.g. Keller, 2003; Kapferer, 2004). Moreover, to managing strategically the place value proposition, is indispensable to analyze and to measure the destination brand knowledge perceived to the tourists; this is related to the cognitive representation of the destination brand.

On based these statements, the destination branding model proposal in this paper represents exhaustively these two kind of brand equity, analyzing: 1. the brand identity, through the element of projected brand equity defined by the DMOs (or policy makers, development agency, an so on); 2. the brand knowledge, through the components of perceived brand equity on costumer based perspective (see Figure 1)

In the case of destination - as illustrated on previous section - the analysis of resources, competences and capabilities of the place is the ground to define the destination brand identity. In the destination branding model proposal, the brand identity is based on six elements:

- **Brand culture** is about the system of characteristics based on the cultural aspects of the people (spirit, traditions, event, gastronomy, an so on) and the country (historical sites, monuments, archaeological sites, churches, an so on). Often, this is the essence of a destination and it represents its core value proposition;

- **Brand character** is related to its internal constitution, how it is perceived in terms of integrity, trustworthiness and honesty (Upshaw, 1995). This is also related with the promise of the brand to deliver the experience associated with its distinctive value proposition;

- **Brand personality** is the set of human characteristics that are associated with the destination. It includes several characteristics as sincerity, excitement or competence (Aaker J., 1997) or gender, age, socioeconomic class, as well as human personality traits such as warmth and sentimentality (Aaker, 1996);

- **Brand name** often is the original name of the destination, in domestic or English language: this choice is more important, because it is strongly related with communication strategy on tourist targets. Brand name should have many strength and unique associations, it should be distinctive, pronouncability and recallability (Keller, 2003b);

- **Brand logos (and symbols)** is a fundamental element to define a destination. A beautiful view, a famous monument or an unique tradition are examples of symbols that – in destination case – could be the main logos to communicate a clear and distinctive value proposition compared to another competitive places;

- **Brand slogan** represents a promise that DMO – or another business player – defining to the tourist targets. It’s based on the main functional, emotive or experiential attributes of the destination, related to the benefits and value provided by the place offering. Naturally - also about this element - is more important to choice strength and unique associations for communicating clearly these to the tourists.

It’s more important selecting brand elements to represent the identity and analyzing its cohesiveness that depends on the consistency of these (Keller, 2003a). Consistent brand elements reinforce each other and it serves to unify the entire process of image formation and building, which in turn contributes to the strength and uniqueness of brand identity (Cai, 2002). Therefore, the systematic, unitary and coherent management of the elements of destination brand identity allows to define the brand equity projected by DMOs (or policy makers, development agency). This player/s is the sender/s of the messages – defining brand communication strategy, based on collaborative approach with media

---

11 The first three elements illustrated in the model are macro-characteristics related to the resources or capabilities of the place; the last three elements, instead, are specific tools to synthesize and communicate the destination value proposition.
...and distribution channels – for positioning destination brand in tourists’ mind (Brand Communication & Positioning Strategy).

On the right of the destination branding model (see Figure 1), instead, there is the destination brand knowledge, the core of the brand equity perceived by tourists (receivers). Consumer [destination] brand knowledge could be defined in terms of the personal meaning about a brand stored in consumer memory, that is, all descriptive and evaluative brand related information (Keller, 2003b). The knowledge of a destination brand can be defined as perceptions about the place as reflected by the brand associations held in tourist memory. This definition of brand knowledge and its relationship to destination branding model proposal in this study is rooted in the psychological theory of Adaptive Control of Thought introduced by Anderson (1983) in his seminal work “The Equity of Cognition”. The principal concept within this theory is spreading activation. To understanding its relevance for branding, it is useful to think of one’s knowledge structure or memory “as a simple network in which all elements or units are nodes and the connections among them are links” (Anderson, 1983). The nodes represent various pieces of information - which can be verbal, visual, or abstract - stored in memory and links represent the strength of associations between them. In destination branding model, the associations network perceived by tourists allow the brand positioning in the customers’ mind, through maximizing the identifying perspective of the [destination] brand and the differentiating perspective compared with [place] competitors (Cantone, Risitano, 2005). Moreover, the brand knowledge is based – according to Keller (1993, 1998) – on two sources of customer-based equity: brand awareness and brand image. Brand awareness is defined as “the capacity of a potential customer in recognizing or to remembering that the brand is present for a certain type of offering” (Aaker, 1991). In accordance with

Figure 1 - The Destination Branding Model proposed in the research (Source: Our elaboration).
Keller (2003), brand awareness is defined as brand’s ability to be remembered and recognized that comes from the mental process used by the consumer in identifying it. Two levels of brand awareness are identified, based upon the consumer’s own brand knowledge. The first is brand recognition, describing the consumer’s ability to recognize the destination brand under a series of explicit external stimuli. The second is brand recall, describing the ability to remember the destination brand due to it being present in the consumer’s mind, independent of explicit external stimuli (Cantone, Calvosa, Risitano, 2003).

**Brand image**, finally, is described by the consumer’s perception of the drivers associated to the destination brand. This perception is determined by the attribution of values as well as significant particularities of the DMO’s value proposition. According to Keller (1998), the image is founded by the types of association to develop and the characteristics that they should have (strength, uniqueness, favourability). Therefore, destination image is a mental construct developed by the tourist on the basis of a selected associations among the flood of total associations. Thus, one would expect especially associations based on personal experience and/or strong tie associations to be among the few selected impressions and associations, upon the basis of which tourists generate destination images whereas the probability of destination marketers’ advertising being part of the few selected associations is low(er) (Blichfeldt, 2003).

Naturally, the coherent between the two form of destination brand equity must be checked by DMOs DMOs (or policy makers, development agency, an so on) through field analysis on the tourists - actual and prospect - to verify the planned positioning of the destination (Brand Tracking & Feedback).


The third aim of this paper - as illustrated on previous section - is to validate this model of destination branding, verifying the descriptive capacity of the proposal framework to explicate the destination branding process in a specific geographical context, the area of Campi Flegrei. Campi Flegrei is a tourist destination located in the west side of Naples city and its province (southern Italy). This is a place with high intensity of cultural and landscape resources.

In the next section, it is precisely described the geographical context object of the empirical research; therefore, they are classified the several place-specific resources of the area of Campi Flegrei.

---

The area of Campi Flegrei: a synthetic description.

The area of Campi Flegrei is a destination positioned at the west side of Naples city and its province (southern Italy). It’s formed by several municipalities (Pozzuoli, Bacoli, Monte di Procida, Quarto) and districts of Naples city (Bagnoli and Fuorigrotta). It is an area with an high intensity of cultural, landscape and environment resources (place-specific resources), in which – at present - there is an economic development related to tourist and rural regeneration.

Campi Flegrei place is a tourist destination with high intensity place-specific resources: the cultural-archaeological resources, the landscape and environment resources as well as a constant volcanic phenomena make this area an unicum in continuous becoming of extraordinary attraction and unparalleled beauty.

Anyway, the resource that strongly characterizes Campi Flegrei place is the archaeological one. The determinants of competitive territorial advantage are:

1. the quality of the archaeological resources comparable to Rome ones, according to the experts;
2. the geographic concentration of this “cultural repository” (53 archaeological main sites): in little more than 74,4 Kmq (Pozzuoli, Bacoli, Monte di Procida and Quarto) are located some of the archaeological parks over the world (3) and several archaeological and monumental sites (7);
3. the variety of the tourist resources: Greek archaeology (for example the walls of the Greek city of Cumae), the Roman archaeology (the archaeological and monumental park of Baia and the Rione Terra excavations) and the monuments of Bourbon age (as the Bourbon complex of the Fusaro Lake);
4. the co-existence of these goods in a landscape and naturalistic scene without equal in the world.
The volcanic phenomena shape the beauty of the Campi Flegrei, modelling its lakes (Fusaro, Averno, Lucrino, Miseno) its craters (Solfatara, Agnano, Astroni), reefs on the sea, shorelines, forests, pine-forest, Mediterranean bush (Greco, 2005).

Figure 2 - The resources of Campi Flegrei tourist destination.

As illustrated in Figure 2, Campi Flegrei has an upper-middle competitive potential because of distinctive and differentiating place-specific resources but a lack of generic resources, particularly tourist and transportations ones, and of unqualified tourist and receptive services.

Policy institutions have understood this shortage and they have adopted two projects named PIT - Grande Attrattore Culturale dei Campi Flegrei e Portualità Turistica - taking advantage by the communitarian funds (POR 2000-2006) in order to slowly realize a massive plan of investments in heavy infrastructures (involving ports and transport), recovery of the archaeological patrimony and urban design.

Moreover, the area of Pozzuoli is realizing the more important European Excavations in order to recovery the three stratified levels of the roman city. The town-council approved in 2002 a plan to improve the port and the city and wide the receptive structure through the creation of 600 new beds (Risitano, 2005).

Moreover to witness the importance attributed by the political institutions towards the natural resources, in the 1997 has been instituted The Campi Flegrei Regional Park, mainly an archaeological and landscape volcanic park with areas of integral protection; areas with a generic tie of protection and areas in which is provided the regeneration of the inhabited places (Greco, 2005).

The offering of primary hospitality facilities of the Campi Flegrei municipalities (Pozzuoli, Bacoli, Monte di Procida and Quarto) is of 50 accommodations, with 2,550 beds, distributed in 1,320 rooms, mostly equipped with room services. The offering of complementary hospitality facilities (i.e. camping, tourist villages, lodgings, bed & breakfast, and so on) is of 12 accommodations with 2628 beds distributed in 629 rooms (Risitano, 2005).

By an interview at the President of the Albergatori Flegrei Associazione Turistica, emerges that, currently, the utilization of the existing receptive structures does not exceed the 15% of the filling capacity.

According to same incoming tour operators the difficulties of tourist development of Campi Flegrei is to ascribe mainly to unqualified transportations services, information services, and differentiating services as the entertainment, whose shortage, makes the tourist destination less attractive towards the wider segments of the market, the juvenile ones.

These difficulties are also due to the lack of tourist culture in the social-economic community. In the past, in fact, political institutions, hospitality system, and the same residents never operated in the tourist business given the industrial characteristics of the previous model of exploitation of the local system. It confirms the observation that tourist destination growth depends on the specific resources of the destination but it is nurtured
by knowledge resources and deeply-rooted competencies, which develop slowly through the creative dialogue among local stakeholder.


The empirical research is based on any evidences of: 1. explorative interviews which involved 15 local stakeholders – policy maker (6), tour operator (4), destination marketing organizations (1), cultural resources managing organizations (CRMOS)(3), entrepreneurs organizations (1) – in Campi Flegrei destination, to analysing the destination brand equity projected by tourism stakeholders system; 2. a pilot survey on a sample of 400 tourist – Italian and foreigners people - interviewed at local tourist sites (Solfatara Vulcan, Castle of Baia, Greek city of Cuma), using a questionnaire with open and closed questions, to measuring the destination brand equity perceived by tourists.

First of all, thought the explorative interviews on the local stakeholder – policy makers (the Mayors of the City of Pozzuoli, Bacoli, Quarto and Monte di Procida; the Presidents of districts of Bagnoli and Fuorigrotta), tour operators, local DMO (Azienda Autonoma Cura Soggiorno e Turismo di Pozzuoli), local CRMOS (Soprintendenza regionale ai beni ed alle attività culturali, Soprintendenza per i beni archeologici di Napoli e Caserta, Soprintendenza per i Beni Architettonici ed il Paesaggio. e per il Patrimonio Storico Artistico e Demetioantropologico di Napoli) and the Albergatori Flegrei Associazione Turistica (senders) - it was analyzed the projected brand equity that describes the Campi Flegrei identity. These interviews was realized in March-April '04.


*Figure 3 - Campi Flegrei case: the Projected Destination Brand Equity defined by senders.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SENDERs*</th>
<th>Projected Destination Brand Equity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art, Culture &amp; Wine</td>
<td>Unique experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People &amp; Feeling</td>
<td>Campi Flegrei Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibilla Cumana, Solfatara Vulcan, Virgil, an so on...</td>
<td>Cultura, mare e tempo libero</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Our elaboration*
Campi Flegrei identity - as just defined - was communicated by tour operators, local DMO (Azienda Autonoma Cura Soggiorno e Turismo di Pozzuoli) and the Albergatori Flegrei Associazione Turistica (senders) to Italian and foreign tour operator to win customers in the tourism industry, particularly for tourists which are driven from cultural reasons. These business players delineated an unique communication strategy - presenting a tourist catalogue on BIT in Milan during February ‘05 and on ITB in Berlin during March ’05 – for Italian and German tourist markets. The second part of empirical research proposal in this work is a pilot survey on a sample of 400 tourist interviewed at sites in area of Campi Flegrei. The sample is stratified with two kinds of factors: the origin of interviewed tourists – Italian or foreigners people - and the place of the tourist accommodation (in area of Campi Flegrei or out area of Campi Flegrei) (see Table 1).

Table 1 – The stratification of the sample of interviewed tourist.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origin of tourists</th>
<th>Italian</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IN Campi Flegrei area</td>
<td>150 interviewed (37,50%)</td>
<td>150 interviewed (37,50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUT Campi Flegrei area</td>
<td>50 interviewed (12,50%)</td>
<td>50 interviewed (12,50%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This study was carried out, using a questionnaire with open and closed questions, with face-to-face interviews in local tourist sites (Solfatara Vulcan, Castle of Baia, Greek city of Cuma). The field analysis was realized in two periods: the first from 20 May ’05 to 15 June ’05, the second from 25 October ’05 to 10 November ’05. The subject of this study was the analysis of brand value drivers - that define Perceived Destination Brand Equity - perceived by tourists.

Figure 4 – The main results of the field research: the distribution perceptual of free association.
Particularly, the factors analyzed were: 1. the **free associations** existing in the customers’ mind - as expressed by the interviewed tourists – classified for typology of local resources to which is related; 2. **brand awareness**, measured with two indicators: the perceptual of the interviewed tourist that knew the destination before the travel and the analysis of the typology of communication channels trough which tourists knew the destination; 3. **brand image**, measured trough three indicators: the value perceived by tourists related to specific destination distinctiveness (measured on a five level scale: 1=extremely low brand image, 5=extremely high brand image), the global destination image value (two kinds: value expected before the travel and value perceived during the travel), the destination image ratio (also called DIR, calculated as ratio between the expected image and perceived image).

The analysis of **free associations related to Campi Flegrei** expressed by interviewed tourists (see Figure 4) shows that the several names/objects/tourist sites/or others resources present in consumers’ mind are related to **Volcanic** local resources in the 57,44% of the total cases named (59,16% and 54,41% respectively for Italian and foreigners people), to **Cultural & Archeological** sites in the 33,06% of the total cases, to **Landscape & natural** resources in the 7,44% of the total cases named (4,20% and 11,26% respectively for Italian and foreigners people), to **Local Testimonials** in the 1,45% of the total cases (i.e. Sofia Loren, named by six foreign tourists).

**Figure 5 – The main results of the field research: the sources of Campi Flegrei recall.**

The analysis of **destination brand awareness** shows that the perceptual of the interviewed tourist that knew the destination before the travel are the 89,75% of the sample (94,0% and 85,5% respectively for Italian and foreigners people). Moreover, the analysis of Campi Flegrei recall (see Figure 5) has highlighted that the principal typology of communication channels trough which tourists knew this destination is the **School** (for the 32,87% interviewers of the total sample, 41,94% of the Italian), followed by the **WOM-Word of Mouth** of parents or friends (for the 31,50% interviewers of the total sample, 34,69 % of the foreigners), followed by the **Television** (for the 15,32% interviewers of the total sample, 18,06 % of the Italian), followed by the **Tourist Journals** (for the 9,12% interviewers of the total sample, 13,65 of the foreigners).

Finally, the analysis of **destination brand image** was based on three indicators. The first of these (see Figure 6) shows that the higher value perceived by tourists related to specific destination distinctiveness (measured on a five level scale: 1=extremely low brand image, 5=extremely high brand image) is **Climate** (4,66), followed by **Landscape & natural resources** (4,65) and **Historical & cultural resources** (4,61). Instead, in the empirical research there were two factors with value perceived by
interviewed tourists under the medium score (3.00); they are Transport services (2.83) and Information & Service for tourists (2.72).

Figure 6 – The main results of the field research: the image of destination distinctiveness.

Moreover, in the image analysis was calculated the global destination image value expected before the travel (3.79) and destination value perceived during the travel (4.31), naturally both observed during the travel. For Italian tourists these score were respectively 3.79 and 4.19; instead for foreigners 3.80 and 4.42. Therefore, the third factor defined in the image research is DIR (the destination image ratio calculated as ratio between the expected image before the travel and perceived image during the travel). The results were respectively: 1.14 for total sample of interviewed, 1.10 for Italian tourists and 1.16 for foreigners (this score is above 1 if the image value during travel exceed this before travel). Probably, the result of this indicator could be a proxy of the higher customer satisfaction for the foreigners people compared with Italian.

5. Final considerations

In the research has been analyzed the role of destination branding to manage the place identity in the tourism stakeholders system. The first DMO’s goal is to define the main constitutive elements of this identity to communicating and positioning the destination value proposition. Therefore, the first aim of the paper has been analyzing the place branding literature review on marketing theory, particularly illustrating the main destination brand models – and the relative brand value drivers - existing in tourism and vacation marketing academic area. Coherently, in the paper has been defined a proposal destination branding model that describe exhaustively the two main brand value equity of destination: the brand equity projected by the DMOs (or policy makers, development agency, and so on) - based on the components of brand identity - and the brand equity perceived by the tourists, based on the brand knowledge and its determinants. The paper has also highlighted the role of the network of associations perceived by the tourists, as base for the best managing of destination brand and its values. Finally, the empirical explorative analysis on Campi Flegrei destination – carried out through interviews to local players - has allowed to identify the main elements constituting the Campi Flegrei identity projected by the local tourism stakeholders system. The Projected Destination Brand Equity was communicated to the customers’ targets and positioning the TDP in the costumers’ perceptive system. This analysis has allowed to validate the left part of the proposal Destination Branding Model. Instead, through the pilot survey on a sample of 400 tourist interviewed has been defined the Campi Flegrei knowledge perceived by customers. This study was based on free associations analysis, destination awareness.
indicators and destination image analysis to representing the Perceived Destination Brand Equity (by tourists). This analysis has allowed to validate the right part of the proposal Destination Branding Model. Therefore, the three aims of the paper - as illustrated on previous section - has been achieved through academic and field methodologies.

References


