



The importance of branding in tourism and introducing nomads of Iran as a tourism brand

Mahdis Saadatmand Javan^{a*}, Dr. keyvan loloie^b

^a Iran's Nonprofit University of science and culture, Tehran, Iran

^b Mahallat Branch, Islamic Azad University, Mahallat, Iran

Received: 23 February 2021

Revised: 28 March 2021

Accepted: 17 April 2021

Abstract

Today, tourism industry is considered as an important industry with huge profitability in many countries. This profitability is achieved through creating direct and indirect jobs. Therefore, in a large global competitive market, any destination attempts to introduce itself to the world as a superior tourism destination. Therefore, we must have something new to say, in order to succeed in such a competitive market. Yet, we should establish a balance between obtained positive and negative effects. Otherwise, after a while the destination will lose its capacity in receiving tourists and only irreparable economic, environmental and especially cultural costs will remain. In fact, motivation is the most important issue and a starter for travel. That is the driving force which encourages individuals to travel and to recreate. Today, the issue of tourism branding can be considered as a motivating factor; because destination branding creates a mental image in the minds of tourists; hence, the aim of this paper is to discuss Iran's tourism branding and finally according to which, a good brand is suggested for Iran's tourism.

Keywords: branding, tourism brand, Iran's nomads.

How to cite the article:

M. Saadatmand Javan, K. loloie, The importance of branding in tourism and introducing nomads of Iran as a tourism brand, J. Practical Buss. Law, 2021; 2(2): 37-42

Introduction

Tourism and traveling has traditionally flourished in Iran and it has begun before Achaemenid; however, today it is regarded as a young industry in Iran. This industry is expected to replace many slow return economic activities and even the oil industry, in the near future in Iran.

Therefore, perfect identification of management practices, employing specialized staff, training local people regarding dealing with tourists, effective advertising and investment are among the most important requirements for the development of the tourism industry. On the other hand,

Iran is the tenth country in the world, in terms of possessing ancient and historical monuments and the fifth country in terms of having natural attractions; however, unfortunately it has failed to stand among the top ten countries in the world in terms of tourism. In recent years, due to the imposition of sanctions, investors have faced many problems to invest in tourism; yet, according to the head of Iran's Tourism Financial Group, Dr. Mehdi

Jahangiri, today the risk of investing in the tourism industry has decreased.

The definition of brand

As defined by American Marketing Association, brand is a name, term, symbol, sign or a combination of these items that is used to distinguish a product or service from products or services provided by other vendors. Arnold believes that brand looks like an atom; its core is the essence of brand (everything that distinguishes the brand) and electrons surrounding it are indeed the benefits of brand (physical, cognitive, tangible and intangible, intellectual and emotional benefits). Brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty, financial approach, distinction, the quality perceived by customers, usefulness and promise fulfillment are among the most important factors in branding and we intend to discuss all of them in the area of tourism in the following sections.

Tourism branding

Since we need to utilize the experience of other successful countries to develop tourism industry in Iran and since such countries pay special attention to the issue of tourism branding; so, it is noteworthy to address this issue as the most important motivating factor in the area of tourism. Today we see huge investments in the area of tourism branding by top tourist countries such as Turkey, Thailand, Australia, Japan, China and India and indeed tourism branding is employed as an effective marketing policy in these countries for the development of tourism industry.

There are two types of brand: product brand and service brand. In the discussion of tourism, service brand is considered. Although the brand of products and goods, such as foodstuff, clothing and other products which are consumable or may be used as souvenirs fall in the category of product brands; however, the main product of tourism is memory; an intangible and perceptual product. This means that a tourist pays some expenses in exchange for buying a memory or a favorable perceived quality. So, each country tries to create more distinctive perceived quality for its tourism, compared to other countries. We face two distinct discussions, in the area of tourism:

Catchy brand

Catchy brand plays the role of motivator. Therefore, we must have something new to say, in order to attract more tourists in such a competitive market. This means creating an attraction that is distinctive from the attractions of other countries. Although Iran possesses many beautiful beaches, numerous ancient and historical monuments, cultural elements, various celebrations and feasts, pristine nature and forests, ports and other attractions and despite its long history and differences in its art and architecture, it still share some common features with other countries. In fact, all of these items listed can be considered as attractions; but they cannot be used as brands. Today, the majority of tourists who visit Iran, come from Eastern countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, China, Japan and ... and they often visit Iran for religious and or recreational issues. So, if we intend to define Europe as our target market; we must regard the issue of branding more seriously. We must ask ourselves: a European post-modernism when the heart is removed, what will follow? What can pull a European person out of the heart of postmodernism? Whether different modern shopping centers, buildings and skyscrapers are attractive to him or not? Of course the answer is "negative". Such questions show that we must look for an invaluable brand and the level of distinction of a brand determines its value.

Service brand

Service brand will be very important after the arrival of tourists to the destination and it includes services such as flights, transportation within the city and between cities, restaurants, hotels and other services which are offered as a travel package. In branding the issue of trust is crucially important. In tourism, a famous airline, reputation of a hotel or a restaurant and even a tourism agency can induce a sense of trust to tourists. Therefore, when a tourism agency is chosen by tourists because of its brand, it should provide the best meals and food products, reserve high quality hotels, Standard transportation facilities and must even choose a tour guide with international standards. This is important for two reasons:

A) If a tour operator pays enough attention to the quality of all the constituent elements of their package, it will create a kind of loyalty in tourist and this means re-selection of destination by tourist and earning more money through raising the costs.

B) Tourism is an inter-connected industry; meaning that all of its elements interact with each other and disregarding each of its elements can negatively affect the quality perceived by tourists; so, quality loss in each element can have an overall effect on the quality perceived by tourists. For example, if the hotel is not secure and the tourist is robbed; in this case, the high quality of a meal cannot make up for the negative impact of this incident and thus perceived quality decreases.

Brand awareness

In simple words, we can say that when a supplier possesses the best brand, but nobody is aware of its existence, he has not done much and his brand will finally fail. In the discussion of tourism, despite the fact that Iran has a lot of potential to attract tourists; however, the issue of advertising in other countries has been neglected. Meanwhile, a large number of foreigners are not aware of Iran's history and culture, customs and traditions, art and architecture and natural and pristine landscapes and negative advertising by mass media and different rumors have ruined Iran's tourism market. Here an important issue is that investors and especially government should allocate a budget for advertising in order to introduce Iran to tourists and especially to European tourists, in the best way.

Brand association

In the discussion branding, brand association refers to stabilization of a brand in customers' mind and in fact seeing the signs of a brand evokes its quality for them. This issue arises from proper provision of tourism services. For example, when the hotel has high-quality hygiene, security and

services; tourists will memorize the hotel by its name and brand and will never forget it.

Brand loyalty

Brand loyalty refers to repurchasing. When customers use a product for the first time and are perfectly satisfied with it, demand for the product increases and indeed the supplier will obtain customers' loyalty and this means that customers will not be willing to use the products and services of other sellers. In the discussion of tourism, when a tourist is pleased with the programs and services provided by a tourism agency, he will refer to it in the next time, too.

Financial approach

Obviously, a brand product has a higher price, compared to other similar products. Therefore, the issue of branding brings more profitability for the supplier, in this way. This means that branding increases profitability both through increasing the number of customers and through raising prices. In the issue of tourism, service providers must set their plans, based on their competitive market. For example, a tour operator may decide to increase its profitability through its famous brand, by increasing ticket and services prices or he may adopt the policy of lowering prices and increasing the number of tourists. Sometimes, reducing prices increased the amount of demand and sometimes reducing prices has a negligible impact on demand and this is the elasticity of product and purchase which is formed within the framework of demand.

Distinction

A product is known as a brand; if it is distinct from other suppliers' products in terms of quality and creativity. As noted above, success in the competitive global market requires creativity. One must be creative and must create creativity. A tourism agency can offer distinct services to its customers, become famous and this way it can persuade tourists. For example, Eli Gasht airline has differentiated itself by offering special privileges to the tourists. This company has offered blue cards, silver cards and gold cards to the travelers and has managed to obtain their loyalty. For example, owner of these cards can take back a percentage of the price of purchased ticket in the next purchase.

Usefulness

Recreation is not the only goal of a tourist. A tourist accepts all the challenges before him on a journey to an unknown destination and beside recreation; he will look for learning and gaining experience, as well. Therefore, planners must plan their tours so that tourists can obtain information about the culture and customs and traditions and

other characteristics of the destination and can know them well.

Promise fulfillment

A major part of tourists' problems is mismatch of what they see and what service agencies had previously promised them. Therefore, promise fulfillment is one of the most important indicators of a brand which makes it distinctive. This is particularly true about tour operators and travel agencies.

Note: One of the most important results of service branding is that it compels other travel agencies, hotels, residential centers, restaurants and transport companies to attempt to raise the quality of their products and services and this competition will rapidly bring the country to an ideal level of tourism services.

Introducing nomads as Iran's tourism brand

Nomadic life has been abolished in many countries and only Iran and few countries have nomads and vertical migration; so, the issue of nomads and their migration can attract the attention and curiosity of tourists and especially European tourists. In Iran, nomadic tours are often running under the name of eco tours or nature tours. But they have been disregarded and most tourism agencies refuse to accept the risks of developing a program for nomadic tours. And they prefer tours such as Isfahan tours, Shiraz tours, Yazd tours or pilgrimage tours. The important issue in the area of introducing Iran's nomads as a tourism brand is investment and development of a comprehensive and attractive program. For example, if we invest on establishment of nomadic music groups or supplying traditional nomadic goods and products in the form of a nomadic festival and also if we hold these tours on special occasions such as the Eid Nowruz or the Yalda Night, indeed we have provided a complete and attractive tourism package which provides all the cultural and artistic aspects of Iran in the heart of an exceptional nature -and with a high level of perceptual quality- to the tourists. This will create brand loyalty. Meaning that the tourist will most probably travel there again and it will be effective in the area of advertising, as well. Tourists will begin to advertise when they enter into their country and thus, in a short time, tourists around the world will recognize Iran with its nomads and in fact nomads will become Iran's tourism brand. It is worth mentioning that this should be performed while maintaining tourism pillars in general and ecotourism pillars in particular.

Ecotourism

Ecotourism is defined as "responsible travel, based on the principles of sustainability to natural areas

in order to enjoy the spiritual aspects and to meet the mental and emotional needs, along with recognition and understanding and respect for local people value system and to help preserving the natural areas and promoting the well-being of the host community (Zahedi, p. 90). According to this definition, nomadic tours must use a powerful management system to increase the efficiency and productivity of ecotourism sites (especially winter and summer sites which are the destinations of their migration), to pay special attention to preserve biodiversity and natural resources and to control the consumption rate and finally to prevent the expansion of mass tourism.

Iran's nomads and tribes

Iran has the most diverse tribes and nomads. Iran's nomads include nomads of Elam, Chahar Mahal and Bakhtiari, Lorestan, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Kermanshah, Khorasan, Qazvin, Fars, Golestan, Khamse Zanzan and Kurdistan and these tribes are divided into smaller tribes.

The majority of Iranian tribes include Lors, Kurds, Turks and Baluchis. Obviously, each of these tribes have their unique culture, customs and traditions, dialects, costumes, handicrafts, music and dance that -along with winter and summer natural attractions- can create attractions for European tourists. It is worth noting that Bakhtiari and Qashqai are the biggest and most famous tribes in Iran. In Iran, most of nomadic territory belongs to vertical nomadism and the widest area can be seen in the internal and external parts of Zagros Mountains. Although with the advent of modernism to the society, the culture of nomadic life has changed; however, what makes nomads attractive is that they have managed to preserve their originality. Cultural tourism identifies the culture of different areas and explores cultural landscapes of human societies and tries to understand them (Tribe, 1997, 73). We will discuss some attractive nomadic features in the following sections:

1. Customs and traditions

Cultural features of nomads which are affected by their beliefs create their cultural landscape. Nomadic feasts and Eids are crucially important in institutionalization of their customs and traditions and pave the ground for mental solidarity and unity of people and for manifestation of collective spirit within the tribal structure of nomadic communities (Tabibi, 267,1992). Feast can create tourism attractions. In this regard, customs of Turkmen can be enumerated; including Eids and various ceremonies such as marriage, rain seeking ceremony and Turkmen games.

2. Housing

Special type of housing in nomadic areas is another tourism potential (Saghaei, 2003). Especially since their housing adapts with the environment; it is a manifestation of preparation for constant movement. So, architecture and special form and type of these houses are both the product of technical phenomena and a formal and material response to the environmental constraints. They also contain symbols for recognition of the dignity and status of people and regional and social interests and contain entities revealing mental ideas, spirits and value system (Bromberger, pp. 157,1991). The shape of nomadic houses is influenced by the geographical context of each region and aside from natural and physical conditions, it depends on factors such as history and historic, religious and ethnic events (Ghare Nejad, 35,2002). The house of majority of Iranian nomads is tent and living under a tent for a few days will be a fascinating recreation for postmodern tourists.

3. Clothing

The shape, tailoring, size and the color selection of women's clothing in nomadic tribes give them a kind of cultural unity. Seeing nomadic peoples in their traditional costumes and in their environment is very fascinating for postmodern tourists (Papeli Yazdi and Saghaie, 213, 2006).

4. Music

The most authentic Iranian music can be found among nomads. Traditional music is not only one of the tourist attractions of nomadic tribes; but it is an artistic attraction which attracts many tourists to celebrations and festivals where live nomadic music is played (Papeli Yazdi and Saghaie, 213, 2006).

5. Dialect

All the Iranian nomads have their distinct dialects. These dialects include Turkish, Qashqai Turkish, Lori, Kurdish and etc. however, the folk literature of these people which is considered as a cultural attraction itself is common in all of them.

6. Livelihood

Nomad's life is based on animal husbandry in the mountains and plains and this lifestyle and items including: milking, butter making, Tolom Zani and shearing are extremely attractive for tourists.

7. Climate

Climate, vegetation, animals and the nature of nomadic life which change with seasons are among the major tourist attractions which contain plains and mountainous areas and foothills and they are considered as subsets of ecotourism.

8. Handicrafts

Handicrafts arose from the basic needs of nomads and unfortunately, nowadays with the replacement of modern technology, they are facing existential challenges (Papeli Yazdi and Saghale, 213, 2006). However, they are still important in the area of tourism.

Infrastructure and superstructure

Infrastructure: Infrastructures are considered among the most important requirements of economic growth and increasing public welfare and they are not needed only for a particular industry and in fact, they are important for all industries. In the discussion of infrastructure, transportation has a special importance and this issue is reflected in the tourism industry, too. For example, road transportation -that is the most important part of transportation- lacks required standards in Iran and as a result of this issue, Iran has become the second country in the world in terms of high number of accidents. Regarding transportation infrastructures and especially road transportation, many projects are being developed; however, most of these projects will not reach the implementation phase and the reason is undoubtedly budget deficit.

Superstructure: superstructures are specific requirements of each industry. In tourism industry, hotels, airplanes, restaurants and whatever tourists need are considered as superstructures.

According to the deputy of Iran Cultural Heritage Handicraft and Tourism Organization, nomadic tourism is developing in our country and improvement and development of the status of nomadic tourism is one of the most important strategic programs to boost tourism. He also added that development of hotel industry and creation of other infrastructures and residential centers are other basic programs in this organization. Midway toilets and restaurants with required standards, local products and goods in appropriate packaging -to be offered as souvenirs- are other major items which must be addressed seriously and meticulously. We will discuss some of the most essential superstructures in the following sections.

Toilets

Unfortunately, today lack of enough midway toilets has become a real dilemma for tourism and it annoys tourists and especially foreign tourists. Whereas, these midway toilets and residences are among the most important tourism -and especially nomadic tourism- infrastructures that foreign tourists usually complain about. One European tourist after travelling to Iran, tells his fellow countrymen: "Do not travel to Iran, there is no toilet in Iran". Unfortunately, travelers are

struggling with this problem for many years. Toilets -or rather insanitary toilets- have a significant negative impact on tourism. Authorities often consider this issue and construct many toilets; however, the issue of maintenance that is even more important, is often ignored.

Restaurants

Midway restaurants are also very important and I think that most of them do not meet the required sanitary standards. Most of these restaurants experience lack of funds and facilities and lack of reputation, too! So, tourists will never choose these restaurants, unless they are forced to. Therefore, if famous restaurants invest on these unknown cafes and restaurants and offer them their license, the quality of their foods and the level of their hygiene will improve considerably and the profit and reputation of operating restaurants (brand restaurants) will increase, as well.

Packaging

In Iran, only a small number of service/product providers pay attention to the issue of packaging. Packaging is significantly important in the area of tourism and it must be addressed seriously.

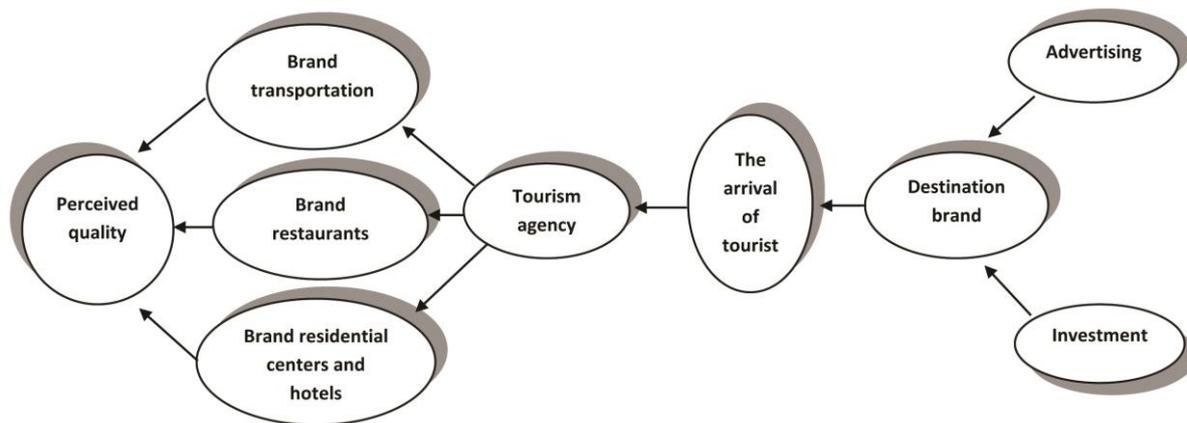
Branding, quality and usefulness of a product along with proper packaging -being beautiful, not occupying much space, being easily movable and enhancing product's shelf life- are crucially important issues for sellers or suppliers. Tourists look for souvenirs which are low volume and yet have a long shelf life (if they are edible). Therefore, handicrafts of nomads and their products and productions should be offered in the form of standard packages. As noted earlier, modern technology has challenged today's nomadic handicrafts; therefore, development of tourism in nomadic areas will enhance nomadic handicrafts' durability, their sales and it will in turn increase employment and income in these areas.

Conclusion

The issue of branding is very important in all product and service supplying markets and especially in tourism. On the one hand, it was said that a brand must contain all the elements of distinction, creating loyalty, profitability, association, usefulness and attractiveness. So, in the area of tourism, a brand is accepted as a tourism brand, if it has these conditions: firstly, it must be distinct from other countries; secondly, it must demonstrate a perfect set of cultures, customs and traditions, music, art, language, food, dress, dance and the nature of Iran and thirdly it must bring profit for stakeholders in the tourism market. Therefore, we can say that Iran's nomads which manifest all the above mentioned cultural elements possess needed potential to be

recognized as tourism brand. This is feasible with the help of government and tourism authorities and agencies and through massive advertising inside and outside the country. Moreover, issues such as training people about dealing with tourists, employing specialized personnel, paying attention to ecotourism preservation, controlling mass tourism and allocating required funds are very

essential in this regard and we have not much time to address these issues in this paper. The model presented below shows the importance of brand, both before and after arrival of tourists to the destination.



A model which represents the importance of branding in the selection of destination and services (made by author)

References

- [1] Papeli Yazdi, Mohammad Hussain and Saghaie, Mehdi, (2006), "tourism (nature and concepts)", Geography Publications, Qom
- [2] Jahanian, Manouchehr and Nad Ali Pour, Zahra, (2009), "Tourism Management (definitions, nature and components)", ACECR, Tehran.
- [3] zahedi, Shams al-Sadat, (2014), "Principles of Sustainable Tourism and Ecotourism (with an emphasis on environment)," Allameh Tabatabai University, Tehran.