

# guest editorial

## special issue Destination rejuvenation strategies



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Following decades of tourist sector activity in developed countries, there is currently strong debate on rejuvenation strategies by tourist destinations that have reached a point of maturity and the different policies in which they should engage. This debate is taking place against a backdrop of important world-wide changes in tourist flows, accompanied by big changes in tourist tastes and preferences (Ioannides & Debbage 1998, Urry 1990). If we bear in mind that international bodies like the WTTC or UNWTO forecast the falling dynamism of regions that are traditionally attracting the largest number of tourists (such as North America and Europe) to the benefit of some Asian regions or countries, it is easy to see that reflections on the specific evolution of mature destinations, analysing the achievements and errors they have committed and contextualizing them within each stage of the lifecycle, may offer a crucial insight into how to tackle their future and come up with sustainable strategies, in social, economic and, of course, environmental terms.

Naturally, the path to maturity that many tourism destinations have followed differs and none of these destinations share the same specific characteristics. Thus, there is no single means of "rejuvenation". Some common features nonetheless, can be identified in their development through to maturity that can be analysed within the theoretical framework of the destination lifecycle proposed by Butler in 1980s. Butler's lifecycle (1980) has been used, with greater or lesser success, to analyse the evolution of a wide range of destinations (Lagiewski, 2006). At the same time, the model has been the focus of many criticisms regarding problems in its applicability and validity. Haywood (1986) and later Agarwal (1997) pinpointed the main operational problems that cast doubt on the model's validity as the unit of analysis, statistical limitations, the relevant market, the identification of the pattern and stages of development of the model, the relevant period of analysis and, finally, the existence of internal and external factors that might make both the growth pattern and identification of the proposed stages vary enormously. Nonetheless, despite numerous problems in its application and the multiple criticisms it has received, the model provides a conceptual framework for a better understanding of differences among destinations and changes in these complex geographical competitive units (Agarwal, 1997). In this respect, identifying the internal and external factors that explain each stage in a destination's development and subsequent responses can contribute to an understanding of the evolution of destinations and generate a set of knowledge based on the know-how they have acquired. This know-how, however, is not enough in itself to face up to the future. The risks and opportunities that each destination faces which are directly associated with its capacity to compete with the rest of the world must also be pinpointed.

In this special issue dedicated to rejuvenation strategies for mature tourism destinations, these issues have been addressed through a number of case studies of different characteristics. These cases attempt to uncover research gaps in the field of destination rejuvenation. In each of them, based on the conceptual framework of Butler's lifecycle

theory the authors not only present the specific evolution of a destination, but they also analyse its development and future expectations, taking a variety of perspectives.

Sustainability and competitiveness are key concepts in the survival and future evolution of tourist destinations. One important factor tied in with these concepts is the need for interrelations and coordination among the different stakeholders at a destination. As authors like Ioannides (2001) argue, sustainability cannot be imposed on a destination from destination management. Instead, it should be based on the needs of local communities, and those of tourists, ecology groups, business employers and other private and public organizations. Consequently, those bodies in charge of tourism planning must cooperate with other interested parties as a means of involving them in the rejuvenation process. The first article by Blanco and Müller is reviewing literature on voluntary environmental initiatives in tourism that have a direct effect on stakeholders' different interests and thus on the need for coordination in order to enhance the destination's competitive capacity. Their paper highlights that there are economic and non-economic incentives for destination stakeholders to undertake voluntary environmental initiatives.

The following articles use the case study approach to answer their research questions: The second one by Camprubí, Guia and Comas explores the case of two tourist destinations, Girona (Spain) and Perpignan (France), which have dealt with the creation of an induced image in different ways. The authors emphasize the need for coordination and cooperation among tourism agents as a means of boosting the destination's future competitiveness. Nordin and Westlund's article centres both on the impact that a destination's development has on the social capital of the region where it is situated, and on the long-term changing relations among different agents in the destination. With the case of South Tyrol (Italy), Pechlaner, Herntrei and Kofink illustrate the role of spatial planning to initiate product development in tourism destinations. The aim of their paper is to indicate that a close linkage of spatial planning and strategic product development can be a factor of success in developing and implementing growth in mature destinations.

A very important key stakeholder in the process of destination rejuvenation is the DMO, the destination management organisation. The article by Bieger, Beritelli and Laesser focuses on a discussion of the importance of the transformation of DMO in order to face the challenge of rejuvenating a destination using the Swiss canton of Grisons as a case study. Finally, also Singal and Uysal support the importance of destination management strategies to successfully develop sustainable tourism growth. Their case study does also focus on the role of resource commitments of certain stakeholder networks. With a case study of Abingdon in Virginia (USA) they analyse the effects of collaboration and coordination among local agents in a small city.

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