

# Bases for the implementation of tourist marketing for a sustainable destination: the case of Barcelona

## Marketing criteria for a sustainable destination

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## What is sustainable marketing

Marketing is responsible for an important part of the impacts, negative and positive, on a tourist destination. The types and number of clients that we receive, the expectations that we generate, the behaviour we promote, the services we promote, etc., are the reasons why the visitors create these impacts, and all these behaviours are the result of the marketing and communication.

The marketing actions have nearly always prioritised the short-term needs of the visitors, without giving so much importance to the impact they have on the residents, or to the capacity of the destination to serve the needs of all their interest groups in the future.

Sustainable marketing is the application of marketing techniques so that a destination, a resource or a product serves the needs of the visitors and residents today, and has the possibility to do so in the future. This implies the fact that the entities charged with the marketing have a wider vision of their responsibilities, and evaluate the impact of their actions in a more holistic way.

In this report we analyse the possibilities of making a more sustainable marketing for a DMO - Destination Marketing Organization, the marketing organism of the destination, the role that in Barcelona is carried out by *Turisme de Barcelona*.

# Section 1. Sustainable marketing criteria

The main aim of sustainable marketing is to attract a volume and type of tourism suitable to the conditions and needs of the destination. The destination is always the priority, and how tourism is used to improve where people live, where tourism is not a tool.

We reiterate that to be sustainable the hierarchy is clear: the destination has to use tourism; and not the tourist industry that uses the destination.

We can achieve this if we change the traditional goals of marketing of increasing the volumes of sales and expenditure, which we present as follows. The format in which we present these criteria is:

- **Criteria** of sustainability
- **Goal** of marketing resulting from the criteria
- **Explanation** of how the goal reflects the criteria
- **Indicator** for the marketing actions of the destination

<b>FOLLOWING THIS CRITERIA OF SUSTAINABILITY...</b>	<b>... WE FIX THIS MARKETING GOAL...</b>	<b>...AND WE MEASURE THE SUCCESS WITH THIS INDICATOR</b>
<b>1-Reducing the negative environmental and social impacts</b>	To normalise the consumption of more sustainable products and services	Percentage of the touristic services certified as sustainable
<b>2-Reducing the carbon footprint of the transport</b>	To reduce the distance of the journey, increasing the stay and optimizing the transport methods	Carbon footprint of the transport per visitor and night
<b>3-Normalising the behavior of the visitors</b>	To increase the visitor loyalty	Percentage of leisure visitors to the destination that repeat
<b>4-Reducing the touristic overcrowding</b>	To reduce the seasonal nature and redistributing geographically	Rate of overcrowding of the tourism in the destination
<b>5-Compensating the negative impacts caused by the tourism</b>	To increase the local expenditure of the visitor	Visitor expenditure that affects the destination
<b>6-Serving the destination and not the entities</b>	To complement, not replace, the private sector	Added value that shouldn't be able to be achieved by the private sector alone
<b>7-Serving the needs of the city</b>	To work with the companies that make a city more sustainable	Percentage of companies in need of help within the "partnership" programmes of the marketing/promotion entity

# 01 Reducing the negative environmental and social impacts.

Goal: To normalise the consumption of more sustainable products and services

The growth of tourism impacts on the quantity and quality of the natural resources that we have and the quality of the life of the residents. There already exist production standards that allow the visitor to be served better without consuming so many resources. Many destinations already have initiatives in this respect, even though the results are limited. What often happens is that very few companies are certified, and we don't have economies of scale for a substantial change. These few companies, therefore, have to be promoted independently, without the support of the public sector.

In the mature destinations it is necessary that being certified as sustainable is something normal, and not an exception.

Certification should be used for improving the transport, the accommodation, the restaurants and catering, the attractions and activities, the meetings, the congresses and trade fairs, and the infrastructure, amongst others. A destination can't do marketing of its efforts in terms of sustainability when the majority of its product isn't so.

Therefore, the destinations will need to introduce important market incentives so that the touristic services become certified. This includes demanding certification for the providers of the public sector, to be members of promotional entities, "convention bureau" or product clubs, and for participating in all the marketing campaigns with public participation.

Indicator: Percentage of the touristic services certified as sustainable.

## 02 Reducing the carbon footprint of transport.

**Goal:** To reduce the distance of the journey, increase the stay and optimize the transport methods.

The carbon footprint for travelling to a destination is the responsibility of this destination: first and foremost, it is "we" who decide which markets we want to attract, from where, for how long, and which products to consume.

The average annual consumption in Europe is 6.5 to 10 tons per person, and to fight against climate change, we need to reduce this consumption to the equivalent of 2 tons of carbon per year. A two-way 2-hour flight represents an average of half a ton per person, and a seven-hour flight is 2.3 tons. In the middle of the century, these flights can signify more than 40% of the carbon footprint, given that currently we don't have technological solutions to advance as quickly as in other sectors.

As a responsible destination we aim to reduce the distance travelled by our visitors, attracting people more close-by. Given that transport represents  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the carbon footprint of the whole trip, we can

try to achieve the fact that our visitors lengthen their stay, so as to proportionally reduce the carbon footprint per night and to need fewer trips so as to get the same economic benefit. We can try to attract visitors who use the train or the bus, and even comparatively the car (in which there are normally various occupants), all of them with lower carbon footprints than the plane.

When the flights are unavoidable, we can do marketing in the markets of origin from where there are direct flights and not in the places when they have to make connections, given that this increases the footprint. Another case that should be given priority consideration are the cruise holidays, which represent a higher carbon footprint, given that they depend on the transport for arriving to where the cruise starts, which should be added to the impact of the cruise itself which is much higher than accommodation and activities on land.

**Indicator:** Carbon footprint of the transport per visitor and night.

# 03 Normalizing the behavior of the visitors.

**Goal:** To increase the visitor loyalty

Visitors who behave more like the residents have better impact. The visitors who repeat spend a little less per day, but that expenditure has a greater effect on the local economy. Visitors who buy in the shops and do activities similar to the residents are helping the local economy more, and the added incomes provide an added stimulus to the local economy. It should be taken into account, however, that the number of these added visitors do not displace the residents, and don't make the services and products that they enjoy more expensive. The visitors that repeat have greater respect for the culture and customs of the destination. They learn more about the culture and the language, visit a greater variety of places, and depend less on the icons of the destination, therefore creating less crowding.

There is also evidence that in the world of the services it costs less to retain a customer than to attract one for the first time. Nevertheless, the marketing campaigns often focus on the first-time visitor, or treat all the visitors as if it was the first time they wanted to visit us, giving

a message, to the visitors who are considering returning, that there are only things to do in just one visit. Therefore, the mature destinations should focus their efforts on the repeating market, as well as looking for ways so that the loyal customer becomes a prescriber and model for other visitors.

Furthermore, we have understood, often, that the satisfaction of the visitors who repeat a destination is lower than on their first visit. There is also evidence that, in general, a visitor who repeats tends to spend less than a first-time visitor. We believe that both variables can be improved with a marketing that focuses more on the needs of the visitors who repeat, giving more emphasis to the variety of attractions and activities, and to new ways of visiting already known attractions.

We understand that this is a difficult goal and that it implies many changes in the usual way of marketing the destinations. However, we believe that, at least, it is something that should guide the efforts of all mature destinations who want to be more sustainable in the future.

**Indicator:** Percentage of leisure visitors to the destination who repeat

# 04 Reducing touristic overcrowding.

**Goal: To reduce the seasonal nature and redistribute geographically**

The visitors are often concentrated in moments and very specific places, this congestion creates negative social and environmental impacts which are much higher than would be necessary if they were distributed better. The overcrowding can also mean that the local economy is unable to serve the needs of the visitors in an efficient way, leading to a loss of revenues, while the lack of offseason visitors is added to this sub-optimal performance.

Destinations should change the way they promote themselves, and stop using the icons/attractions that are saturated. Systems need to be defined so that the customers who want to visit the icons leave more benefits for the whole destination. For example, including them in the packages of greater value, and not allowing the agencies to buy large volumes for visitors, and so they affect the destination less, and have a preferential treatment.

The marketing should spread the visitors, providing them with many more options of "things to do", and creating sub-brands that highlight the personality of the different parts of the destination so as to

efficiently serve different markets, where they don't cause more conflicts with local needs.

For mature destinations, it is essential that this is a way of spreading the excessive pressure that already exists in overcrowded points, and not as a way of facilitating greater growth. Barcelona has already been working for some years with the neighborhoods, where there is a district tourism plan which is working in this way. However it is important that a plan such as this is not seen as a way of growing with the same touristic model that has caused negative impacts in other neighborhoods.

The spreading of tourism should also be temporal, distributing the demand to create regular flows of visitors, who can be received in an optimum way. Here the marketing can help both from the programming and promotion of the activities as well as for ensuring that the image that we give is not one that enables the attraction of customers in the high season (even though Barcelona has tourism which is quite spread throughout the year).

**Indicator: Rate of overcrowding of the tourism in the destination**



# 05 Compensating the negative impacts caused by tourism

**Goal: To increase the local expenditure of the visitors**

Seeking ways for the tourists to spend more, and that the money spent affects the destination instead of ending up in other places, helping a destination to offset the unavoidable negative impacts of tourism. It is necessary to calculate how the visitor spending affects the destination, and not just how much they spend.

Part of the money that the tourists spend doesn't benefit the destination, when the products are imported, the labor force is not local, or when the establishments are owned by entities that pay taxes in other places (or have tax exemptions).

The money that has a local effect has a positive indirect economic impact, because the local purchases create more jobs, and the purchasing of more local materials. This money has a third level of positive impact, which is the spending in the local

economy done by people working directly or indirectly in tourism.

The destinations should adjust their marketing to develop products and attract markets that have a greater economic impact at all three levels, and not only the first, which could be misleading. Countries already have satellite accounts of tourism that provide them with figures of these types at a national level, but in general don't collect figures by segment and by destinations, in a format that allows them to use them for decision-making.

In the case of a destination such as Barcelona, it can seem difficult to work along these lines, given that its economy is highly globalised. However, when it comes to tourism and sustainability it is essential to make an effort to prioritize the local benefits.

**Indicator: Visitor expenditure that affects the destination**

# 06 **Serving the destination, not the entities**

**Goal: Complementing, not replacing, the private sector**

The evaluation of the success of a promotion/marketing institution of a mature destination, DMO, either public, private or mixed, should be for the added value that it contributes to the destination thanks to its actions, and not due to the total revenues or expenditure generated (a theme more related to the governance and mechanism of financing designed). Its actions should therefore be aimed at the capacity of this institution to serve the needs of the destination. And that translated into its capacity to implement the marketing that meets the guidelines and/or the strategic plan that the destination has.

The governance and the system of funding of the DMO should influence, but the other way round, its authentic mission. The

function of the DMO is to promote the destination and commercialize the products and services that respond to the sustainable development goals of the city, and the private sector in itself is unable to do so without help. A DMO (be it public or mixed) in a mature destination shouldn't commercialise products/services that "per se" already are well sold, and in which the entity is direct competition of the private sector in itself.

A change of measurement, a change in the decision-making process will therefore be fundamental. This could require a redefinition of the system of funding (and predictably of the architecture of the tourist management/promotion of the destination) so that it enables, and doesn't impede, the authentic mission of a DMO.

**Indicator: Added value that shouldn't be able to be achieved by the private sector alone**

# 07

## Serving the needs of the destination

Goal: To work with the companies that make a destination more sustainable

The priority of the public sector (and all the entities which are involved) should be to work with the companies that help most in the sustainable development of the city. That means giving priority to working with companies that most need help, understood to be:

- In the process of creation or small
- With implicitly or explicitly sustainable products
- Managed by women
- Located in the poorest areas of the city
- Which contract staff with difficulties of labour insertion
- Far from the main tourist circuits/areas
- ...

The priority is to work with the organisations of the city that can benefit most from tourism so as to make the city

more sustainable, and those that require more help and that are unable, for example, to access the market alone, and not with the large companies that already have easier access to the market.

In this way, the public sector becomes an "incubator" of entrepreneurial projects, in collaboration with entities, which need the know-how and the support of the public sector to launch new products in the market with sustainability criteria. The incubator format guarantees a rotation of available products and services which allow a certain novelty of the offer to be maintained, and at the same time, allow the collaborating organizations to undergo a learning process until they grow and are able to fend for themselves. What needs to be avoided is the fact of creating a dependence on companies of a certain type, from the public sector, and, mainly, of large companies.

Indicator: Percentage of companies in need of help within the partnership programmes of the DMO

## Section 2. Bases of a more persuasive marketing and communication of sustainability

Now that the criteria are clear, it is necessary to look at the main tools available to us so that our marketing and communication efforts have greater chances of success. Because we regularly see results which don't slow down the campaigns that communicate the fact that a

destination or a product/service is sustainable, or when they request that visitors and residents change their behavior so as to contribute to the sustainability. Here are some examples that are applicable to tourism. The format is as follows:

<b>DEPENDING IN THIS MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION GOAL...</b>	<b>... WE WILL UNDERTAKE THESE ACTIONS SO AS TO BE MORE PERSUASIVE</b>
<b>8-To avoid the perception of "make-up" in the sustainability actions.</b>	Taking into account the needs of the interest groups and analyse the "reputational risk" of the communication of sustainability actions
<b>9-To lead the consumption of sustainable products from the public sector</b>	Introducing criteria of sustainable procurement for the chain of providers of all the services of the public and mixed entities in relation to the tourism of the destination
<b>10-To redefine the sustainable product according to the market needs</b>	Once we have a base that guarantees the fulfilment of basic criteria by the providers, it is necessary to think how to communicate taking into account the customer needs
<b>11-To communicate the benefits for the customers of more sustainable products</b>	Changing the reasoning of why we communicate sustainability: the emphasis is on communicating first the benefit for the customer, and only if necessary, communicating the characteristics of the sustainability of the product that contributes this benefit.
<b>12-To communicate the quality of the experience that results from the sustainable product</b>	Changing the vocabulary and tone of the messages highlighting the emotional elements of the sustainable product, and avoiding abstract concepts of sustainability or technical information difficult to understand.
<b>13-To improve the credibility of the explicit messages</b>	For business tourism, using international standards with credibility for the customer. For leisure tourism, communicating messages of experience. In both markets, providing evidence of the impact of the action.
<b>14-To segment the markets according to the emotional significance of the sustainability</b>	Experimenting with specific campaigns and messages for specific markets and contexts, so as to evaluate the impact they have on the change of behavior.

# 08 To avoid the perception of "make-up" in the sustainability actions

There is a lot of skepticism regarding the messages of sustainability, and rightly so, given that there have been many examples of companies and tourist destinations that have communicated actions of sustainability in a partial and interested way (1, 2), a concept called "greenwashing". No destination (nor any company) should therefore create a storytelling of being sustainable based on limited actions, when, at the same time, there are more important impacts that they are not tackling. This risk of criticism, often done by NGOs, is highly probable for destinations that, for example, don't take into account the impact of transport.

Before beginning a process of sustainability, and before communicating it, it is necessary to take into account the needs of the interest groups. For example, it should be mentioned that there is evidence that in the sector of cruises, this hasn't happened as often as it should (3).

It should also be highlighted that in the process of documentary presentation Corporate Social Responsibility in the

"Global Reporting Initiative", it is a key requirement to carry out a "materiality analysis". This means that all the multinationals in tourism, as in other sectors, should design their programmes of sustainability based on what their interest groups expect of them, and not simply to do (and communicate) what has already been done. This has repercussions for destinations that want to work together with companies to design joint CSR programmes.

Given that there are many international experiences in sustainability, we need to avoid, therefore, the reputational risks of doing campaigns or actions that have a low impact. If we want to explicitly communicate messages of sustainability, they need to be significant. Trying to communicate that a destination is sustainable because, for example, less than 5% of its accommodation, restaurants and attractions are certified as such has a high risk, and more so when there are other destinations with a considerably higher percentage.

**Action:** To take into account the needs of the interest group and to analyze the reputational risk of the communication of actions of sustainability.

# 09 To lead the consumption of sustainable products from the public sector

The main change in the demand for sustainability lies in the need to be accountable for the impact by intermediaries and multinational companies. We cannot expect it to be the tourists who trigger actions by the businesses or the public sector of a destination. Given that the process of change is slow, we first need to take a look at the public sector as a driver of the demand for sustainability.

The governance of the public sector should not only be noted in the influence on others to change their behavior, but also accepting that the public sector is one of the most important purchasers of services of trade fairs and congresses, hotel and catering services and restaurants. One of the best ways for the public sector to create a chain of changes in the supply is to be the agent that demands standards of sustainability from among its providers. A change of this type creates confidence in the process.

This represents a change in the role of the public sector, that has often been seen as a driver of the supply (creating systems and providing incentives), while in this case we propose an intervention from the demand

side. This type of behavior has the potential of making the medium and large-sized companies, who are often the providers of the public sector that organize themselves so as to fulfil the sustainability standards required. This then leads to the medium and large-sized companies of tourism, restaurants and the management of events, to demand standards of sustainability from their own suppliers and providers.

A government can calculate the value of its purchases in services of tourism, transport, restaurants, catering, events, etc., and use this purchasing power to create changes. It is possible to start with the public entities that manage tourism in the destination, and this can serve as an example for other public entities.

It should be taken into account that it is more feasible to use standards of sustainability of environmental aspects and not social ones, because the international trade agreements prohibit placing barriers to commerce based on criteria of local purchasing or the creation of local jobs (4). To be able to implement it, it is necessary to be well advised legally.

**Action:** To introduce criteria of sustainable procurement for the supply chain of all the services of the entities of public and mixed management in relation to tourism in the destination.

# 010

## To redefine the sustainable product according to the market needs.

The criteria of sustainability that are used, for example, by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), and all the eco-labels that are validated by them, serve to have a measure of which products and services are sustainable and which are not. But the criteria are often defined without taking into account the market needs.

The agency that promotes a destination has to think in how to use these criteria as a base, and see which characteristics these products have that can be used as a Unique Selling Proposition. If possible sustainable products should be designed thinking about the customer - User Centred Sustainable Design (5) and in how the customer will be able to enjoy better the experience that we offer them.

That means that we have to go further than having lists of products certified by criteria such as those of GSTC, Biosphere or ETIS. It's true that we need to have a justification of why a series or products/services are sustainable, but in terms of offering gratifying customer

experiences, the list in itself doesn't help us to sell.

In many cases we find that there are experiences that we can offer to a destination that would intuitively be sustainable, but that for a variety of very valid reasons, we won't be able to certify. Hotels in outlying neighborhoods that promote activities and restaurants within the same neighborhood will improve the economic impact, companies that hire staff with disabilities will improve the social impact, and companies that provide offers to customers who come by train will improve the environmental impact, to give a few examples.

It's often here that we will find the most creative options that can have a more emotional value for the customer. They will also represent opportunities so that other companies also learn, and it will be necessary for the promotion entities to be flexible enough to assess these options. Overall, the promotion entities of the destination find ways of highlighting these actions.

**Action:** Once we have a base that guarantees that the providers fulfil basic criteria, we need to think how to design experiences taking into account the customer needs.

# 011

## To communicate the benefits for the customers of more sustainable products.

There are many surveys that state what percentage of customers are interested in sustainability, but there is also a lot of evidence that even though the intention is good, the customers take purchasing decisions based on the benefits of the product for their experience, and not necessarily for "altruistic" reasons (6). The market segment for travellers aiming to buy tourism products because they are sustainable is small, but the market segment interested in the personal benefits to be gained from a more sustainable product is much higher (7).

It is more realistic to influence the purchasing process when we communicate what the benefits are for the customer of buying a sustainable product. All customers, whether they are predisposed to be more sustainable or not, prefer messages in which it is very clear who benefits from a sustainable action. If the sacrifice that we demand of the customer is low, it is possible to present the benefits for the destination. If the sacrifice is high, such as requiring a change of behavior, we

have to find a way in which there is an explicit benefit for the customer (8-10).

When there are benefits for the customer, it is important to make these benefits tangible with a persuasive communication. Saying that a product is sustainable leads to few results, but saying what the customer wins with this product (without necessarily saying it is sustainable), is more successful (11).

In an analysis of more than 1,800 messages of sustainability carried out in 2014, we found that only 21% explained the benefits to the customer, and the customers only drew a positive experience from 6% of the cases (12). Therefore there is still a lot of potential as a result of a better communication.

We therefore propose a change of reasoning in the communication of sustainability: we don't communicate that a product is sustainable just because it is, but because there is some benefit to be taken from it and that the customers value.

**Action: To change the reasoning of why we communicate sustainability: the emphasis is to first communicate the benefit to the customer, and only if necessary, communicate the characteristics of the product that provides us with this benefit.**



# 012

## To communicate the quality of the experience that results from the sustainable product.

As a consequence of the previous points, we have found that it is better to sell products and experiences which are sustainable without mentioning the word sustainability (13, 14). The word sustainability is not useful for communicating to the leisure customers, because they don't understand it, given that it is a very abstract word, which means very different things depending on the product we are talking about.

The products we are talking about are only "relatively sustainable", given that there is always something more we could do, and, therefore, we could enter into the dilemma that when we use the word sustainability we often receive criticisms from people who think it is not enough. While there are other products that are partially sustainable but deserve to be promoted for other value that they contribute to the destination.

Furthermore, not everyone sees sustainability as something positive. The word 'quality' is also abstract and means many different things, but it has the advantage that all the customers understand it as a positive factor. Sustainability is often understood as an excuse for providing less service (heating, towels, quantity of food, etc.) (15).

The advantage of communicating the technical aspects of sustainability less is that the company owners feel more comfortable with this communication because it is less risky, by not explicitly saying that the product is sustainable (16). These are some examples of the language we can use (12):

- Attractive language, not just listing facts (11);
- Aspects of normality ("reuse the towels as you do at home" is more successful than "reuse the towels to save planet earth");
- Personal and social norms (explaining how it is part of how you would do it, or how other people already do so (17));
- An active tone, and not passive;
- Possibilities of experiencing the sustainable product, instead of speaking about things that happen in the background;
- Incentives for buying the sustainable product;
- Making it easy to be more sustainable, for example, making it a standard option (a menu with less meat and more local vegetables, for example).

**Action:** Change the vocabulary and tone of the messages, highlighting the emotional elements of the sustainable product, and avoiding concepts of abstract sustainability or technical information which is difficult to understand.

# 013

## To improve the credibility of the explicit messages.

There are cases in which it is convenient for us to explicitly communicate that a product is sustainable. For the market of tourism of business and congresses in particular, criteria of sustainability are being incorporated more and more in the purchasing of these services, because the multinationals have to do corporate social reporting accounting for their carbon footprint (18).

International standards have been created to report on the carbon through the "Greenhouse Gas Protocol" that provides us with guidelines to follow. Messages should be communicated that have authority, using ecolabels that are recognized and valued by the customers. The analysis of the ecolabels for the compensation of the carbon footprint for transport has little relevance nowadays, and it is necessary to find more persuasive ways of communicating it (19). Therefore, for the markets of leisure, that don't know these standards, it's possible to work with messages endorsed by people or institutions with credibility, so as to be more convincing (20).

However, the labels have a limited impact when they are the unique differentiating characteristic of the product (21), but,

**Action:** For business tourism, use international standards with credibility for the customers. For leisure tourism, communicate messages of experience. In both markets, provide evidence of the impact of the action.

nevertheless, we can use them to give authority to the emotional and experiential messages that we want to communicate to the customers. In this way, we can work on the two levels.

Before deciding to explicitly communicate an action or to carry out a sustainability campaign, it is necessary to analyze if it is congruent with the type of experience or service we are offering the target group (22). Messages are more credible when the customer can experience what has been done (23, 24) and when the customer can be part of the experience of doing so (25).

Finally, to gain credibility, it is necessary that we explain what the impact is of the action or change of behavior desired (26), and it will therefore be necessary to measure these impacts. In fact this almost never happens in tourism (27), but we do have models to follow. If we think about the Marathon of TV3 (an annual television events to raise money for specific illnesses), we can see that a large part of the credibility of the programme depends on how they communicate the benefits of the money raised in previous years. We therefore need more responsibility / accountability.

# 014 To segment the markets according to the emotional significance of the sustainability.

It should be understood what sustainability means for each market, because the significance of the same product or experience can vary in each segment / market, and it is necessary to think how to sell in each one. For certain markets, the sustainability is bought due to the fact of being an exclusive product, while in other markets it will only be bought if it's seen to be the most normal thing to do.

It will be necessary to know how we can use the norms and personal and social values so that the customers find that the behaviour we are asking of them, and the product we are offering them, are normal and the most adequate for them (28). For example, if we promote the purchasing of farm-laid eggs of 0Km to a family, we do so according to the experience of seeing where they come from, while communications to an elderly couple will be done with messages that appeal to nostalgia.

For tourists who repeat a visit to the city, messages of sustainability can be used that link their loyalty with the destination. Messages that give them a certain "status"

**Action: To experiment with specific campaigns and messages for specific markets and contexts, so as to evaluate the impact they have on the change of behavior.**

in comparison with those who visit the destination for the first time. For tourists who visit us for the first time, the messages should be made so that they understand that behaving in a sustainable way is what is expected of them and that the majority of people already do so.

Normally, the messages of sustainability in tourism are simply descriptive of the characteristics of the product, without being segmented by the customer needs or their knowledge of the destination. We propose changing this, by designing specific messages for a certain context and to achieve a certain behavior.

We are aware that this change is difficult for destinations, that have the custom of translating information about the resources they have in different languages, without adapting the contents to the needs of the different markets, either by nationalities or by other variables. It will be necessary to begin with specific situations where there is a certain homogeneity of expectations and behaviors.

## Section 3. Sustainability applied to the marketing plan

The criteria and bases we have described beforehand have consequences, in the strategy and the specific actions of marketing of the destination. Direct implications, therefore, in the way in which a destination such as Barcelona should be represented by its DMO, the promotion to do and the products, services and experiences that it decides to prioritize, that we have analyzed above (29).

In mature destinations the DMO normally does, following very guidelines, the

function of Marketing and Management, and not only information, promotion and sales. This should also include taking risks in the development of concepts and products that private companies can't do on their own (particularly SMEs). Doing the marketing of a destination that aspires to be sustainable and responsible can imply rethinking the governance, the financing and the functions of the DMO so as to be able to efficiently fulfill the above-mentioned aspirations.

THE FUNCTIONS OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION...	... CHANGE IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS, AS THE RESULT OF INTRODUCING CRITERIA AND BASES OF SUSTAINABLE MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION
<b>15-More complete marketing goals of the DMO</b>	Redefining the goals of the DMO according to the contribution of tourism to the sustainability of the destination
<b>16-A segmentation of markets according to the total value of the visitors</b>	Calculation of the rate of sustainability by market segment, awareness of its added value, segmentation according to this value, and proposal of specific marketing actions according to its positioning
<b>17-A range of possibilities of positioning</b>	To think how we position the significance of the sustainability of the destination for each market segment
<b>18-Investment in future products</b>	Creation of products for <i>deseasonalising</i> , geographically diversifying, increasing the stay, promoting loyalty, and including the day visitor and resident
<b>19-Managing the demand through prices</b>	Using the prices and taxes of the services to influence the demand of the services available as a whole
<b>20-Communication and distribution that benefit the destination</b>	Promoting the services and resources that benefit the destination most, and influence communication and distribution channels to do the same

# 015

## More complete marketing goals of the DMO.

The sustainability programmes of the majority of DMOs are tangential to the main functions for attracting tourists. It is often not clear what it is aimed to achieve as a result of communicating to the tourist or to the resident that a destination is working on becoming more sustainable, they have different contradictory goals, or use messages of sustainability to justify that they are doing something. If sustainability is a central value of the destination, it is necessary to rethink the main goals of the DMO. In the report prepared by the Catalan Tourist Agency, to provide the companies from the private sector with the capacity for sustainability marketing, there are goals that are adaptable to the marketing of destinations by the public sector. (30):

1. **Making the customers feel good.**

Often the sustainability campaigns are for the tourists, residents and businesspeople to have the feeling that they are doing something. To a certain extent this is a valid goal, if the action in itself is effective (we can, for example communicate to the tourist or resident actions that are taking place in the background, that are not visible, but help to improve the experience – for example, all the food of a congress is ecological and from OKM). Following this goal, we don't aim to change the behaviour, it is simply a way of improving the satisfaction of the different interested parts.

2. **Awareness-building and achieving changes in behavior.**

It is necessary, however, for the majority of the campaigns to go further. People value more things with which we have an emotional relation. We can create empathy and respect for a tourist destination improving the visitor satisfaction by means of creating a storytelling of the values of the destination, which we share with the visitors, provided it is clearly believable.

3. **Offering new products.**

You need to have a programme of development of original activities and attractions, which are authentic and with added value, which differentiate a destination. The emphasis can be on activities of interest both to the residents and the visitors, where there is more chance to interact, and where the residents feel themselves to be beneficiaries of the services of the DMO. The activities should provide opportunities to the visitor to come off-season, to repeat, and to feel empathy with the destination.

4. **Attracting different markets.**

We can use the credential of “sustainability” to attract events, conferences and company meetings. We can use the benefits of the experience taken from a sustainable product to attract leisure markets.

**Action: Redefining the goals of the DMO according to the contribution of tourism to the sustainability of the destination.**

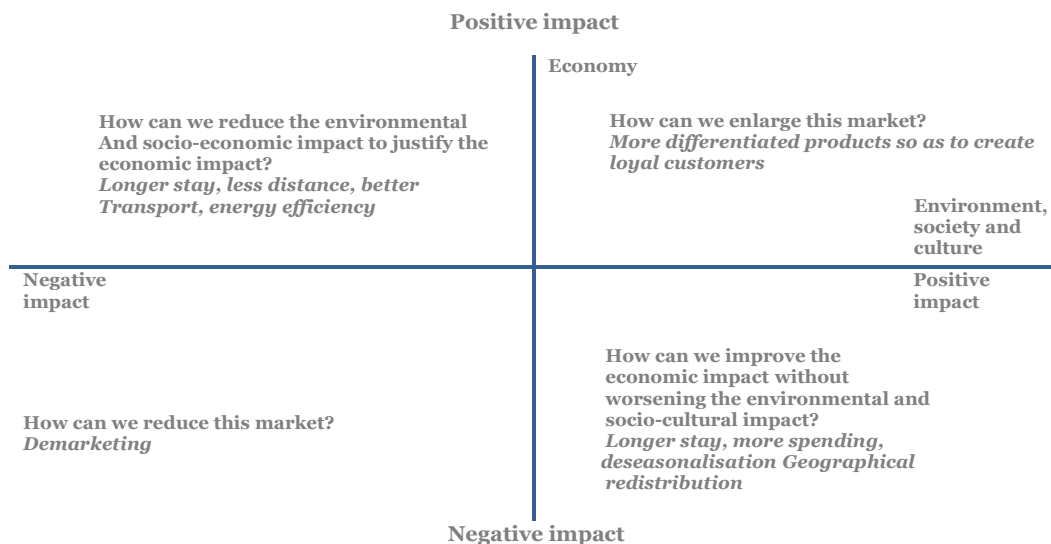
# 016 A segmentation of markets according to the total value of the visitors.

A marketing plan will need data so as to analyze the total value of each market. Apart from using data about the impact that this market has at an economic level (current and potential), which is currently done, it is necessary to take into account the social and environmental impact of each market.

It will be necessary to calculate the rate of sustainability of each market, based on the data that we will represent graphically in the matrix. In one axis, a variable will be represented that combines data about the value of this market for the destination (volume of customers, daily spending, level of satisfaction). In the other axis, the cost will be represented that the destination "pays" for using this market: social and

cultural cost (conflict with the residents, etc.), environmental cost (of arriving to the destination, of enjoying the stay, etc.). It will be necessary to compare the results of this segmentation with the decisions taken currently in the destination. Within what is viable, we will take decisions about marketing actions for each of the markets depending in which of the four squares they are found.

It will be necessary to propose specific marketing actions so that each market segment is a little more sustainable, understanding their needs as a consumer, to find the changes we can make to the products that are more acceptable to this market segment.



**Action:** Calculation of the rate of sustainability by market segment, awareness of its added value, segmentation according to this value, and proposal of specific marketing actions according to its positioning.

# 017

## A range of possibilities of positioning.

Each destination wants to develop a unique storytelling of its identity. A destination with ambitions to be sustainable often tries to use it as part of its positioning. Sustainability provides us with contents to explain the values and experiences with emotional storytelling that creates connections that allow us to improve the visitor experience, given that we can propose more unique activities to them. More sustainable products are often more authentic and autochthonous, and we can therefore use them to differentiate a destination and highlight its unique character.

Instead of using just one message (“our destination is making an effort to become sustainable”), we will break down this more generic value according to what it means for the experience of the customer in a hedonistic use of sustainability (31). It will be necessary to create a series of storytelling that complement each other, and that contribute to the image that the destination want to give of itself, creating, at the same time, a competitive edge. Here we have some examples that can work for specific markets and products, which are not mutually exclusive:

- *Enjoyment*: I will have a better experience because I consume sustainable products and visit sustainable places.
- *Cultural Immersion*. I will get to know the real destination thanks to sustainable experiences.
- *Better service*. I will be welcomed better by my hosts because they are concerned with the wellbeing of the destination.
- *Trust*. I can trust that the services I am offered are of quality because my host has similar values to mine.
- *Nostalgia*. I am enjoying the destination as I did so in the past (for example eating the food/cooking of the 'grandmother', etc.).
- *Modernity*. The services that I am buying are up-to-date and well cared for, with the latest luxuries (for example in accommodation).
- *Status*. Few people can have access to a unique experience like this - I am special (for example, to activities, festivities/parties, etc.).
- *With a clear conscience*. How I can enjoy my trip knowing it has a positive impact (for example on business trips/MICE).

**Action:** To think how we position the significance of the sustainability of the destination for each market segment.

# 018

## Investment in future products

The DMOs have to play a more active role in the creation and coordination of products so as to achieve the sustainability goals. Their work should not be limited to information, promotion and sales. The success of the destination nowadays is the result of the promotion, but the future success depends on the innovation in sustainable products. The DMO has to have a more ambitious horizon than the businessman, and to therefore be an incubator of new ideas, sharing the risk, or assuming it totally if necessary.

A way of tackling the issue of sustainable innovation is by analyzing how the actions that a DMO does 1) contribute to the sustainability, and 2) are innovative (from more to less risk):

**New products in the world.** The DMO is creating a sustainable product which isn't known anywhere yet, and for which a segment/market has to be identified.

**New product lines.** The DMO is adopting innovative products, and with sustainability criteria, that have seen that competing destinations have recently introduced, generally by means of incentives for the private sector to carry out investments, or in the management itself of infrastructure and creation of events, or the creation of new brands and seals, among others.

**Additions to the existing product lines.** The DMO boosts and coordinates the diversification of the supply of accommodation, of attractions and events and of transport between others, so as to fulfil the goals to benefit the destination

from the sustainable point of view. It can be done vertically for a location you want to enable for tourism, transversally by product line, temporarily creating low season offers, by market, creating packages of complementary services for a segment, etc.

**Improvements and revisions of existing products.** The DMO is revising quality criteria of touristic services so as to incorporate elements of sustainability. For example, requesting that hotels of 3,4 and 5 stars get a certification of sustainability, that the restaurants make compost, or that the tourist attractions have infrastructure and signage adapted for the disabled, are just a few examples.

**Repositioning.** The DMO has identified new markets for already existing products, and is improving their visibility. It often happens with products that already exist in the destination for the residents, which highlight the value for the international markets; but it should also be the other way round.

**Reduction of costs.** Creation of new products that provide a similar performance at a lower cost. The economy of the shared value has followed this model, also like companies that have removed services from their catalogue that the customers didn't value (hotels reducing or outsourcing services, etc.), or the intensive use of online distribution channels. Given that this line of innovation continues growing, the DMOs have to find ways of working together.

**Action:** Creation of products for *deseasonalising*, geographically diversifying, increasing the stay, promoting loyalty, and including the day visitor and resident.



# 019

## Managing the demand through prices.

Price is often the most neglected variable in the marketing mix. It is the variable that is least understood, of critical importance in many cases, and the easiest to copy for the competitors (in the short term). We propose using techniques of yield management, which are well known to marketing professionals, so as to achieve a more sustainable management of the destination.

A myth should be tackled: “sustainable products should be cheaper”. Quite the opposite, we want to promote forms of sustainability that aim to provide more quality and added value to the customer, and this should be paid for. Sustainability should help us increase the spending of the customer, not only because we have offered more products (and sustainable products are often more costly), but also because we can increase the prices by making these products more accessible and attractive.

It's true that the DMOs have little or no control in the pricing of the services they promote. Even so, we cannot rule out their influence in working with the interest groups involved so as to use the prices and taxes (provided they are legally possible) to manage the demand. Here we have some examples of prices (the same principle can be applied to taxes in the destination):

- **Identification of markets.** To receive different payments from different markets, depending on where they buy from. A destination should be paid more for the essential services (admission to the attractions that are overcrowded), to the customers who don't spend on additional services (customers in groups or package tourists, excursionists or cruise ship passengers). The main attractions should provide a better service to customers who spend more in the destination.
- **Moment of purchasing.** Charge more for tickets at peak times.
- **Purchasing point.** Charge more at the ticket office than online.
- **Volume of purchase.** Only charge less to groups during off-peak season or on resources that are not saturated, but not for the icons of the destination, which should be protected.
- **Packets of tickets.** Incentives (preferential entry to touristic icons, for example) to the markets that buy a pack that provides greater benefits to the destination. The destinations can create packs of preferential services for customers who are in specific types of accommodation, or customers who stay more than a certain number of nights, for example.
- **Loyalty.** Loyalty systems, giving additional benefits to the customers who return to the destination.

**Action:** Using the prices and taxes of the services to influence the demand of the services available as a whole.

# 020

## Communication and distribution that benefit the destination.

It will be necessary to define different messages for the different channels of communication, not only because the channels are aimed at different audiences, but also because each channel has a specific and different use. Once the different messages have been established, we have to plan how to adapt them to the different channels. It is necessary to analyze how the different channels have different potentials so as to change the behavior of the visitors and the residents.

It is necessary to bear in mind that many direct messages to users, be they either visitors or residents, are not persuasive because direct communication is seen like advertising, and therefore of little credibility. The entities involved in a destination that want to be more sustainable should search for ways of influencing third parties so as to present the storytelling we want to be identified with. It is therefore necessary to make a more important effort in terms of b2b (actions aimed at other agents, as is habitual in Barcelona) and not in b2c (actions aimed directly at the visitor/resident).

A realistic marketing of what can be expected from the destination helps us to manage the expectations. Using realistic photography and text that represent the reality of the destination, instead of

idealizing it, helps the customers to be more satisfied with what they find. The DOM can be more successful by facilitating the fact that normal tourists or bloggers share unique experiences (when they are implicitly sustainable) and not doing direct marketing or promotion actions.

The DMO should orient its promotion so as to take into account the new goals of benefitting the destination. Therefore the DMO shouldn't promote what sells itself, which the private sector can do, but the priority is to promote the services and resources which benefit the destination most, or the services of the companies that don't have access to the markets themselves (small companies and start-ups).

The DMO has a series of tools, such as, for example, to do specific campaigns for lines of production that are more sustainable; to establish rigorous criteria of sustainability (although scalable in time) for product clubs or programmes; more ambitious criteria for companies with partnerships of greater visibility, among others.

The DMO should do *demarketing* actions (that discourage or at least don't encourage, their visit) for the overcrowded icons and resources, not using it in their own promotion, and encouraging the private sector to do the same.

**Action: Promoting the services and resources that benefit the destination most, and influence communication and distribution channels to do the same.**

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