



Destination image and the renewal of mature tourist destinations

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RENOVESTUR Project, 2008-2011

/'Renewal of mature tourist destinations'

Theoretical underpinning: a critique of the deterministic nature of the TALC model

- ▣ **Dialectic interplay between external and internal factors underlies the uneven evolution of tourists destinations**
- ▣ **Tourist destinations are able to adapt to circumstances and can influence their future evolution**

RENOVESTUR/ Benidorm's challenges

- ▣ Changes in tour operator processes e.g. online booking, dynamic packaging...
- ▣ Limited business profit margins
- ▣ Dependence on the British and Spanish market segments
- ▣ Changes in consumer preferences and behaviour patterns
- ▣ Negative image of a mass tourism destination

Renewal strategies in Benidorm, Spain

/Ivars et al. 2013

- ▣ **Tourism and urban regeneration**
 - ▣ **Modernisation of hotel accommodation**
 - ▣ **Urban renovation**
- ▣ **Product diversification**
 - ▣ **Development of new tourism products**
- ▣ **Public-private innovative management structure**
 - ▣ **Benidorm Tourism Foundation**

EEG perspectives and the evolution of Benidorm, some thoughts...

- **Path dependence, mutation and continuous adaptability** /Martin 2009 in Brouder and Eriksson 2013
 - Hotel industry was able to renovate due to public incentives and local planning legislation
 - Development of differentiated products for different types of consumers
- **Path-creation and the active role of local or regional development actors: human agency** /Saarine and Kask, 2008; Branwell and Cox 2009; McGill 2012; Ma and Hassink 2013
 - ‘Know-how’: key role of local entrepreneurs in maintaining competitiveness of Benidorm



Exploring the tourist image of Benidorm, Spain

- **Aim: to explore the perceived image of Benidorm held by British TOs and tourists**
- **Qualitative approach:**
 - **In depth interviews with Area Managers of UK-based travel intermediaries**
 - **Content analysis of British tourists post-visit online feedback**

Perceptions held by UK travel intermediaries

□ Strengths of Benidorm:

- Excellent climate
- High air connectivity
- Good value for money
- Good quality tourism infrastructure and leisure services
- Strong brand image within the British market



Destination image: strengths

/In-depth interviews with UK TOs

- *“Benidorm really caters for the needs of Brits (...) is really in tune with what the British want”*
- *“Home from home’ holidays, Britishness of the destination (“big British flavour”)”*
- *“Benidorm has something foreveryone*
- *“There is a huge number of repeat visitors that are very satisfied with what Benidorm has to offer”*

Weaknesses / In-depth interviews with UK TOs

- *Lack of differentiation*
- *Strong brand image (for limited-budget Brits)*

“Benidorm is just bucket and spade, not differentiation whatsoever”

“(…) it is a weakness to have such a strong brand image within the British market of being a very British oriented resort for the working man who wants a ‘home from home’ type of holiday... The difficulty will be to get people to open the brochure in the Benidorm page in the first place!”

Perceived image among British tourists

Cognitive characteristics

Common

- Hot and sunny
- Good and clean sandy beaches
- Low prices
- Very accessible
- Nightlife and entertainment
- Theme parks

- Good climate
- Beautiful sandy beaches
- Winter sun
- Beach holidays
- Good value for money
- Personal safety

Attributes

- Lively
- High rise
- Clean
- Noisy
- Crowded
- Safe
- Tacky

Holistic image

- Lively and fun
- Very British
- Open 24/7 all year around
- 'Home from home' holidays

Affective characteristics

Unique

Some conclusions...

- ▣ **A paradox: Benidorm's strong brand image is also its main weakness**
- ▣ **Despite the public/private efforts Benidorm still advertised mostly as a 'sun and sea destination with a British flavour'**
- ▣ **Strategic marketing efforts are needed to revitalise the city's tourist image and attract new market segments**



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Acknowledgments:

The RENOVESTUR Project was funded by the Plan Nacional I+D+I 2008-2011, Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation.