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The Role of Management Organizations and Local Governments in Destination Marketing: The Case of Turkey Tourism Promotion and Development Agency (TGA)

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In an increasingly global and competitive tourist market, destination marketing is now recognized as a pillar of tourism destinations' future growth and sustainability (UNWTO, 2022). Destination marketing activities are essential for the development of the tourism industry. Destinations are the most critical communities that host touristic products and experiences. Considering the recent developments in the world economy and the COVID-19 pandemic, traveler expectations have significantly changed. As in many other industries, the changing trends of tourism demand make tourism consumers more dynamic and experienced. Therefore, the importance of destination management organizations has evolved and adapted to better cater to the tourists' sophisticated demands and offer solutions.

Destination management organizations (DMOs) play an essential role in the management of destination networks and in promoting cooperation between destination stakeholders. It is becoming increasingly accepted that the role of DMOs includes proper marketing and other management activities (Beritelli et al., 2015). DMOs act as a bridge between the public sector responsible for tourism marketing, local governments, and private sector businesses that provide tourism services (McCamley et al., 2012). One of the main focuses of DMOs is to promote the link between destinations' resources and tourist needs. Its main objectives are to improve the destination image, boost industry earnings, prevent over tourism, and provide long-term financial support. Wang (2011) outlined eight roles of DMOs. These roles are providing information, building a brand, being a unifier, connecting with the industry, organizing destination marketing campaigns, finding financing for mass marketing activities, and providing management with the right team. DMOs are now more than ever responsible with managing stakeholders' relationships and engaging them in destinations through feedback on various platforms that will lead to better planning and decision-making (Gretzel, 2021).

Destination management consists of the planned and systematic management of all elements that make up a tourism destination. For better management of the destination, this sometimes takes a strategic approach to link disparate stakeholders. Destination management requires a coalition of many organizations working towards a common goal that ensures the success of the tourism destination's competitiveness and sustainability. The role of the destination management organization includes managing activities under a coherent strategy towards this common goal. Although DMOs typically undertake marketing activities, their duties vary in becoming a strategic leader in destination development. This is a vital factor for success in any tourism destination. Many destinations now have DMOs to lead. DMOs have started to move away from a traditional marketing focus and adopting a leading institution role with a broader

authority that includes strategic planning, coordination, and management of activities; all these efforts within an adequate communication structure with the unification of different stakeholders operating in the destination under a common goal. Destinations are increasingly planning to create a DMO as the leading organizational entity.

Turkey Tourism Promotion and Development Agency (TGA) is a successful example of destination management. Founded on 15 July 2019 (TGA), it aims to present Turkey as a brand and a popular destination in both domestic and international tourism markets. To discover, develop and promote tangible and intangible natural, cultural, biological, and manufactured heritage assets; It works to increase the tourism capacity of Turkey, increase the rate of tourism investments in the country's economy, and increase the quality of service through short, medium, and long-term communication and marketing activities. In line with the tourism strategies and policies determined by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey, TGA serves Turkey's tourism goals, promotes, and markets the current tourism opportunities worldwide, discovers, develops, and carries out all promotional, marketing and communication activities. In addition, TGA is also heavily involved in unmasking and developing untapped potential tourism areas.

TGA strengthens its international connections as a member of UNWTO. The "Safe Tourism Certification Program," one of the first examples in the world, was prepared under the leadership of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, with the contributions of the Ministries of Health, Transport, Interior, and Foreign Affairs, and with the cooperation of all industry stakeholders. The "Safe Tourism Certification" is granted through accredited bodies by inspecting accommodation, catering facilities, tour, and transfer vehicles, congress and art facilities, theme parks, mechanical lines, and sea tourism at international standards within the framework of different criteria, hygiene and health inspection and conformity assessment. Detailed reports are prepared followed by audited inspection to the to establish if services are provided following the criteria.

Reaching a record number of visitors with the Safe Tourism Certificate despite the COVID-19 conditions last year, Turkey signed a cooperation agreement with the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, the top accreditation institution of sustainability standards. Thus, for the first time in sustainable tourism, Turkey and GSTC agreed with the government to develop a national program and set an example to the world. Turkey's tourism industry will be restructured with the three-year protocol signed with GSTC, which sets the most widespread and highest standards in sustainable tourism. In the first stage of the agreement, which Turkey has signed with the government by taking the sustainability-oriented approach seriously, the national program criteria will be determined, and the audit firms will be subjected to the training process. The first phase of the program, which is planned to be completed by 2030, is in 2023; the second phase will be carried out gradually in 2025. By 2030, all international standards will be completed.

Turkey's global tourism information platform, GoTurkiye.com, has started its activities with its new design. With its modern design and state-of-the-art infrastructure, the platform will provide Turkey with a competitive advantage. Moreover, the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism designed with the latest technology and design trends, and the new platform aims to provide a superior user experience. The platform will offer content suitable for each user's profile and digital consumption habits to make the most of the extensive content related to Turkey. The new GoTurkiye platform will promote all tourist attractions in Turkey from an experience-oriented perspective. For this purpose, GoTurkiye.com creates content that includes each province's cultural and touristic values separately for the platform in coordination with

local governments and non-governmental organizations in 81 provinces. TGA has established a good communication language by cooperating with local governments in sustainable tourism, cultural heritage, creative tourism, cultural activities and festivals, alternative tourism, and gastronomy.

Collaboration between local governments and DMOs is essential for destinations to be promoted correctly and become a successful brand. As in the TGA example, marketing is effective when all the artistic and cultural features of a destination are appropriately introduced. Furthermore, each region can generate industrial gains by creating professional institutions that market its values. Therefore, the need to create a management organization that oversees the destination and ensures tourist satisfaction is vital. A DMO should be an institution that maintains critical market information, establishes a total management system, coordinates the flow of tourists, and works with all stakeholders to address current trends and challenges. According to Jeuring (2016), tourism marketing strategies include destinations' social structures and stakeholders' alignment. In this way, it makes it possible to create value for stakeholders, tourists, and residents, as well as the tourism destination that benefits from displaying uniqueness and authenticity (Giumelli et al., 2022).

As a result, DMOs need to focus on four primary points to establish their relations with local governments correctly and be successful; to use international connections correctly, make effective and efficient planning, create flexible and accessible institutional organizations, and provide sufficient financial resources for initiatives.

In addition, DMOs should ensure that the adverse effects of tourism are minimized, protecting natural resources, and positioning the destination image as sustainable and environmentally friendly to transfer the richness of destinations to future generations. It should create the right balance between economic, social, and environmental goals, such as the local people getting the most significant share from the tourism economic contribution and increasing the visitors' interest in sustainable products by ensuring visitor satisfaction (Zhang & Blasco, 2022).

In conclusion, the relationship between various stakeholder, especially travelers, and DMOs needs to be revamped and further investigated. In a “post-pandemic” era, travelers have developed new needs and wants. Some areas worth exploring for future research:

- Last minute bookings – with the everchanging landscape, travelers have started to book last minute, this phenomenon being closely tied to travel restrictions, cancellation, and new destination regulations
- Longer trips with more requirements – as a vast number of companies are allowing their employees to work remotely, there is an increase demand of individuals traveling and working at the same time, therefore further investigation into “bleasure” traveling and how DMOs can accommodate and advertise
- Clear communication by DMOs on on-going restrictions and regulations related to the pandemic
- Family trips are still lower than in the previous years, further investigation on how DMOs can help this very important and fruitful market bounce back is necessary
- Has the relationship between the industry and DMOs changed? What is the role of DMOs in the eyes of industry leaders?

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