Place Hospitality: A Way to Understand and Improve Place Marketing Approaches

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Abstract: Several articles stressed on the necessity for a territory to work on boosting its attractiveness. Welcoming new publics such as tourists, companies, and households would increase its economic development and thereby its reputation. This vision seems too restrictive today to be unique. Indeed, the concept of hospitality sets itself up as the corollary of place attractiveness. To understand the concept of Hospitality, it is necessary to define its context of using. The interest to consider the concept of Place Hospitality arose along with the integration of territorial development into Place marketing strategies. That is why the concept of Territory has been more and more popular for the last 30 years, not only in France but also all over the world. Nowadays, everything is « territory » or territory-based. This proposal first explores the concept of hospitality, as it is presented not only in philosophic literature but also in academic researches dedicated to tourism. Secondly, we present a conceptual framework which includes the place hospitality as its central element. Hospitality represents at the same time one of the objectives of the place marketing and the only way there is to consider the place marketing as a long-term process. We shall end with a proposition of levers of action allowing legal authorities - in regions with a measure of autonomy - to implement a real hospitality policy.

Keywords: Place hospitality, Integrated elements, HDIN, Marketing approaches

1. Introduction

Numerous articles highlighted the importance for a territory to work on increasing its attractiveness. So, welcoming new publics such as tourists, companies, and households would increase its economic development and thereby its reputation. This vision seems too restrictive today to be unique. Indeed, the concept of hospitality sets itself up as the corollary of place attractiveness. Either the will to increase attractiveness is voluntarily time-limited - as it is the case for seasonal tourist activities - or territories adopt a long-term vision by registering hospitality as the engine of a real policy so as to allow the public welcomed to stay on the concerned territory. For a territorial project to be based on hospitality, that means studying the levers of preservation of both the people and the activities on a specific territory.

This proposal first explores the concept of hospitality, as it is presented not only in philosophic literature but also in academic researches dedicated to tourism. Secondly, we present a conceptual framework which includes the place hospitality as its central element. Hospitality represents at the same time one of the objectives of the place marketing and the only way there is to consider the place marketing as a long-term process. We shall end with a proposition of levers of action allowing legal authorities - in regions with a measure of autonomy - to implement a real hospitality policy.
2. Place Hospitality: A Global Concept for Integrated Elements

To understand the concept of Hospitality, it is necessary to define its context of using. The interest to consider the concept of Place Hospitality arose along with the integration of territorial development into Place marketing strategies. That is why the concept of Territory has been more and more popular for the last 30 years, not only in France but also all over the world. Nowadays, everything is « territory » or territory-based! In French, the term of “territory” is a polysemous one: « territory » has both the meaning of « place, space, area … » and of « territory ». But these two acceptances refer to two different conceptions of territory:
- A literal sense: A unique natural space
- A figurative sense: A place where actors can imagine and realize projects

According to Moine (2006), a territory is a set of 3 sub-systems which make up/constitute a global model to explain what a territory is and how we can act on it in order to implement a strategy:
- The first sub system is the spatial system. A territory is a set of natural resources, located in a geographical space with many changes operated by Man.
- The second one is a mental representations system based on individual beliefs, social values, and ideological theories.
- The third sub system is the actor's system, which is composed of every person or group involved in territorial development

Figure 1: Two objectives for one place marketing approach

Figure 2: A territory as a set of systems
We can also consider that these 3 parts of the global system correspond - more or less - to the distinction between area (spatial system), identity (mental representations system) and organization (actors system). Considering the territory as a system, the role of Place marketing is to develop this complex system based on the territorial project. Thus, Place marketing (or territorial marketing) can be defined as a strategy aiming for both an increased attractivity and hospitality of a territory founded on the definition of a territorial project.

The concept of hospitality is nothing new, especially in literature dedicated to tourism. In the 70s, professionals already qualified their activities as “hospitality industry” (Heal, 1990). According to Pechlaner et al. (2004), more than 30 academic reviews focusing on the concept of hospitality have been created during the last 40 years. Even though this concept is used in others disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, history and even theology, most of the publications are focused on commercial and economic aspects (Brotherthon & Wood, 2000).

As French approaches seem very different from Anglo-Saxon ones, defining the concept of Hospitality turns out to be an ambitious challenge. According to the French conception (Gotman, 2001; Montandon, 2004), Hospitality is a temporary social interaction strictly codified whereas Anglo-Saxons are more focused on the tangibles aspects of Hospitality, even if the social interaction is also included. For instance, as stated by Brotherton (1999), Hospitality is "A contemporaneous human exchange, which is voluntarily entered into, and designed to enhance the mutual well being of the parties concerned through the provision of accommodation, and/or food, and/or drink." In the literature dedicated to the tourism, Hospitality is automatically linked to the supplying of food, drink, and accommodation (Heidegger, 1951). According to Telfer (2000), Hospitality is "The giving of food, drink and sometimes accommodation to people who are not regular members of a household. […] But the central idea of the concept remains that of sharing one’s own home and provisions with others."

In Antiquity, several cities such as Sparta or Delphes (Greece) had implemented public hospitality (hospitium public) by creating special accommodation designed to welcome people coming from partner cities to Spares or Delphes where they would be working in the service of their city of origin (Michel & Fournier, 1851 p.27). In the perspective of place marketing, Hospitality can be defined by at least four elements: a location (Montandon, 2004; Brotherton, 2006), interactions with persons in charge of welcoming others, objects used for welcoming activities (food and drink) and an accommodation. According to Viard (2000), Place hospitality appears as a mix of 3 dimensions: reality, imagination, and atmosphere. To study territorial hospitality, we can refer to a tourism-oriented approach but we also have to widen our reflection. Place hospitality does not include only tourism but also welcoming new companies or households. We can define territorial hospitality as the capacity to attract new public but that is above all the capacity of territory retention. Thus, increasing the hospitality of a territory will be translated either by the decrease of departures from the studied territory or through the increase of time spent on this territory by households, companies or tourists.
3. How to Measure Place Hospitality?
Measuring hospitality for a territory appears to become a key challenge due to the competitiveness between territories. According to Cinotti (2011), the concept of Hospitality can be measured in three dimensions: the resident's attitude, security, and communication. Since 2010, we try to explain how a place’s brand image is built, how much does hospitality weights on it and how to evaluate that impact.

The role of hospitality appears in two different ways. Firstly, there is an impact of the perceived hospitality on the place brand image. To be more precise, the hospitality perceived for a place is one of the components of its brand image. Secondly, hospitality has a direct effect on people’s preferences when choosing a place to invest into, to live at or to visit as a tourist.

Because of the lack of an existing scale to estimate the role of hospitality in place marketing strategy, we have implemented some experimentation based on a newly developed methodology which includes qualitative and quantitative approaches by Chamard (2004), Chamard and Liquet (2010) and Chamard and Lorey (2016). Data were thus collected between January and February 2010, in collaboration with the IFOP Institute - a major company specializing in online data collection. An online questionnaire was sent to 1610 representatives of the French population, aged 15 and over. The characteristics of each group were exploited by quota sampling (eg. sex, age, head of family, profession) after the implementation of regional and peripheral environment categories.

A direct quotation method (Krech and Crutchfield, 1948; Vernette, 1994) was used to preserve respondent spontaneity. Interviewees were asked two questions:
1. Please indicate all the terms (words, verbs, expressions, etc.) which come to your mind when you think about region X?
2. What is your opinion about these terms? Valence scaled replies included
   1=Very Negative,
   2=Negative,
   3=Neutral,
   4=Positive,
   5=Very Positive.

Verbatim data (30,271) were collected in all of the 22 French regions and then processed using two steps. First, three researchers classified each word and drew up across the table. Based on this table, each category was labeled to synthesize the meaning of the words. After that, in order to build a useful tool for managers, the number of dimensions was reduced. Findings are shown in the chart below.
Table 1: Content of associations: HDIN (Hospitality, Dynamism, Influence, Natural Characteristics) score index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HDIN Score Elements</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hospitality</strong> of the place</td>
<td>Quality of life</td>
<td>The elements that make the place pleasant to live.</td>
<td>A gentle way of life, happiness, pleasant, pollution, isolation, lost, loneliness…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residents features</td>
<td>All the personality features of the inhabitants associated with the place</td>
<td>Square, tacky, backward, friendly, welcoming, nice, lively atmosphere…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>All the equipment and infrastructures connected to transport within the place</td>
<td>Underground, suburbs train, traffic jam, ring road…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Demography</td>
<td>All the characteristics connected to the demography of the local population</td>
<td>Overpopulation, density, packed, retired people, cosmopolitan, social mix, diversity…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>All types of weather conditions associated with the place</td>
<td>Sun, beautiful weather, warmth, blue sky, humidity, rain, greyness…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dynamism</strong> of place’s cultural activities</td>
<td>Local culture and tradition</td>
<td>All the habits and local customs associated with the place</td>
<td>Patios, a local language, heritage of history, tradition, history, folklore, traditional singing…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leisure</td>
<td>All the leisure activities associated with the place</td>
<td>Stroll, walk, hike, idleness, hydrotherapy, cure…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>All the sports activities associated with the place</td>
<td>Football, rugby, surfs, ski…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Events</td>
<td>All the events associated with the place</td>
<td>Festivals, carnival, feria…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Influence</strong> of the place</td>
<td>Gastronomic</td>
<td>All the food products associated with the place</td>
<td>Bouillabaisse, olive oil/olives, Pancakes and buckwheat pancakes oysters, shellfish, foie gras, wine…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>All the economic activities associated with the place</td>
<td>Tourism, aeronautics, aviation, fishing, unemployment, poverty…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Famous local personalities</td>
<td>All the personalities, current or past, associated with the place</td>
<td>Valérie Giscard d’Estaing, Ségolène Royal, Napoleon, Guy Roux…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Natural characteristics</strong> associated with the place</td>
<td>Landscape</td>
<td>All the place’s physical aspects</td>
<td>Mountains, a beauty of landscape, cliffs, pebbles, stone, rock, charm, picturesque, forest…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Geographical proper nouns</td>
<td>All the proper nouns indicating a specific geographical location</td>
<td>Montpellier, Toulouse, The Cévennes, the Great Dune of Pila, Futuroscope…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flora and fauna</td>
<td>All the botanical and animal species associated with the place</td>
<td>Flora and local fruits, animals…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thanks to this both qualitative and quantitative methodology, we have created a new tool to estimate the weight of place hospitality’s perception and to evaluate the opinion of people on hospitality.
Then, we can compare the 22 French regions - using the HDIN score in order to assess the verbatim distribution on its 4 dimensions. It allows us to estimate how important the hospitality ratio is in the studied regions.

![Figure 5: HDIN Score components](image)

As a result, hospitality is not the most quoted dimension when people evoke images of regions in a spontaneous way. Most verbatim comes from the place's natural characteristics.

![Figure 6: Comparison of the 22 French regions based on their HDIN score](image)
Even if hospitality is not quoted as often as natural characteristics are, we can see in this figure that the evaluation (pleasant versus unpleasant) of the Hospitality component of the HDIN score offers the biggest variability. This means that the competition for image perception between these 22 regions is mainly based on the discriminant criteria of hospitality. That is the reason why this dimension appears as a key challenge for every place in their place marketing strategy and their positioning.

4. How to Build a Territorial Project by Including Place Hospitality?

Even if this experiment is focused on perceptions and place brand image, we can anticipate that the measure of place hospitality will become more and more crucial to develop territories – whether that is in France or in other countries where place marketing strategies are (already?) implemented.
In the map above, regions can be compared using the migration rate. This diagnosis allows us to define a priority among the objectives of attractiveness and hospitality in a territorial marketing strategy. Some places have already developed hospitality programs which are more focused on tourism actors. That is the case of the High Hospitality Academy founded by the French Industry & Trade Chamber. However, beyond the tourist practices of hospitality, all these policies are emphasizing the importance of attractiveness, sometimes without considering long-term hospitality - as previously defined in this article. Yet, a Place marketing strategy cannot be limited to outward operational marketing actions. It should focus on structural investment programs in order to increase the positive perception of place hospitality dimensions: quality of life, resident's features, transportation and all other infrastructures, demography, climate. Hospitality is a primary and tertiary form of communication for place marketing. It is not part of institutional communication but rather assimilated to self-promotion and advertisement; if good and effective enough, hospitality is already a kind of communication in itself (Kavaratzis, 2008). Thus, quality of life can be managed so that a place may be pleasant for tourists, companies, and households. The residents have to be involved in the place marketing project to become its ambassadors. All the equipment need to be improved to help people exploit the territory. That could be transported infrastructures but also digital networks equipment which would contribute to make it a connected place. In terms of demography, improving the place hospitality demands the implementation by the local authorities of a policy aiming to urge the targeted public to develop the territory they are in charge of. Even if the climate cannot be changed, we can see that its perception is very much linked to place hospitality. It seems that, in order to find a way to benefit from its situation, a place has to communicate on this element.

This article is based on the 22 French regions analysis but it demonstrates the importance of hospitality in a long-term place marketing approach – and that, whatever the kind of territory: cities, local regions or countries. The objective of increased attractiveness cannot be completely separated from a search for improved territory hospitality, still, they must be distinguished. Indeed, if a place marketing strategy militates for the increase of attractiveness, it is likely that the concerned territory spends a lot of energy and money to solve a wrongly identified problem. Inviting the public to settle on a territory neither requires the same tools or the same methodologies as those needed to mobilize people to increase the hospitality of a territory. On the other hand, improving the hospitality represents a more efficient - and sometimes more useful - process than focusing non-stop on the problems of attractiveness. First of all, every territory has to estimate if its situation requires settling either its deficit of hospitality or its deficit of attractiveness. Then, and only then, will this priority be integrated into the territorial project and the place marketing adapted according to the local idiosyncrasies.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, this study first tried to define the concept of hospitality, as it is presented not only in philosophic literature but also in academic researchers dedicated to tourism. The concept of Territory has been popular for the last 30 years because of the interest to consider the concept of Place Hospitality arose along with the integration of territorial development into Place marketing strategies.

Then, the conceptual framework was introduced and demonstrated, which includes the place hospitality as its central element. As it was explored, the role of hospitality appears in two different ways. Firstly, there is an impact of the perceived hospitality on the place brand image. To be more precise, the hospitality perceived for a place is one of the components of its brand image. Secondly, hospitality has a direct effect on people’s preferences when choosing a place to invest into, to live at or to visit as a tourist.

Finally, a proposition of levers of action allowing legal authorities - in regions with a measure of autonomy - to implement a real hospitality policy was given along with presenting a territorial project implementation by including place hospitality.

1 http://www.cci.fr/web/developpement-de-l-entreprise/high-hospitality-academy
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