

Overall quality brand criteria and overview of the project methodology for brand assignment

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The enhancement of environmental and cultural resources always entails the **risk of deterioration of the assets**

Overcrowding produces damage on fragile environments, natural or urban, and with limited carrying capacity.

Another less considered risk is the assumption by the local communities of a **short-term perspective** aimed at maximizing the benefits deriving from the tourist and commercial income, but which go **against the preservation** of the environmental and cultural assets of a territory

The value of heritage in cultural, environmental and tourism terms also depends on a very large local context:

- the choices of urban furniture, residential and productive locations, residential buildings and transport infrastructures, planning tools and land planning, etc
- A simple constraint policy does not always work if delegated to the local authority and can be too rigid and limiting if entrusted to regional control.

It is necessary to move from constraints to opportunities

The experiences gained

- experimentation of valorisation-protection and enhancement-incentive **policies**
- environmental **certification** for tourism companies especially, hotels (ecolabel, ISO etc)

Granting a sort of "green stamp" to tourism businesses that meet certain sustainability criteria.

**Similar certification initiatives in some cases
have been applied to territorial development**

In practice, target groups of territories but, to be part of which, must be guaranteed the respect of urban-architectural criteria, not for companies, but for the territory as a whole.

For example, the existence of instruments for the protection of a certain percentage of the municipal area or the existence of a classified cultural asset or the implementation of active measures to promote and promote cultural and environmental heritage, the creation of tourist services information and reception, help with crafts and trade in local products, the existence of floral furniture or communication policies

The objectives

- **promotion tool** with reasonable flexibility as it does not impose obligations on individual municipalities, but rewarding those that comply with environmental and cultural promotion criteria and directives
- **effectiveness** in terms of responsible tourism promotion and respectful of local cultural heritage has proved to be very relevant in certain cases
- instrument for **launching or re-launching the tourism-production** system of a territory in the sense of sustainable development

- From a tourism point of view, the **competitiveness of a destination** depends on various factors of influence
- These include the **quality of the environment**, which indirectly also affects public health
 - **the quality of accommodation, resources and attractions** (infrastructures, accessibility features, reception facilities, environment, culture and local history)

Virtuous management, development and planning policies influence these basic resources and determine their competitiveness on the international market

Environment plays a very important role in the tourist experience

What applies to the tourist movement is even more true for the residents, **many tourism policies have the real purpose of improving the quality of the territory.**

The **correct management of tourism destinations** is a key element for the success of the destination.

In managing a destination, **certification** is basically one of the elements of "**amplification**" and "**visibility**".

So what is the role of certification for destinations compared to other land management tools?

Certifications are traditionally voluntary instruments.

Basically they offer recognition that voluntary actions (not prescribed by plan laws or regulations) have been put into practice.

However, the certifications alone are not sufficient to guarantee a sustainable development from the economic, social and environmental point of view of the destinations; legislation and planning are in fact the starting point for certifications to be considered effective tools.

Territorial certification is still at an early stage with respect to certification of individual services and activities, such as accommodation facilities, or beaches, for example.

Greater complexity compared to the application to single and contained structures such as reception facilities

Certifications for destinations can represent an effective starting point for the management and awareness of sustainability issues and tourism competitiveness.

Metodology

A brand for tourism destinations may have a sub-national, national, regional or international geographical operation.

The choice of geographical operations affects all elements of the certification system, especially on the certification criteria. In fact, the main feature of a certification is the grouping of homogeneous destinations.

The characteristics are expressed in the **criteria**, which must take into account the geographical, environmental, socio-economic and even administrative characteristics.

At a local operational level, destinations will have similar environmental, economic and social assets, allowing for the definition of very specific criteria.

The disadvantage of a geographical expansion of a certification is that the level of homogeneity will decrease, and consequently above all the certification criteria will lose their specificity.

Certifications for destinations can be divided into three categories:

- **labels**, with an assignment system based on predefined criteria, and an evaluation system and the possibility of reclaiming at the end of the pre-established period.
- **Certified management systems**, that are based on more general guidelines that are implemented ad hoc according to local problems and incorporated into a detailed plan designed for each destination. The destination will not have to reapply but only eventually prove that the activities indicated in the plan are implemented continuously and effectively.
- **Prizes** awarded on the basis of activities or projects already completed that meet a set of pre-established criteria. Prizes are awarded once only.

Certification programs for destinations have different **objectives.**

- Among the programs based on environmental quality criteria, it is necessary to distinguish between those referring to all destinations from those that favor tourism destinations.
- Other certification programs certify the "tourism quality" of the destination, i.e. that a given number of services or attractions, and a defined level of quality are present in the certified area.

How to choose the main objective?

- The important thing is that it responds to the highest number of needs locally expressed.
- Following an initial analysis of the needs, they are incorporated into the objective - mission statement, then they allow to have interesting ideas for a possible expansion of the initial objectives.

Obviously, combining the largest number of needs in the chosen target will ensure greater success for the initiative.

The process of defining a certification can be divided into three phases:

- First the conditions for a certification are verified assessing whether it is a promising and useful tool for the established objective.
- Then it is necessary to develop the appropriate certification establishing how it should be concretely realized and made known.
- Finally, the certification must reach the demand and move the market in the desired direction: it is therefore necessary to determine when a label is destined to "success".

Selection criteria are the key element of an **eco-certification**

They represent the strategy to implement the certification objectives,
not just a recognition of the *status quo* of the destination situation

They must summarize additional voluntary initiatives with respect to the
existing situation

The certification criteria are therefore the actions that the community
must implement in order to obtain certification

The content of the criteria varies according to the type of objectives:
protection of the environment from and for tourists or enhancement of
tourism assets and increase in tourism potential

Activity

The certifications that aim to promote tourism prefer actions that enhance the **urban, landscape and cultural heritage** and increase the efficiency of the **tourism service**.

The certifications for the development of tourism potential in general include selection criteria based on **the existing heritage** (a monument of historical value) and the **characteristics of image that are to be protected and developed** (for example, of a rural nature, which implies a limited number of the people living there).

To these are added **architectural and urbanistic criteria** generally the responsibility of public authorities and criteria related to the type of services offered, which also involve the operators.

At the opposite end are the **eco-certifications** and the prizes that have as their objective the **exclusive protection of the environment**

In environmental certifications, the criteria are generally divided into areas of action that reflect **the large areas of intervention within a community**, from traffic, to spatial planning, to water quality, to traffic management.

The criteria can be selected in such a way as to require the effort of the public authorities alone or the active participation of the community itself.

The criteria offer indications on actions that can contribute to the sustainable development of the destination.

Finally, there is a third category of certifications: those whose objective is the **protection of the natural heritage to improve the tourism experience and protect the environment itself from the impact of tourism**

In the process of defining the criteria it is **essential to have a clear final objective that collects the consent of all the parties involved.**

The agreement of the parties involved facilitates the implementation phase of the criteria themselves, and consequently the obtaining of the certification. **The criteria must be selected so as to be able to be adopted from different destinations**, while taking into consideration the local differences (environmental, cultural and even socio-economic).

It is difficult to establish environmental quality criteria to which all destinations can refer, and which have an "**environmental sense**" in social, cultural, economic and environmental situations very different. The variables involved are in fact numerous and significant, and this means that some aspects can not be rigidly defined with pre-established criteria

The criteria must - to be credible and effective - take into consideration:

- the **potentials and problems of environmental and tourism heritage at the local level;**
- the **impact of the tourism sector on the environment** and the factors of interest for tourism demand;
- the **level of technical capacity and the institutional structure** (the skills of local governments).

Good practice is to conduct an extensive survey among tourism operators (private and public) to decide what are the "emergencies" with effect on the environment, the characteristics of the tourism demand and the potential of the destination itself and reach a *consensus* on the objective to pursue.

There are several "**forms**" of criteria, which are not mutually exclusive within the same program. In general, the criteria can be expressed in the form of:

- **guidelines** to be developed: the criteria are expressed in the form of general principles that must then be developed into specific objectives and then actions.
- **objectives to be achieved**: the criteria are expressed in the form of objectives and standards that candidates must achieve. Candidates choose independently the actions / activities to achieve them.
- **actions to be taken**: the criteria are expressed in the form of specific activities that will lead to the final result initially defined.

Cultural Routes

Another kind of heritage.

Not summatory of heritage but their sense

Convention Européen du Paysage, Florence 2000

European Convention of Landscape

The landscape role (cultural landscape and living landscape)

European Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society,
Faro 2005

Tourism and cultural Routes

4 basic elements:

Sense (why?)

Project (how?)

Management (who?)

Communication and creativity Story telling / Story doing

Cultural Routes criteria for a quality brand on sustainable tourism

Potential parameters:

Specificity and value

What makes our territory unique and how we will give it value

Target - public

to whom we address (visitors, residents, ect)

Channels

how we reach our target

Relations with travelers

How we build and maintain relationships with those who visit our territory

Networks

With whom we should collaborate

Key activities

What we must do to achieve the objectives

Required resources

What we need to achieve the goals

Costs and investments

What are our sources of costs and possible investments

Community involvement

How to involve the community

Human resources

Training and education plan

Expected results

What consequences do we foresee in the area

Final Remarks and Conclusions

