

Personal experiences in region and location marketing

by Arnold Kappler, Dr. oec. HSG, Hedingen / Switzerland

Region marketing, destination marketing and higher-ranking location management are terms which have been on the political agenda for a only few years, and which have experienced an amazing uptrend during that time. Whereas the elaboration of location or destination strategies depends largely on the experience of the company management, the major differences between company management and location management lie mainly in the implementation of strategies and concepts once elaborated.

Keywords: Location marketing, experiences in location marketing, destination marketing

Not only businesses but also locations are involved today in a world-wide competitive struggle. General economising can be noted not only in tourism, but also in many areas of public life. Attempts are being made, especially in regard to the financial situation of many "public cash funds", to transfer the rudiments of modern management studies to the public sector.

Regions and destinations in competition

Key words such as "new public management" and "private-public partnerships" are topics which are very current today. The broad management area is one of today's modern management instruments. Communes and public institutions are obliged to be active in this area as well. In return, the pressure increases as neighbouring or competitive locations become active in these areas.

Differences in company management

Location and destination strategies also imply new orientation (focusing) towards a new goal. This leads to shifting of resources, new operational processes, and new organisational structures, but also to uncertainties - for example, the well-known "resistance to change". Culture, living sphere and political processes are impacted to an even greater extent in destinations and regions than in businesses.

Taking additional interests into account

In contrast to management development, "management of change" in the area of location has to take additional interests into account. Political legitimacy must be continuously observed with regard to the execution of various partial projects. Consensus must be found with the interests of the (regional) economy as well. In addition, great attention must be paid to valid concerns of the residents regarding the manipulation of their identity.

Greatest possible involvement of those impacted

The elaboration of location strategies on the one hand and their implementation on the other cannot be seen as consecutive steps, occurring independently of one another. If the impacted areas are integrated into the strategy-making process, the implementation will consequently be considerably easier.

Experience from consulting activities of the past years

Over the past years, Kappler Consulting has elaborated various location and destination strategies with their customers. The following are some experiences which resulted from the elaboration and implementation of projects:

1. A clear, strict project description

The basis for every location management concept is a goal-oriented project description which has been carried out in a strict manner by a project group and a project leader. (“Tell me how a project begins, and I’ll tell you how it will end!”)

2. An image and the resulting clear setting of goals

In particular for the implementation phase, goals which are clear and accepted by those involved are the “key to success”.

3. A concept which underscores the regional successes

Location concepts require clear profiling as well. If a “Unique Selling Proposition” (USP) is lacking for a region, it is virtually impossible to create recognition value within the target groups for the destination/region involved.

4. Systematically involve those impacted in the preparation and implementation of strategy

We had good experiences when bringing in experts together with groups of experts (project teams) and repeated (pinpointed) involvement of representatives of various involved interest groups (in workshop settings).

5. Provide sufficient budgets for the implementation

Location management is a long-term investment. Erratic budgets lead to uncertainties during implementation. A successful financial policy, oriented to the long term (e.g., over five years) is a crucial factor for the success of destination and location concepts.

6. Foster key performers at various levels

Regional, performance-oriented interaction processes (as can be found in location management) are dependent on “performers”, who initiate, finance, and manage the processes. These key persons are also of importance to the functioning of the individual networks.

7. Set up regional networks

Available regional networks (with the important key performers) are very important to location management, be they for sources of ideas on projects, providers of financial support, or as support in implementation/realisation.

8. Create platforms for contacts

Region marketing thrives on the goal-oriented co-operation of all those involved (in particular the networks). Events provide the possibility of creating meeting points and platforms where the individual exhibitors have continuous access to the performers.

9. The regional and destination manager as central performer

The three most important tasks of the “central performers” are co-ordination, co-ordination, co-ordination! With image and goal-setting as his basis, he manages the region/destination in the agreed-upon direction with the participation of and utilisation of all the interest groups. This function is more demanding than “normal” company management, as political managerial skills, social competence, teamwork ability, strategic thinking, and flexibility with regard to the process management are all required in large doses.

10. Develop programmes for head and heart

A balanced relationship between operations for the few on the one hand and wide-reaching operations on the other is of utmost importance. For example, a successful “local fair” insures an acceptable basis for the broad further development of a regional marketing idea.

11. Proceed “step by step”

Begin with small successes, building location marketing step by step: this is the sure path to successful location management.

12. Conduct systematic public relations work

Regular public relations work and regular contact with the dialog groups (right from the beginning) are further requirements for the success of location management.

November 2006

© Arnold Kappler, Dr. oec. HSG CMC
Kappler Management AG, Hedingen/Switzerland

Author's address: Arnold Kappler, Dr. oec. HSG
Kappler Management AG
Haldenstrasse 58
CH-8908 Hedingen ZH
Mail: info@kappler-management.ch
www.kappler-management.ch
