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Introduction

Short-term rentals are significant destination management stakeholders as currently nearly every destination will have some listings on platforms like Airbnb. To date, little is known about the relationship between destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and short-term rentals. Recently it appeared that many destinations such as New York City are fighting short-term rentals with new regulations to limit their use and number (Giulia, 2022). On the other hand, there seem to be only little effort by DMOs to integrate short-term rentals into marketing strategies. This is surprising as each individual short-term rental listing could contribute to the mental image potential visitors develop for the destination. The inclusion of short-term rentals in the DMO stakeholder network could facilitate promoting the destination and managing tourists' expectations (Nieuwland & Van Melik, 2020).

Destination image is defined as the total impression towards a destination combined with cognitive and affective elements (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Typically, the image of a destination is built not only by a central actor like a DMO but also by all other destination stakeholders. A destination image is thus fragmented and disjointed (Tasci, Gartner, & Tamer Cavusgil, 2007). In the context of short-term rentals, it is unclear if hosts take note of the marketing language used by DMOs and follow the DMO-created destination image or if hosts promote a different destination image. Managing stakeholders can enable DMOs to coordinate efforts to develop a cohesive destination image across multiple stakeholders (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Nicolau & Mas, 2015).

The goal of this study is to identify differences and similarities in the destination image promoted by DMOs and short-term rental hosts and how the relationship between them affects the similarity of the image. This study aims to contribute to our understanding of the development of a destination image in today's tourism landscape that consists of traditional actors such as hotels and attractions and now also includes an often very large numbers of short-term rental hosts. Specifically, this study offers theoretical contributions for the management of destination image fragments and stakeholder management. We also provide practical contributions for destination managers for their relationship with short-term rental hosts.

Literature Review

Destination image construction

To properly distinguish a destination, DMOs must provide a distinct and alluring perception or destination image (Calantone, Di Benedetto, Hakam, & Bojanic, 1989). It is widely acknowledged that the construction of a destination image should be multidimensional (Gallarza, Saura, & García, 2002; Pan, Rasouli, & Timmermans, 2021) to determine the overall image and to influence the intentions and actions of tourists (Lojo, Li, & Xu, 2020; Qu, Kim, & Im, 2011). Based on this knowledge of the construction process, it is possible to argue that the destination is not static and is contingent upon multiple factors simultaneously.

Stakeholder and destination image fragmentation

Conventional wisdom holds that the DMO commands the destination image-building and marketing process, and numerous studies have emphasized the significance of DMO's strategic management practice in fostering the connection between other stakeholders (e.g., Ford, Peeper,

& Gresock, 2009; Meriläinen & Lemmetyinen, 2011; Pavlovich, 2003; Volgger & Pechlaner, 2014). Nonetheless, some studies argue that images generated by other information sources are also persuasive (e.g., Beerli & Martin, 2004; Connell, 2005; Llodrà-Riera, Martínez-Ruiz, Jiménez-Zarco, & Izquierdo-Yusta, 2015). Rather than DMO-centric operations, scholars highlight the advantages of a multi-stakeholder approach and are concerned with the consistency of the destination's image due to the presence of multiple stakeholders (Saraniemi & Komppula, 2019). Furthermore, Leung, Law, and Lee (2011) argue that hotel-generated images are integrated into the overall destination image. Thus, cooperative marketing between a DMO and hotels can build a cohesive destination image and brand (Laws, Scott, & Parfitt, 2002).

Stakeholder management is essential for DMOs to control image fragmentation conflicts (Pike & Ryan, 2004). Those in charge of promoting tourism should establish a relationship with stakeholders and ensure that the message transmitted matches the desired image of the destination (Beerli & Martin, 2004). To combat a negative destination image, marketing organizations can collaborate with potential stakeholders and use a combination of multiple image formation agents to create a positive destination image (Tasci et al., 2007).

Integrating short-term rentals

Most of the short-term rental image-related research focused on tourists' reviews, while few articles explored the induced images projected by short-term rental hosts (e.g., Cheng & Jin, 2019; Lalicic, Marine-Roig, Ferrer-Rosell, & Martin-Fuentes, 2021; Sánchez - Franco & Rey - Moreno, 2022). Tourism scholars such as Tamajón and Pérez (2022) and Zhang, Lee, Singh, and Srinivasan (2022) realized that the description and property image of Airbnb hosts would impact intention and behavior of tourists. However, these studies mainly focus on the images of the property itself, seldom discussing the impact on the local destination image or the differences between image fragments generated by the hosts and the DMO.

With regards to fragments destination image, research still has several gaps. First, even though previous research has proposed the concept of destination image fragments and the possibility of fragments being different, there is a paucity of examining precisely where these fragments differ. Second, the influence of integrating stakeholders on shaping the destination image has not been considered. Existing literature argues that short-term rentals can manage their image; however, tourism research has yet to assess whether this host-generated image fragment is consistent with other destination image fragments. The management of a cohesive destination image inclusive of short-term rentals might require DMOs to integrate short-term rental listings alongside other long-standing stakeholders into their marketing efforts (Nieuwland & Van Melik, 2020; Tamajón & Pérez, 2022). This study raises the following questions:

RQ 1: How similar is the destination image presented by short-term rental hosts versus that of DMO?

RQ 2: Does the integration of short-term rental properties on DMO websites affect the similarity of destination images presented by short-term rental hosts and DMOs?

Methodology

This study uses data from 109 DMO websites and 14,522 Airbnb listings for a US East coast state. To capture the destination image, we use topic modeling separately for DMO websites and Airbnb listings for the area covered by the DMO. For the DMO generated destination image all website

text was analyzed. For Airbnb listings only property description minus all keywords that refer to the accommodation unit or building were used, thus allowing an analysis of the short-term rental host generated image of the destination.

To analyze the relationship between a DMO and short-term rentals, we identified the number of short-term rental links in DMO websites. This count compared to the number of short-term rental listings on the Airbnb website serves as the indicator of the inclusion of short-term rentals for destination image similarity.

Results

1. This study generated 20 topics each for Airbnb and DMO websites based on the textual data for each destination.
2. The topics generated by the DMO website are significantly different, supporting the effectiveness of using the DMO website to identify the destination image.
3. The study selected some counties for preliminary analysis. After analyzing the topics generated by Airbnb and the DMO textual data, there are differences, but detailed conclusions require further study.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study contributes to research on destination image, specifically the relationship between short-term rentals and DMOs and the difference in images created by these actors. Understanding destination image similarity can guide DMOs strategies to include short-term rental hosts in the image creation process and which types of hosts require more coordination efforts. Future research should investigate the challenges faced by DMOs to include short-term rental listings on their website considering the fraught relationship between traditional accommodation and short-term rentals in many destinations.

This study also provides practical value for destination managers. Knowing which hosts differ from the aspired destination image enables DMOs to approach these hosts. Furthermore, DMOs need to consider how to manage hosts as an addition to their stakeholder network.

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