

Localising the city: The new turn in DMO campaigning – making residents *locals* calls for host-making activities to solve the DMO’s tasks for tomorrow’s urban destination

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Abstract

In recent years, a turn in DMO campaigning and management decisions is noticeable - a turn from the traditional tourism value chain perspective towards a focus on ‘the locals’. From a tourist perspective – or through ‘the tourist gaze’ – residents are now perceived as locals. They are part of the destination and as such they are a resource. The importance of the host-guest relation becomes evident in such DMO campaigns, and the hypothesis in this paper is therefore that a strengthened focus on host-making activities at DMO level is to be seen as a competitive resource. With current DMO-turns as inspiration, the paper includes considerations on the development of the future tasks of the DMOs based on host-making activities for the DMO aiming to facilitate host/guest-encounters.

Key Words *Destination Management, hostmanship, place branding, locals, host-making*

Track *Be inspired by new and emerging hospitality and tourism sectors*

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Introduction

In the beginning of 2017, Wonderful Copenhagen – the Destination Management Organisation (DMO) of the capital of Denmark – announced ‘the end of tourism as we know it’ introducing its 2020-strategy focusing on so-called ‘localhoods’. The strategy is devoted to the inclusion of locals in co-creating tourists’ experiences. Wonderful Copenhagen is not unique in this field, though, since other DMOs around the world, e.g. Melbourne and New York City, have increased their focus on addressing locals in tourism as well - locals being the residents perceived through ‘the tourist gaze’ (Urry, 2002).

Considering the new DMO strategies, the future task for the DMOs is to activate and include the locals in the tourism value chain. So how do the DMOs empower the locals to enable them to meet the expectations of the tourists - without disturbing their ‘localhoods’ and everyday lives?

This paper intends to sketch current tendencies of DMOs directing their campaigning towards the locals and to suggest examples of host-making activities. We find that the DMO-turn towards *the locals* is putting people back into placemaking and turning locals into hosts.

Hospitality and hostmanship in tourism

Traditionally, the responsibility of the DMO has been to create an attractive destination and continuously develop new experiences by facilitating strong partnerships among the destination actors, balancing on one side the tourist experience and the tourism value chain on the other. When defining tourism, the supply side perspective represents the tourism value chain (the tourism operators) and the demand side perspective

represents the tourists' experiences (Page & Connell, 2014). When trying to understand the interrelations of both sides, tourism theory offers a holistic perspective, e.i. Leiper's 'tourism system' (Page & Connell, 2014) or in a definition as MaIntosh' (Gartner, 1996):

"[...] the sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the interaction of tourists, business suppliers, host governments, and host communities in the process of attracting and hosting these tourists and other visitors" (Hird & Kvistgaard, 2010, p. 21).

However, tourism definitions diverge according to which elements are included as central, and they emphasise the complexity of the supply side with regard to the specific role of tourism businesses and the different levels of decision-making.

Outlining the tourism industry in a value chain model as described by e.g. Yilmaz & Bititci (2006) is still relevant, but the intention of this paper is to analyse the new holistic and inclusive task of DMOs from the perspective of hostmanship. Accordingly, this paper seeks to support the new tourism strategies that includes the non-professional resident side of the host communities, proposing operational next steps.

To understand the effects of the new tendencies for DMOs from a hostmanship perspective, first step is to define and contextualize the concept of hostmanship, as we see hostmanship as being different from the widely used term hospitality and the more general theoretical understanding of tourism described above.

In literature, hospitality refers to the relationship between individuals taking the roles of host and guest (Brotherton, 1999; King, 1995; O'Connor, 2005) and was in its original sense for hosts to provide comfort and a safe place for their guests (King, 1995). Hospitality has developed over time into both a private and a commercial form (Causevic & Lynch, 2009; King, 1995). Brotherton (1999) defines hospitality as a voluntary human exchange, which is mutually beneficial and happens contemporaneously based on specific products and services (Brotherton, 1999). According to Page & Connell (2014), commoditized commercial relations can also include personal hospitality, but will not be based on charitableness nor include the expectation of returning the generosity in the future.

Hostmanship is a holistic perception of the guest-host relation, and according to Gunnarsson and Blohm (2003) it is composed of different levels, i.e. the personal, functional, organisational and destinational hostmanship. Contrary to Brotherton's definition of hospitality (1999), hostmanship is NOT based on specific products or services.

Destinational hostmanship is the least developed level by Gunnarsson and Blohm, but is essential for this paper, as we find the destinational hostmanship fundamental for the new DMO strategies that have as their focus to include locals as hosts at destinational level.

Destinational hostmanship as place branding

Regarding hostmanship at destinational level, the affinity to the area of place- and city branding might be overlooked, but we assume that this is exactly where hostmanship might find its real value.

City branding has two strategical tasks to solve (Gulmann, 2015): First, the external - making the area attractive and known to potential citizens, investors, companies and tourists. Second, the internal - to increase citizens' self-awareness related to what the city already has. Keeping this dual focus of city branding in mind, it becomes clear that place branding processes are to be understood only as a communicative side of something more complex, call it 'city design' or 'community development'.

This perspective is supported by place brand experts as Anholt (2007), Ashworth (2009) and in particular Kavartzis and Kalandides (2015), who anticipate and advocate for the inclusion of participatory processes and the residents' role in branding. In our perspective, hostmanship is the missing link in this line of thought of a complexity of association related to the place brand formation that Kavartzis advocates. The relational focus implicit in host-making activities exemplifies, not the guest's brand association bound to 'materiality' or 'institutions', but the guest's brand association bound to 'practices' (Kavartzis & Kalandides, 2015). Destinational hostmanship could headline these more participatory processes in place brand formation as Kavartzis calls for - of rethinking the place brand formation as a move from advertising campaign thinking, and

the creation of slogans and landmarks to an interchanging ‘network of associations’ based on ongoing interaction with a place and its people.

The argument is basically that place brand association is based on elements that allow people to make meaning of places, and this is dependent on several functions that the place performs for both citizens and guests. ‘Functions’ meaning: How the place makes them feel; what does it add to their lives; how it connects people to each other; how it helps them construct their identity, etc. Destinalional hostmanship is relational thinking – relation to other people, hosts and guests, and relation to place. Destinalional hostmanship is an appeal to the DMO of tomorrow to provide inclusive storylines and facilitate meetings online and in the real world as part of their next branding process.

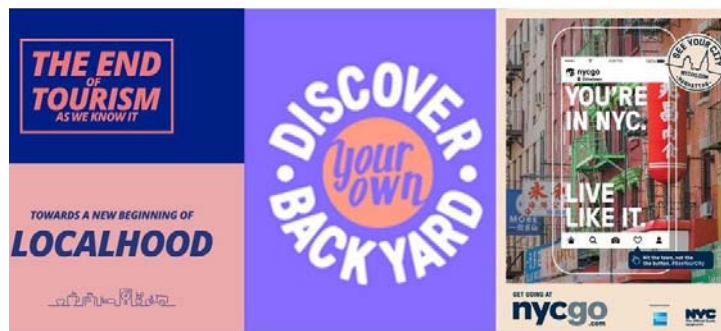
Learning from Airbnb

In recent years, *Airbnb* and other home sharing platforms have reinvented the commercial form of hospitality into a more holistic form (Bove-Nielsen, 2016). The commercial sphere is stretched closer towards the private sphere, turning a large number of people into hosts, when opening up their spare rooms and homes to travelling strangers. Airbnb and similar platforms are putting people, the local hosts, back into travel. It is still a commercial form of hospitality but centres the role of the hosts in the cultural relation in travel experiences. *Belong anywhere* - the tagline of Airbnb’s global campaigning - stresses the travellers’ possibility to relate to foreign places away from home, when entering this commercial framing of the private sphere. Likewise, it emphasises Airbnb’s unique selling proposition, making the relation between the guest and the local possible, and especially empowering the last in becoming ‘the host’ (“Airbnb: Belong Anywhere”). The success of these platforms displays the demand and motivation of today’s traveller, who is looking to belong anywhere.

Our interpretation of the discursive change towards local hosts in destination campaigning resembles the Airbnb-initiative, and the need for host-making activities will be illustrated below by different DMO campaigns.

DMOs turning towards the locals

Figure 1: DMO campaigning



Wonderful Copenhagen 2020 Strategy: Localhood for everyone

In the following example of a current DMO strategy, the tourists’ desire to interact with the locals seem to be the new competitive factor, and facilitating these types of meetings is the new necessary task for tomorrow’s DMO - at least according to Wonderful Copenhagen’s (WoCo) 2020 strategy:

“The interplay between the visitor and the citizens is a key point in the years to come and for this it forms a central part of our new strategy [...] The times in which the tourist was satisfied with merely visiting a destination is over. In the future, when we travel, we want to be part of the city or the place that we visit. This is

the tendency [...] and that is why we call the tourists of tomorrow for temporary locals” (Wonderful Copenhagen, 2017b).

The tourist’s well-known hunger for authenticity is about an undoing-of-the-tourist-role through relation-making. When connecting with someone, there is a chance that you leave not as a tourist, but as one having shared an interest or an experience with others for a while. And locals want to share, too. Especially when being proud of their homes, places and activities. The task of the DMO is to find out what to share and to create the necessary meeting places in digital and city spaces, because

“the temporary local seeking not the perfect still picture to take home, but the emotional connection to an instantly shared experience based on interests, relations and authenticity” (Wonderful Copenhagen, 2017a, p. 4)

WoCo’s 2020-strategy was introduced as *‘The end of Tourism as we know it’*, indicating a paradigmatic shift towards a more involving way to work:

“Rather than promoting to others, we need to promote through others. We anticipate a task that we will share with many, in which we will take lead on developing and managing the destination by enabling others to build experiences based on [...] our shared sense of localhood” (Wonderful Copenhagen, 2017a, p. 4).

‘Developing’ and ‘enabling’ can happen through dialogue on values, host empowerment, facilitation of maker-cultures, or shared story-making. This is central and not just about attracting the descriptive writing of foreign travel journalists and blog-influencers, but about enabling locals to share activities. Facilitating popup scenes, communication channels, visual identities etc. would be the inviting task and the societal value. And if these possibilities help to change the perception of visitors in over-tourism areas while also potentially inviting them to more diverse areas, it would be ‘the end of tourism as we know it’. This kind of pride and community building is seen elsewhere and is the reason in this paper to talk about ‘a turn towards the locals’. The following campaign-initiatives from Melbourne and New York City are centred around the same line of thought.

Destination Melbourne: Discover your own backyard

Discover your own backyard (DYOB) is Destination Melbourne’s 2017 campaign, which focuses on reaching local Melburnians, who are hosting visiting friends and relatives (VFRs) (“Melbourne 1”). The campaign

“encourages locals to become informed hosts by educating them about what is available in their own neighbourhoods and inspiring them to explore [...] for VFRs, their hosts – the people who live in the community – are the greatest influencers on what they do while in Melbourne. DYOB works by engaging and connecting with Melburnians to become ambassadors for their neighbourhoods, concentrating visitation and spend locally” (“Melbourne 2”).

In this campaign, Destination Melbourne demonstrates the wish to make locals informed hosts, neighbourhood explorers and –ambassadors and engaging and connecting the locals in doing so. This is about pride, ownership and hostmanship.

New York City: See your city campaign

The official marketing and tourism organization of New York City *NYC & Company* launched in 2014 the *See Your City Campaign* (“New York City”) to *“encourage and inspire New Yorkers to explore the diverse neighbourhoods and boroughs of their city [...] We want to give New Yorkers a new perspective”* (op.cit.), the CEO of NYC & Company Fred Dixon said. The campaign consisted of video postcards on SoMe platform and vintage posters on bus shelters, Pinterest and Instagram. Editorial content featuring itinerary suggestions in the video postcards and custom illustrated vintage posters of the boroughs intended to create inspiration and pride *‘selling New York to the New Yorker’* (“New York City”).

“By referencing vintage travel posters and passport stamps, we reframe the familiar as foreign and idealized, and where to grab the attention of the New Yorkers” (“New York City”).

They added photo competitions inviting everyone to *share* their must-see picks in New York's five boroughs on social media using the campaign hashtag.

NYC & Company, whose mission is to spread the positive image of New York City worldwide, turned with this campaign towards the residents - the locals - and framed their homes and neighbourhoods in vintage travel style lending them the tourist gaze to re-discover their values in familiar surroundings. Itineraries would connect curious residents with other residents, and engaging them in competitions would train their tourist gaze, building pride of their neighbourhoods.

The host-making discourse

The turn to the locals in the example of NYC & Company is host-making on destination level, as relation is in focus, and all three DMO strategies and campaigns paint a collective picture of management and marketing activities directed towards turning destination residents into local hosts. The DMO adopts the tourist gaze and seeks to arm the destination with local flavour and in doing this – not unlike Airbnb - needs a corps of authentic hosts. Through the tourist gaze, local everyday life becomes the main attraction. The tourist wants to consume *the everyday-life-relations* to the place and ‘the other’ next door. The wish to become ‘a temporary local’ is only possible through a local, as locality itself is not enough. This makes the host-guest relation the central object of desire and host-making one of the most important tasks for the future DMO.

Host-making activities

As stated earlier, we draw inspiration from the levels of hostmanship (Gunnarsson & Blohm, 2003) and acknowledge all levels, but focus here is on the destination level, as it might lack operational next steps in the form of specific host-making activities. The foundation for hostmanship at destination level emerge from shared pride:

“One of the biggest assets a destination has, is the pride of its hosts. When people are passionate about where they were born, where they live or where they work, they can’t help but promote these destinations no matter what the situation” (Gunnarsson & Blohm, 2003, p. 128)

Inspiration for host-making is found in the second largest city of Denmark, Aarhus, which was European Cultural Capital in 2017. One of the greatest successes of the yearlong event was the mobilisation of volunteers, and Aarhus has become The European Volunteering Capital 2018. When finishing the year as Cultural Capital, the management of the new volunteering program was handed over to the local DMO, Visit Aarhus. This organisational disposition ties tourism to local volunteering and is a call to the DMO of the need to study the value-driven factor of voluntary work in tourism, guest experiences and event-based activities. The DMO must learn the motivations of the residents for such voluntary activities.

The object of study in this paper is new tourism rhetoric as expressed in the DMO examples. Common features are ‘localized space’ and the emphasis on tourists’ relation to residents’ ‘spaces of belonging’. DMO campaigning addresses the visitor’s *place-based imagination* on life of the locals.

The brief encounters between tourists and locals, which take place during visits, make the tourists see the ways and habits of local life. The tourists take pictures and compare similarities and differences with their own lives and then maybe connects the experiences and imagines routines and everyday life on the destination. This is place-based imagination.

‘Tourism takes place’ - lodging, picture-taking, thematic itineraries - and guided tours, local food tasting etc., including meeting locals. Addressing this tourist praxis in campaigning and strategies means that the professional tourism industry is beginning to understand the value of the personal encounter by directing campaigning towards the locals of the destination. The motivation for the DMOs for this type of campaigning

can be diverse e.g. pride- or community building, but the overall tendency is *a rhetorical appreciation of everyday life of the local*.

The DMOs have adopted the tourist gaze on the inhabitants and are now pushing it back to them, calling them ‘locals’. This is not about staged visitor-guest relations. This is about images and stories that in their local forms intend to empower locals with the knowledge that they are – themselves - the attraction.

On a larger scale this is about cultural encounters in the realm of tourism, and it leads to broader debates on cultural identity and place. Narrative templates and cultural tropes are activated to create or revitalize certain dimensions of local qualities. As mentioned, place does not do it alone, the discourse is tied to the residents in ‘your own backyard’, ‘see *your city*’ and in the Copenhagen neologism ‘*localhood*’. This rhetorical investment in place paves the way for potential communal identity, where values are rooted in place.

Considering the tendencies in the above DMO examples, we propose the following host-making activities:

- To balance liveability and visitability. In the wake of over-tourism in the most popular European cities, the DMO must monitor visitor numbers in neighbourhoods and balance media exposure accordingly.
- Hosts must volunteer by themselves. The DMO must make it attractive and push forward recruiting activities.
- To provide inclusive collective stories and a clear thematic red thread (or brand essence) to follow in the destination brand that the locals can use.
- Create a digital platform where locals, different kinds of volunteers and local products can be exposed alongside the locals. Inspiration can be found at *Vayable.com*, *Spottedbylocals.com*, *likealocalguide.com*, *withlocals.com*.
- Initiate community building activities. Inspiration could be taken from Airbnb initiatives (“Airbnb Citizen”).

Concluding remarks

Examples of innovative DMO campaigns show a tendency to incorporate locals in the tourism value chain, but it is a complicated task to turn the locals into destinational hosts without disturbing their ‘localhoods’. Destinational hostmanship is fundamental for the new DMO strategies, as they presuppose a possibility for the tourists to access local life. To develop destinational hostmanship, host-making activities are necessary to support the interaction between the place, the locals and the tourists, and based on the new DMO tendencies, specific activities has been suggested in this paper.

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