

COOPERATION AND GOVERNANCE FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT. ARANJUEZ AS A CASE STUDY

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Aranjuez, a town located in the south of the Autonomous Community of Madrid and within 47 kilometres reach of the capital, is a city known as once of the royal summer residences since the seventeenth century. It is a town with a strong tourist tradition due to the wide variety of cultural and scenic resources as well as the proximity to the city of Madrid. This paper describes the main reflections of a research about the possibility to create a destination management organization.

Several decades ago, the term *governance* appears in social sciences and is applied to tourism. It is a complex concept that brings together different theories and practices whose only commonality is to understand that new structures based on cooperation and collaboration are key along with the more traditional forms of social organizations in tourism (Bevir, 2011). Among the different proposals on the development of governance, it becomes clear that stakeholder networks, collaboration and cooperation are most important (Bramwell y Lane, 1999; Dredge, 2006; Pavlovich, 2008; Reed, 1999; Scott, Baggio, & Cooper, 2008). Tourism destination management has been searching for new ways in which different stakeholders can be involved in Destination Management Organizations (DMOs). Associations between stakeholders have different names and structures and can be constructed in-between the private sector, the public sector or between both. Different types of collaborative structures are based on a variety of forms: partnerships, corporations, joint ventures, collaboration in specific areas such as marketing, relations in the value chain, business networks, however, they all depend on the level of commitment and functionality that each stakeholder assumes.

This paper argues that the choice of a DMO model must be based on previous research and should focus on three specific characteristics: characteristics of the tourism destination, the importance of the tourism activity in the destination and the maturity of collaboration between the stakeholders. The following table shows the main categories, dimensions, indicators and sources for the creation of a DMO.

Table 1
CATEGORIES, DIMENSIONS, INDICATORS AND SOURCES FOR THE CREATION OF A DMO

Category	Dimension	Indicator	Source
Characteristics of the tourism destination	Tourism Resources	- Development degree of tourism resources and products in the destination	- Bibliographic and data analysis - Analysis of the tourism information generated by the destination
	Tourist Behaviour	- Homogeneity/Heterogeneity degree in the visit	- Bibliographic and data analysis
	Tourism Supply	- Diversity of the tourism offer Maturity degree of the tourism offer	- Analysis of primary sources in the destination - Semi-structured interviews of tourism stakeholders
Level of importance tourism in the destination	Level of tourism dependence		- Bibliographic and data analysis
Maturity of collaboration between the stakeholders	Know-how of Public Institutions	- Previous existence of a tourism administration	- Analysis of primary sources in the destination - Semi-structured interviews of tourism stakeholders
	Know-how in collaboration		- Analysis of primary sources in the destination - Semi-structured interviews of tourism stakeholders

Source: Elaborated by the author.

The case study takes place in Aranjuez. Primary data from statistical sources were used and 21 interviews were conducted with public and private stakeholders involved in the tourism destination.

The main conclusion of the investigation shows that the tourism situation in the destination would not allow for a proposal of a destination management organization. It is necessary to go through several previous phases. The first one is based on the creation of a simple organization that could increase the degree of mutual understanding and trust between private and public sector. The organization should be well defined with clear common objectives. In a second phase, it could expand the level of agreement and design an institution with more competences.

However, tourism stakeholders have shown a high degree of interest in the idea of creating a public-private management organization. For this to happen, local businesses and associations should be open to this type of organization although they may not clearly understand what the functions, financing model or operational level of involvement they might have in such an organization

Stakeholders perceive different areas and forms of cooperation in view to their characteristics or experiences they had in other entities or associative groups. A first group (a) commits to collaborating mainly in promotion, a second (b) proposes to generate different actions to create innovative and quality products, a third one (c) requires the proposal to be flexible so that they can be implemented to benefit everyone (an independent professional is suggested for the management of the organization) and the last group (d) suggests that prior to the creation of the entity it is important to generate a climate of trust through forums or meetings between stakeholders.

Furthermore, regarding the role of the private sector and facing the future direction of tourism in Aranjuez, it is necessary that the tourist companies maintain a long-term vision, create innovative tourism products and participate in professional associations.

However, tourism in Aranjuez will be successful and competitive only if the public administration encourages entrepreneurs through effective management communication channels to learn about the different initiatives.

The research has developed several conclusions that could be implemented in other destinations. First of all, the role of the stakeholders has changed in the last years and this change has introduced new forms of tourism destination management. Nowadays it is important that all stakeholders are involved in the tourism system through several strategies that promote cooperation and collaboration.

A second conclusion is that one of the basic tools for working together is the creation of an institution responsible for destination management. There are already successful collaborative experiences with very different dimensions that have achieved dynamic destinations and change the way of working for tourism development at the local level.

Third, to get positive results from the creation of a destination management organization is essential to analyse the specific context, the characteristics of the destination and the cooperative culture within it. Only then can we determine the possibilities and limits of this type of institution, since there is no theoretical model that can be implemented directly.

Another conclusion of the study is that the indicators to be observed are those linked to the actual dependence on tourism for the city. This will determine the degree to which it is necessary to modify the forms of tourism management. It is also important to analyse the previous institutional development in view to tourism, its experience, the leadership and credibility of proposals. It is relevant to know the maturity of the private in order to determine the profile of the private stakeholder and its partnership vocation as well as the expectations of a public-private platform. And finally, it is basic to know the areas that could be understood by both sectors as potential areas of joint collaboration.

The overall conclusion of the study is that there is no theoretical model of a tourism destination management organization that can be implemented directly at any tourist destination. The specific context and conditions are the most important items to define what type of institution management is possible to design and implementation. The categories and dimensions proposed can help in the diagnosis and allow pre-designing the most appropriate and effective model of destination management organizations.

