

# Coordinated **marketing** and dissemination of **knowledge**: **Jewish heritage tourism** in Serra da Estrela, Portugal

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**Abstract** | It is logical to assume that coordinated marketing among all partners involved facilitates dissemination of knowledge regarding the marketed object. This study sets out to prove to what extent this assumption operates in marketing places for tourism. Specifically, the study explores the coordination between a regional agency and local municipalities in their efforts to introduce a new tourism product that of Jewish heritage tourism in the peripheral towns of Serra da Estrela, Portugal. The study utilizes internet site content analysis as its source of data. The data provide evidence that coordinated marketing is rewarded by synergic dissemination of knowledge regarding the new tourism product offered in those locations cooperating with the regional agency, and vice versa.

**Keywords** | Jewish quarter, synergic effect, internet site content analysis.

**Resumo** | É lógico assumir que uma estratégia de marketing organizada e implementada por todos os parceiros envolvidos facilita a difusão do conhecimento relativamente a um produto. Este estudo pretende provar até que ponto se verifica esta hipótese quando analisadas ações de marketing no setor do turismo. Especificamente, o estudo explora a coordenação entre uma agência regional e os municípios locais, no âmbito da introdução de um novo produto turístico: o turismo ligado ao património cultural dos Judeus nas cidades periféricas da Serra da Estrela, Portugal. Como fonte de informação, é utilizado e analisado conteúdo disponível *online*. Os dados confirmam que uma estratégia coordenada de marketing é compensada pela difusão sinérgica do conhecimento do novo produto turístico oferecido nas localidades que cooperam com a agência regional, e vice-versa.

**Palavras-chave** | herança judaica, efeito sinérgico, análise de conteúdo de *Website*.

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## 1. Introduction

The objective of this study is to examine the crucial role coordinated marketing plays on successfully advertising locations promoting a new tourism product. Advertising success is then traced by following the dissemination of knowledge via the internet (Doolin *et al.*, 2002). A well-coordinated marketing among all partners involved may yield synergic returns (Tjostheim and Aanonsen, 1997; Laws *et al.*, 2002). Uncoordinated marketing, on the other hand, can be harmful to the development of the tourism product due to allured trips ending with low level of satisfaction or disappointment.

The case study to be examined is the product of Jewish heritage tourism as is developing in a cluster of cities and towns in the Serra da Estrela region in Portugal. (For the advantages of developing tourism products in regional clusters see Breda *et al.*, 2006.) The development of the Jewish heritage tourism product is underway in several European countries especially those endowed with rich Jewish heritage histories (Gruber, 2002; Ashworth, 2003; Flesler and Melgosa, 2010; Russo and Romagosa, 2010). This product is based on old Jewry-related tangible relics and intangible spiritual assets that have stayed intact or are newly discovered.

Despite Portugal's rich Jewish history, its Jewish heritage tourism did not receive, as of yet, attention in the English academic literature. There are several well-known Jewish heritage sites in Portugal such as Porto, Tomar, and Guimarães. This paper concentrates on the development of the Jewish heritage product in the less traveled peripheral area of Serra da Estrela (Vaz and Dinis, 2007; Reis Silva *et al.*, 2009). Although the difficulties stemming from the peripheral location will not be treated in this study (Fonseca and Ramos, 2012) it is clear that such a location calls for a well-planned coordinated marketing.

Accordingly, this study aims specifically: a) to examine the coordination of marketing between the regional tourism agency and the local municipalities,

and b) to estimate the correlation between the level of marketing coordination and the level of knowledge proliferation regarding the Jewish heritage product of the cities and towns included in the marketing campaign. It is hypothesized that this campaign can be defined as uncoordinated marketing endeavor. This hypothesis is based, first, on the usual difficulties in coordinating and carrying out a unified policy among two tiers of governmental bodies. And second, it relies on the assumption that no equal enthusiasm is expected among all municipalities to seriously promote a heritage product that belongs to a culture other than their own (Ashworth, 2003). It is further hypothesized, based on simple logic, that the level of dissemination of knowledge is correlated with the level of marketing coordination.

## 2. Literature Review

To avoid excessive length this review concentrates on the marketing of places for tourism. An appropriate starting point would be Ashworth and Vooged's (1994: 17) conclusion that "tourism place marketing is a distinctive form of marketing". They also suggest drawing attention not only to the place aspect but also to the type of product involved. This literature review also excludes public-private collaborative alliances due to the special complexities involved (e.g. Selina and Myers, 1998). Such alliances greatly differ from the case of the public sector marketing dealt with in this study.

Instead, in congruence with the players present in this study, the review concentrates on collaboration between public agencies. One of the leading scholars in this area is Yucheng Wang (2008a, 2008b). His contribution refers specially to the role played by Convention and Visitor Bureaus (CVBs) as destination marketing organizations. CVBs are complex organizations. They represent varied and often competing interests of a large number of private and public players. As a consequence, Wang concludes

that intra- and inter-organizational collaborative operations must be carried out with a great sensitivity. Sometimes, this collaboration reaches a state of cooperative competition or competitive cooperation termed cooptation (Wang and Krakover, 2008).

In this study, the term 'coordinated marketing' is preferred over collaborative marketing used by Wang due to two reasons: a) the official organizational structure of marketing in Serra da Estrela is less complex than in the case of the CVBs. It is at the level of public to public agencies cooperation; and b) the product this study focuses on – the Jewish heritage product – is very specific and most often treated as rather marginal in relation to the main product of the places at hand. Under these circumstances the less demanding term 'coordinated marketing' seems to be sufficient to describe the level of cooperation required and there is no need to resort to the more binding term 'collaborative marketing'.

The same logic leads to reluctance in linking this study with network marketing theory since it usually pertains to complex local or international systems (Buhalis and Licata, 2002). Nevertheless, Li and Petrick (2008), following the presentation of three marketing paradigms, suggest a definition which appears to fit both simple and complex organizational structures. They state that "the notion of networks seems to be particularly relevant to the tourism context, where various tourism suppliers cluster together to provide an experience of value to tourists" (Li and Petrick, 2008: 239). The applicability of network theory to a smaller organizational scale has been demonstrated by Saxena (2005) with respect to a national park. In this study the desired network is composed of two tiers, that of the regional tourism office and the municipal offices, although the national tourism authority may be drawn in as well.

The research on the operation and success of destination marketing at the local municipality level is scarce. An example is Prideaux and Cooper (2003) summarizing in their abstract that "the role of local government authorities is essential if destination marketing authorities are to operate effectively".

Accordingly, this study focuses on the effectiveness of the coordinated marketing between the local authorities and the regional tourism office.

### 3. Methodology

The assessment of the levels of coordination and knowledge proliferation is conducted mainly via the internet using Google as the search engine (Pan *et al.*, 2011). The cities and towns included in this study are those nine municipalities advertised in a brochure named "Ancient Jewry Routes – The Last Sefarad Secret Jews" distributed by the office of Turismo Serra da Estrela in 2011. This brochure allures tourists to visit one or more of these nine towns and see their Jewish relicts. The first question examined here is to what extent the municipalities are prepared to meet this challenge by enhancing the campaign through their own resources? One of the most effective and least expensive ways to advertise local visiting sites is through the municipal internet site. Google's internet sites of each of these localities was looked up and searched for the inclusion of information on Jewish related topics. High level of exposure of the Jewish heritage product means a good level of coordination with the regional marketing campaign, and vice versa.

The second question raised in this study refers to the correlation between the level of coordination and the level of dissemination of knowledge regarding the Jewish heritage of the Serra da Estrela towns? The level of dissemination of knowledge was examined via Google's search engine in English and Hebrew. This was done by inserting the name of the town, adding Portugal as the country, and examining the first 20 sites returned by Google. The representation of the Jewish issues in these sites has been coded in three levels: 1 - Special entry wholly devoted to the Jewish topic in a specific city, 2 - Information provided on Jewish heritage as part of the site, and 3 - Jewish heritage mentioned briefly only in

passing. The depth of description that was found in such content analysis testifies to the success of the marketing campaign. Given the small sample size and the use of indirect surrogate measures this study should be considered as an exploratory research.

4. Main Results and Contribution

Table 1 presents the results of a search for Jewish heritage references in the sites of the nine municipalities included in the study. Only the town of Belmonte has decorated its homepage with Jewish symbols and provided ample information on its Jewish touristic assets. The information provided

for this town can be regarded as fully coordinated with the regional tourism agency’s campaign. Three other localities – Guarda, Pinhel and Trancoso – did not publish their Jewish connection but briefly in an internal page usually in the tourism section. No reference to Jewish heritage was found in the other four places (no municipal site was found for Linhares de Beira). It can be concluded that the utilization of the municipal sites as a resource for advertising the developing Jewish heritage product is below the average. The level of coordination of the marketing campaign between the localities and the regional tourism office can be described as low to medium. This diversity can, at least partially, be explained by the variation in the local richness of the Jewish history. Nevertheless, in order for a newly developing product to be successfully incorporated as part of the local touristic resources one would expect a higher level of advertising coordination to be attained.

Table 2 presents the results of an examination of the sites returned by Google (in December 2011) when words entered were the name of the town and the country. For each city and town, the top 20 sites were examined for content related to Jewish heritage information. The municipal sites covered in Table 1 were excluded. There is a significant difference in the level of exposure of the Jewish heritage tourism product among the nine cities and towns.

Table 1 | Results for searching reference to Jewish heritage tourism via Google using keywords: “Câmara Municipal de . . . , Portugal”

Cities and Towns	Municipal Site		Index
	Mentioned	In home page	
Belmonte	Yes	Yes	3
Covilhã	No	No	0
Celorico da Beira	No	No	0
Guarda	Yes	No	1
Gouveia	No	No	0
Penamacor	No	No	0
Pinhel	Yes	No	1
Trancoso	Yes	No	1
Linhares da Beira	Site Not found	Site Not found	0

Index: Homepage = 2, Mentioned = 1.  
Source: Author’s survey, December 2011.

Table 2 | Number of internet sites presenting the topic of Jewish heritage in towns and cities in Serra da Estrela, Searched via Google’s 20 top sites, December 2011

Cities and Towns	English				Hebrew			
	Special	Part of	Mention	Exposure Index	Special	Part of	Mention	Exposure Index
Belmonte	2	3	0	12	6	6	1	31
Covilhã	0	1	1	3	0	0	1	1
Celorico da Beira	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Guarda	1	1	1	6	1	3	6	15
Gouveia	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Penamacor	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pinhel	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Trancoso	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3
Linhares da Beira	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0

Index: Special = 3, Part of = 2, Mention = 1.  
Source: Author’s survey, December 2011.

Without any doubt, the leading town in the region is Belmonte with six special sites in Hebrew and two in English dedicated to Belmonte's Jewish features (Table 2). The town's index of exposure reached a high level of 31 points, well beyond Guarda's, the second in the list. This high level of exposure appears to be, at least partially, the result of a synergic return to Belmonte's well coordinated marketing. Belmonte earned its leading status due to three Jewish elements: the return of part of its Conversos community to Judaism after living 500 years in disguise, the local Jewish Museum, and the newly built Jewish synagogue.

Second to Belmonte is Guarda. Jewish tourism of this city has two special sites and several partial exposures in the internet. The main Jewish features in Guarda are the mezuzah (a piece of inscribed parchment affixed to the doorframe in a decorative box) holes changed to crosses in the old Jewish quarter (Judaria), and the story related to Inês, the beautiful daughter of a Jewish shoemaker, who gave birth to an illegitimate son of King João I. This child, Afonso, was later bestowed as the Duke of Bragança.

The municipalities of Belmonte and Guarda confirm the hypothesis of the correlation between coordinated marketing and level of potential exposure. This hypothesis is also confirmed by the towns of Celorico da Beira and Penamacor. Both towns exhibit no advertisement in their sites and no exposure in the internet. The town of Trancoso fits the hypothesis owing the Hebrew internet sites. The other four towns portray a slight disagreement. While Pinhel did insert its Jewish connection in its municipal site (to some extent) yet is not rewarded by internet exposure, the other three towns – Covilhã, Gouveia, and Linhares da Beira – did not mention their Jewish assets in their municipal sites, yet nevertheless, gained some minimal internet exposure. Despite the slight disagreements, there is quite a good fit between the index of exposure on the internet and the index of coordinated marketing as hypothesized. (For the English index  $R^2=0.66$  ( $p > 0.008$ ). For the Hebrew index  $R^2=0.85$  ( $p > 0.0005$ ).

## 5. Limitations

The methodology applied in this study carries side by side with its strength several limitations. The strength of the study lies in its very clear and unbiased data collection method. However, the data collected is very technical and could have benefitted from supplemental information brought into the study from other sources. For instance, interviews with decision makers both on the regional and municipal levels could have explained the reasons for the seemingly uncoordinated marketing campaign or may reveal preference for alternative channels of network marketing. However, ignoring the cost effective advertising method through the municipal sites is almost unforgivable in case there is a genuine intention to develop the local Jewish heritage product.

Interviews may also reveal the temporal aspects of the marketing campaign and peculiarities related to the network organizational procedures. It may well be that different municipalities have joined the network of Jewish heritage tourism in the Serra da Estrela region on different dates and the newcomers are still lagging behind with their marketing efforts. In the same vein, it may well be that some places, such as Belmonte, have preceded the development of their Jewish heritage product to the formation of the network, thus gaining a relative advantage over the other places. In further research the variation of the unique qualities of the local Jewish artifact should be evaluated and incorporated within the study.

## 6. Conclusions

Despite the obvious limitations this study has successfully pointed out that:

1. The marketing campaign for the Jewish heritage product of the Serra da Estrela towns is presently not operating in a fully coordinated manner.

The regional tourism office advertises a product that is not wholly supported by all individual members of the cluster (Breda *et al.*, 2006; Novelli *et al.*, 2006). It appears that network marketing in this region has to be tightened (Li and Petrick, 2008).

2. There is a high positive correlation between the level of marketing coordination among the regional and local agencies and the exposure gained through the internet. This seems to point toward the operation of a synergetic effect wherein the total benefit gained through cooperation (in terms of knowledge dissemination) is larger than the benefit expected from the direct cost (Pratt *et al.*, 2010).
3. More research is required, especially in the form of personal interviews, in order to further validate and fine-tune these findings.

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