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Place branding for local sustainable development

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Problem statement

Threat of the cultural heritage in the Mediterranean food domain.
Global markets put pressure on the competitiveness of farmers and small food enterprises.
Consumers tend to give up the traditional Mediterranean Diet in favour of western industrialized food.

Research project

Assess options for developing a collective territorial brand for Chefchaouen (Morocco), as strategy for promoting and adding value to traditional food products and tourism services.

Objectives of place branding:

- improve competitiveness of rural areas
- enhance smallholders' incomes
- ensure food security
- protect cultural and natural heritage



Research questions

- What is the nature and functioning of place brands? What is their link to embeddedness?
- How can the impact of place brands be measured?
Do place brands lead to local sustainable development and enforce cooperation?
- What are the preconditions for developing a collective territorial brand for Chefchaouen, Morocco?
What kind of governance and institutional arrangements are therefore needed?

Methodology

1. Benchmarking of four European cases of place branding.
2. Impact analysis of the place brand Sud de France via interviews with key stakeholders and an online consumer survey.
3. Field research in Chefchaouen, including interviews with public and private stakeholders to investigate the potential for developing a place brand.



Results

1. Comparison of the four European place brands

	Produit en Bretagne (<1993)	A taste of Cork (< 1998)	Sud de France (< 2006)	Echt Schwarzwald (< 2008)
Governance & funding	Initiated and governed by the private sector . 85% private funding, 15% public subsidies.	EU LEADER II funding 50%; remainder financed by the private sector. From 2006, fee-paying scheme. Public-private partnership .	100% public funding & governance by the Languedoc-Roussillon government.	Transition: First supported by local communities, later financed & governed by private sector.
Cooperation & impact	Largest economic network of the region . Consumer studies show high brand awareness.	Strategic cooperation between tourism & food. Increased local employment . Improved use of natural resources . Better access to markets.	Policy aim to develop a sustainable network. Growing number of participants. Better access to export markets . Increased sales.	No formal network until now. Interest from other countries. 50% sales increase from 2009 to 2010 .

2. Impact of the brand *Sud de France*

Key example: "The brand has two values:
An economic one for enterprises, as communication and commercialization tool.
An institutional one that gives value to the region as a whole, by increasing the awareness and creating a common strong identity. This includes an extension of the brand to other sectors."
Laurence Serrano, Conseil Régional Languedoc-Roussillon

3. Preconditions for a place brand in Chefchaouen



Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numerous natural and cultural assets. • Popular tourist destination. • Label UNESCO for the Mediterranean Diet. • Strong commitment of local authorities and associations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No visibility and commercialization of local assets. • Lack of sensitization for brands among consumers. • Problems of coordination & cooperation among different local actors.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National agricultural plan (<i>Plan Maroc Vert</i>) to valorize typical food products. • Strategy of eco-tourism for the natural park Talassemtane. • First initiatives of inter-sectoral cooperation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The national plan to develop Geographical Indications in Morocco is a little bit forced." • Dominance of cannabis plantation in the region. • Multitude and incoherence of different donors and development projects.

Conclusions

- A collective place brand for Chefchaouen may contribute to preserve the Mediterranean food heritage and lead to local sustainable development; however, a strong local (public-private) governance structure and financial support are imperative.
- Further research is needed on the cooperation mechanisms in the target area to define institutional arrangements.

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