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Regional Food Products in the Tourist Home Country. The Case of South Tyrol

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Abstract

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This thesis investigates the relationship of regional food products in the tourist home country with destination marketing and management at the example of South Tyrol. South Tyrol was chosen as research area, because the 2 sectors have, on their own, a big standing in the region as well as a cooperate in many different ways. This has led to a symbiosis inside and outside the destination, making it an interesting area to research. While the interplay of the culinary assets of a destination with tourism within the destination is increasingly recognized, developed and used by researchers, planners, companies, and authorities, the possible relationship of these sectors outside the destination remains an under-researched area. As Alderighi et al. (2016) found out in a study, an (empirical) connection between the availability of local specialties in the tourist home (markets) and the intention of (re-)visit the place is evident. Therefore, this thesis uncovers different tools and mechanisms in (destination) marketing and management for the incorporation of regional food products in the tourist home country. Additionally, experts from the sectors of food and tourism, DMO, will share their considerations and limitations. Theory and practice will be opposed, whereas the concepts of “region branding” and “sensory destination marketing” will be elaborated.

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1. Introduction

The globalization is affecting major pillars of our society, e.g. the food industry. Through rapid technological advancement and rampant goods traffic, the availability and diversity of food products is increasing in the stores around us. There are concerns that the corporatisation and "Mc Donaldization" of the world leads us towards a "global cuisine", where flavour, taste and appearance will be standardized to suit the "average world citizen" (Mak et al., 2012a). It can be said that the famous dishes of the world (burger, pizza, curry, sushi) are omnipresent, which is led by the globalization processes. At the same time by recognizing the whole world as one, a new way of differentiation is introduced, Robertson (1995) describes it as glocalization: differentiation-within-sameness. The diversity of food products in the market, availability of restaurants of different ethnic cuisines, as well as increased travel opportunities are progressively educating us and raises the awareness for the variety of tastes (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Mak et al., 2012a). Furthermore, through the mere-exposure effect¹ the consumer tends to evaluate these products more positively (Hekkert et al., 2013). In addition, regions are rediscovering their culinary and agricultural roots while acknowledging the positive economic, environmental and cultural impacts the development has for them.

These developments are also affecting the tourism food sector, where culinary tourism is rising, and goods are available all around the world to please tourists. A differentiation of /competing between destinations through culinary heritage is happening and food, wine and tourism industries rely on regional and national branding for market leverage and promotion (Hashimoto & Telfer, 2006). Nowadays the tourists are more aware of different cuisines, educated and interested in local heritage and able to visit (nearly) all places on the world (Mak et al., 2012). Different trends are supporting these developments. The "modern" tourist wants to be part of the local culture, its traditions and customs (experience - based economy), plans his own trip (individualisation), is interested in healthy, sustainable and ecological attributes and engages in social-media (Gnoth, 1997; Laura Sidali & Hemmerling, 2014; Yeoman & McMahon-Beatte, 2016) .

¹ The mere-exposure effect describes that repeated exposure to a stimulus leads to familiarity with that stimulus which in turn leads to liking, which Zajonc (1986) first found out with a series of experiments with Chinese pictograms (Hekkert et al., 2013)

These sectors and developments have caught the eye of the academic world and a lot of research has been conducted on food and tourism, gastronomy, local food, and tourism and local specialities (Laura Sidali & Hemmerling, 2014; Lin & Mao, 2015; Stone et al., 2018; Tsai, 2016; Yeoman & McMahon-Beatte, 2016). The published articles focus on effects, developments and contributions inside the destination. Above all, the interconnectivity and the relationship of the destination with its tourists does not have to stop at its physical borders.

Therefore, it is at least surprising that the availability of local specialities outside the tourist destination and the effects of it has gained only little attention in the academic world. Especially keeping in mind, as Alderighi et al. (2016, p. 234) states:

"Contrary to local cuisine that is not really marketable outside the charming restaurants of a tourist region, local food specialities are also sold outside the place of origin. The availability of these products in food stores near their homes allows prospective visitors to get some idea of local traditions, and thereby increase their perception of the authenticity and attractiveness of the supposed place of origin. Moreover, for those travellers who have already spent a vacation in a tourist destination, the consumption of its local products (far from the place of origin) may help to keep an interest in that destination alive. In both cases, these local food products should make it more likely for customers to visit (or revisit) a tourist location."

Favoured by globalization and integrated logistics of regional products into the shelves of markets far ways from the place of origin, the increasing demand of regional, high-qualitative products for the consumer as well as the importance of destination marketing offers researchers, companies and destinations and their Destination Management Organization's (DMO) new possibilities to explore and take advantage of.

Crossover effects are known. So did Xu et al. (2018) found out in a study of Chinese tourists in England and their post-visit behaviour, that there are crossover effects between tourist satisfaction and tourist's positive attitude towards destination country's products. Furthermore there is also a positive connection between tourism destination image and product-country image (Elliot et al., 2011).

Alderighi et al. (2016) connected these topics and made an empirical study about the experience of local food specialities on the decision to (re-)visit a tourist destination. In their study about Italian tourist visiting mountainous (Italian) destination, they found out that there is a positive correlation between the consumption of typical products and the willingness to visit or revisit the products place-of-origin. Moreover, the stronger the appreciation of local products, the stronger the intention to (re-)visit a mountain place. The research proves that there are linkages between regional products and the destination that go beyond the simple consuming of the products. Additionally, the linkage of appreciation of local product and intention to visit the mountain area implies a market -expanding effect for all similar mountainous destination (Alderighi et al., 2016).

Alderighi et al. offered some empirical evidence that local specialities can influence the decision to (re-)visit a destination. This could be a great tool for a destination on an increasingly competitive market. To explore the possibilities this thesis will be fathom the destination of South Tyrol with the question:

"How can South Tyrol integrate regional food products in the tourist home country in their destination management and marketing efforts to enhance (re-)visits?"

To answer the research question, it will be important to explore the following side questions:

- What is destination management?
- Which tools/possibilities does a destination have for marketing?
- What is considered a regional product?
- Which linkages are there between regional food and tourism?

South Tyrol is a top-destination of Europe with tourism arrivals as high as Irelands (Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung (Wifo), 2017). The mountain destination presents itself as the link between the Alpine and Mediterranean region with local specialities from both parts. Economical wise it is an export-oriented region with a high share of the agricultural exports e.g. South Tyrol has the largest continuous apple growing area in the EU (BLS, 2015) Furthermore, South Tyrol has an innovative destination management and marketing approach and is known for its regional product scheme "Qualität Südtirol" (Quality South Tyrol) . Evidently South

Tyrol meets the requirements regarding the research area as well as the described qualifications make it an interesting destination to explore.

This research will be supplemented by another research question. To understand collaborative, alternative solutions for South Tyrol and diversify the product spectrum, selected product from the regional scheme will be examined. For this reason, a hypothetical evaluation of the question:

Which alternative products of South Tyrol could be included to enhance the image and establish successful on the European market?

will be implemented. This display of practical implication from a marketing point-of view could help to further evolve and maximize the benefits of the relationship of regional products and tourism.

The detailed view into the destination of South Tyrol in this thesis contributes to this new research topic and tries to determine the key areas of interest for further studies. Furthermore, through the insights of South Tyrol and the hypothetical evaluation of products, general practical implications for the establishment of local specialities in the marketing and management of a destination can be drawn.

This thesis is structured as follows. After the introduction part, the underlying methods is examined. A closer look at the destination of South Tyrol is followed by the establishment of the theoretical framework through a comprehensive literature review. Through the interdisciplinary research involving different areas of research, it is indispensable to narrow down the topic from a general point of view. The theoretical framework will consist of underlying concepts from the literature of marketing and branding, destination management and image, and regional products. Followed by the theory, in the results section, qualitative interviews with experts from the destination and regional product associations will be summarized. After gaining some practical insights, with the hypothetical product evaluation, how marketing considerations of companies and destinations can be combined, the discussion part will set against the findings from data and interviews. Thereby, tools a destination has to incorporate regional products in the tourist home country will be highlighted. The thesis will be concluded with a summarization of findings as well as a lookout for further fields of engagement for destinations and researchers.

It has to be acknowledged that this thesis occurred during the COVID-19 Lockdown in Italy, which influenced the work. The experts dealt with a variety of newly occurring challenges, which are addressed and influenced the answer to the research question. The data gathering occurred (partly) online, which all experts agreed on, but was a challenge to the author to create a positive interview atmosphere as well as acknowledge body language.

2. Methodology

To investigate the role of food specialities in foreign markets for the destination, this thesis uses a case-study approach as research design to illustrate the underlying theory and mechanisms and test it on the example of South Tyrol. The Case-study is a research design where “the researcher explores a single entity or phenomenon (the case), bounded by time and activity and collects detailed information by using a variety of data-collection procedures during a sustain period of time” (Creswell, 1994). It is applicable when the research strategy is answering how and why question, control over behavioural events are not required but it is focused on contemporary events (Verschuren, 2003; Yin, 2003). The case study is the most flexible of all research designs, allowing the researcher to set boundaries (Yin, 2003). Nevertheless, this thesis is following the case study approach of Robert K. Yin in his book “Case Study Research – Design and Methods –”.

Yin (2003, p. 21) proposes that the following five components of a research design are important for a case-study:

- a study’s questions
- its propositions if any
- its unit(s) of analysis
- the logic linking the data to the propositions; and
- the criteria for interpreting the findings.”

The presented research question is following the approach and is answering a “how” question. The underlying propositions for South Tyrol, to enhance visits and revisits with local specialities, is their marketing and management efforts, which will be examined in the theoretical as well as practical part of this study. The unit of analysis is hereby the DMO of South Tyrol: Innovation Development Marketing (IDM) Alto Adige.

For “the logic linking the data to the propositions” and “the criteria for interpreting the findings” the tools and methods of this case-study has to be described in detail.

Considering that this is an explanatory study, a study that focusses on explaining the aspects of a problem that is not well researched before, and that for a qualitative case-study the underlying theoretical propositions have to be studied well before collecting data (Yin, 2003), an extensive literature review is performed.

First, the theoretical propositions get determined and different thematic areas described. Afterwards, the theory gets summarized and a theoretical framework gets created.

Through qualitative interviews with experts from the economy and DMO, the theoretical framework and its theoretical propositions get tested in a real-life context. Expert interviews are the logical solution for gathering data for this premise, because only the local experts have expertise or experience about the marketing and management efforts in foreign markets and the combination of tourism and regional products in South Tyrol.

Furthermore, the theoretical framework will set the criteria to interpret the findings. With the help of the analyzation tool "explanation building" the theory gets connected with the statements of experts.

Given the explanatory background of this research, a theoretical framework is essential. As already described, the part of research area is new and comparable results have not been published. The literature review therefore touches on the topics which are considered important and any literature that has a direct reference to this particular research area. There is no restriction on the period of time of the published literature, but the interlinked research areas and its suitable literature has mostly emerged in the last 10 years. As suggested by Yin (2003), for the theory development the ideas and topic were discussed with my professor and colleagues from EURAC Research to narrow down the specific areas and evaluate different approaches.

To gain insights of this new part of research area as well as reveal South Tyrolean specific information, qualitative interviews as well as internet research are conducted. Internet research was mainly used for the hypothetical product analysis. With a qualitative interview, especially with open-ended questions, the interviewee has the chance to explain his answer and offer a more in-depth look into the research area, which is from great importance for explanatory research like this thesis. Furthermore, through the under researched status of this research area, secondary qualitative data is not available, making it indispensable to collect primary qualitative data. For the selection, a non-random sampling was applied because this topic can only be answered by experts with expertise and/or experience in connected thematic areas. In total, four interviews for around one hour with experts were conducted. The interview approach was open, so that the

experts can explain their thoughts more freely about the interplay between regional products and tourism and the chance for follow-up questions was given. The experts were from the most affected sectors of this study: ham, apple and DMO. The wine sector (as third with a secured origin by the EU) was neglected for this study because wine is mostly consumed locally and, therefore, insignificantly exported to tourist home countries. All experts were in a leading position in their company and all of them were engaged in marketing and branding activities.

In the discussion part, explanation building is used as analysis technique. Explanation building is used to "explain" a phenomenon through a presumed set of casual links about it (Yin, 2003). An initial theoretical statement or proposition is thereby compared with the data findings, followed by a revision of the statement. This process, which in most cases is in narrative form, is done iterative until the "phenomena" is described. This is ideal for this qualitative explanatory study but accommodate the risk of drawing wrong conclusions (Yin, 2003). This thesis tries to minimize the risk through the theoretical framework.

The triangulation, which follows Creswell case-study definition of using a variety of data collection methods, is achieved through the literature review, qualitative interviews and the product analysis (Creswell, 1994; Schell, n.d.).

As a new part of research area, different approaches could be taken to explore it. Alderighi et al. (2016) for example used a quantitative study about mountainous area. Even as it functions as an empirical base for this study, the approach would not have been purposeful in this thesis. This study had to focus on one locality, because the stated questions demand a closer look into the processes in one destination to understand connections and synergies. Exploring the whole mountainous areas through a quantitative or multiple case study approach would have failed due to resource and time constraints.

Alderighi et al. (2016) research was exploratory, whereas this study focusses on an explanatory approach. A quantitative study could have directly investigated how strong local specialities of South Tyrol have affected the rate of visitation to South Tyrol. But his study or similar studies would not been able to answer the research question and also been impede through an insufficient data situation for example, exact export locations or the determination of travel reasons.

Internal validity could be a problem, which also occurs for this study because the visitation of South Tyrol can have several reasons. For example, to empirically link the availability of local specialities on foreign markets to the visitation of South Tyrol is congruent with the holistic approach of scientific work and could leave out other factors. This study is using the (proven) link to determine some of the tools a destination has as well as to see some practical insights how the determined tools are used. There are no statements that these are the only tools to use to succeed.

Case studies as research design have been linked with criticism of insufficient external validity since they are focussing on one specific locality with all its circumstances. As Yin (2003, p. 37) suggested the external validity is more given through analytical generalization, where "the investigator is striving to generalize a particular set of results to some broader theory". The findings of this study are hardly generalizable, because of the pristine situation of South Tyrol. However, the results "might be accepted as providing strong support for the theory" of the linkages of businesses and tourism (Yin, 2003).

The test on reliability, "the minimization of errors and biases (Yin, 2003)", is hard to achieve. The introduction, methodology as well as the appendix with interview question section allow the reader to follow the steps that have been taken by the author. A strong guidance increases the chance that another researcher could be able to produce similar results again. But it should be noted that through the open-ended interviews as well as hypothetical product analysis different answers as well as conclusions could be possible.

In conclusion, there is little basis for scientific generalization because it is a single case with minor empirical results. Nevertheless, this thesis tries to address the research gap and set a base for further studies. Additionally, the theoretical framework and statements of experts can influence destination manager and other marketing for successful destination planning.

3. Nostalgia Destination Südtirol/ South Tyrol

3.1. South Tyrol

South Tyrol is an alpine region in the north of Italy with autonomous status (Carlà, 2018; Sidali et al., 2017). It has approximately 500.000 Inhabitants and is the richest province in Italy and one of the richest in Europe. (Astat, 2020; Eurostat - Tables, Graphs and Maps Interface (TGM) Table , n.d.). Due to his moved history, it has strong influences from Austria and Italy and once was united with the Austrian Tyrol (Carlà, 2018). The official languages are Italian, German and Ladin (Carlà, 2018).

The capital of South Tyrol is Bolzano, which also inherit the economic centre of the region (Das ist Südtirol – Landschaft, Produkte, Menschen , n.d.). Further cultural and historic centres are Meran and Brixen (Das ist Südtirol – Landschaft, Produkte, Menschen, n.d.). In the centres, as well as further to the south, the influence from the affiliation to Italy is visible, whereas in the mountains regions the German-Austrian influence is predominantly (Carlà, 2018).

The climatic conditions in South Tyrol are special with big differences between summer and winter as well as valley and mountains (BLS, 2015). The alps protect South Tyrol from cold weather from the north as well as large moist air masses from the Mediterranean south (BLS, 2015). Therefore, the valleys are classified as subtropic, creating perfect conditions for wine and apple (BLS, 2015). On the other side, the mountainous areas are marked by colder weather, which are perfect for cattle farming (BLS, 2015).

South Tyrol is an export-oriented region (BLS, 2015). Agriculture is one of the biggest sectors, whereas other important companies include e.g. Oberalp (Outdoor apparel), Technoalpin (snow canons), Durst (Phototechnic) and Dr. Schär (Food) (Astat, 2020).

3.2. Tourism in South Tyrol

South Tyrol is one of the top tourist destinations in Europe with over 7 Million arrivals and over 11 Million overnight stays in 2016 (IDM Südtirol, n.d.-a; Sidali et al., 2017). The main markets are Germany (around 3.3 Million visitors) and Italy (around 2.5 million visitors) followed by Austria and Switzerland (IDM Südtirol,

n.d.-a). Besides this "neighbouring-tourism", new emerging markets includes the UK, Netherlands, Slovakia, Slovenia, France and Spain.

Pechlaner et al. (2012) describe South Tyrol as a typical community-based tourism destination in the European Alps, with diverse and multiple small to medium scale enterprises.

The accommodation structure shows an high share of 4 to 5 star hotels which also has the highest occupancy rate of all hotels with 63,9% (IDM Südtirol, n.d.-a). In the private hospitality sector, the most beds (24.819) are accounted for "Urlaub auf Bauernhof" (Holiday on the Farm). The agritourism concept introduced by "Roter Hahn" (red cock) is a special form of tourism, where tourist, mostly young families, stay and experience a farm.

South Tyrol main target group are the so called NANOS "Natur, Akitivität, Nachhaltigkeit Originalität", which in English are described by the term LOHAS "Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability (IDM Südtirol, n.d.-a, 2016b, 2016a). South Tyrol's visitor structure is multi-faceted but predominated by older couples and families and is attracting medium to high segment consumers.



Figure 1 Umbrella Brand South Tyrol (from dachmarke -südtirol.it)

South Tyrol bundles mayor part of his competences with the destination management/marketing organization "Innovation Development Marketing Südtirol" (IDM). Following newest destination development principles, IDM functions as a communication and marketing platform, facilitator of business and sector cooperation, strategic developer and marketing operative of the umbrella brand "South Tyrol" and the regional products brand "Quality South Tyrol", film developer and research hub. IDM approach is innovative and network-oriented, the marketing includes Co-marketing, content social media marketing, fairs but also the film commission can be seen as a source to transport the image of South Tyrol into the world (IDM Südtirol, n.d.-b).

South Tyrol main touristic offers are the beautiful nature with the alps and dolomites, the authentic culture, the agriculture and regional products and outdoor

activity. This is summarized by the umbrella brand "South Tyrol" brand promise: "*South Tyrol is a contrast-full symbiosis from Alpine and Mediterranean, spontaneous and reliability, nature and cultures.*" (IDM Südtirol, 2016a)

Landscape-wise South Tyrol fascinates with mountainous regions, (mostly) small-scale mountain and valley agriculture coupled with forest areas and historic centres. Even being an economic leader in Alpine technology, South Tyrol conserved its appearance as an authentic Alpine region. The mystic of the mountains, authentic culture and the conversation of the beautiful landscape as well as architecture might evokes nostalgia feelings in the (mostly urban) tourists (Pechlaner et al., n.d.).

Popular outdoor activities can be divided into winter and summer sports, whereas 60% of guests come in the warmer months in spring, summer and autumn and 40% in the winter months (IDM Südtirol, n.d.-a). In the winter, tourist as well as locals are mainly engaged in ski activities, snowshoe hiking and sledding. In the summer outdoor activities like hiking, cycling and downhill biking are popular.

Culinary-wise South Tyrol impresses with a Mediterranean-Alpine mix. Both influences can be found in the Tyrolean cuisine. Mediterranean influences like wine, coffee culture and southern fruits are incorporated through the Italian population, mostly in the more urbanized districts of South Tyrol. The Alpine cuisine, which still dominates the customs and traditions, fascinates with local ham, dumplings, and bread. Regional products and local specialities are an important factor to the tourists visiting South Tyrol. They are a figurehead for all major markets (Germany, Italy, Austria and Switzerland) as well as important for the emerging markets Czech Republic and UK (IDM Südtirol, 2016b).

An internet evaluation in the concept "South Tyrol Tourism 2030" showed some insights of the main attraction points and landmarks of South Tyrol; the landmark of South Tyrol are the Dolomites followed by the gardens of castle Trauttmansdorff, the city of Meran, the Southtyrolean Archeologymuseum with the "Ötzi", the Seiser Alm, Messner Mountain Museum, the three Zinnen, Skidistricts am Kronplatz, the therme of Meran and the city of Bolzano (Pechlaner et al., n.d.).

For marketing and management purposes these attractions are grouped under different headlines. So are the main topics for tourism in South Tyrol according to

the Concept from EURAC Research and WiFo "South Tyrol Tourism 2030" summarized under the headline "nostalgia": hiking and landscape, pleasure and culinary delights as well as hospitality. (German: Wandern und Landschaft, Genuss und Kulinarik sowie Gastfreundschaft (Pechlaner et al., n.d.). These are complemented by calm and retreat places, picturesque landscape, security and high water and air quality.

On the other side, the IDM developed 6 fields of interest for tourism under the title of "attitude of life" (German: "Lebensgefühl"): Relax & Wellbeing, Food & Drinks, Cities & Culture, Ski & winter, Bicycle and Hiking (IDM Südtirol, 2016b). The introduced concepts of "nostalgia", as well as "attitude of life" are interesting approaches to synergize tourism efforts and communicate a clear image to the tourist. Both terms, which can be seen as co-dependent on each other, are value-laden and evoke emotions that meet the Zeitgeist and will become important "pull" determinants for South Tyrol.

The inclusion of sustainability, environment and biodiversity protection, especially under presumption of the target group, are acknowledged to be from great importance for the tourism product of South Tyrol.

In the concept "Future, Tourism, South Tyrol, 2030" cross-sector projects that combine different elements are seen as desirable and the collaboration between tourism and other sectors, mainly agriculture, retail and rural development should be enhanced (Pechlaner et al., n.d.). Only with inter-sectoral cooperations, which is introduced by the IDM, can remain and expand its position as one top destinations of the Alps. Pechlaner et al. suggests regional products as a lever for tourism to incorporate sustainability more.

3.3. Umbrella Brand

To synergize the different sectors, mainly tourism and agriculture, and strengthen them in their marketing efforts, an umbrella brand was founded in 2003 (Markenstrategie Dachmarke Südtirol , n.d.). The state of South Tyrol is the owner of the rights. The umbrella brand includes companies from tourism, agriculture and



Figure 2 Regional quality product scheme from www.dachmarke-suedtirol.it

companies from the production and service but also engage with own South Tyrolean “merchandise” like bottles, bicycle-wear and towel. At the core of the umbrella brand is a, South Tyrolean influenced, pool of images and text formation. So should the colourful mountains of Fig.1 display the Dolomites. Images and text formation are made for every occasion, so that it transports a consistent image.

“Qualität Südtirol” (english: Quality South Tyrol) is the subsidiary brand for regional products of the umbrella brand Südtirol. At the “heart” of the brand are the four products with EU protected geographical origin: South Tyrolean ham, wine, apple and cheese, which have an exceptional cultural standing among the south tyrolean population. But Quality South Tyrol is, since a brand evolvement between 2015-2018 home to a broader spectrum of other products. This includes local specialities like Apfelstrudel (apple strudel) or Schüttelbrot (shaking bread), but also products with South Tyrol geographic origin like meat or jam. Together with the creation of a consistent image, the brand implemented its own quality scheme and regalement, which assures a high quality and local production (Pechlaner et al., 2012).

4. Marketing

4.1. The definition and the 4p's

The American Marketing Association defines Marketing as: "an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders" (American Marketing Association, n.d.). The underlying concept of marketing are the human needs and wants. Human needs in marketing are subdivided into physical (food, clothing, warmth, safety), social (belonging and affection) and individual (knowledge and self-expression) (Kotler & Armstrong, 2011). Kotler and Armstrong (2011) further describe that apart from the basic needs; humans have wants, which are shaped by culture and personality and becoming demands when backed up with buying power.

Basic considerations for a company engaging in marketing are the traditional 4P's: Product, Price, Place and Promotion, which have been converted in a new approach of marketing with a high emphasize on customer value and relationships into the 4 C's: customer solution, customer cost, convenience and communication (American Marketing Association, n.d.; Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM), 2015; Kotler & Armstrong, 2011).

To determine the 4p's and 4 c's for a destination is difficult because of the variety a destination has to offer. With regards to Chapter 3, South Tyrol is a high-quality Mediterranean/Alpine destination in the medium- to high price segment. The place is obviously South Tyrol and followed by all kind of communication strategies.

4.2. Implications for engaging in Marketing

Companies should understand which needs and wants they are serving to, so they can build customer relationships and deliver superior customer value (Kotler & Armstrong, 2011). With creating high superior value for the customer, the companies create highly satisfied customers, which stay local and buy more. Loyal customers are from great importance for a company because of long-term returns and loyal customers talk favourably about the company and its products (Kotler & Armstrong, 2011). Word-of-mouth marketing is considered as one of the most important and effective marketing types (Ndubisi et al., 2008).

The advertising can affect the customer in two different cases. In the first, advertisement immediately affect consumer awareness of a product and has a

direct impact on sales (Alderighi et al., 2016). In the second, advertising generates an accumulation of goodwill, which has a positive effect on sales. It should be noted that only long-term advertising has a positive effect on sale, while short-term advertising plays a negligible role (Bass et al., 2005).

Firms are trying to “leverage firm-customer relationships to gain privileged information about customers’ needs and thereby serve them better than competitors” (Ndubisi et al., 2008). These efforts merged into the concept of relationship marketing, with the goal “to create and maintain lasting relationships between the firm and its customers that are rewarding for both sides” (Ndubisi et al., 2008, p. 7; Rapp & Collins, 1992). With the consideration that a loyal customer is cheaper than attracting and serving a new customer, the firm activities in relationship marketing are predominantly directed towards existing customers (Ndubisi et al., 2008).

The concept is building on competence, trust, commitment, communication, and conflict handling between the consumer and the company (Gummesson, 2006). The buyers believe in the high competence abilities of the company in its field of expertise, communication is seen as an interactive dialogue between company and customer in all stages of consumption (pre-, consume and post) (Ndubisi et al., 2008). Conflict-handling reflect the company’s competence of avoid potential conflicts and solve conflicts before they get problems. The trust and commitment of a buyer towards the company can help to be forgiving and honour conflict-handling (Gummesson, 2006).

A high consumer satisfaction, which is closely linked to commitment and trust, is “affecting the buyers’ decision to continue a relationship” (Ndubisi et al., 2008). The consumer satisfaction judgement is yield through the comparison of the pre-purchase expectation set with the level of perceived product performance to the emotion reaching from unfavourable (dissatisfied) to favourable (satisfied). (Westbrook & Oliver, 1991).

5. Branding

The concept of branding is an important, powerful tool in marketing strategy (Pechlaner et al., 2012). The brand can have different functions. It allows the company's product to be differentiated from its competitors and concurrently the brand serves as an orientation for the consumer in the mass of products. (Christensen, n.d.; Pechlaner et al., 2012). Furthermore and with increasing importance, brands are tools of self-projection and self-expression for the consumer (Bastos & Levy, 2012; Christensen, n.d.; Fournier, 1998; Pechlaner et al., 2012). Bastos and Levy (2012) summarized: "At the root of all branding activity is the human desire to be someone of consequence, to create a personal and social identity, to present oneself as both like other people and unlike other people (e.g. to stand out), and to have a good reputation".

Branding literature developed a variety of subject specific terms. Brand equity summarize the most important terms brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality of a brand and brand association, which are further described in this section (Blain et al., 2005).

Nowadays branding efforts of companies include the incorporation of tangible and intangible values, which are summarized under the term brand association (Tregear & Gorton, 2005). Brand associations describe anything that is directly or indirectly linked in consumers memories to a brand, which include company-managed attributes like symbols, slogan, storytelling, taste, smell but also the consumers own emotions and/or stories (the most yummy apple after a long hike) (Fournier, 1998; Tregear & Gorton, 2005). Another important term in branding is the brand awareness, which describe the recognition of the brand through a customer under different conditions (Keller, 1993).

Companies use different tools to engage in branding and accomplish a high brand equity. In the past, branding and marketing has focussed mainly on images and product attributes like quality and price (Hultén, n.d.). Nowadays companies try to include all kind of senses to establish a high brand association. Sensory branding and marketing describe the inclusion of all five senses into the efforts (Berg & Sevón, 2014; Erenkol, 2015). Through the inclusion of different senses, a more personal and individual experience with a high emotional involvement with the brand is created (Hultén, n.d.).

"A high brand awareness coupled with strong, favourable brand associations will most likely influence the choice towards the brand through the customer, as well as foster loyalty with the brand" (Keller, 1993; Tregear & Gorton, 2005). Brand loyalty is from great interest for the company, because loyal customer will not only repetitively buy the product, they advertise the company through word-of-mouth and therefore enhance the importance for retailer and other stakeholders (Keller, 1993; Kotler & Armstrong, 2011). The consumer can be loyal to more than one brand, even from the same product category (Oppermann, 2000). Brand loyalty can evolve to a customer-brand relationship that stresses a long-lasting bond with a brand, which captivates through love and passion, commitment, self-connection, intimacy and interdependency (Fournier, 1998).

A company/corporate has different options in incorporating the product branding. These differ between if product and corporate brand are the same or differ from some connections to none (Christensen, n.d.; Pechlaner et al., 2007; Tomczak & Zupancic, 2004). Recent research indicates that the brand is always influenced by the corporate perception of the consumer (when it is known) (Christensen, n.d.).

Smaller companies and/or producer can engage themselves in an umbrella brand, which includes different products under one brand and its image (Pechlaner et al., 2007). Erdem (1998) found out that the positive perception of one is a positive influence towards the other ones.

6. The Destination

6.1. Destination Management

A Destination, a place that is developed for touristic purposes, consists of a variety of stakeholders like businesses, (local) authorities, NGOs and communities. It is of great importance to bundle the different actors with different views into a consistent tourism product (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Volgger & Pechlaner, 2014). The management of a destination is most of the time carried out by a Destination Management Organization (DMO) on local, regional or national level. The DMO is internally seen as a mediator and initiator for ensuring collective agency toward shared goals for the stakeholder network (Volgger & Pechlaner, 2014). External tasks are mainly driven towards the marketing and overall quality assurance of the place for the tourists (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). A consistent quality through all stakeholders which reflects the destination is important, because if only one link produces a bad experience, the whole vacation can be evaluated negatively (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003).

The importance to internally manage the place, e.g. to create synergies or enhance network, is rising for DMOs (Hristov & Petrova, 2018). Nonetheless, the main task is still to market the place and create a consistent, qualitative tourism product that is fitting the place (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Volgger & Pechlaner, 2014). Important marketing elements are the destination branding and advertising support (Blain et al., 2005; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003).

6.2. Destination image and brand

The concept of tourism destination image (TDI) emerged in the literature after Hunt (1975) examined the role of images in tourism development (Hunt, 1975). The importance and awareness of this concept is constantly increasing. Destinations around the world are increasingly competing with each other in attracting tourists (Botschen et al., 2017). They mainly compete for tourists based on their perceived image (Baloglu, 2001).

TDI defines the tourist's perception of a destination. In the research literature different definitions of the destination image have been described. In this thesis, the TDI will be defined as the "totality of impressions, beliefs, ideas, expectations, and feelings accumulated towards a place over time" (Kim & Richardson, 2003, p. 218). The TDI is not only important to market a place and

affect the choice of intention to visit a place, but is directly linked to the perceived quality and satisfaction with it (Bigné et al., 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007). Additionally, a positive TDI increases the intention to return and recommend the destination (Chen & Tsai, 2007; De Nisco et al., 2015), which can enhance a multiplier effect for a destination.

The image of a destination can be transported through a variety of channels, which are actively used by destination managers to market their place. They can use fairs and marketing campaigns to influence the perceived image. Research shows that the image is also transported through movies and popular culture (art, literature, lifestyle, TV and social media) as well as through news (Kim & Richardson, 2003). "As noted by Morgan and Pritchard, the power of constructed reality is likely to dominate any sense of objective reality" (Kim & Richardson, 2003, p. 219) and therefore destinations are recognizing the power of movies and popular culture for constructing an destination image and trying to engage in it (Kim & Richardson, 2003).

Hereby, the result of the TDI is drawn through two primary dimensions: cognitive and affective. The cognitive dimension relates to the beliefs and knowledge about the physical attributes of a destination like natural environment, cultural heritage, tourism infrastructures and atmosphere, whereas the affective dimension includes the individual's feelings towards the tourist destination (San Martín and Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008). It has to be acknowledged that the TDI is a multi-dimensional concept and its perception and formation differs through every individual (San Martín & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008).

The process of the formation of the TDI through a tourist is divided into stimulus factors and personal factor. (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Personal Factors can be further divided into psychological and social factors. Psychological factors include values, motivations and personality, whereas social factors include age, education and marital status. In contrast stimulus factors are described through information sources, previous experience and distribution, while the variety and type of information sources and previous experience have a significant effect on the perceived image of a tourist destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Hsu et al., 2004; San Martín & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008). Information source can include also products, so did Lee & Lockshin (2012) found out that positive product perception can influence the destination image (Lee & Lockshin, 2012).

Information sources and previous experience combined are determinant of the influential term familiarity . Familiarity is a an important driver of destination image and a major influence on destination perception and attractiveness (Baloglu, 2001). "Previous visitation or direct experiences with a destination is likely to alter and modify the image of the destination" (Baloglu, 2001). Destination familiarity is in most cases a desirable and positive association with a place, but is a tourist too familiar with a destination through information sources, the novelty of the destination is reduced or lost (Kim & Richardson, 2003).

Is a tourist familiar with a destination and has visited it (regularly), he/she can develop place attachment.

"Place attachment occurs when people develop dependency, identification sense of belonging or other emotional connections to a place that satisfies their functions after understanding and be coming familiar with the place through frequent contact with and participation in events and activities in the local place."(Tsai, 2016, p. 536)

With the further increase of importance to market a destination, a destination is becoming widely recognized as a brand. Emerging tourism studies have focussed on the concept of a destination as a brand and the related marketing concept of brand personality, which are supplementing the destination image.(Blain et al., 2005; Botschen et al., 2017; Kemp & Bui, 2011; Murphy et al., 2000; Zarney, 2010).

Destination branding is described by Blain et al. (2005, p.337) as

"the set of marketing activities that (1) support the creation of a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that readily identifies and differentiates a destination; th at (2) consistently convey the expectation of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; that (3) serve to consolidate and reinforce the emotional connection between the visitor and the destination; and that (4) reduce consumer search costs and perceived risk. Collectively, these activities serve to create a destination image that positively influences consumer destination choice" (Blain et al., 2005).

Consumers have the desire to express their desired -or actual- self through brands, which also applies for destination branding (Kemp & Bui, 2011). Furthermore,

loyalty towards a destination (=brand loyalty) is reachable and can be described through Tsai (2016) place attachment. However loyalty towards a place is more applicable on a lifelong approach than on a permanent and consistently visitation of the place (Oppermann, 2000).

Destination personality is "the set of human characteristic associated to a tourism destination" (Hosany et al., 2006) and part of destination branding and image. The brand personality is related to the affective destination image (Hosany et al., 2006), which as written above, reflects the individual`s feelings. This shows that the concept of brand association linked to Keller`s (1993) concepts of personality, express to self, locality is also applicable on destinations (Kemp & Bui, 2011). Destination brand associations can be influenced and are therefore from great importance to market a destination.

In conclusion, branding concepts also apply in destination marketing and management, with the destination image on the forefront as show-off to potential customers. Destinations managers use different techniques to reach a higher destination brand awareness, and at the same time hope for a high place attachment or loyalty towards the advertised place. But the concept of branding of a destination has some limitations. The destination consists of many stakeholders which have different views on the culture and even unique selling point (USP) of their place, making it hard to create a consistent image (Kemp & Bui, 2011). It is also argued that it is not desirable to limit a destination towards one image, since demand differ from individual to individual (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). Accordingly tourist can perceive the same attraction/ activity differently, making it hard to assure a high satisfaction through all tourist segments. To establish an authentic destination brand, all stakeholders, the culture and nature as well as the awareness of the multidimensionality of a place have to be included in the creation process (Kemp & Bui, 2011).

7. Regional Food Products

The category of regional products, hereby especially food with a culinary heritage, are products which are connected by essential characteristics with a particular place (Barrionuevo et al., 2019). These products reflect local features and evolved through the uniqueness each region has to offer (Chen & Tsai, 2007). Luceri et al. (2016) argue that a greater emphasis is considered on the regional than on the country-level, as a region is more homogenous and provides a more consistent image.

Regional products are associated with sustainable local development, environment protection, preservation of indigenous varieties of plants and breeds, family farming and sustainable farming practices (Barrionuevo et al., 2019; Cerjak et al., 2014). Food with local heritage contributes to the preservation of tradition, culture and identity, and supports local diversity and social cohesion (Cerjak et al., 2014; Kneafsey, 2010). But there are constraints to regional products through the limited space or quantity, whereas high-demand can lead to over-exploitation of local resources (Brunori et al., 2016).

Products with culinary heritage or regional attributes are from increasing interest for consumers (Kneafsey, 2010; Laura Sidali & Hemmerling, 2014; Lorenz et al., 2015). Yet, the interest is sparked off through some recent developments: recurring food scandals (Brunori et al., 2016; Laura Sidali & Hemmerling, 2014), change towards experience-based economy (Yeoman & McMahon-Beatte, 2016) as well as individualisation and branding.

Furthermore, the geographical area can create a unique identity for the product, which consumers connect with authenticity and tradition, but also health and safety (van Ittersum et al., 2003). Research showed that the perceived image must hereby match the product features (van Ittersum et al., 2003). The image of the region, but also the perceived attributes of the artisanal, creative character of regional products are attractive for consumer (Laura Sidali & Hemmerling, 2014). These effects should not be underestimated. The country image can serve as the evaluation criteria, even when the consumer is not familiar with products from the country (Luceri et al., 2016).

Ittersum et al. (2003) distinguished between the human factor and a natural environment factor describing the region-of-origin attributes. The natural

environment factor represents the natural and climatic situation with factors like soil, attitude and biotic environment (Barrionuevo et al., 2019; van Ittersum et al., 2003), whereas the human factor includes the local knowledge and expertise for making a specific product (van Ittersum et al., 2003).

The different factors can be seen in South Tyrol. The apple, ham and cheese have a high natural environment factor, through the local climatic conditions. Ham and cheese have additionally a high human factor, since both products have been produced already for centuries. Conversely, wine would be associated with a high natural environment factor and a rather small human factor in South Tyrol.

Through the close link of regional products between food, identity and culture some consumers can develop a deep, emotional association to the food and place that goes beyond a product evaluation and decision (Tregear & Gorton, 2005). The affective response can evoke feelings of pride, tradition, nostalgia or exoticism (Tregear & Gorton, 2005).

The added value is significantly influencing the consumer decision. Consumers are willing to pay a price premium for food, characterized as regionally produced (Lorenz et al., 2015). This can be described as the "place-of-origin" effect which is "a set of strengths and weaknesses linked to the place-of-origin that add or detract value from the product for consumers"(Chamorro et al., 2015). The consumer decision in evaluating the place-of-origin is not limited to the human and environment factor, but also includes the level of economic development and political situation (van Ittersum et al., 2003).

Companies can use the effect and the positive associations for branding the product, since consumer prefer products that reflect their actual-or desired-personality and they connect regional products with higher quality (Laura Sidali & Hemmerling, 2014; van Ittersum et al., 2007). Furthermore, through the place-of-origin branding, companies and manufactures can differentiate their product from foreign and other domestic competitors (Chamorro et al., 2015).

Traditional food is mostly produced through small- to medium-scale manufactures, producers and processors with a low budget and know-how for marketing. Hence regions or countries create umbrella brands to support and synergize marketing and branding efforts for this shareholders (Cerjak et al., 2014). In contrast, through umbrella branding, as well as branding through place-of-origin, the

marketing/ branding is not in the control of one company and is a common resource for multiple stakeholders (Raynaud et al., 2009; Tregear & Gorton, 2005). This can lead to inconsistent quality, inhomogeneous branding as well as the exploitation of the image through copycats (Raynaud et al., 2009). Additionally, through the affective response and relationship of consumers with the region and its products, the development of origin brand values is facing more constraints than is normally assumed in other sectors (Tregear & Gorton, 2005). Quality schemes and copyrights are important tools to assure a consistent quality and a homogenous image, which is especially of great importance for companies in the agri-food sector.

The differentiation, as well as quality assurance for the consumer is supported through quality and protection certification, which are also used in the branding strategies of companies. "Certifications provide a guarantee of product and process adherence to certain environmental, social and ethical standards at different stages in the value chain" (Chkanikova & Lehner, 2015).

The EU introduced a protection scheme for specific traditional products with three different labels: Protected designation of origin (PDO), Protected geographical indication (PDI) and Geographical indication of spirit drinks and aromatised wines (GI), which helps to promote their unique characteristics, linking them to their geographical origin and traditional know-how (Luceri et al., 2016).

8. The relationship of the destination and food

Along with the increasing awareness and popularity of regional products, the status of food for a destination is increasing. The development and popularity of culinary tourism, agritourism and food-related activities illustrate this development. In financial terms the importance get highlighted by the calculation that every tourist spends 25-35% of vacation expenses on food (Stone et al., 2018).

Food & gastronomy are driving factors in the choice of a destination and the satisfaction with it (Duarte Alonso et al., 2018). Tasting local food is an essential part of the tourism experience since it can serve as both cultural activity and entertainment (Hjalager & Richards, 2002).

The taste and experience of new, appealing food creates unforgettable memories (Tsai, 2016). This is in line with Stone (2018), who stated that food and drinks are significant for the tourists memory because they often involve all five senses and are triggering the affective, emotional, cognitive and physical dimensions (Stone et al., 2018). Additionally, at the place of vacation, local food specialities help to convey a sense of authenticity and uniqueness (Sims, 2009). Positive experiences affect the autobiographical memory and precise recollection of previous experience. Cheerful memories of food-related activities enhances the satisfaction with the destination and therefore the possibility of positive word-of-mouth, as well as retention and further purchase intentions as described in the marketing section.

But the tourist's satisfaction is even influencing the positive attitude towards destination country's products. A study of Xu et al. (2018, p.182) found out that "tourist satisfaction goes beyond the traditional tourism related constructs such as destination loyalty or revisit intention, to a broader consumption sphere" which they explain with the associative network theory of memory [...] "The theory suggests that our memory is an associative network that consists of nodes that are interlinked (Anderson, 2013)" (Xu et al., 2018, p. 182), which "means that a tourism experience that is stored in consumer memory can be activated when consumers access the products, service and brand originating from the destination they visited previously" (Xu et al., 2018, p. 182).

Vice versa, the gastronomy and food are important assets for the destination itself. "Agriculture, the food industry, and tourism are therefore complementary, and

characterized by upstream and downstream linkages and strong inter-sectoral multiplier effect” (Alderighi et al., 2016). Considering that food represents approximately one third of all tourist expenditures and variety of stakeholders involved in the business, it is a great tool to spread the benefits of tourism and foster local development.

For the management of culinary tourism, Harrington and Ottenbacher (2010) defined in their paper “six key issues: (a) a clear strategy, (b) strong cooperation among stakeholders, (c) leadership, (d) enhancing the regional culinary profile, (e) communicating quality standards, and (f) promoting regions as perceived by tourists” (Harrington & Ottenbacher, 2010). Tourist that are satisfied with the local cuisine express a higher attachment to the destination, which is a strategic goal of a destination.

Besides the rise of culinary tourism, the interlinkage of agriculture, food and tourism has created another type of tourism: agritourism. A rough definition of agritourism is the exchange of some sort of service from the farmer to the visitor in exchange of money (Fischer, 2019). The services in offer can range from hospitality over the sale of products to the participation in farm work/activities (Fischer, 2019).

In brief, the interlinkages at the destination between tourism, agriculture and local food are manifold and a successful interaction is important for the success and sustainable development of a destination. But there are also external interactions which are increasingly recognized and connected. Thus, the (destination) image of the region is used in marketing and branding efforts of regional products (van Ittersum et al., 2003) and regional gastronomy in the marketing in the destination. The travel to a destination can offer new insight into tastes, products and eating habits for tourist, which, in turn, can lead to changes in buying preferences and the import of goods from the destination (Fischer, 2019; Santana-Gallego et al., 2016).

9. Results

After gaining some theoretical knowledge, it will be valuable to see how do South Tyrolean expert interpret the connection between regional products and tourism?

To distinguish between the experts and to connect them to the summarized transcription in the appendix, the four experts will be anonymized as:

- Expert A, apple, retired, management
- Expert B, DMO, active, branding
- Expert C, apple, active, marketing
- Expert D, ham, active, management

The following section summarizes the most emerging themes from the interview analysis.

The interaction between regional products and tourism is strong in South Tyrol. All experts stated that the two sectors cooperate and work together in some of their marketing and branding activities. Sometimes they work together in a strategic and sometimes just in an operative way (e.g. IDM, as a marketing agency, carries out the assignments (in this case the apple associations)). Synergies are mutually, which the interviewed experts affirmed. Thereby, products are using the image of the destination for marketing purposes and the other way around. Gastronomy is in every advertisement (Expert B). This linkage is historically grown so was the ham distributed through tourism in the early stages of tourism and through the ham the destination of South Tyrol. Furthermore, the two products have a long history inside the destination and a "standing" among the locals. Every expert stated that it is really important that the South Tyrolean live, what has been advertised. All experts agree, that authenticity and quality is the basis for a successful engagement in any tourism or regional product marketing. Regional products can, thereby, be integrated into the destination management and marketing as Expert C states: "*Food is a mouthpiece for a destination, they are an ambassador for the destination if they have a strong connection to the heritage of the place and also communicate this. This is the case in South Tyrol since centuries. There is a comprehensive communication between the regional products and the destination. Food is connecting people. It is a language everybody understands.*" (Expert C).

Interestingly, the experts think that the tourists are first enjoying their vacation in South Tyrol and then engages in South Tyrolean products. These assumptions have been summarized by Expert D on point: *"there is a really close connection with people that make vacation, that also enjoy the ham (at home) than "* Thereby, the group of loyal tourists, around 80% come back for vacations, engages with South Tyrolean products. The experts from the regional products associations stated that their marketing is targeting these people. First, the interest is sparked by visiting an authentic gastronomy experiencing the typical South Tyrolean "Gemütlichkeit" (english Enjoyment) or by enjoying the idyllic beauty with its agriculture. Secondly, the tourist starts to be interested in the regional products. This experience with the local gastronomy is used in the communication/marketing of the regional products and especially tourism.

With the products the tourist can revive the feeling of his/her vacation again. This has been emphasised by Expert D in regard to the South Tyrolean ham (Expert D). The tourist has been in a South Tyrolean typical gastronomy and has experienced the South Tyrolean typical attitude of life. At home, he has the opportunity to engage in it again and share it with family and friends (Expert B, C, D).

The marketing of regional products outside the destination are primarily using the environmental and human heritage for marketing purposes. In total, the regional products experts stated that the heritage of South Tyrol, the Alpine-Mediterranean image, is there biggest USP. All experts stated that the umbrella brand "Südtirol" as well as the regional products "Qualität Südtirol" are important marketing and management tools and sets a common goal. The concept with the unification of appearance of so many diverse stakeholders is unique in Europe (Expert B). Additionally, the umbrella brand is the platform for exchange and also sets the guidelines for quality and heritage for the members, which Expert C summarized with *"The brand South Tyrol is the lowest common denominator "*. They are working closer together and use the synergies more (Expert D).

Cooperation between the different players is strong, so do the different regional products even engage, together with the DMO, in marketing activities collectively. Therefore, first the frame is discussed like target market and target audience and then South Tyrolean offers are market together. The target audience is differing most of the time, but the big markets Germany and Italy are interesting for all of

them. The marketing channels can be manifold, all companies have marketing efforts on the “regular” ones (TV, paper, internet, raffles). But there are also innovative concepts with live experiences like theme week in supermarkets, pop-up shops or the South Tyrolean house at the biathlon world championship. Inside the destination the regional producer use the local gastronomy (ham) or sport (apple) for marketing purposes.

Through the cooperation of the sectors, mainly through the umbrella brand, South Tyrol engages in marketing activities with a far smaller budget than big companies, but still reaches a quite big market. In any advertisement activity inside or outside the destination like fairs and delegation travel, they not only present themselves but also South Tyrol and the other products. If a journalist, a delegation, or an influencer is invited to South Tyrol, he will be surrounded by the products in his hotel to present a holistic South Tyrolean experience. This attitude towards togetherness and cross sectoral cooperation is seen as a big advantage by all of the active experts.

Negative effects differ for the different sectors, so that the apple has a limit-to-growth and the DMO is concerned about over tourism in South Tyrol. South Tyrol is dependent on its nature and is, therefore, environmental conscious. The mobility is seen, by the IDM, as the biggest challenge to further engage in sustainability (In the summer, all tourists want to go to the same spots and all with their own car). The ham consortium is trying to engage in packaging in a sustainable manner and nitrate-free options. The apple association sees itself as sustainable (which is not primarily advertised) with their mission statement. But efforts continue which include the packaging and logistics.

The experts are convinced, the effects of the COVID-19 Crisis cannot be estimated at the moment. But worries have been stated that the economic recession could be a problem. For the apple, there has been an increase in sales, but to secure production and logistics is a challenge. For the ham producers, there are differences in the company size. The big producers who sell to supermarkets have seen an increase, whereas the turnover from the small producers which sell to gastronomy is tending towards zero. There has been no tourism in the last two months, but the DMO still has a positive attitude. Expert B told that the hospitality and gastronomy sector do not want to go down in prices, when everything opens again. This shows some confidence and the belief in quality tourism for South

Tyrol. Expert B stated that Corona could be good for business on the long-term because the nature & sport tourism close to home could increase even more. Additionally, expert D stated that by buying South Tyrolean products at home, they can have at least a little bit of vacation.

10. Product Evaluation

10.1. Introduction

The theoretical framework introduced possible solutions to integrate regional products in the marketing and management efforts of a destination and explained the developments regarding regional food products. Based on the interviews and the acknowledgment of the standing of regional products in South Tyrol and the close relationship with tourism, it is interesting to practical investigate some further evolvement in the future.

South Tyrol regional products are flagships. Ham, apple and wine are distributed and known in locations around the globe while the larger South Tyrolean companies have own distribution structures. But the South Tyrolean economy has more to offer. Manufacturers and farmers region-wide are producing authentic quality products, thus, the brand Quality South Tyrol included new categories in their portfolio.

The following section will try to hypothetical classify some of these products, regarding the research question: Which alternative products of south Tyrol could be included to enhance the image and establish successful on the European market?

For a comparable analysis producing trustful information, only products which are under the "Qualität Südtirol" qualification scheme are chosen and evaluated. The main emphasize is on the customer-oriented product attributes and features, and development opportunities for the destination and its economy. The products will be selected and analysed through internet research from the website: www.suedtirolerspezialitaeten.com

10.2. Product evaluation Indicators

Since this is an analyzation of already existing products, the steps of company product development with the influence of all kinds of consumer needs will not be included. Nelson (1970) introduced the search- and experiences attributes for product evaluation which have been supplemented by credence attributes (Nelson, 1970). Search attributes are pre-purchase attributes like price and colour, whereas experience attributes (taste, convenience) are post-consumption evaluation

attributes. Credence attributes are taking an extra role, they include attributes like safety, environmental quality and health. Their perception differ from person to person and is therefore difficult to classify (van den Heuvel et al., 2007). In the assessment the search attributes will be summarized and presented in one category with bullet points.

The assessment of the product quality through the consumer can be organized in different characteristic groups. There are process-, product-, society- and psychological oriented quality characteristics (Engelage, 2002). Process-oriented characteristics describe characteristics like environmental-friendly growing habits and animal welfare. Society-oriented characteristics, which fall under credence attributes, can be sociocultural or socioeconomic impacts, like the support of the local economy (Sadilek, 2019). Psychological attributes include emotion towards exclusiveness as well as (local) patriotism or other feelings that affect the consumer when buying or consuming the product (Sadilek, 2019). In this product assessment, we follow van Ittersum et al (2003) study, that for the product evaluation of regional food products the consumer evaluates the suiting human and environmental factor of the region. This inherits most process- and product-oriented characteristics for the evaluation and will reflect these groups in the evaluation. If the product is achieving a high human or environmental factor, or a combination of both, an authenticity bonus will be given. As high-qualitative regional food products are emotional (Tregear & Gorton, 2005), the psychological and society attributes are of great importance. For the assessment, the criteria "exclusiveness" as well as "trend" will be added to the evaluation. "exclusiveness" and "trend" will be explanatory, e.g. "exclusiveness" includes considerations about the unique selling point or a special reference to South Tyrol and "trend" about the latest food trends.

Important to consider is that the importance of each attribute and characteristics among persons, and even for each person in different situation (Martin, 1998), as well as across different cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, there are differences in proposed purchase behaviour and actual purchase, which is called social desirability (Engelage, 2002).

The evaluation is missing out a lot of consumer-side product attributes and features. Experience attributes will not be part of the evaluation, because this is a hypothetical evaluation and experience attributes can not be measured without

empirical study. Since this is an evaluation of products from the "Quality Südtirol" scheme, some attributes/ features are already served to a high satisfaction, e.g. safety for the consumer, accordingly, they will also not be evaluated.

This product evaluation, which normally is only consumer-centred, will be supplemented through the following topics of "transportation of destination image" and "local sustainability" and their criteria. A company's product evaluation would most probably not include criteria like these, as these criteria are not consumer-oriented and, therefore, have only small to no direct value for the demand stimulation of companies. This evaluation will include these criteria because it follows the desired cooperation of tourism and agriculture stakeholders for marketing purposes, so that these criteria are destination-centred product evaluation measures. The offered products and their producers have not the resources to establish advertisement campaigns on foreign markets and need a partner, like IDM, for funding and usage of their marketing channels. The DMO with its pluralistic destination approach and the aspired inclusion of different stakeholders and their views justify the measurement of local sustainability.

Following IDM's and EURAC Research "Tourism Concept 2030", the "transportation of destination image" will include the criteria of "nostalgia" as well as "attitude of life". Nostalgia will be rated through the historical and natural context of the product towards South Tyrol, whereas "attitude of life" will be rated with reference to the South Tyrolean way of life and the South Tyrolean culture.

The measures for sustainability are important to consider for maximisation of benefits and minimisation of negative local impacts. The case study area, as well as the Qualität Südtirol scheme provide already high sustainability criterias. Therefore, the "local sustainability" indicators will consider "ecosystem service support", "local crop", "community involvement", "limit to growth" "animal health and welfare", "regional value" and "educational factor" (Gustafson et al., 2016; Jawahir et al., n.d.). The evaluation will be explanatory, and statement based, whereas specific activities and merits are highlighted.

To combine the two different approaches, the results of the evaluation will be juxtaposed and analysed in a portfolio analysis. A portfolio analysis, which originates from the finance sector but is also used for strategic planning, includes different alternatives/ products in a coordinate system (Organisationshandbuch - Qualitative Bewertungsmethoden , n.d.). The x-axis will be the DMO-oriented

evaluation and the y-axis the consumer-oriented. With this analyzation-model, it can be judged which is an promising product and a tool to successful represent the destination and its image.

For the consumer-oriented indicators, the evaluated profile of a German organic food consumer by Mutlu (2007) is set as reference. In his thesis, Mutlu found out that organic food consumers are predominantly singles or couples of all ages, having high education levels, a full-time job and belonging to middle income groups (Mutlu, 2007). The products of "Quality Südtirol" have high environmental standards and, therefore, qualify as organic food.

	Price (in €)	Weight	Product Details	Human Factor	Environmental Factor	Authenticity	Exclusiveness	Trend	Transportation of Destination Image	Local Sustainability
 <p>"Marteller" Strawberry-Jam by Seibstock</p>	6,20	270	Mountain strawberries (grown on average of 1300m above sea level).	Family Seibstock makes Jam since 1890.	The ingredients are not from the four products, but the Martelltal is known for his berry fruits.	Yes,	Strawberry jam is a product with a lot of competitors.	The trend of regionalism and individualism is supported	Nostalgia – Yes, mountain strawberry jam, specific for this location. Attitude of Life- No.	Seibstock is engaging in: -circular economy - Local crop - truly biology -100 % Regional and regional support of environment
 <p>Dried "Weiroug" apple by Luggin</p>	3,80	50	Weiroug is a special apple which is completely red. Higher Anthocyanin (good for detox) Luggin is the only distributor from South Tyrol.	Usage of specialized drying procedure but not related to South Tyrolean history.	Apple is an iconic part of South Tyrol	Yes, apple is so deeply connected that, even when South Tyrol is not market leader on drying, this is an authentic product.	Yes, a total red apple has an exclusive standpoint in the supermarket section-	Dried fruits keep all the nutrition's and vitamins and are therefore a healthy snack. Healthy snack is a trend	Nostalgia – No, Weiroug is not a South Tyrolean specific variety, Attitude of Life – Yes, healthy snack, perfect for mountain sports.	Besides "Quality Südtirol", no other indications for "local sustainability" online.

	Price (in €)	Weight	Product Details	Human Factor	Environmental Factor	Authenticity	Exclusiveness	Trend	Transportation of Destination Image	Local Sustainability
 <p>Treber Grappa – Winery Algrund</p>	n.d		Grappa made from specific South Tyrolean grapes	Winery Algrund makes Alcohol since 1909. Area known for strong alcohols	Grape is an iconic part of South Tyrol	Yes	Grappa is a popular product, grappa from specific South Tyrolean grapes is exclusive	Small manufacturer with high-quality but no specific trend	Nostalgia – Yes, wine cultivation areas Attitude of Life. Yes, south Tyrolean gastronomy big pull factor	Engages in preservation of culture and cultural landscape
 <p>Craft Beer style "Vienna Lager" from Batzen</p>	1,82	0,33	First beer from brewery, popular beer in South Tyrol at around 1900.	South Tyrol has a long beer tradition but not known for it.	Most resources from the region now, but South Tyrol hasn't been a beer resource producing region.	No	No, beer market competitive and not out-of-the-ordinary beer.	Craft beers are a huge trend.	Nostalgia – No Attitude of Life – Yes, sitting together in South Tyrolean gastronomy is a big factor of the destination.	-circular economy - reviving of old south Tyrolean recipes (cultural heritage) - development of south Tyrolean agriculture.
 <p>"Mountain pine oil" from Bergila</p>	10,95	10 ml	Etheric Oil for food, sauna and fragrance . Spicy and woody scent.	The extraction of oils is something not directly associated with South Tyrol.	Mountain pine is a typical resource of the alps.	Yes, mountain pine is authentic and the consumer would want the oil from an authentic source in the mountains.	No, big market of natural cosmetics.	Yes, natural cosmetics are a trend.	Nostalgia – Yes, alpine environment Attitude of Life- No	Usage of local plant.

10.3. Descriptive rating of the Products

“Marteller” Strawberry Jam from Seibstock is a product which combines a high human and natural environment factor. It is a high-quality product from a sustainable and future-oriented company. It transports the image from the alpine region and could be interesting for the consumers and destinations. The circular economy approach could be difficult on foreign markets. The competition in jams is hard and the price high. Rating on the basis of indicators: Customer: 4/5 Destination: 5/5

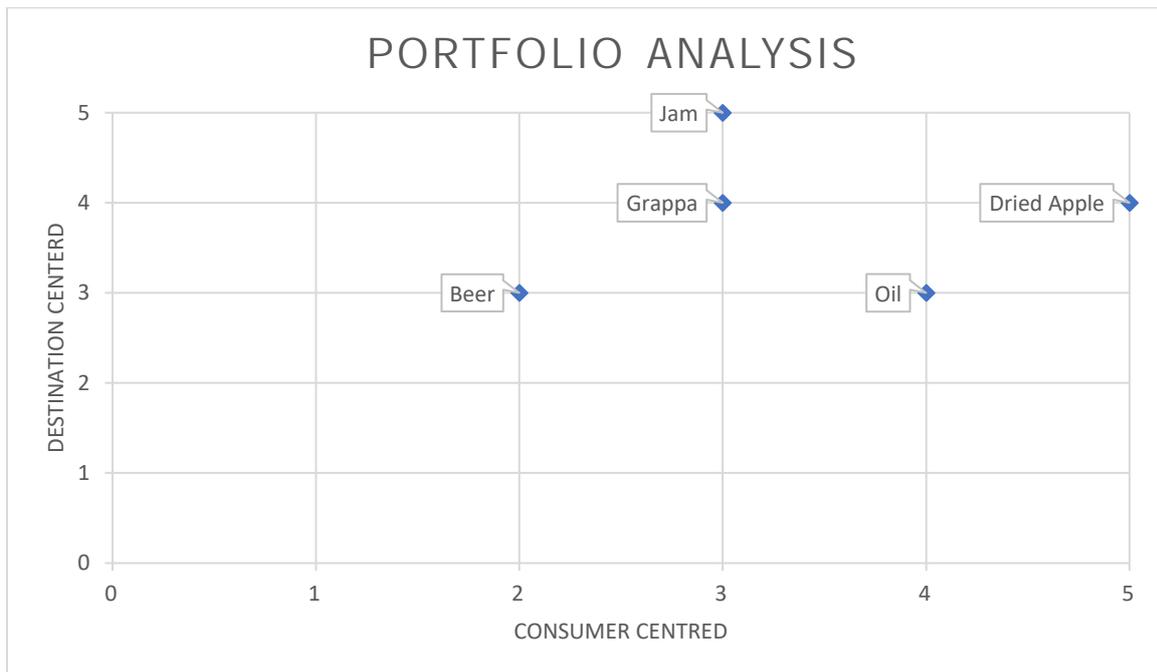
Dried “Weirough” apples from Luggin is a perfect combination of traditional South Tyrolean heritage and new trend. This embodies how the region of South Tyrol is seen by South Tyrolean. For the consumer it is exciting and connects perfectly with the trend of healthy food which can be consumed fast. Rating on the basis of indicators: Customer: 5/5, Destination: 4/5

Treber Grappa from the Winery Allgrund is a high-quality product which could be more associated with Italy than South Tyrol. The South Tyrolean “edition” of Grappa can delight especially South Tyrolean affine consumers, which know of the potential of the South Tyrolean grapes. Rating on the basis of indicators: Customer: 3/5, Destination: 4/5

Craft beer “Vienna Lager” from Batzen is a new edition of a product with a rather long heritage in Bolzano. Craft beers from “exotic” locations are a big trend, but this product can not transport destination image or will be associated with South Tyrol. It is good solution for drinking in Bolzano. Rating on the basis of indicators: Customer: 2/5, Destination 3/5.

Mountain pine etheric oil from Bergila serve a growing market with an oil from a tree which is domestic to South Tyrol. Through the all biological and procession habits, it could be interesting for a specific market. Since it can serve in food but also wellness and has an alpine root, it is transporting the image of South Tyrol. Rating on the basis of indicators: Customer: 4/5, Destination: 3/5

10.4. Analysis



The evaluation shows that the jam would be the most appropriate tool to transport destination image and values towards the consumer, whereas the apple product has in this evaluation the biggest consumer centred factor. Difficulties could occur, as it is a competitive market. All in all, the products of South Tyrolean scheme "Quality Südtirol" are high-quality products and all have a relation to the locality. It should be noted that the different products could be addressed to different markets where a different rating would apply. The rather high price of the products could be a market barrier.

11. Discussion

The theoretical framework has given some interesting insights to different tools and mechanisms for a destination to incorporate regional products into the destination management and marketing portfolio. And it can be a quite strong, as stated by Expert C for South Tyrol: *"Food is a mouthpiece for a destination, they are an ambassador for the destination if they have a strong connection to the heritage of the place and also communicate this. This is the case in South Tyrol since centuries. There is a comprehensive communication between the regional products and the destination. Food is connecting people. It is a language everybody understands."*

In the case of South Tyrol, the synergies and cross effects between tourism and regional products are known and used, which all experts emphasize. As stated by Expert D at the example of ham, the root is historically grown together. Through tourism the South Tyrolean ham was distributed and, vice-versa, through the ham the destination of South Tyrol is recognized in different parts of Europe. Derived from this, the synergies have opened each other new target markets and groups, which is in line with the research of Fischer (2019) and Santana-Gallego et al. (2016) that travel alter buying preferences. This is be especially valuable in South Tyrol because the local gastronomy with the whole experience as well as the heritage of the production of different kind of foods is a big part of the tourist experience. Furthermore, it supports the research from Lee & Lockshin (2012) that consumers connect their perception of product information towards the destination image.

All experts in the food industry agree that the heritage is their biggest surplus in marketing and that they use images of South Tyrol in their advertisement, which is in line with the theoretical framework. The products get charged up with destination values (Expert A+C). Conversely, the availability of regional products in supermarkets and speciality stores in tourist home countries can be integrated into destination marketing.

On the one hand, it can attract new customers or get people interested in the destination of South Tyrol. Through the mere exposure effect people start to associate positive things just through the constant exposure to them in the supermarket, which can make them interested in South Tyrol. The high-quality products, as stated by expert C, are than a positive association made with South

Tyrol which alters the tourism destination image (Elliot et al., 2011; Lee & Lockshin, 2012), and eventually enhance the possibility of a vacation. As Alderighi (2016) stated, the stronger the appreciation of the local specialties the stronger the intention to (re-)visit a destination. Additionally, the product attributes, the price segment and point-of-sale overlaps with IDM's target audience.

On the other hand, the products are an interesting tool to maintain customer relationships. As stated by expert C +D, most consumer have been tourists before, which fits to the statement of expert B that South Tyrol has mostly loyal tourist with nearly 80% of tourists come back for vacation. Most of the communication of the products is towards people that have been experienced South Tyrol before. The products can function as a different version of a tool which has been used in tourism marketing before (e.g. Christmas wishes from hotels): the reminder effect. The products are a reminder of positive experiences of the vacation in South Tyrol. This overlaps with the theory of associative network. The products activate a link to the positive emotions associated with an experience in the vacation in South Tyrol. The tourist can revive the feeling of his/ her vacation again. This has been used by the South Tyrolean ham (Expert D). The tourist has been in a South Tyrolean typical gastronomy and has experienced the South Tyrolean typical attitude of life. At home, he/she has the opportunity to engage in it again and share it with family and friends (Expert D). This is a way that bonds the relationship between the tourist and the destination, which increases the possibility of place attachment. The tourist can have this vacation moment, as close as it gets, preferably with his friends. This "nostalgia" and out-of-the ordinary evening/meal is further establishing the special of the vacation in particular and of South Tyrol in general. This could be a great tool, because a loyal and satisfied customer will talk favourably about South Tyrol, and (positive) word-of-mouth is known as one of the most effective marketing strategies. Again, most probably family and friends of this tourist serve the target market and audience, which can trigger a multiplier effect.

Food is emotional and involves all senses (Stone et al., 2018). IDM is using the emotional part in their marketing strategy (Expert B) (e.g. not showing the ski area, more the iconic sit together in a ski hut at the ski area), whereas gastronomy is a big part of their advertisement. Through the inclusion of regional products, South Tyrol engage in sensory destination marketing as well as transporting their keywords "nostalgia" and "attitude of life" through the products with a high human

and environmental factor (van Ittersum et al., 2003) Sensory destination marketing is a tool, which can affect every kind of tourist for South Tyrol and has the power to transport emotions but also values of the destination of South Tyrol. This allows IDM to expand or improve their marketing activities. Besides operating the classic channels of social media, tv, fairs, radio and papers, innovative concepts are on the try-out, which contains mostly some sort of live experiences (Expert B). For example, did they conceptualize a "Südtirol Haus" (South Tyrolean House) at the Biathlon World Championship, where interior, gastronomy and food are matched, and synergies are used. This concept could be an interesting tool for pop-up or concept stores, so Expert B. Additionally, through inclusion of the movies as a tool, sensory destination marketing can enhance towards multi-sensory destination marketing.

Sensory destination marketing, various live experiences as well as associations of any kind are the beneficiary of another tool that has been proven to have a huge impact on destination marketing and management: the umbrella brand "Südtirol" and its co-brand "Quality Südtirol".

First, the common logos and text transport a unified image of South Tyrol into the world, whereas their elaboration and establishment has been the main task so far for IDM (Expert B). Thereby, the brand is charged with the image that South Tyrol wants to be connected with: nature (the image), enjoyment (regional products) and sports (run- and bicycle wear). A lot of people can associate to that and since at the heart of all brand activity is the social desirability of being someone, it makes an interesting brand for people to engage in. After the successful introduction of the brand and the efforts to unify the different stakeholders, IDM wants to focus on charging the umbrella brand more with values (Expert B).

The destination of South Tyrol, with the help of the unified appearance of umbrella brand and its associates, can reach a high brand equity. With the help of the diversity of products and different branding and marketing approaches of the shareholders, it transports tangible, intangible and emotional values of the destination into foreign markets, which Expert C summarized with the statement: "*The regional products are an* ambassador for the destination ". Besides the managed attributes of image, the associates of the umbrella brand connect attributes with a destination to an extent, that could not be managed before. This

include attributes like smell, taste, touch as well as hard to manage attributes like the consumers/ tourist own emotions and stories.

Each consumer, who only know one product of the product range will still be able to recognize the brand on the other products, or even on South Tyrolean tourism advertisement (= brand association). If someone is satisfied with the product, it will at least spark the interest for other ones. The positive associations of one product will hereby influence the perceptions of the whole, which showcase again the synergies and cross effects between the different actors of the umbrella brand (Erdem, 1998). These positive associations towards one product are used by the South Tyrolean actors through cross-product advertisement (Expert B + C + D), which establishes the connection towards the other products and transport a more holistic experience for the consumer.

Any form of attachment towards one product, or even brand loyalty, can make the consumer interested in a vacation in South Tyrol. Supporting this statement is the dimension of customer-brand relationship and the assumption of Tregear & Gorton (2005) that consumers can develop a deep and emotional connection to regional food products and the place.

Also, there is a high chance that visitor to South Tyrol will be at least recognizing the brand when shopping (= brand awareness). The South Tyrolean actors are conscious of the circumstances: Expert B+C+D stated that they are aware that they always advertise, to a certain degree, the other South Tyrolean shareholders with them with their activities and they are happy and proud to do so.

This statement is showing another important effect of the umbrella brand and a South Tyrolean peculiarity: the interest in collaboration as well as cohesion towards one goal. The umbrella brand is hereby functioning as a platform for communication, collaboration and exchange. As Expert C stated: "*The brand Südtirol is the lowest common denominator*". Besides creating a consistent image and a valuable brand, it functions as a quality assurance outside and inside the destination. The management of the destination is from increasing importance for a DMO. The biggest challenge has been the unification of the different stakeholders, which are always also competitors, and the communication with and between them. A satisfactory management facilitate the best possible outcome for the tourist and a sustainable impact for the place. In South Tyrol, big parts of the communication, as well as the establishment of collaboration and a common goal

is given through the umbrella brand. This standpoint did the experts shared in one or another way. The cross-product advertisements, knowledge about marketing the other or the unification for stands at fairs, show the act in concert. The umbrella brand can be seen as a stakeholder network. An advantage is the interplay of the state South Tyrol as owner and IDM as the DMO in charge of management (Expert B), which bundles the power and competences inside the destination. This approach established a rather flexible system to operate which is backed up by the official power of authorities to convince any kind of stakeholders for the common cause. The bundling of competences and marketing efforts allows the regional producers and IDM with a rather small budget to have a market reach, which normally only corporates with an extensive marketing budget are involved in (Expert D).

The availability of regional food products in tourist home countries can alter the tourist destination image. The high-quality products with their marketing and packaging form an image that is closely related to South Tyrol and its natural and human production conditions. Furthermore, regional products are associated with sustainable farming practices in small-scale agriculture, which has been used in the marketing as part of authenticity (Expert B + C). The EU-certification for geographical origin is supporting the authenticity, which is a mechanism that influences the TDI. Following Luceri et al (2016) research, consumer make abstractions from the product information to country image, which is in the case of South Tyrol an opportunity. In other words, it can be said that the high-quality regional products of South Tyrol bear the chance to further alter the TDI, since they affect psychological factors of the TDI like values, motivations and personality, as well as stimulus factors (information source and previous experience).

The intensive relationship between regional products and the destination as well as the umbrella brand, entails some risks. An occurring food scandal can affect the tourism sector as well as the other sectors (Expert A). The other way around, any form of disaster inside the destination might have consequences for the regional products. This would be dramatic, because South Tyrol has a strongly export-oriented economy (Expert C). The Covid-19 crisis shows this kind of vulnerabilities of destination with a main impact on gastronomy and regional products, as the sales from small- and medium scale producers of ham have decreased to zero, since the demand from hotels and gastronomy has collapsed (Expert D).

The umbrella brand and the intense cross-sectoral collaboration reveals further challenges. The constant increase in the brand's recognition and the export of the products around the world can affect the image of the authentic small-scale agriculture. The focus on one image, which is in the case of South Tyrol an authentic one (Expert A,B,C,D), can be dangerous. Reactions to trends or megatrends are hard to manoeuvre, as well as the introduction of future topics for everyone to focus on. In contrast, the umbrella brand bears the chance that strategic decisions can be made with a common sense. Accordingly, Expert B and C stated that the IDM is working on strategic development, where, in the case of Expert B the apple cooperative, can contribute with ideas. The inclusion of other regional products was a clever move to evolve the brand, counteract the focus to one image and allow other regional producers like the ones from chapter 10 to participate from the brand equity. This could spark new life if, according to Kim & Richardson (2003) assumptions, the novelty has been lost through too many (same) product information sources. The guidelines, thereby, promise high-quality and an authentic connection to South Tyrol. However, the inclusion might complicate the communication and the distribution of power remains unclear. The small-scale producers are bound to the umbrella brand and could have trouble to market on their own on foreign markets. Further research should be conducted on this point. It can be said that the big cooperatives and consortiums have own marketing campaigns for their external presentation (Expert C+D). Another limitation is that the target audience and target market are differing and only in certain destinations, it is possible to engage in cross-sectoral and cross-product advertisement (Expert A, B, C, D).

Overall all experts stated that the regional products contribute in one way, or another, to the attractiveness of the destination and, therefore, are tools to enhance (re-)visits. But all experts emphasize that they believe that people are first making vacation here and then have an increased interest in the products (Expert A, B, C, D). So did Expert D say: "*there is a really close connection with people that make vacation, that also enjoy the ham (at home) than* " (Expert D). This supports the statement of Santana-Gallego et al. (2016) that a visit can change buying preferences. This suggests that South Tyrolean products get more asked for, since tourism numbers are rising. Higher demand can evolve to higher recognition by other consumers and shareholders along the supply chain, which would be (again) in favour of South Tyrol and its tourism.

In the covid-19 situation regional products show another link, which is closely linked to the previous described reminder-effect. As Expert D pointed out, many tourists want to come to their vacation to South Tyrol but can not. The regional products at home, therefore, give them at least the chance to be close to South Tyrol (Expert D). Expert B adds, that in their social media channels they engaged with the campaign #everythingthatwelove to include people from all over with recipes and ham challenges to be as close to South Tyrol as possible. This leaves the possibility that the vacation of South Tyrol was limited to a place, but through the inclusion of regional products and Virtual Reality, could be extended, to a certain degree, to any place around the world.

The communication through products as well as with products, educates future tourist for the specific location. This can be used to increase the impact of each tourist and spread the benefits, because one is interested in product related activities and specific restaurants. A successful example is the direct interlinkage of regional products and tourism in the agri-tourism scheme "Urlaub auf dem Bauernhof", which has proven especially valuable for the apple industry, according to expert C. Other connections are known but the interlinkage with the destination, with special activities like visiting a ham smokehouse, could be better and intensified in the future as Expert B agreed. The potential are immense, so could the better interlinkage inside the destination with product-specific activities, museums and other forms of information create a whole experience world "food". This would undermine the innovative approach of South Tyrol and could be a great tool to strengthen the shoulder seasons (educational trips from school classes, fairs, festivals), establish a common sense for South Tyrolean nature and heritage for locals and diversify business opportunities. The regional products in the tourist home country would be on the forefront for this experience world again (information, raffles and "in" brand).

12. Conclusion and Limitations

The case of South Tyrol clarifies how strong and far-reaching the interlinkages of tourism, agriculture and food can be. A good local gastronomy has always been a pull-factor for tourist, but South Tyrol shows that the potential of regional food products as a tool is not limited to the destination itself. Regional products in tourist home countries are on the forefront of destination marketing. They allow the destination to engage in sensory destination marketing without any further costs, in addition, they can qualify as a push-factor (reminder effect, associative network theory). Through cross-sectoral joint marketing approaches it is also possible to engage into far more effective and authentic marketing campaigns, like Live-cooking, the South Tyrol house, as well as theme weeks in supermarkets.

The unified approach through the umbrella brand "Südtirol" bundles the synergies additional and shows that South Tyrol has an innovative approach, as they do not engage in a linear place branding strategy but rather engage in multi-dimensional region branding.

In particular, in South Tyrol the umbrella brand plays a big role for the destination, to use regional products into their marketing and management efforts. Besides serving as the obvious branding and marketing tool, it operates as a communication and collaboration platform, as well as a quality scheme. All active Experts (B+C+D) stated such connections in one way or another: they are aware that they are also actively marketing the other producers and that they are communicating with branches as well as IDM through the umbrella brand. Furthermore, following Harrington and Ottenbacher (2010) culinary tourism strategy in chapter 8, the umbrella brand additional qualifies as a management organ for a further development into this direction.

A strong multi-dimensional brand, as well as cooperation on different stages, can be far more effective than a stand-alone DMO place branding campaign. It supports the social cohesion in South Tyrol, because the brand is generally more accepted and the pride for regional products increases through the availability on foreign markets. Economically wise, the interlinkage of the different stakeholders, supports local development. The benefits of the tourism are spread in the community and leakages are minimized. There is a chance that the economic impact per tourist can be maximized by stimulating his experience and knowledge-

based activity needs. The guidelines and quality scheme support environmental efforts through local supply networks and environmental-friendly growing habits.

This study entails limitations which need to be acknowledged. The exact significance of the umbrella brand as a communication and collaboration tool has not been researched and could be part of another scientific work. Since destination management rises in importance, and often fails due to communication issues, further research would be desirable.

The conditions of South Tyrol are really specific and support the criticism that case studies have little basis for scientific generalization (Yin, 2003). For example, all of the evaluated products in chapter 10 already possess a heritage and conditions to be seen as an authentic regional product, which is not the case for other destinations around the world. The linkage of tourism and regional product has grown organically in South Tyrol with both sectors playing a major role in the economy of South Tyrol. Furthermore, the cohesion towards one goal with so many different stakeholders is special. Nevertheless, the insights of South Tyrol and the theoretical framework can be a good orientation for destinations and researchers to further dive into this area of research. The integration of regional food products into destination management and marketing in general can follow the best-practice example South Tyrol.

While this thesis is an explanatory study with the focus to determine the different tools and mechanisms, empirical data would be important to support the statements and observations. Likewise, more research on the actual effect of regional products in tourist home country on the decision to (re-)visit South Tyrol would be interesting and essential. This could include a further distinction between the effects on different target markets but also the different effects on the different kind of tourist (new, loyal). Latter research could test the observations from the experts that tourist first come to vacation here and then engage in South Tyrolean products. The topic could be also illuminated from a psychological point of view to research what messages or signals from regional products in tourist home country address the cognitive and affective dimension and trigger reminder-effect or the associative network towards South Tyrol.

This research included the big economic players (cooperatives, consortium) of South Tyrol. It would be interesting to understand the role of the smaller producers

,since their involvement in the brand, in this stakeholder network. Why do they participate? What is their focus and motivation?

In conclusion, "the path of South Tyrol is unique " (Expert B). The destination is not going the "usual" way of place branding, but rather operate with multi-sensory, multi-dimensional regional umbrella branding, which allows the unification of a diversity of stakeholders and establishment of a common cause. This approach could extend the lead in the competition between the alpine destinations and, at the same time, allows large part of the society to participate from the benefits. To follow this path, regional products on foreign markets are, consciously or unconsciously, integrated into destination management and marketing. First, they function as a tool in terms of marketing with e.g. the mere-exposure or reminder effect as well as part of the associative network theory. Second, they are part of the branding efforts and transmit further values of the destination. Finally, they are integrated, in a wider sense as part of the umbrella brand, as a communication tool for the management of a destination.

To further profit from these synergies and evolve the brand, new products, where the efforts are bundled from beginning on, could be integrated. Luckily, South Tyrol has multiple number of authentic products and perhaps mountain strawberry jam or dried red apple will be the next food hype somewhere in Europe. When keeping in mind that regional products and products with a culinary heritage are consistently popular, this symbiosis of sectors will be a long-term success factor for South Tyrol.

Above all, these developments will find imitators, but this can only be successful when the presentation is authentic, and has a strong connection to the place, which is the case in South Tyrol (Expert A+B+C+D).

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14. Appendix

14.1. Interview guideline

14.1.1. Branding

Interviewleitfaden

Dieses Interview ist Teil der Masterarbeit von Lukas Weyh, Universität Uppsala, Schweden (M. Sc. „Sustainable Destination Development“, Email: lukasweyh06@hotmail.de).

Befragte Person:

Name:

Unternehmen:

Position:

Einstiegsfrage

In welchem Zusammenspiel stehen Ihrer Meinung nach regionale Essensprodukten und Tourismus?

Internationale Vermarktung

Erzählimpuls 1: Das Angebot an Waren über Landesgrenzen hinaus steigert sich und die Vermarktung von Produkten orientiert sich an neuen Absatzmärkten. So wird Südtiroler Speck mittlerweile vor allem in Deutschland und Österreich verkauft. Es gibt Südtiroler Feinheiten auf Berliner Wochenmärkten, Speck in Japan und Wein in London.

- I. Welche grenzüberschreitenden Vermarktungsstrukturen gibt es? Welche innovativen Konzepte könnte es geben?

Auswirkungen auf Südtirol

Erzählimpuls 2: Insgesamt gibt es eine Entwicklung hin zu regionalen, qualitativen Produkten. Südtiroler Produkte sind beliebt, der Stellenwert wurde erkannt.

- I. Welche Auswirkungen sehen Sie für Südtirols Tourismus durch den erhöhten Stellenwert regionaler Produkte?

Branding

Erzählimpuls 3: Die Dachmarke „Südtirol“ sowie „Qualität Südtirol“ wurden geschaffen um Synergien zu bündeln und ein einheitliches Auftreten zu gewährleisten

- I. Was sind, Ihrer Meinung nach, weitere Effekte dieser Dachmarke? Kennen Sie auch negative Auswirkungen?
- II. Wie kann man sich das Verhältnis zwischen der Dachmarke und den Unternehmen/ Verbänden vorstellen? Wie ist das Verhältnis zwischen Qualität Südtirol und den Produzenten?

- III. Neben dem Bild als Branding Modul, wie wird versucht die Marke Südtirol weiter „aufzuladen“? Wie werden diese Branding-Anstrengungen an den Kunden kommuniziert?

- IV. Touristen entwickeln durch persönliche Erfahrungen vor Ort eine emotionale Bindung zu Südtirol. Wie wird diese im Branding-Prozess berücksichtigt?

Die Produkte im Südtiroler Tourismus

Erzählimpuls 3: Kulinarik und regionale Produkte sind wichtige Faktoren, um die Tourismusregion Südtirol zu vermarkten.

- I. Was für Aktivitäten/ Kampagnen werden in Südtirol unternommen, um typisch Südtiroler Produkte und ihr Image an die Touristen zu bringen?

- II. Was für Aktivitäten/ Kampagnen werden außerhalb Südtirols unternommen, um Südtirol und Südtirols Image an die potentiellen Touristen zu bringen?

- III. An welche Länder sind Marketing und Branding Aktivitäten gerichtet?

- IV. Welche Kooperationen zwischen Produkthersteller und Tourismusmacher/ Veranstalter gibt es? Welche Rolle spielt IDM?

- V. Kennen Sie gemeinsame Vermarktungsanstrengungen von Produzenten und Tourismusunternehmen? Wenn ja, welche?

Der Tourist

Erzählimpuls 4: Laut einer Studie erhöht das Angebot von lokalen Spezialitäten im Wohnort der Touristen die Chance das Touristen einen Ort wiederbesuchen.

- I. Haben Sie das Gefühl, das aus den Regionen wo Südtiroler Produkte angeboten werden, mehr Leute in den Urlaub nach Südtirol kommen?

- II. Wie kann man, ihrer Meinung nach, das Potential der „gebildeten“ Touristen nutzen?

Anmerkungen, Anregungen, Hinweise:

Vielen Dank für das Gespräch. Alle Daten werden vertraulich behandelt. In der Thesis werden alle übernommenen Aussagen anonymisiert.

14.1.2. Apple

Interviewleitfaden

Dieses Interview ist Teil der Masterarbeit von Lukas Weyh, Universität Uppsala, Schweden (M. Sc. „Sustainable Destination Development“, Email: lukasweyh06@hotmail.de).

Befragte Person:

Name:

Unternehmen:

Position:

Meine Masterarbeit hat das Thema „Qualitätsprodukte als Instrument- potentielle Touristen von der Destination zu überzeugen. Ich versuche vorrangig zu beantworten welche Tools Südtirol hat um die regionalen Produkte zu benutzen.

Dieses Interview soll sich offen wie möglich gestalten. Die zugesendeten Fragen diesen hierbei als Leitfaden. Wenn es etwas bestimmtes gibt, das Sie für sehr wichtig erachten dann können Sie das gerne mitteilen.

Einstiegsfrage

Der Apfel ist ganz stark verknüpft mit Südtirol. In welchem Zusammenspiel stehen Ihrer Meinung nach regionale Essensprodukten, in ihrem Fall der Apfel und Tourismus?

Internationale Vermarktung

Erzählimpuls 1: Das Angebot an Waren über Landesgrenzen hinaus steigert sich und die Vermarktung von Produkten orientiert sich an neuen Absatzmärkten. So wird Südtiroler Speck vor allem in Deutschland und Österreich verkauft. Es gibt Südtiroler Feinheiten auf Berliner Wochenmärkten, Speck in Japan und Wein in London.

- II. Welche grenzüberschreitenden Vermarktungsstrukturen gibt es? Welche innovativen Konzepte könnte es geben?
- III. Was wird außerhalb Südtirol unternommen um den Apfel und ihr Image an Konsumenten zu bringen?
- IV. Wie hoch sehen sie den Einfluss des Ursprungs auf das Produkt?
- V. Touristen entwickeln durch persönliche Erfahrungen vor Ort eine emotionale Bindung zu Südtirol. Wird diese in Vermarktungsanstrengungen berücksichtigt?

Dachmarke

Die Dachmarke „Südtirol“ sowie „Qualität Südtirol“ wurden geschaffen um Synergien zu bündeln und ein einheitliches Auftreten zu gewährleisten.

- I. Wie kann man sich das Verhältnis zwischen der Dachmarke und der VOG vorstellen?
- II. Wie sieht die Verknüpfung von IDM mit der VOG aus? Gibt es gemeinsame Anstrengungen?

Auswirkungen auf Südtirol

Erzählimpuls 2: Insgesamt gibt es eine Entwicklung hin zu regionalen, qualitativen Produkten. Südtiroler Produkte sind beliebt, der Stellenwert wurde erkannt.

- II. Es gibt einen „limit to growth“ für regionale Produkte, sehen Sie diese Gefahr in Südtirol? Sehen Sie andere Gefahren für Südtirol?

Die Produkte im Südtiroler Tourismus

Erzählimpuls 3: Kulinarik und regionale Produkte werden aktiv in Werbung benutzt, um die Tourismusregion Südtirol zu vermarkten.

- VI. Was für Aktivitäten/ Kampagnen werden in Südtirol unternommen, um typisch Südtiroler Produkte und ihr Image an die Touristen zu bringen?

- VII. Welche Kooperationen zwischen Produkthersteller und Tourismusmacher/ Veranstalter gibt es? Welche Rolle spielt IDM?

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Vielen Dank für das Gespräch. Alle Daten werden vertraulich behandelt. In der Thesis werden alle übernommenen Aussagen anonymisiert.

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Befragte Person:

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Unternehmen:

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Erzählimpuls 1: Das Angebot an Waren über Landesgrenzen hinaus steigert sich und die Vermarktung von Produkten orientiert sich an neuen Absatzmärkten. So wird Südtiroler Speck vor allem in Deutschland und Österreich verkauft. Es gibt Südtiroler Feinheiten auf Berliner Wochenmärkten, Speck in Japan und Wein in London.

- VI. Welche grenzüberschreitenden Vermarktungsstrukturen gibt es? Welche innovativen Konzepte könnte es geben?
- VII. Was wird außerhalb Südtirol unternommen um den Speck und ihr Image an Konsumenten zu bringen?
- VIII. Wie hoch sehen sie den Einfluss des Ursprungs auf das Produkt?
- IX. Touristen entwickeln durch persönliche Erfahrungen vor Ort eine emotionale Bindung zu Südtirol. Wird diese in Vermarktungsanstrengungen berücksichtigt?

Dachmarke

Die Dachmarke „Südtirol“ sowie „Qualität Südtirol“ wurden geschaffen um Synergien zu bündeln und ein einheitliches Auftreten zu gewährleisten.

- III. Wie kann man sich das Verhältnis zwischen der Dachmarke und dem Speck Konsortium vorstellen?
- IV. Wie sieht die Verknüpfung von IDM mit dem Speck Konsortium aus? Gibt es gemeinsame Anstrengungen?

Auswirkungen auf Südtirol

Erzählimpuls 2: Insgesamt gibt es eine Entwicklung hin zu regionalen, qualitativen Produkten. Südtiroler Produkte sind beliebt, der Stellenwert wurde erkannt.

- III. Es gibt einen „limit to growth“ für regionale Produkte, sehen Sie diese Gefahr in Südtirol? Sehen Sie andere Gefahren für Südtirol?

Die Produkte im Südtiroler Tourismus

Erzählimpuls 3: Kulinarik und regionale Produkte werden aktiv in Werbung benutzt, um die Tourismusregion Südtirol zu vermarkten.

- VIII. Was für Aktivitäten/ Kampagnen werden in Südtirol unternommen, um typisch Südtiroler Produkte und ihr Image an die Touristen zu bringen?
- IX. Welche Kooperationen zwischen Produkthersteller und Tourismusmacher/ Veranstalter gibt es? Welche Rolle spielt IDM?

Anmerkungen, Anregungen, Hinweise:

Vielen Dank für das Gespräch. Alle Daten werden vertraulich behandelt. In der Thesis werden alle übernommenen Aussagen anonymisiert.

14.2. Transcription summary of interviews

14.2.1. Expert A

On the 10th of April 2020, a telephone interview with Expert A was conducted. As requested from Expert A, the interview was open and on discussion basis. Expert A was the manager of an apple consortium and retired in February 2020.

The interactions between region specialties and tourism are existent. The region-of-origin is extremely valuable for the South Tyrolean apple. He proposes that the interactions the other way around are stronger: first the tourist comes for holiday to South Tyrol, than he buys the products. The synergy is extremely strong and the personal experience in South Tyrol is the starting point. The local environment is where the synergy between tourism and regional products starts for the tourist and the interest in products is born. Most products can only enjoy here and therefore the results are here, so Expert A.

The synergy has risks, if e.g. a food scandal occurs, not only the sector is influenced but also the destination of South Tyrol. Furthermore, the synergies and interactions cannot be generalized and must always be evaluated.

14.2.2. Expert B

The interview with Expert B, leading role in the branding department of IDM, took place on the 22nd of April 2020 from 15.00 to 16.00 in Bolzano in German language. The interview was unstructured, but some questions were prepared to lead the interview. As leading role in branding, Expert B oversees everything that has to do with Brand & Content. He is responsible for the brand South Tyrol which includes activities like brand leading, campaigns and inclusion of new brand members.

At IDM, Destination marketing & management and regional products are through the umbrella brand connected since the beginning. The region is the owner of the rights and IDM is the executive. Through the umbrella brand the visual communication is unified and the appearance is always the same. This enhances the synergies, shows a consistent image and creates a Win-Win situation. Destination marketing includes the regional products and regional product marketing includes the destination in their advertisement. This concept with the unification of appearance of so many stakeholders is unique in Europe. Furthermore, IDM is also in charge of governance and quality assurance.

The marketing and distribution channels are manifold. In the past, the unified appearance through image and text as marketing strategy in TV, press was the main target. After successful establishment (brand awareness), IDM is now using different channels and wants to try new innovative concepts.

Physical communication through fairs is important where the umbrella brand Südtirol is having a stand together to demonstrate the synergies. Most fairs are declining in importance but some special fairs e.g. wine are still an important marketing channel and IDM will continue to work with them. Here, multi-sensory brand experience as well as live-experience are integrated. Other physical channels are pop-up stores or concept stores in target markets, which are considered but the relation of price to usage is debatable. At the Biathlon world championship in South Tyrol, they had a Südtirol-House where visitors could experience the South Tyrolean feeling with food and interior design from famous south Tyrolean places, which was a success and shows an innovative concept. Concepts like this will be continued.

Another important marketing channel are journalist and influencer, where again the destination and specific products work together. Online marketing and distribution via social-media is really important, too. All marketing here is in the hands of IDM. They always try to transport the image of cosiness and attitude of life with pictures and they initiate dialogue campaigns. As example, Expert B showcased their "style" with the winter communication. Südtirol is positioning themselves as Genussland and oasis of feeling good e.g. Gastronomy is in every advertisement. In the advertisement you will see the mountains with snow and than a tourist in a mountain gastronomy and not the tourist on ski. The transportation of emotions and the attitude of life of South Tyrol is far more important.

Besides that regional products, gastronomy and tourism are using each other in combined marketing strategies with differing target markets. IDM is, in the tourism section, more free to develop marketing for their target markets (Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, France, Slovakia, UK, Poland, Benelux-Countries), where they get money from the state and the big tourism players of South Tyrol. For the products, the consortiums decide which market they want to advertise. This is important, since they have other markets and the different products (wine, apple,

ham) have different target markets. When they decide where to go, they still integrate IDM into the marketing efforts.

South Tyrol has a lot of tourist that are visiting on a regular basis (80% of tourist come again). The tourism associations and companies are taking care of them. IDM tries to attract new tourist, but IDM is watching that they attract quality tourists from their target group "NANOS". This is a slow process but they do not need high increasing rates since they have a high occupation rate. With the marketing efforts they try to strengthen the shoulder seasons. This quality tourism is shown by the example that through the Covid-19 situation the South Tyrolean tourism do not want to drop prices to engage the competition for tourists.

Inside the destination South Tyrol the linkage of products and tourism could be better, which is the task of the tourism association and the tourist companies. As soon as the tourist is in South Tyrol, he can use the internet and informative webpages to take part in food-related activities like wine tasting or visitation of production processes. IDM is the inspiration through advertisement but the linkage between inspiration and the advertisement as "Enjoyment country" and food-related activities have to be intensified.

Cooperation's between product companies and other companies are manifold. There are important direct linkages between food companies and hotels (wine and apple). Additionally examples of cooperation's are sensibilisation campaigns from schools and agriculture, but also cooperation from IDM with supermarkets to showcase the products to the South Tyrolean's. And then there are many more, IDM is not part of and is not the competence area of Expert B. These include all kind of events associated with the consortiums and their product like all kind of apple, ham and wine events. Hereby not the distribution and more the image of the company/product is in the foreground.

Expert B and IDM are believing that first tourists come here and enjoy South Tyrol and than they will go home and buy products of South Tyrol. On this logic, they construct their communication. Hereby the brand Südtirol is not only a logo, it is a quality assurance as well as a transporter of emotions.

In the overall development nature and regional products will get more important, which could be intensified through covid-19 situation. Products are coming from everywhere; the origin can create value and quality assurance. This tracing back

to the root of the product will be even more important in the future. Since Südtirol is connected with regional products, The Alps meet Mediterranean cuisine, this will continue to be a success factor for the future. Expert B believes that new products that have a story, like old family recipe, as well as sustainability attributes (Re-Use and Recycle) and everything that includes a quality process can be an innovative product and therefore successful in the future. An example is the Kohl apple juice which founds its niche as mountain apple juice and great product packaging and is now sold in Harrots in London. A sustainable example is a paper product which is made from the left-over from the apple juice process.

There were little to small negative effects of the umbrella brand. Everybody worked together since they could see the benefits. The rules and guidelines to become a product member of quality Südtirol are really high and are an important attribute of the tourism advertising. The producer want such rules and guidelines also for the members of the tourism sector of the brand.

For some producers the quality Südtirol batch is not convincing since the region is to big for them for their target market in the surrounding of South Tyrol. They try to market through even smaller locality like the city of Meran.

Besides this "Internal" discussion, IDM and the Südtirol brand are thinking about how they can engage in the governance of over-tourism or in the case of South Tyrol the mobility problems in the mountains. Here they try to engage with a network approach with the different key actors (companies and regions).

14.2.3. Expert C

The Interview with Expert C, Head of Marketing at VOG, the biggest apple cooperative of South Tyrol and Europe, took place on the 02.05.2020 via Microsoft Teams. South Tyrol is Europe biggest apple producer and the South Tyrolean climate is perfect for apples, so they cultivate apples already since hundreds of years.

Expert C statement on the connection between regional products and the destination:

"Food is a mouthpiece for a destination, they are an ambassador for the destination if they have a strong connection to the heritage of the place and also communicate this. This is the case in South Tyrol since centuries. There is a comprehensive communication between the regional products and the destination. Food is

connecting people. It is a language everybody understands. While travelling, enjoyment is a central topic. Enjoyment is a central point in South Tyrol and all its stakeholder. Authenticity is important and it is given here since South Tyroleans love the things they advertise with: nature, food and culture. For tourists it is possible to relive the vacation through enjoyment of South Tyrolean products at home. They are the linkage and ambassador for the destination .”

The VOG uses the whole bandwidth of tools for marketing: TV, social media, radio and print as well as “Below-the-line” marketing like contests, sales promotions, delegations and South Tyrolean theme events at the places of advertisement. In South Tyrol, sponsoring is an important marketing tool. They engage in different sports. Besides this they have a newsletter and write in the newspapers.

In their communication, the heritage plays an important role, the Alpine + Mediterranean is a big component of the communication. The heritage is the plus for the apples, it is the added value. The destination, especially in images, is an important part too. Sustainability is not communicated so much. They try to be sustainable (leader in integrated cultivation) and operate as sustainable as possible but it is not actively communicated. Interested consumers can look it up on their homepage.

The umbrella brand is the smallest denominator for the region. It sets the fundament, with guidelines on heritage and quality. The tradition and heritage is the basis for the communication of all the products. That is why the umbrella brand has been developed together. The cooperation with IDM succeeds with activities from both sides, which include the other. Some activities are from apple alone, but then IDM helps in the operative management of these activities. In strategy activities IDM and VOG are partners which try to develop products and enhance the image of the umbrella brand.

In South Tyrol they cooperate with a lot of different stakeholders for tourism purposes. The most famous is the agritourism concept “Urlaub auf dem Bauernhof”. Then there is cooperation with the gastronomy as well as the hospitality sector. The South Tyrolean is important because it links the regional products to the gastronomy which then are an ambassador for the destination.

There are some challenges for the apple. First of all, there is a limit-to-growth given by the arable land of South Tyrol. Through product innovation they try to

encounter that problem. The challenges of corona are unpredictable and manifold. First of all they had to secure the logistics and now the production of apples since they can not have workers from the outside. Expert C notes that the availability of food in the supermarket is nowadays a basic need and that there will be chaos when it is not available.

Overall there is an increase of demand for fruits and vegetables. But there is also an increase in the demand for packaged fruits, because they are considered more healthy. The consumer buying behaviour changed since they are buying alone, fast and at one place.

The marketing also changed through corona. The brands are giving the consumer orientation and have to show added value. Not only in quality but added value for the society. This can be demonstrated on the brand "Marlene" from the VOG, where the slogan was "I am Marlene" and have been change to " We are marlene" to show that there are a lot of people working "behind the scenes" to secure the food production. This gives the consumer security and on the other hand also is a thank you to all involved stake- and shareholders.

14.2.4. Expert D

The Interview with Expert D, CEO of the Speck Konsortium (ham consortium) took place on the 28.04.2020 via Microsoft Teams.

The Speck Consortium was founded in 1992 as a union to protect the name "Südtiroler Speck" from copycats. After the establishment, the successful protection of the name, the Speck Konsortium (over a longer period) started to act as a representative of the Speck. Nowadays the Speck Consortium represents 29 ham producers and 98% of the ham from South Tyrol. They work with a lot of local companies, like IDM, for marketing and distribution purposes.

Südtiroler Speck is a product with a lot of heritage and tradition in South Tyrol. Researchers from EURAC found out that the Ötzi had 5.000 years ago a variety of ham in his stomach. The relation of tourism and ham is therefore rooted in the history. After the 2nd World war and into the 60/70 's South Tyrol was economically weakened. With the beginning of tourism, mainly from south Germany, the ham got recognized as a traditional and appealing product from tourist and locals. Tourist started to bring a lot of ham with them at the end of the vacation. From the 70 's until the 90 's tourism numbers and ham sales rose. Since than Südtiroler Speck is available in speciality shops and supermarkets. Today 60% of the sales

are made in Italy and 30% in Germany. Besides this USA/Canada and France are the markets they invest in. For each country, there is a different strategy.

In Germany there is a close connection between the tourist home regions and the regions where they sell the ham. As already told South Tyrol and Ham and Ham and South Tyrol are so close related to each other that they have to market together. But since the umbrella brand and the cooperation with IDM, they are working closer together and use the synergies more.

Example: If a journalist is invited to come and stay in South Tyrol, they will also have all the regional products around him. When the ham is on fairs or on meetings, they always sell the destination as well.

Through the connection of all the key players (apple and wine included), they can make the most out of it. They have only a small budget but the reach is close to big players.

For the collaboration with IDM: there is a constant exchange. Some strategies/ ideas or marketing activities are proposed from IDM, some from the Speck Konsortium. Of course, they also have own initiatives, but mostly there is at least a link. There are also marketing efforts between different regional products and the destination to market together. This is mostly done in Germany, since it is a target market for all of them. In Germany, the basis they all agree is the choice of REWE/Edeka Supermarkets, since a target audience for all of them is shopping here. The activities are mostly trying to improve the image of South Tyrol as a whole.

Challenges: Sustainability is a main topic. Especially the plastic packaging is a topic. They are working on that. Other challenge is the discounterisation of the supermarkets and falling prices which can intensify through Covid-19 and the economic decrease. The challenges through corona are manifold. Big producers of the Speck Consortium which distribute through supermarkets have increasing sales, smaller producer which distribute through gastronomy or speciality shops have not sold anything since beginning of the crisis. Corona is also a perfect example of the combination of tourism and regional products. A lot of loyal tourist want to come to their vacation to South Tyrol, but they can not. So buying some Südtiroler Speck and/or South Tyrolean Wine or Cheese allows them to be close to their favourite destination for the moment.

The activities of marketing are manifold. Inside the destination they try to strengthen collaboration with the gastronomy since it is a good link to present the product in the right ambient. E.g. some hotels have a South Tyrolean evening, where they cut the ham live. Also they have collaboration with tourism associations and the ham Aperitivo in the ski and hiking areas. They can present themselves as a modern product. They founded a ham academy to offer job opportunities but also reach all the people.

The activities outside are, as already stated, different for each country. Hereby the marketing activities are on one side always to attract new customers but also to keep loyal customers. There is a big group of South Tyrolean loyalist which they try to enlarge the same as IDM. Mostly they try together.