

* Under Secretary of Urban Development and Territory Planning of Mexico (Summary by Margarita Pérez Villasenor, Officer of the Permanent Delegation of Mexico to the OECD)

What to do?

To design and promote The Venice-Padua-treviso Metro Region Brand (the VPT)

Why is a regional brand needed?

In a global world, where regions are becoming the main territorial development units and where markets, in terms of either acquiring or offering products and services, look up at additional options beyond their borders, it is required to give each region a distinguishing mark that differentiates one region from another. The Venice-Padua-Treviso Metro Region (VPT) is a very good example and perfect fit where this theory may apply since VPT offers a great variety of economic, tourist and social development options and has the potential to adopt a regional brand.

There are several reasons to support the idea of branding the Venice-Padua-Treviso Region. In the first place a regional brand may foster territorial identity among citizens, entrepreneurs and governments of both rural and urban areas, therefore facilitating regional governance. The relevance of this initiative lays upon the capabilities that are created on a cooperative win-win relationship among government and society, where citizens and private sector organizations are empowered to shape public policy, follow up its implementation and evaluate its results.

In the second place, but not less important, a brand name could offer an image of the region for visitors and potential investors. This impression should portray the opportunities and advantages that the Venice-Padua-Treviso Metro Region offers over other regions; it ought to convey the main characteristics that differentiate it from the other ones. This image may be that of a territory that offers industry services, knowledge and networking opportunities regarding specific economic sectors while tourist and leisure attractions are offered to executives working at that region or to client and supplier representatives during a business trip. This also may work in an opposite way, where tourism is attracted to this area not just because of its historic places and landscapes but also for the outlets and lower price products and services that could be offered by the industry and medium size enterprises located in it. A perception of this region could be that of a territory where business life may mix with pleasure and vice versa.

These advantages turn to be a milestone to help the VPT region to stand in a specified place in the European market and in the global network, and to promote the region's awareness of its relative position compared to others as well as to set forth the uniqueness of this region.

How to do it?

The means to reach these objectives could be based on the following aspects that rely principally on the concept of a region as a well balanced polycentric urban and rural system with great potential for complementary development, on the conception of identity axis of the region and on a comprehensive brand name that refers to the whole region, including its main cities and rural areas, instead of referring only to Venice.

The conception of identity axis should be fostered as the main characteristics and as means of strategic planning and marketing of the VPT region:

i. *Arts, crafts and industry* that offer the opportunity of establishing new business, creating supply chains, introducing small and medium size enterprises, identifying specific production of the region, generating clusters, among other benefits;

ii. *Commerce*, such as outlets, whose products and services are provided by the main regional factories and give a particular distinctive to the region where most visitors or clients may find a great variety of products within a certain sector or activity.

iii. *Culture*, such as industrial and architectural heritage, for instance, the old factories that still stand in the north-east side of the region that are part of the scene and remain as a reminiscence of the tradition and work related to the regional art and heritage of its productive activity; and

iv. *Landscape*, either natural or built up, that complements all the services and attractions mentioned before and offers another option for leisure and traveling as specific destinations or as optional ones while commuting.

The regional branding is aimed to attract both international and national visitors and investors, in this sense the brand formation process should create interest in the region from the beginning and involve both international and national communities in every stage.

Finally, establishing a Council for the development of the VPT Region is required in order to promote governance and collaboration between government and society. This may include representatives of private and public sectors, citizens, icon personalities, main economical activities, among others.

What is the basis for such a policy?

The branding region policy emerges from both the need to reduce the unemployment rate and the available assets of the Veneto-Padua-Treviso Region.

1. The need to reduce the unemployment rate

During the past three decades the success of the Veneto Region in industry and tourism activities has attracted a large quantity of all kind of workers. Currently the Venice Metro region has a population growth rate of 1.2%, above the media in Italy (0.8%). Even though in the past, the region has attracted large immigrant flows, most of them entrepreneurs, as an effect of the world economic crisis, nowadays there is a lack of permanent employment in the region, especially in the manufacturing industry. The last unemployment rate registered is about 4.2%.

2. The regional assets

The VPT Region has a number of positive features that could help launch the region's brand. Some of these include the strong tourist tradition which can be used to make a profit. Additionally it is the first tourist region in Italy and one of the most popular destinations from the world: in 2007 the region registered 60 million of arrivals. The Veneto has a regional GDP of 135,000 millions of euros and most of this income is related with tourism industry. So it is a real strength of the region that could be raised up to foster economic growth from its regional attractive sites and the specificity of some tourist towns and villages complementary to those of Venice. Additionally, the region could attract more cultural, adventure and ecotourism visitors.

It is unquestionable that the Veneto has a cultural background and world celebrities recognized all over the world. Venice attracts thousand of tourists every year just with some of the main well known attractions: the Venice Carnival, the Venice International Film Festival or the Venice Bienale. Celebrities like Marco Polo, Antonio Canal -el Canaletto-, Tiziano Vecellio, Antonio Vivaldi, Giotto, among many others, are also directly related to the area. These incomparable cultural assets are advantages for the regional brand.

The regional branding is a mechanism that promotes territorial unity between the citizens, entrepreneurs, and governments. The use of a regional brand for the VPT region will help to reinforce the identity and the competitiveness of the partners. It could stimulate a regional innovation process and create synergies among the participants to reach common objectives and goals. Regional branding will improve the governance and could help region's sustainability.