

# Chapter 10

## Co-Creating the Christmas Story: Digitalizing as a Shared Resource for a Shared Brand

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### ABSTRACT

*Digitalization can be regarded as a megatrend which results that both brand building and brand management must adapt to new challenges. The growing role of digitizing points to both challenges and risks, as well as to opportunities. This chapter conceptualizes digitizing as a resource for brand development with the help of two tourism destinations. It focuses on the role Web-based platforms play in destination brand development, using the examples of two seemingly nearly similar Christmas tourism destinations as case studies: Santa Claus, Indiana, and Santa Claus Village, Rovaniemi. The chapter highlights the contribution of a customer-oriented digitalization to creating a competitive advantage, even a sustainable one, for tourism destinations with theoretical connections to a resource-based view (RBV) and discusses its potential for incremental and radical innovative brand development processes.*

### INTRODUCTION

Digitalization is an interesting phenomenon: despite its technological groundings it clearly points to non-technological innovation potential (Jeannerat & Crevoisier, 2011). Through digitalization, brand building is becoming a dialectic and participatory approach where managers are said losing their control over brands (Ind, 2015). Digitalization can nowadays be regarded as a megatrend which results that both brand building and brand management must adapt to new challenges (Wiedmann, 2015). One of its effects is the growing customer engagement in business, marketing and branding activities, which is

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increasing to an extent that Boyd et al. (2014) call customer engagement a norm in today's marketplace. Indeed, brands need to become agile in order to adjust to changing situations (Lusch & Vargo, 2006), but it is not plausible to expect them to develop without brand or marketing management interference. The brand development and brand management scholars and practitioners this development situates in front of a dilemma: how to positively acknowledge societal changes without simply adjusting to the customer demands and how to integrate brand development in the management practice (Wiedmann, 2015)? Ignoring the customers is risky, as it can lead to a dissonance between what managers think customers do, and the reality how they use and build brands (Ind, 2014). These challenges implicate digitizing as a resource for innovative brand development processes with potential for value creation. Most studies on cocreational opportunities for value creation are conducted from the perspective of single companies. Research on digitalization from a multistakeholder perspective is needed (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2016). This chapter scrutinizes digitizing as a resource for innovative brand development processes in the tourism sector, which enables a multistakeholder perspective on the topic. The chapter discusses brand development with the help of two tourism destinations consisting of a number of companies with one shared brand: Christmas. The destination brand ownership is distributed among many interests and so differs from brands owned by individual companies. Destinations, consequently, offer a fresh perspective on the study of digitalization as a resource within co-creative brand development.

In the tourism sector, several forms of customer engagement have become more important than ever. Digitalization provides several channels over which customers can *share* their experiences of products and services with others. Digitally shared experiences have important effects on the brand of the destination (Budeanu, 2013), as well as on product design and product development (Battarbee & Koskinen, 2005; Kozinets et al., 2008). The brand is an essential part of every marketing and business model (Moore & Birtwistle, 2004) having an effect on a business's turnover and profitability. In this sense, brand development and product development become associated with each other in literature on management (e.g., See: Ambler & Styles, 1997). This chapter conceives brand development integral to product development.

Drawing from the resource-based view (RBV), this chapter examines how digitalization-based product development can contribute to a sustainable competitive advantage in form of destination brands. The study draws from two tourism destinations: Santa Claus, Indiana, USA, and Santa Claus Village Rovaniemi, Finland. The chapter starts by reviewing the presently available literature on digitalization, product development and sustainable competitive advantage, and by emphasizing the role consumers play in these processes. The subsequent section describes the methodology used, and the data section examines how the two destinations utilize digitalization to develop the Christmas brand. The proceeding section discusses how digitalization can contribute to value co-creation within the framework of RBV. The chapter concludes with a presentation of its findings.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Digitalization and Co-Creation**

Digitalization has various alternative definitions. It can mean the use of Internet, social media, various digital technologies and analytics, as well as mobile applications in business activities. Especially in communications, information, media, and entertainment (CIME) industries exploit digital technologies (Gimpel & Westerman, 2012) but digitizing provides an opportunity for businesses in nearly all sec-

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