

Chapter 16

A Study of Place Branding of Macao

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ABSTRACT

Macao is stereotyped as a gambling city and its unique cultural connotation is often ignored. Branding Macao effectively may deliver a concise but different image to the world. This research is a quantitative study that attempts to investigate Macao's city characteristics, to explore the importance of place branding, and to assess the influence of place branding on competitiveness and sustainable development. A theoretical framework is established to explain the relationships. Data were collected from 393 respondents in the greater China region. Reliability, correlations, and regressions are run to test various hypotheses. The research findings reveal that Macao is "Exquisite and Exalted," "Fantasy and Passionate," and "Calm and Relaxed." Place branding of Macao is essential to enrich cultural life of residents inside, and to promote good image outside. Moreover, place branding turns out to be the most significant predictor of competitiveness and sustainable development. Discussion, limitations, and implications are presented.

INTRODUCTION

Brand management is a hot topic among academics and marketing practitioners nowadays. Branding is an effective tool to gain competitive advantages for companies in the market which can create greater value for both the producer and customers (Browning, 2016). The brand's strategic power has led to a lot of studies in this area to explore and enrich understanding of branding by developing multiple concepts such as brand personality, brand identity and brand image (Peighambari et al., 2016). Besides

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branding goods and services, pushing the borders of the product definition obviously leads to brand places, persons or ideologies (Hankinson, 2001). As nations and cities attempt to improve the quality of life, they compete for tourists, investors, entrepreneurs, and qualified labor (Anholt, 2010). Thus, place marketers are interested in building the place as a brand, and targeting different market segments. Cities, apart from their constructions, have a variety of features that include tradition, culture, art and heritages. These can be used to establish the unique brand images that different from competitors (Kemp et al., 2012). Cities worldwide increasingly engage in place branding efforts in order to create favorable images. Some examples of well branded cities are Paris, New York City and San Francisco. They marketed their history, lifestyle, place quality, culture, diversity, and cooperative partnerships to improve their infrastructure (Saraniemi, 2011).

Hong Kong, Macao's neighboring city has already had its own distinctive city brand for more than a decade. Place branding of Hong Kong was launched in 2001. A well-planned communication strategy was adopted to market Hong Kong's unique features around the world. The image of the flying dragon and the slogan: "Asia's world city" has become the symbols of Hong Kong (Chan & Marafa, 2016).

Comparing to Hong Kong and other foreign cities, Macao's image has not been changed fundamentally. This may lead to degradation or a total loss of advantages eventually. For a long time, Macao has been labelled as the "gambling city" and "Las Vegas of the East" (Sheng & Gu, 2018; Zhang, Song & Park, 2016). The quintessence of more than 400 years of both Chinese and western culture in Macao is somewhat overlooked and failed to be identified and appreciated by the outside world. In short, Macao lacks a positive, remarkable and civilized brand. It is necessary to brand Macao as a world center of tourism and leisure in target market through integrated strategies with attractive attributes (Wan & Li, 2011).

This study tries to identify the elements that are suitable for the construction of a new brand of Macao, and to enhance its competitiveness and sustainable development through this re-positioning process.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Place Branding

Usually, when people talk about a place, they mention the most representative symbol of it rather than its real name. Many place names are types of brands, and the value of brand may influence the whole society's operation. Besides, those place brands are often accompanied by visual identities just like the product brands own their logos for identification. When people talk about place branding, they often refer to something special and typical which symbolizes the place.

Place branding refers to branding and building brand equity in relation to national, regional or local identity. Brand equity is consisted of brand loyalty; name awareness; perceived quality; brand associations; perceived quality; and other proprietary brand assets – trademarks, channel relationships (Sarabia-sanchez & Cerda-bertomeu, 2017). Place branding can be used to organize value-adding partnerships and networks in both private and public sector to build a coherent product offering (which includes tourism, trade, and temporary employment and investment opportunities). Simply, a place branding is the representation of identity, and a favorable internal and external image. This may include: brand satisfaction and loyalty; name awareness; perceived quality; and other brand associations (Chan, Peters & Marafa, 2016).

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