BRAND PERSONALITY OF COIMBATORE: TOURISTS INSIGHTS AS A TOOL FOR DESTINATION BRANDING

Dr B Prasanna Soundari

Associate Professor, G R Damodaran Academy of Management, Coimbatore, India

R Sabari Shankar

Ph D Scholar, G R Damodaran Academy of Management, Coimbatore, India

ABSTRACT

Incredible India is the tagline adopted by the Indian nation to position itself in the global tourism map while Enchanting Tamil Nadu is the result of the quest to draw maximum tourists to the state. India is the master brand and Tamil Nadu is the sub brand, additionally the Vision Tamil Nadu- 2023 has established the state's tourism sector as a major economy driver. Coimbatore the second largest city in Tamil Nadu recognized for textiles, education and hospitals is a fastest growing tier –II city and destination branding is an undisputable tool that will attract investments and visitors to the district. The present study aims to identify the personality of Coimbatore using a descriptive research design. The sample size considered for the study was 448 tourists by way of non-probability sampling. The mean a descriptive statistics and the mapping of the mean scores has helped to identify the personality of Coimbatore as convivial.

Key words: Destination Branding, Destination Personality & Perception Mapping

Cite this Article: Dr B Prasanna Soundari and R Sabari Shankar, Brand Personality of Coimbatore: Tourists Insights as a Tool for Destination Branding, *Journal of Management*, 6(2), 2019, pp. 45–49.

<http://www.iaeme.com/JOM/issues.asp?JType=JOM&VType=6&IType=2>

1. INTRODUCTION

Branding is the strategic art of communicating an image of a product or service in the minds of the customers. The turbulent global market has redefined the strategies of sustainability and only the efficient and effective entities who have found a place in the mind of a consumer will thrive. The scenario of the tourism sector is no different as the information age has nurtured the philosophy of standardization be it the service sector or the goods sector resulting in substitutable destinations. The exclusivity of a destination in the pre modern world has been driven either by the religion or the natural factor endowment of a habitation, but the current hypercompetitive markets mandates the projection of a destination in terms of the core competency of a location a hard element or the experience realized in a location a soft element.

Assigning human traits to a destination has become a critical or rather a necessary success factor as it influence the visiting intention of an individual. Understanding the tourists' behavioural intentions is important as it aids in gaining competitive advantage (Chen, C.-F.; Leask, A.; Phou, S. Symbolic, 2016)⁵. The current research assess the personality of the Coimbatore city as perceived by the tourist on the 5 point Likert scale and the mean scores are mapped to draw conclusions on the research. .

Nations have and will continue to invest in destination branding as a means to strengthen their economies. Dubai of United Arab Emirates and Toronto of Canada are well known for their brand building exercises. (Bageen, 2007)². Researchers have identified the personality linked with London as open minded, vibrant & creative and that of Paris as romantic (Hosany, Ekinci & Uysal, 2006)⁸. The intense competition in the global tourism sector has initiated various branding approaches and the enquiry on the brand personality help marketers connect with the tourist (Hildebrandt & Isaac, 2015)⁷. Not to be left behind India launched the international tourism campaign "Incredible India" to promote tourism to an audience of global appeal. The FDI earnings of the country through tourism having increased seven times from 2000 to 2016 and "Tamil Nadu Vision- 2023" have positioned the Coimbatore city known for its climate, food, architecture and culture as an important tourist spot (Kumarasamy, T, 2018)⁹. The study aims to understand the personality of the city through the eye of the tourist for the purpose of revitalizing the image of the city.

2. DESTINATION PERSONALITY – A PREAMBLE

Destination personality as a strategic marketing tool has been a much coveted topic in the tourism field (Hosany et al, 2006)⁸. The personality acknowledged by the tourists shapes the destination's unique identity that results in differentiation of a locality (d'Astous & Boujbel, 2007)⁶. The perfect competition setting of the global markets has dictated the researchers to measure personality and the marketers to employ the recognized individuality factor to influence the consumer decision making (Murphy, Moscardo & Benckendorff 2007; Papadimitriou, Apostolopoulou & Kaplanido, 2015)^{10,11}. Additionally the personality that evokes emotional bondage with a destination inculcates a positive word of mouth and revisiting intention (Blain, Levy, & Ritchie, 2005)³. Brand positioning a complex process can be circumvented effortlessly by propagating the personality of a nation, state or city.

A renowned model for investigating personality traits is the Big Five Model. The five factors are openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism (Casidy, Riza & Tsarenko, Yelena & Anderson, Alastair, 2009)⁴. Aaker (1997)¹ introduced a scale called Brand Personality Scale which describes the brand personality in terms of sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness. Hosany, Ekinci and Uysal (2006)⁸ had drawn from the Aaker's brand personality scale to conclude that the three personality traits sincerity, excitement and conviviality are the best fit for understanding a destination's personality. d'Astoud and Boujbel (2007)⁶ used unstructured interviews and highlighted that the six dimensions i.e. agreeableness, wickedness, snobbism, assiduousness, conformity and obtrusiveness constitutes the construct destination personality. Further Usakli and Baloglu (2011)¹² with scientific backup proved that the factor destination personality has a positive impact on tourists' intention to recommend and influence travel behaviour.

2.1. Brand Personality: A Theoretical Frame Work

The brand personality dimensions considered for the present study to be piloted at Coimbatore are Sincerity, Excitement, Conviviality, Sophistication, Ruggedness and Conformity. Literature regarding destination branding are abundant but studies with special focus on Coimbatore as a brand is negligent. The new generation researchers Hosany et al (2006)⁸ have defined sincerity,

excitement and conviviality while Murphy et al (2007)¹⁰ have defined sophistication and ruggedness and d'Astous et al (2007)⁶ have stressed on conformity. The 5 point Likert scaling technique has been engaged to measure the perception of the tourist regarding the brand personality of Coimbatore.

The figure 1 highlights the various elements of the destination personality and their explanations are as follows.

Figure 1 Destination Personality

Sincerity denotes the local people's kind and friendly attitude towards the tourists and is assessed by the four items Sincere, Reliable, Peaceful & Down to earth.

Excitement symbolizes the emotions experienced by the tourists when at the destination and is evaluated in terms of the three items Daring, Exciting & Imaginative.

Conviviality is about the family system, culture and relationship and encompasses the three items Welcoming, Friendly & Family Oriented.

Sophistication describes the destination, its people, and man-built resources as luxurious, romantic, magnificent, and charming and is judged by the two items Upper class & Charming.

Ruggedness represents the presence of nature-based resources for outdoor activities and is gauged by the two items Outdoorsy & Western.

Conformity refers to the traditionalism the tourists encounter at the destination's religious or spiritual ambience and is explained by three items Religious, Spiritual and Traditional.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A descriptive study has been undertaken to understand the perception of the tourists regarding the brand personality of Coimbatore. A pilot study conducted by selecting 50 respondents revealed a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.793 which is more than 0.6 required for the reliability of the data.

Sampling Process.

Population.

Elements: Tourists.

Sampling Units: Entry Point to Coimbatore (Railway station, Bus Stop, Airport and Check Posts) then the Tourists.

Extent: Coimbatore District.

Time: November 2018 to February 2019.

Sampling Frame: Road Map.

Sample Size: 448 respondents comprising of 124 samples from Railway Station, 124 samples from Bus Stop, 50 samples from Air Port and the remaining, 150 samples from the two major Coimbatore Check post.

Sampling Method: A non-probability convenience sampling was adopted after identifying the tourists among the local population.

4. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The demographic details involved are not considered for the present study as the focus of this article is to map the perception of the tourists with regard to the personality of Coimbatore. The mean scores of the personality traits generated using the SPSS software has been represented as table 1.

Table 1: Mean Scores			
Se No	Personality Traits	Items	Mean
1	Sincerity	Sincere, Reliable, Peaceful & Down to earth	3.8086
2	Excitement	Daring, Exciting & Imaginative	3.4970
3	Conviviality	Welcoming, Friendly & Family oriented	4.0893
4	Sophistication	Upper class & Charming	3.4855
5	Ruggedness	Outdoorsy & Western	3.1484
6	Conformity	Religious, Spiritual and Traditional	3.6622

As the 5 point Likert scale was employed a score of one , two, three, four and five indicates the tourists perception towards a personality trait as strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree respectively. The personality trait “conviviality” a combination of the items welcoming, friendly and family oriented tops the list with the mean scores of 4.0893. The trait “conviviality” trails the trait “sincerity” with a mean score of 3.8086 and cannot be considered as positively perceived as the value is below 4. The other traits also have secured a score below 4 with “conformity”, “excitement”, “sophistication” and “ruggedness” being awarded a score of 3.6622, 3.4970, 3.4855 and 3.1484 respectively. The perception of the tourist is visually represented as chart 1.

Figure 2 Perception of Mapping

It is clear that Coimbatore is considered as a convivial place by the sample respondents and such the city can be dubbed as “Convivial Coimbatore” for purpose of marketing by individual entities and trading associations.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The destination personality that emulates the symbolic function of a brand, measured using the psychometric scales and analysed using the SPSS package adjudges Coimbatore as a convivial destination. The welcoming or the conviviality dimension exhibited by the Coimbatore District sounds promising and can be effectively used to position the city at local, national and global levels. Building a place brand is an arduous process and hence representation through associations like the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry –Coimbatore Chapter is an effective tactics. The study has not considered the demographic facets as the holistic approach to research was adopted, being the first of its kind research for Coimbatore. Further studies that help identify the brand image or brand equity of Coimbatore can act as a complementing force for branding Coimbatore.

REFERENCES

- [1] Aaker, A, Dimensions of brand personality. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34(3), 1997, pp 347-356.
- [2] Bagaeen, Samer, Brand Dubai: The Instant City; or the Instantly Recognizable City. *International Planning Studies*. 12. 10.1080/13563470701486372, 2007
- [3] Blain, Carmen & E. Levy, Stuart & R. Brent Ritchie, J, Destination Branding: Insights and Practices from Destination Management Organizations. *Journal of Travel Research*. 43, 2005, pp 328-338. 10.1177/0047287505274646.
- [4] Casidy, Riza & Tsarenko, Yelena & Anderson, Alastair, The Big Five and Brand Personality: Investigating the Impact of Consumer Personality on Preferences Towards Particular Brand Personality. *Journal of Brand Management*. 16, 2009, pp 234-247. 10.1057/palgrave.bm.2550093.
- [5] Chen, C.-F.; Leask, A.; Phou, S. Symbolic, experiential and functional consumptions of heritage tourism destinations: The case of angkor world heritage site, cambodia. *International Journal of Tourism Research*. 2016, 18, 602–611
- [6] d'Astous, Alain & Boujbel, Lilia, Positioning countries on personality dimensions: Scale development and implications for country marketing. *Journal of Business Research*. 60, 2007, pp 231-239. 10.1016/j.jbusres.2006.11.005.
- [7] Hildebrandt, T., & Isaac, R, The tourism structures in Central Vietnam: towards a destination management organisation. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 12(4), 2015, pp 463-478. DOI: 10.1080/21568316.2015.1038360
- [8] Hosany, S., Ekinci, Y., & Uysal, M, Destination image and destination personality: An application of branding theories to tourism places. *Journal of business research*, 59(5), 2006, pp 638-642.
- [9] Kumarasamy, T, Impact of tourism industry development in Coimbatore city. *International Journal of Applied Research and Studies*, 2018
- [10] Murphy, Laurie & Moscardo, Gianna & Benckendorff, Pierre, Using Brand Personality to Differentiate Regional Tourism Destinations. *Journal of Travel Research*. 46. 5. 10.1177/0047287507302371, 2007
- [11] Papadimitriou, D., Apostolopoulou, A., & Kaplanidou, K, Destination personality, affective image, and behavioral intentions in domestic urban tourism. *Journal of Travel Research*, 54(3), 2015, pp 302-315.
- [12] Usakli, Ahmet & Baloglu, Seyhmus, Brand personality of tourist destinations: An application of self-congruity theory. *Tourism Management - TOURISM MANAGE*. 32. 114-127. 10.1016/j.tourman.2010.06.006. D'Astous and Boujbe, 2011