
Editorial: Contemporary perspectives towards building brand personality and loyalty in leisure and tourism industry

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Leisure and tourism services are intangible, and developing an effective brand is a challenging task for companies. Competition in the service marketing is continuously increasing due to the enhancing brand personality and perceived values of consumers in the global marketplace today. The companies influence consumer demand in the leisure and tourism industry by developing sustainable brand personality in exhibiting brand attractiveness. Branding paradigm in this industry has several interrelated constituents those need to be derived from the service marketing mix (11 P's) comprising product, price, place, promotions, pace (first mover advantage), physical evidence, process, people (frontliners in sales and customer relations), psychodynamics (consumer perceived value, experience, and networks), posture (brand image) and proliferations (associated services). Leisure and tourism companies need to develop their brand also around the behavioural factors including personality, image, reputation and trust (PIRT). The concepts of image and reputation have been increasingly emphasised in the fields of customer relations and service marketing. Cocreating leisure and tourism brands involving consumers, experience sharing within the brand community and highlighting brand-specific emotions and attitudes could strengthen the brands in the competitive marketplace. The PIRT attributes of the brand would help in fostering the brand value and drive brand passion among consumers (Rajagopal, 2009).

The leisure and tourism companies need to rethink strategies on brand building adapting non-conventional tools and techniques. Brands today are growing faster on the digital platforms than responding to the conventional channels of advertising and communication. Television commercial, traditional billboards and print media advertisements appear to be less effective over the mobile communications to design

personality of service brands. Most international leisure and tourism companies in the travel and hospitality segment have followed new brand placement strategies by integrating brands into entertainment media, particularly in the television programs and films. Brand placement engages consumers in content analysis as part of entertainments and reduces the possibility of ignoring commercial messages. Such brand placement affects purchase behaviour as evidenced by the hospitality companies after the brand's placement in the in-flight entertainment services (Kohli and Thomas, 2011).

In leisure and tourism industries, brands are generally fragile unless they are periodically reinforced on digital media emphasising consumer experience. As there is sporadic growth of companies at the bottom-of-the-pyramid market segment in this industry, brands often fall into the behavioural complexities. Consumer in leisure and tourism services prominently search for value for money effects to justify their buying decisions. Since the brands turn more judgemental among consumers in this industry, companies should consider sustainability of brand value as an important factor in prompting decision-making processes of consumers. There is often a gap between the consumer perceptions, brand equity and firm performance. Companies need to make efforts to embed brand image into consumer culture and blend global business perspectives with the local practices to gain a competitive edge on brand value against the local competitors. In this way, companies in the leisure and tourism industry could be able to better integrate brands into mainstream communications (Peloza et al, 2012).

Reputed brands, high brand equity, and brands with high value for money establish brand loyalty among consumers. However, having a combination of these factors is a complex phenomenon for the companies to achieve in the highly competitive marketplace within the leisure and tourism industry. Consumers who gain higher brand value intend to develop brand loyalty and exhibit sustainable behaviour towards the brands. Therefore, a leisure and tourism company should develop skills to manage customers individually, exhibiting how its services can enhance satisfaction and uphold the brand promise. Companies must also develop ways to deliver benefits of loyalty to their stakeholders by developing individual relationships with customers. Programs on developing brand literacy and knowledge would provide consumers deeper insights about the company as it helps in building a brand umbrella. Successful brands can also cocreate brand emotions, motivate buying behaviour, and command high levels of loyalty. As customers become increasingly loyal, they display behaviours in a predictable manner and actively participate in sharing experience through word-of-mouth endorsements. This would help leisure and tourism companies to horizontally grow their brands across the geodemographic segments and build stronger destination brands (Narayandas, 2005; Rajagopal and Rajagopal, 2017).

Digital marketing platforms help companies transfer the brand knowledge through the social platforms. This tool can also be effectively used for building loyalty and build organisational capital by booting new expressions of interests of consumers to get associated with the brand. Such grapevine communication effects support the leisure and tourism companies to expand their consumer base by inducting cross-company loyalty programs. The accrued mileage points of most airline companies can be redeemed at various hotels and shopping destinations. This could be the right example of such loyalty matrix in managing stakeholder values at the competitive marketplace today. This implies that firms can stimulate communication and interaction among people, leading to innovative activity, by explicit and organisational knowledge (Carmona-Lavado et al., 2010). Effective brand literacy requires shoving the brand stronger by communicating to

consumers through ethnic values, family decisions and peer psychodynamics. Updates on brand knowledge deliver consumers more comprehension and competitive appraisal on brands. The brand knowledge programs can be developed by the companies like Marriot Hotels as campaigns, which could inculcate consumers' conviction towards brands and drive actions towards getting associated with the brands. Brands can be architected with the verbal and non-verbal elements. Verbal elements include name, term and its etymological significance while the non-verbal elements of a brand constitute colour, graphics, pictures, charts and symbols that endorse the brand name, attributes, and related knowledge. Brand etymology helps consumers analyse the significance of brand name and develop their cognitive inference and perception on the brand (Rajagopal, 2017).

This issue of the journal includes four papers that address the destination branding, brand image, loyalty and pricing perspectives in reference to consumer perception and satisfaction, ecotourism, and hospitality services. The above-mentioned research papers represent study areas of USA, China and Malaysia. These papers discuss contemporary research propositions and attempt to establish convergence between the role of consumers and companies in managing buying decisions in a competitive leisure and tourism marketplace. I hope the collection of research papers appearing in this issue will enrich the existing literature on the topic and stimulate future research.

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