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An Examination of Singapore's Effectiveness in Destination Branding focusing on Tourists Perceptions

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Abstract

Singapore has become a top travel destination worldwide. This study looks at how well Singapore's branding tactics work to create the opinions of international tourists in regards to them coming to Singapore as a holiday destination. International tourists as well as marketing specialists in the tourism industry were interviewed in semi-structured interviews using a qualitative approach to learn more about expectations, motivations and real-world experiences. The study used an inductive approach, selecting participants through a non-probability sampling technique and interpreting the results using thematic analysis. These results show that Singapore's branding does a good job in conveying a sense of efficiency and modernity. Before travelling, tourists' expectations are largely shaped by digital marketing, social media and word of mouth referrals. Even Though the brand is effective at drawing tourists, there are some differences between what is advertised and what is actually experienced by tourists, especially when it comes to cost and cultural richness. This research adds to the body of knowledge by highlighting how crucial it is to match branding tactics with genuine visitor experiences. The knowledge acquired has important ramifications for those involved in the tourism industry, highlighting the necessity of ongoing brand development to preserve competitive positioning. To further improve branding strategies, future research could examine comparative studies across various travellers' segments and region destinations. This study advances knowledge of how destination branding shapes the dynamics of international tourism by fusing theoretical viewpoints with real-world applications.

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Background information

Singapore, known as the little red dot, is home to 5.92 million people. Singapore is also known as one of Asia's most frequently visited countries - welcoming 13.6 million international tourists in 2023 (Singapore Tourism Board, 2024). This is to a certain extent due to two particular factors which are firstly, Singapore's branding strategies which involves various marketing, promotional and branding efforts - using key messages and campaigns such as Uniquely Singapore or Passion made Possible which helps this country differentiate itself from others. Another factor would be tourist perception of Singapore - especially with how factors shape the tourist's perception and how the actual experiences align with Singapore's branding as well.

In Singapore, "the tourism sector contributes an average of 3% of Singapore's gross domestic output over the last ten years" (Singapore Tourism Board, 2024). This clearly is evident in proving that Singapore is doing something with its destination branding, having the sector to contribute immensely to the country's economy. Recently, it is stated on the news that Singapore's' tourism industry will be receiving a $300 million boost as part of the growth of the tourism sector (The Straits Times, 2024).

The aim of the study is to assess how well Singapore's destination branding influences tourists' perceptions. It specifically seeks to understand whether the image that Singapore promotes through its branding and

marketing efforts matches the actual experiences tourists have when they visit. By doing so, the study will explore whether the branding effectively conveys the reality of Singapore as a tourist destination, and where any gaps might exist between what is promised and what tourists experience. This evaluation can help improve future branding strategies to better align with visitor expectations.

This study examines the effectiveness of Singapore's destination branding strategies in shaping tourists' perceptions through key concepts. Destination branding refers to the creation of a unique identification of a specific place which separates it from others, understanding the global positioning of Singapore itself. Destination image talks about perceptions of tourists in regards to Singapore which are shaped by marketing efforts and in-person experiences which provides a platform to assess how branding influences tourists. In addition, tourist brand perceptions discuss how visitors interpret marketing messages which enforces Singapore's strategies and tourists beliefs. Therefore, analysing these key concepts are essential in understanding how they are interconnected and play an important role in shaping tourists' perceptions towards Singapore.

1.2 Rationale of the study

Similar studies have been conducted and researched by a few researchers, notably by Kotler and Gertner (2002), which focuses on marketing places in creating a favourable destination image. Alongside this, Hankinson (2004), cited by Langosi (2014) also did a study in regards to the destination framework which discussed the key elements of destination branding. According to Hosany, Ekinci and Uysal (2007), tourists' brand perceptions focus on the relationship of destination image and the human traits tourists associate with a destination.

This research would utilise the existing studies by providing a destination-specific analysis of Singapore's branding strategies, emphasising on how Singapore is being perceived in the eyes of visitors. This study will also evaluate the effectiveness of Singapore's unique branding efforts, providing a deeper level of evaluation.

Singapore's success as a global tourism hub can provide valuable insights for other cities and countries seeking to enhance their own tourism appeal. Other than benchmarking, this research is vital as it increases awareness in optimising future marketing efforts by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of Singapore's branding strategies, policymakers can refine their approach to attract more visitors and maximise tourism revenue.

Therefore, this study on Singapore's destination branding strategies has its significance on several aspects for Singapore, the tourism industry and academic research. For Singapore, it assists with policy refinement whereby areas of improvements would be identified and future strategies would be more tailored so as to better resonate to future interested tourists. In addition, this would be beneficial for the tourism industry as it provides valuable insights for other destinations seeking to improvise on their branding strategies. Moreover, the results of this study may expand specific knowledge as well as create a broader theoretical framework and model within the industry itself. In summary, this would assist in providing a more informative and provide connections with branding strategies as well as tourist perceptions.

1.3 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to examine the effectiveness of Singapore's destination branding strategies in shaping and influencing tourists' perceptions.

The objectives of this study are:

- To examine how Singapore creates and shares its destination branding on different platforms.
- To investigate what influences and motivates international tourists to choose Singapore as a travel destination.
- To assess whether Singapore's branding matches the actual perceptions and experiences as international tourists.

1.4 Summary of methodology

This study used an inductive approach with an interpretivist paradigm. This study also interviews participants by utilising semi-structured interviews to obtain detailed data. A non-probability sampling technique (purposive or judgemental sampling) was used to choose participants with pertinent travel experiences. Thematic analysis was used to examine the data and find important themes and patterns in the responses given by the participants pertaining to Singapore's destination branding, what influences and motivates international tourists to come to Singapore and also to assess whether Singapore's branding matches the reality.

Chapter 2. Literature review

2.1 Destination Branding

Destination Branding is defined as building a more favourable judgement of a destination through the selection of a brand mix (Cai, 2002, cited by Qu, Kim and Im, 2011). Studies conducted in the late 1990s, when the first academic conference on destination branding took place in 1996, have proven that destination branding has been essential (Gnoth, 1998, cited by Ibáñez and George, 2017). In addition, this is another strategy for conveying a nation's distinct identity and setting it apart from rivals (Morisson and Anderson, 2002). It is evident through a variety of tactics, channels such as social media and advertising campaigns that destination marketing is more than simply a well-known brand (Ruiz-Real, 2020). Ever since then, destination branding has turned out to be one of its most powerful ways to attract tourists to their countries to generate revenue and increase their

country's economy. This is clearly evidenced in a research paper stating that "in 2004, in order to change its image, Colombia carried out the campaign 'Colombia is passion!', almost doubling in 2006 the volume of foreign tourism." (Garcia, Gomez and Molina, 2012, p.1)

In the hindsight of destination branding, it is also vital in emphasising the strategy which is identifying the Unique Destination Proposal (UDP). This demonstrates what tourists find unique and valuable about a place (Anholt, 2002). According to Qu, Kim and Im (2011), there are two other strategies which include affective image, which goes to greater detail about the tourist's emotional responses and feelings associated with the location. A location that creates a strong affective image will create positive emotions such as joy and nostalgia. Creating these positive feelings would create location loyalty as visitors may come back again to places whereby strong, positive feelings were created. Other than affective image, cognitive image is also involved. Cognitive image discusses the tourist's understanding of the location, highlighting the factual and rational aspects of tourists' knowledge of a certain landmark or infrastructure. That being said, it is evident that tourists' preferences as well as their emotions are undeniably important in creating a destination branding strategy. According to Pereira, Correia and Schutz (2012), the destination branding goes along with the branding personality and branding image with various components which align together in order to create a branding for the destination (refer to figure 1).

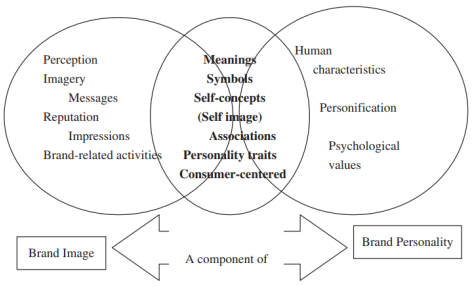

Figure 1 (Pereira, Correia and Schutz, 2012)

In figure 1, brand image is defined as consumers' perceptions or mental imagery of a brand or destination which are influenced by a variety of activities which are associated with the brand or destination. Components of brand image includes messages whereby communication initiatives are established through platforms like social media, reputation on how renowned the destination is, impressions is how their first impressions on it alongside with brand-related activities such as the campaigns and actions pertaining to the brand, on how it influences how consumers or visitors to view the brand or destination. Brand personality is then defined as the collection of human qualities and attributes which claims to provide the brand with a unique personality. It consists of components such as human qualities whereby establishing personal connections with the visitors or consumers such as friendliness and reliability are vital, personifications to give a brand or destination a "human touch" of being friendlier, alongside, psychological values whereby its values are subconsciously relatable to people on a daily basis. Based on the model, brand personality is a more comprehensive concept which coincides with brand image whereby brand personality includes the internal human characteristics while brand image represents an external viewpoint of how it is perceived. A brand identity is influenced by its personality and image with it creating emotional bonds while the other aids in building reputation.

In summary, it is clear that destination branding assists in making profitability in the country, but with proper planning and strategies which involves the emotional and reputative aspects would be beneficial and essential for a destination to achieve maximum success.

2.2 Destination Image

Destination Image is widely vital in the tourism industry as it discusses the making of a destination, as a way of influencing tourists to visit their nation. With a country or destination made up of different activities and attractions, the image created is usually based on the tourists' imagination (Govers, 2005). Even though tourists have their own visions or fantasies of a certain destination, it is clearly viable that a process was established in order for the tourists to reach a certain level of expected belief. The process begins from impressions which originate from marketing channels such as news articles, social media, as well as entertainment elements such as movies and TV shows alongside the opinions of close ones (Gunn, 1988, cited by Matos, Mendes and Valle, 2012). Besides the process, this has created a model studied by Matos, Mendes and Valle, (2012) in understanding and formulating the controllable and uncontrollable force of destination image - highlighting how both different forces are liable in creating and developing the expectations of tourists of a certain destination (refer to figure 2).

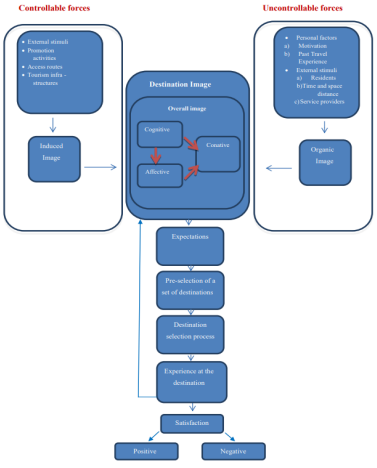

Figure 2 (Matos, Mendes and Valle, 2012)

According to figure 2, destination image is made up of two different forces which consists of firstly, controllably sources which explains the factors which can be controlled by authorities or destination marketers can control or have influence by through external stimuli where behaviours that can be used to influence how the location is viewed through promotional materials like advertisements. Another aspect which could be controlled by such stakeholders would be access routes such as the accessibility and transportation availability is involved. Moreover, establishing tourist infrastructure such as hotels or attractions in the country would all assist in building a mental image of the destination. Other than controllable sources, there are also uncontrollable forces which affect destination images which are usually out of authorities or destination marketers' control. These forces or factors are usually derived from individuals such as motivations which determine the purpose of one's trip whether it is for cultural experiences or leisure. In addition, prior trip experiences also play a big part as it influences attitudes and expectations of a certain destination. Other than individual factors, external aspects of the destination such as interactions or encounters with locals alongside service providers such as guides and hospitality personnel would also craft the image of the destination. With all the factors combined, it produces a more organic image which establishes a more organic and non-filter experience in the destination.

Destination Image is usually measured by surveys to ask tourists how they view or experience a certain attraction or landmarks in a destination. In a case study by Aksoy and Kiyci (2011), measurement tools such as firstly, semantic differential scales where tourists rate the different characteristics of a destination by gathering of cognitive and affective points of the particular place. Cognitive points are defined as the knowledge and opinions which a person has about a destination's features. It is usually associated with factual information which is known by the person visiting the destination beforehand. Factual information in this case is referring to Infrastructure and amenities, accessibility and safety as well as economic and social characteristics. Other than cognitive, there are also affective points where it involves the emotional aspects of the visitor to the destination. This point is more known to be subjective, and it pertains more to the individuals' feelings about the location as compared to their knowledge. Positive emotions such as joy, excitement and negative emotions such as stress, discomfort would impact greatly on the scale to measure destination image. Aside from semantic differential scales, likert scales are also used to assess visitors' level of agreement in regards to the destination. This would benefit in overseeing the different categories of the location and having an appropriate understanding of the destination's image. Tourists usually have a more superficial and short-term view or image of the destination relying on the destination's city attractions, hospitality and ambience. According to Ezeuduji, November and Haupt (2016), emotional and cognitive assessments of the destination influence tourists' perceptions and country's image based on their experiences. This would explain why visitor perceptions are primarily based on the opinions of the tourists themselves, making them highly subjective and individualised. Tourist perceptions are formed from different elements such as standards of lodging, entertainment options, safety, cleanliness and the accessibility of facilities (Anastassova, 2011). A study made by Kovacic, Milenkovic, Silvar and Rancic (2018) claims that the two most important factors in how travellers view a destination are safety and comfort. Having visitors from different backgrounds have different opinions about the country's atmosphere, which in return could impact their visit and whether they would return to the destination.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

Taking into account the aims of this study, an interpretivist paradigm would be best suited. According to Alharahsheh and Pius (2020), this paradigm views people as distinct, with the presumption that people cannot be studied in the same manner as each human being has a different point of view, adding in depth meanings to their thoughts and opinions of a specific topic through different factors such as their behavioural aspects based on individual experiences visiting Singapore. Moreover, knowledge and truth are based on people's experiences and how they themselves interpret them whereby subjectivity is situated (Ryan and Gemma, 2018). Hammersley (2013) cited by Pham (2018) mentioned that this paradigm explained about the various ways people see and experience Singapore through various contexts and situations with an attempt to steer clear of prejudice when analysing experiences in accordance with their own interpretations. By implementing this research paradigm, this allows an unbiased and multiple subjective viewpoints of first-hand experiences visiting Singapore. Having to utilise an interpretivist paradigm whereby multiple viewpoints would be gathered; an inductive approach would be best suited to analyse data. As explained by Thomas (2003), an inductive approach is used to identify recurring, important and more apparent themes or reasons in regards to visitors coming to Singapore which are presented in unprocessed data without any limitations of hypothesis or established theories. According to Alharahsheh and Pius (2020), in order to have an in-depth understanding of the reason visitors visit Singapore and to develop the concepts, using the inductive approach would be vital in observing and identifying the recurring patterns in the data collected which are grouped in broad themes. Therefore, this approach aids in summarising themes from the raw data, providing insights why people visit Singapore and whether the findings reveal any references to

Singapore's destination strategies, with a focus on highlighting the actual reasons and experiences of visiting Singapore. With that being said, this research is conducted in a grounded theory methodology which aligns to this research aims. Grounded theory methodology is defined as to acquire a better understanding of a phenomenon where it entails comprehending different viewpoints of someone who has firsthand knowledge or experience in regards to the subject (Turner and Astin, 2021) which in this case refers to their visit to Singapore. According to Miller (2015), the objective of grounded theory is to build a theory that explores and investigates the phenomenon of interest, promoting discoveries and providing an in-depth examination on the subject.

3.2 Sample and data collection

The participants in this study are destination marketing specialists working in Singapore's tourism industry as well as foreign visitors who have been in Singapore in the last twelve months. Alongside expert opinions from the destination marketing specialists in regards to branding tactics, this study seeks to investigate the reasons, anticipations and experiences of travellers. A non-probability sampling with a purposive or judgemental technique will be conducted as it allows the researcher to specifically select participants for the interview which fits to the population's criteria.

A typical profile of a participant would be an international tourist who has visited Singapore the last one year, regardless of demographics or a destination marketing professional involved in the tourism marketing industry in Singapore. The number of sample sizes is estimated to be 8, with 6 being the tourists who visited Singapore and the other 2 to be marketing specialists of the tourism industry of Singapore.

Participants who have not visited Singapore within the past year or who do not have the experience with destination branding in the tourism industry in Singapore will be excluded from the study to ensure that the findings and data collected are relevant to the current tourism strategies and recent experiences of tourists.

The data for this study will be gathered through semi-structured interviews due to its flexibility between the interviewer and interviewee alongside document analysis of Singapore's tourism promotional materials. According to Morse and McIntosh (2015), with the aid of the framework and the responses flexibility in doing semi-structured interviews, having open ended questions will allow participants to answer anything they want while the researcher is also given the freedom to delve deeper into the interviewee's answers if it intrigues the researcher. Moreover, Kakilla (2021) also mentioned that semi - structured interviews tend to generate a nature which tends to increase the possibility of new concepts to be discovered by the researcher.

3.3 Data Analysis

This study will be conducted through semi - structured interviews which will be tape recorded and transcribed via verbatim. Verbatim is utilised in this study to analyse data due to its purest form of authenticity and detailed form of transcribing all of the things mentioned by the interviewee without any filtering or restrictions. As mentioned by Rutakumwa, Mugisha, Bernays, Kabunga, Tumwekwase, Mbyone and Seeley (2020), the main points raised in a verbatim transcript are not only illiterate in the transcript but it also presents all of its complexity, covering almost every facet of the problem without hiding any meanings or issues.

Thematic Analysis via an inductive orientation will be utilised in this study. Thematic analysis is known as a technique for finding, examining, and summarising patterns and similar themes in data findings (Konstantinos, 2024). Moreover, this is used to ensure a more seamless process to uncover patterns within complex data and uncover deeper meanings of the data found. The researcher is expected to anticipate different themes without any predetermined categories or framework. The level of semantic analysis in this study will be latent. According to Waeraas (2022), a latent level is used whenever the researcher is more eager to comprehend more in-depth data such as attitudes, beliefs, concepts, convictions or presumptions which shapes the interviewee's responses. The latent level of text analysis is characterised value coding.

3.4 Ethical Issues

According to Yip, Han and Sng (2016), ethics in research consists of three principles which are firstly, the need to respect the participants' confidentiality. Secondly, is to minimise as much harm or damage to the participants. Lastly, it would ensure that both parties have the same mindset of serving justice pertaining to an individual and societal level when doing or participating in research. With this being said, participants are given a consent form detailing the goals of the study, their voluntary participation and their rights to withdraw at any point of time without facing any repercussions in order to preserve integrity and reliability. Furthermore, informed consent guarantees openness and empowers participants to make informed choices in regards to their participation. In addition to obtaining participants consent, the researcher must proactively safeguard their privacy by anonymising responses and safely storing data to guard unwanted access to it.

Additionally, this study made sure that findings are presented truthfully and without any fabrication or selective data collection during the data analysis phase, where ethical considerations have to be presented at all times. After data collection, the researcher would then utilise thematic coding which aids in improving confidentiality by assigning participants numerical identifiers rather than personal information. Hence by

adhering to these ethical guidelines, the study not only safeguards the rights of participants but also enhances the validity and creditability of the data results.

3.5 Limitations

Limitations in research context are defined as potential flaws that are usually beyond the researcher's control and are closely related to the selected research design whereby it is "imposed" to be done or be conducted in a "specific" way (Theofanidis and Fountouki, 2019). There are a few things in this research whereby research design could have been thought of better as it can impact the findings of the research contributing to the risk of respondent biases. Respondent bias is a significant factor of limitation whereby it discusses the possibility of participants giving socially desirable answers instead of true harsh facts which may impact the accuracy of the data. In this case, semi-structured interviews were used in this study and although the method is known for obtaining detailed viewpoints, it does not accurately represent the views of a wider range of tourists due to the small sample size. In addition, the time and resource limitations that comes with this research are another drawback. The time and effort required to conduct interviews, transcribe responses and conduct thematic analysis may limit the number of participants. Having a larger sample might have offered a wider variety of viewpoints, which might have improved the findings' resilience. Lastly, there might be interpretation issues which might have impacted the accuracy of the responses despite having every attempt was made to guarantee clarity. It is still possible that some meanings were overlooked during the discussion or thematic analysis process.

Chapter 4. Findings

The goal of this study is to examine Singapore's effectiveness in destination branding with an emphasis on tourists' perceptions. This chapter's analysis relates to three objectives which are to examine how Singapore creates and shares its destination branding on different platforms, to investigate what influences and motivates international tourists to choose Singapore as travel destination and to assess whether Singapore's branding aligns with actual perceptions and experiences as international tourists.

4.1 Singapore Destination Branding across different platforms

Based on the interview with the marketing specialists; in order to create a powerful worldwide identity, Singapore uses a multifaceted branding strategy that strategically makes use of digital media, traditional marketing and word of mouth marketing. According to the study's findings, the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) is essential in crafting a unique story through initiatives like Passion Made Possible which elevates the city's reputation. By interacting with a variety of audiences through influencers, user generated content and immersive storytelling with the aid of social media such as YouTube and Instagram. Other than this, having reputable events and branding such as Singapore airlines further bolster its digital marketing initiatives.

Based on the interviews with international tourists, it was indicated that even though Singapore's branding does a great job of projecting an aspirational image, some believe that some aspects such as Singapore's cultural heritage are not given as much attention as its modern counterparts. Business travellers as well as wealthy tourists are more drawn to the city's portrayal as an urban city but culturally sensitive or budget-conscious tourists occasionally feel that local customs and grassroots experiences are not adequately represented. This disparity implies that a more varied branding strategy that targets various traveller demographics would be much more effective and advantages in attracting international tourists to come to Singapore. Furthermore, the interviews also demonstrated the increasing significance of customised experiences which offers more of experiences that speak to them personally rather than just famous sites and well-known landmarks. Enhancing targeted campaigns that appeals to a particular interests such as foodies since it is one of the main factors why tourists come to Singapore according to the data collected could be one way to achieve good branding and attract more international tourists.

4.2 Motivations and influences driving International Tourist to visit Singapore

Based on the interviews with the marketing specialists, the data shows that Singapore's world-class infrastructure, safety and cleanliness are what attract most foreign visitors. The data also highlighted the nation's standing as a safe country to travel with excellent public transportation and services. Moreover, Singapore's reputation as a world food centre continues to be a major draw. Other than that, travel choices were also greatly influenced by theme parks, upscale lodging and well-known landmarks such as Marina Bay Sands and Gardens by the Bay.

Based on the interviews with international tourists, participants mentioned that their travel decisions were influenced by Singapore's green initiatives such as the incorporation of nature into urban areas. Moreover, all of these experiences were further shaped by social media and travel vlogs as these online resources offer up-to-date information and peer suggestions which might have impacted tourists' expectations prior to their arrival. In addition, it is also noted that most of the participants acknowledged that despite Singapore having the upper hand in terms of futuristic infrastructure and reputation of being safe and clean - friends and family who had previously visited Singapore also played a part in their travel choices. Their choice of Singapore over other locations was strongly supported by word-of-mouth recommendations. This data specifically emphasises

on how crucial visitors' reviews are to bolstering Singapore's competitive edge. According to the data, the authenticity of experiences that people share on social media, travel vlogs and through personal narratives adds a level of relatability and trust which formal marketing campaigns are unable to duplicate.

4.3 Alignment between Singapore's branding and actual tourist perceptions

Based on the interviews with the international tourists, the data indicated that Singapore generally meets or surpasses expectations in areas such as modernity, efficiency and safety where the city's futuristic aesthetics, excellent service standards and easy access to transportations were praised by many participants which proves that Singapore's destination branding on these aspects are effective. However, some participants pointed out that their experiences did not entirely match the city's state representation as a vibrant cultural melting pot. Although Singapore's multicultural identity can be seen in places like Chinatown and Little India, some think that these areas are missing out or not given enough promotion. Furthermore, even though food was always hailed as a highlight, some mentioned that Singapore's exorbitant prices prevented them from experiencing what was portrayed in the advertisement promoting Singapore.
In conclusion, Singapore's branding initiatives are very successful in establishing the city as a top travel destination. However, there is still room for improving the messaging to better suit changing visitor demands. A stronger focus on diverse experiences, affordability and cultural authenticity may aid in closing the gap between perception and reality. The data collected also emphasises on how peer recommendations and digital marketing are becoming more influential which underscores the necessity of ongoing interaction with travellers via immersive and interactive platforms.

Chapter 5. Discussions

This chapter's analysis will be discussing the relationship between the research findings and literature review. The relationship will be discussed based on the three key areas which are Destination Branding, Destination Image and Tourists perception and experiences. In light of these key areas, the results covered in this section will be contrasted with the literature review.

5.1 Destination Branding

The data collected supports Qu, Kim and Im (2011)'s definition of destination branding which highlights how perceptions are shaped by both affective and cognitive image formation. Through the Passion Made Possible campaign, Singapore's branding strategy successfully conveys a strong identity and positions the nation as a centre of innovation, culture and distinctive experiences. This is in line with Anholt (2022) idea of a unique destination proposal (UDP) since Singapore uses its cutting-edge infrastructure, wide range of attractions and reputation of safety and cleanliness to strategically set itself apart from rivals. Moreover, the results of the study also support the destination branding model put forth by Pereira, Correia and Schutz (2012) which emphasises the relationship between brand image and brand personality. Singapore's solid international reputation as a secure and well-run travel destination is indicative of its brand personality which is characterised by traits like efficiency. Nevertheless, the data showed that some participants believe there is insufficient cultural promotions in Singapore despite the country's robust destination branding initiatives. This suggests that Singapore's emphasis on modernity may obscure its local customs and heritage. More regional narratives could be incorporated into branding strategies in the future to improve authenticity and emotional engagement.

5.2 Destination Image

Matos, Mendes and Valle (2012) model which separated controllable and uncontrollable elements affecting destination image is consistent with the results. Controllable elements like government-led advertising campaigns such as Passion Made Possible and Singapore's dedication to upholding a safe and clean environment play a major role in shaping the country's reputation as a travel destination. On the contrary, there are also uncontrollable elements such as individual expectations and impact of social media can greatly influence how tourists perceive a destination which in this case would be Singapore. Based on the findings, many responded that they had anticipated Singapore as a lively and fascinating city which luckily exceeded their expectations when they visited Singapore themselves. This is consistent with Gunn (1988) model of destination image formation which emphasises how tourists' perceptions are shaped by their pre-visit expectations and their actual on-site experiences. The data results are also consistent with the destination image model developed by Matos, Mendes and Valle (2012), which holds that perceptions of a place are influenced by cognitive factors such as efficiency and infrastructure, as well as affective factors such as emotional ties. According to the data collected, Singapore excels in cognitive as well as functional domains but could improve more on the affective aspects by encouraging more in-depth cultural and interactive experiences.

5.3 Tourists Perceptions and Experiences

The research findings are consistent with the study done by Ezeuduji, November and Haupt (2016) which examines the impact of both cognitive and emotional factors on visitors' perceptions. Based on the data collected from participants, infrastructure, cleanliness and safety are important cognitive elements that contributed to a positive destination image which had influenced most of the participants to come to

Singapore. However, on the emotional aspects, some participants described Singapore as a vibrant and friendly destination whereas others thought the experience was lacklustre especially when it comes to cultural promotions.

Additionally, the findings support Anastassova (2011) research on the key factors influencing visitors' perceptions which talks about elements such as cleanliness and safety. This further reinforces Kovacic, Milenkovic, Silvar and Rancic (2018) claiming that safety and comfort are the most important factors in shaping travellers' overall impressions of a destination.

In conclusion, the theories and models covered in the literature review are very helpful in elucidating the elements that influence image formation, destination branding and visitor perceptions. The results bolster the notion that both cognitive and affective factors impact a destination's brand identity which highlights the significance of strategic branding initiatives in determining visitors' expectations. Moreover, it is clear that there are controllable and uncontrollable elements in the creation of a destination's image. While government-led programmes such as safety and cleanliness are vital, social media and individual expectations have an impact on perceptions that are outside of direct control. Although Singapore's strong international appeal and image are explained by the theories, the results indicated that emotional aspects or engagement as well as cultural authenticity should be given more attention.

The diverse experiences of tourists show that although efficiency and infrastructure support a favourable cognitive impression, stronger emotional ties might improve long-term visitor satisfaction. This implies that in order to meet increasing demand of immersive and genuine experiences, conventional models of destination branding and destination image formation might need to change. In general, the theories does offer a solid basis for comprehending the dynamics of Singapore's image and branding as a travel destination but it also pointed out areas in which the models especially when it comes to the emotional aspects or engagement which proves that the theories does add significant value to the findings.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research provides a detailed understanding of how Singapore's destination branding affects international tourist perceptions and experiences. This study emphasises the dynamic interaction between branding efforts and actual visitor experiences, building upon established theories of destination branding and image development. The study indicates that although Singapore's branding successfully communicates an image of modernity and efficiency, the emotional and cultural richness of the tourist experience is a vital aspect requiring improvement. The study examines tourist motivations and perceptions, highlighting the disparity between strategic branding initiatives and genuine visitor expectations, hence underscoring the necessity for destination marketers to always adapt their strategies to maintain relevance in a dynamic tourism environment.

The importance of these findings is in their contribution to both theoretical and practical aspects of destination branding. Theoretically, the study emphasises the necessity of incorporating cognitive and affective elements in branding efforts, as previously noted in the literature. The research offers significant insights for tourism stakeholders, legislators, and marketing experts in Singapore, allowing them to enhance branding tactics that better reflect actual tourist experiences. Rectifying the discrepancies between branding and tourist expectations can bolster Singapore's competitive stance in global tourism, guaranteeing ongoing growth and guest contentment.

This study enhances the comprehension of destination branding theory by highlighting the influence of personal experiences on tourist impressions. Theoretical models emphasise branding techniques and cognitive-affective frameworks; however, the findings highlight that a destination's brand identity is collaboratively developed through tourist interactions, cultural experiences, and service encounters. Future research could include experiential branding approaches to investigate how tourists emotionally engage with a site and how these connections affect brand loyalty and repeat visitation. By incorporating these views, researchers and practitioners can formulate a more holistic approach to destination branding that transcends conventional marketing narratives.

Future research could examine numerous routes to expand upon the findings of this study. A comparison study examining the perceptions of various traveller segments regarding Singapore's branding could yield profound insights across distinct demographics. Moreover, integrating in depth research may facilitate the evaluation of the evolution of Singapore's branding in relation to global tourism trends and tourist feedback over time. Ultimately, subsequent research could extend to additional Southeast Asian locales to evaluate branding efficacy, offering a regional viewpoint on how destination branding techniques influence tourist perceptions and experiences. By examining these aspects, subsequent research might augment our comprehension of the dynamic function of destination branding in global tourism.

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