CLASSIFICATION OF DESTINATION SLOGANS IN TERMS OF UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITIONS

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ABSTRACT

Slogan is considered to be an essential component of destination branding. Creating a slogan aims to convey a distinctive message to potential customers and consists of phrases about the destination's unique selling propositions. The focus of this study is to examine the classification of slogans for 796 destinations that are found to be the members of DMAI. Identified each slogan among 582 slogans are categorized into 18 thematic categories according to their unique selling propositions aiming to find out the extent which differentiates the competing destination from each other. The results of the study point out the efforts and difficulties in creating a distinctive slogan for destinations since there are many challenging destinations offering more or less similar tourism products and experiences.

Keywords: destination branding, slogan, destination websites

ÖZET

Sloganlar destinasyon markalaşmasının önemli bir bileşeni olarak nitelendirilmektedir. Sloganlar destinasyonun özgün satış önerileri konularını içeren ifadelerden oluşmakta ve potansiyel tüketicilere ayırd edici bir mesaj iletme amacını taşımaktadırlar. Bu araştırmanın odak noktası DMAI üyesi olan 796 destinasyonun sloganları arasında sınıflandırma yapmaktır. 582 slogan içinde tanımlanan her bir slogan, rakip destinasyonları birbirinden ayıran boyutları ortaya çıkarmak amacıyla, özgün satış önerilerine göre 18 tematik konu içinde kategorize edilmiştir. Araştırmanın sonuçları ayırd edici bir slogan oluşturmanın, bir çok ilgi çekici destinasyonun aşağı yukarı benzer

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turizm ürünleri ve deneyimlerini sunmaları nedeniyle, güçlüklerini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Destinasyon Markalaşması, Slogan, Destinasyon İnternet Siteleri

INTRODUCTION

Destinations are places towards which people travel and where they choose to stay for a while in order to experience certain features or characteristics (Buhalis 2000). Grangsjö (2003) suggests that tourists choose a destination according to the attractions it offers and the facilities it provides, such as transport services to and from the destination, accommodation, restaurants, and additionally the physical setting of the destination. Therefore, Hsu, Tsai and Wu (2009) point out that prioritizing factors and attributes affecting destination choice is a complex multi-criteria decision-making process. Since pull motivations play an important role in selecting a destination to visit, Hsu et.al (2009) also distinguish pull motivations on the basis of attractiveness of the destination, including tangible resources (beaches, recreational activities, and cultural attractions), and travelers' perceptions and expectations (novelty, benefit expectations, and marketing image).

Since many cities have quiet similar characteristics, a strategy of destination branding is to create unique values, so distinguishing one destination from another (Zhang and Zhao 2009). Therefore, destination marketers use slogans to communicate these unique values as a branding strategy. In order to attain a successful brand, it is urged for the service organizations to dare to be different in terms of many aspects (Ritchie and Crouch 2003: 199-200). Thus, differentiation lies at the heart of a brand's equity (Kohli, Leuthesser and Suri 2007). It highly depends greatly on the identification of distinctive and defining characteristics possessed by the destination in question (Zhang and Zhao 2009). Destination branding is principally about highlighting these differences and without differentiation, it's hard for a brand to survive in the aggressive international tourism arena. In terms of differentiation determining the uniqueness of the destination can be

considered as the starting point of destination branding, followed by the uniqueness of the brand that must be supported with a slogan or a logo to make the destination compelling to potential tourists. Hence it's hard to distinguish the features of the destinations since it becomes harder to create distinctiveness for the recognition of a destination worldwide.

Morgan at al. (2002) explains destination branding as a strategic instrument to publicize a destination's competitive advantages. Destination branding does not simply refer to the exclusive use of promotional ways such as logos or slogans, but include many more areas of activities (Zhang and Zhao 2009). Thus, as said by Morgan at al. (2002), destination branding is a common practice to market the destination's history, quality of place, lifestyle, and culture for opportunity, prestige or power in capital accumulation in a competitive environment. According to Goeldner et al. (2000: 653), a destination brand communicates the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination. Hence, the strategy of branding tries to place a fresh and unique image in the minds of the audience (Avraham and Daugherty 2009). Rebranding and repositioning a destination's image in the marketplace is likely to require a significant and long-term investment in resources (Pike 2009).

Vanolo (2008) studies how to represent and build urban images connected to the ideas such as the culturally oriented, socially attractive, and creative destination. The understanding that lies beneath this concern is actually about drawing the attention of tourists and persuading them to travel to the destination. Hence, destination image should be conveyed through multiple channels, including verbal messages and managerial practices (Singh and Lee 2009) aiming at successful destination branding. Destination imaging is fundamentally a social and political issue as it affects tourist flows (Cornelissen 2005). Along with the growing awareness of the importance of a destination's positive image, many place leaders believe that their

destination's negative image is an obstacle that prevents it from becoming more attractive and in fact forestalls a brighter future (Avraham 2004).

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Context of Destination Slogans

Slogans are powerful branding devices because, like brand names, they are extremely efficient; short-hand means to build brand equity (Keller 1998: 151). Slogans provide some meaning to those incapable of understanding what is complex, or not wanting to spend the time mastering it (Sharkansky 2002). A brand name, most often no longer than a word or two, cannot say much in a literal sense (Kohli, Leuthesser and Suri 2007), so it has to be supported by a slogan for instance that provides a significant contribution to the ongoing branding process. A slogan can be defined as one of the fundamental elements of the branding process in destination marketing which has to be kept updated and, be created, designed and communicated as memorable. As Avraham and Daugherty (2009) implies, this is done by first identifying the place's unique selling proposition and then creating a message that promotes and reinforces the unique selling proposition as an image.

According to Kohli et.al 2007, since names and logos cannot be easily changed, a slogan is in a unique position to act as a bridge between a brand's legacy and its evolving image. Slogans conveying images (Sharkansky 2002), contribute to the attainment of two broad objectives; enhancing brand awareness and, creating, supporting, or changing the brand's image or perceptions; that is, positioning or repositioning the brand (Kohli et.al 2007). However, advertising slogans sometimes reflect positioning, but not always. Slogans may only be catchy phrases that have nothing to do with a destination's positioning strategy (Rocco and Vladimir 1994: 351). At the same time, branding needs continuity, so slogans need time to be recognized and become effective (Kavaratzis and Ashworth

2006). In a general sense slogans reflect the destinations' characteristics and values by means of a word combination representing the destination.

The major reason of using slogans that are word phrases generally used with the name of the destination is to create awareness about the main features and attractions of a destination and to draw the attention of the tourists who are seeking for certain characteristics. Although the practice of including the brand name in the slogan may somewhat limit creative flexibility, potential benefits are great given the magnitude of the recall problem (Kohli, Leuthesser and Suri 2007). Since the brand name of the destination refers to the actual name of the destination, the actual function of the slogan is to express the benefits of visit and also support the brand identity. Therefore, a slogan should be appealing, catchy, remarkable, compelling and easy to remember. Additionally, Kohli et.al (2007) emphasize that shorter slogans are learned more quickly than complex ones. On the other hand, slogans and logos are likely to be short-lived and not effectively differentiate the destination from competing places offering similar benefits (Pike 2009). So as Lee, Cai and Leary (2006) states, slogans interplay effectively with other brand builders, such as names, logos, packaging, and designs.

As Vanolo (2008) implies, creativity is the major keyword in building effective slogans. A good destination slogan should express the unique selling proposition of the destination brand pleasantly and effectively to the audience (Lee, Cai and Leary 2006). The slogans, therefore, should represent the most distinctive pull factors of destinations to create differentiation in tourists' minds. Uysal and Hagan (1993) define pull factors of a destination as tangible and intangible cues that pull people to realize the needs of particular travel experiences, such as natural and historic attractions, food, people, recreation facilities, and marketed image of the destination. Additionally, Lee et.al (2006) states that slogans must reflect the character or personality of the destination.

1.2. Communication of Slogans Through Destination Websites

Slogans are essential to the human condition as simplifiers of communication (Sharkansky 2002). Since consumers need to be bonded to the brand attitudinally, a brand's rational and emotional benefits need to be communicated through strong and consistent brand communications (Morgan and Pritchard 2000: 232). Therefore, marketers design communication strategies aimed specifically at different stages in the information search process that directs to efficient use of resources and more success in attracting tourists to their specific destinations (Gursoy and McCleary 2004). In this sense, destination websites enable the destinations to enhance their competitiveness by benefitting from the utilities provided in terms of powerful communication. According to Purdue (2001), website design and Internet-marketing features contribute to the effective delivery of messages, the perceived quality of products and services, and as well as the recognition of a brand image.

As an intermediary in the tourism industry, Internet is a very important communication tool for customers. From a customer point of view Heung (2003) argues that the two main considerations for Internet users are time saving and convenience. Therefore, websites are considered to be the most universal form of technology in marketing used by destinations and are critical in the creation of brand reputation. Park and Gretzel (2007) indicate that destination marketing organizations like CVBs invest considerable amounts of money in the development of web sites as part of their overall promotion efforts. Thereby, convention and visitors' bureaus enhance the economic growth and development of their respective regions, making them a desirable location for meetings, conventions, and tours, and increase the environmental well-being of destinations through promotion and comprehensive marketing (Stepchenkova et al. 2010).

The main objectives of these destination marketing organizations are to offer accurate and comprehensive information about a destination's attractions,

events, and facilities, and to attract and persuade potential tourists (Singh and Lee 2009). As part of their marketing strategy, destination websites offers new distribution channels for destination product, reaches people in faraway locations, and provides richer information and less expensive means of communication to DMOs (Stepchenkova et.al 2010). Fesenmaier (2007) also argues that successful destination marketing strategies require a substantial integration and coordination of Internet marketing efforts as well as the development of a favorable organizational environment that supports innovation.

Once the internet users search the website with an instinct to go on a holiday or a sense of duty for a business trip, firstly they encounter with the name, slogan and logo of the destination on the home page. These three components of the brand are repeated on other pages and on a number of spots at the same page of a website in order to position it in the minds of the tourists. In addition to the web sites, the names, slogans with or without logos are also used in other marketing mediums to spread the recognition of the destination brand. In this study, only the slogans emphasized in the websites are taken into account and the slogans at other marketing mediums have been excluded.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study seeks to examine the extent to which the destinations are differentiated through slogans on the websites of DMOs and classify them in terms of unique selling propositions. So, this research aims to identify certain classifications that destinations identify in their slogans. Knowing that destination websites with a slogan on the homepage generally represent the first impression for the customer, slogans are examined according to their presence. In this regard, technology offering remarkable opportunities facilitate in the first encounter with a destination. Hereby, slogans were collected from 796 DMOs by two independent coders via visiting destination websites that are member of the Destination Marketing Association

International (DMAI). DMAI (Destination Marketing Association International) is the world's largest and most reliable resource for official destination marketing organizations (DMOs) as implied in their website (www.destinationmarketing.org).

Therefore, links of DMOs listed in the website of DMAI were used to access the destination websites. The slogans published in the websites were collected separately in the first week of April 2011 by the two coders. Destinations which emphasized their slogans at their websites were identified. Afterwards, slogans were compared which the coders were required to record after visiting the DMOs' websites. If the results of two coders didn't match, the link of the websites were visited together by the two coders and checked once more. The links that couldn't be accessed and slogans that are not mentioned on the websites of destinations were checked once more together by the two coders in order to assure the results. The links that didn't work were not searched through internet in order not to risk the convenience of the study. On the other hand, slogans for different segments were not taken into account but the general slogans of the destinations were especially studied. Finally, each slogan is analyzed according to their messages by the two researchers to reach an agreement about the classifications and there have been identified 18 categories of slogans. If there was a difficulty in determining the meaning of the slogan and classifying it, the web site of the destination was checked over again to have a clear idea about the meanings that the marketers have emphasized.

3. FINDINGS

The primary objective of this paper is to classify the slogans existing on the destination websites provided from the list of DMAI members. 796 destination websites are visited, but the link of 18 websites didn't work and 196 of destinations didn't have a slogan mentioned at their websites. Thus, the classification of 582 destination slogans is determined upon the focus of slogans created to appeal the audience. As a result, the slogans were

classified into several groups such as emotions, attention, specification, invitation, encouragement and so forth after examining the messages of each slogan. 18 categories are identified among 582 destination slogans. Pike (2004a), (2004b) and (2009) conducted similar studies on slogans. For instance, in the study of Pike (2004b), it's been identified 14 categories for 244 destination slogans. The categories are listed as superiority, discovery, nature, location, people, water, self expressive, escape, pleasure, treasure, royal, vibrancy, climate and culinary. Here the discovery category in Pike's (2004b) study is named as encouragement that are spelled to motivate and encourage the tourists. The categories of "nature" and "location" and "superiority" are other similarities between these two studies.

During the classification of the slogans it's been noticed that there are some slogans that evoke the imagination of tourists, motivate them to fall in dreams and then inspire them to make it real by going on a holiday. It's not only the individual travelers that have been targeted but also the meeting planners, incentive companies and/or incentive departments in corporate companies. The slogans examined are generally short as to be catchy and memorable. A few destinations such as Mexico, Cardiff, Vicenza, Montreal, Llandudno and Puebla, uses the slogans in their own language. This may refer to either the destination targets the national market or the destination is so nationalist and confident and is not caring about not to be understood by international tourists. Other slogans are all in English which refers to the global way of communication.

According to the uniqueness or competitive advantages, the destination slogans may highlight the cultural richness, heritage, diversity or novelty. The classifications of the slogans are examined and it has been observed that some slogans are taking attention by their unique selling proposition(s) where the others are problematic in positioning themselves. Moreover, the slogans without a focus confuse the tourists' minds and suspend them making a decision in favor of the destination. On the other hand, slogans of

some destinations are far away from positioning themselves with a specific theme. Especially some states in U.S.A. don't have a slogan or if there is they don't use it on their web sites. The number of destinations not having a slogan leads to 196 which is almost one fourth of the destinations.

Table 1: Classification of Destination Slogans

Category	N	Examples
Encouragement	157	Discover Lisbon – Lisbon Portugal Catch the Spirit- Youngstown USA
Single Descriptive	77	Korea Sparkling Breathtaking Athens
Invitation	77	Visit Yuma- AZ USA You're invited- London UK
Hospitality	40	Welcome to Yorkshire- UK The friendly city- athens USA
Confidence	39	Once You Go You Know- Jamaica USA I amsterdam – Amsterdam Netherlands
Multi Descriptive	44	The city of "Water, Wealth, Contentment, Health." – Modesto USA The smart, innovative, artsy, eclectic, clever, savy, vibrant, too-dynamic-to-fit-in-a-short-tagline city – Columbia
Location	31	A long lake Michigan- Indiana USA The Heart of Louisiana – LA USA
Superiority	30	The best of southern california – California USA The very Best of Atlanta- Atlanta USA
Nature	16	Nature's Masterpiece- IN USA On the River. On the Bay. – Baton Rouge USA
Meeting	15	Capital for conferences - Nottinghamshire

		UK Enjoy busan, enjoy convention – Busan South Korea
Diversity	13	On the edge of it all- Chicago All things are possible- Vancouver Canada See it in colour – Black Country UK
Emotion	11	I love NY- NY USA Love Beverly Hills- Beverly Hills USA
Adventure	9	Adventures in southern culture- Florence USA Timeless Adventures-Tuscarawas Country USA
History	8	Historically dynamic – İstanbul Where history lives – Charleston USA
Non-English Language	6	Ciudad en moviemento , Mexico A la montreal, QC Canada
Attention	4	The Cat's Meow! – Muncie USA Wow! – Monroe USA
Belonging	3	My Hawaii – Hawaii USA Your Waynesbor– Virginia USA
Fun	2	Arizona's Playground- Lake Havasu City USA Fast Track To Fun , IN USA

On the other hand, some others probably consider themselves well known and popular that they don't feel the need to express themselves. So some examples refer to the category "confidence" such as 'That's so LA', 'Only in San Francisco', Egypt – 'Nothing Compares', Jamaica – 'Once you go you know'. As noticed from some slogans, the name of the destination is actually a part of the slogan while others don't involve the name directly. Additionally,

a few slogans imply the magic of words such as cOPENhagen – Open for you, I feel sLOVEnia, Only Lyon, Nice for me, **I am**sterdam, I♥NY, **Your Way**nesboro and try to create a distinctive brand image.

The aim of destination marketers for the category of "invitation" is to invite the tourists in their destination by calling them using the expressions such as "come, see, and visit". Here, it is not the USP of destinations that are stressed but instead this category highlights a kind of invitation for tourists to visit the destination. Some destinations invite the customers to their destinations by using the expressions such as go, visit, come, experience which are categorized as the group "invitation" whereas some other destinations try to encourage tourists by using expressions for instance explore, discover, and so on.

As the category name implies, "encouragement" intends to encourage the tourists to experience the destination. The slogans of this category try to motivate tourists by arising curiosity and creating enthusiasm. This category is the most popular category for destination marketers with the frequency of 157. For instance, "Make it" for Staffordshire, "Do something better" for Tees Valley and "Dare to be different" for Telford directly provoke the tourist.

Destinations like California, Atlanta and Santa Barbara position themselves as superior when compared with competing destinations. Therefore, they often use the words such as "the best, the real" in their slogans referring to the frequency of 30. On the other hand, messages like "welcome to America's hometown, the friendly city" are more often used in destination slogans which emphasize the hospitality attribute of destinations. The frequency of messages referring to hospitality is 40 among 582 slogans. On the other hand, it's been observed that only 3 destinations try to generate a feeling of belonging by using possessive adjectives for instance "my, your" in their slogans. Additionally, in fact some destinations promote the sense when a destination is discovered instead of tangible particular attractions. 11

destination slogans appeal tourist emotions to attract tourists which they make use of expressions such as "love, feel, sense".

Some destinations focus on their USPs related to nature, the diversity of products, and location. The messages containing expressions with "big wild life, on the river, lakes, nature" are used to communicate the natural characteristics of 16 destinations. They target the tourists who are more interested in natural resources of a destination. On the other hand, some destinations differentiate themselves through slogans by putting emphasis on the advantage of their locations. Thus, slogans consisting of "heart of .., a mile away" are classified as 'location' referring to the frequency of 31. Additionally, history is another USP for 8 destinations and it can be monitored that this feature is less frequent than the other categories. These destinations use especially "history" as a USP to position themselves as a destination brand. Fun and adventure are other less frequent two characteristics that are highlighted in destination slogans. The tourist who seeks adventure in their journey may be attracted with the related message. In fact, 9 destinations have especially concentrated their slogan theme on "adventure". Additionally, only 2 destinations built their slogan to attract tourists by promising experiences full of fun.

13 of 582 destinations' slogans are examined in the category of "diversity". Those destinations express their diversity of facilities and resources in their slogans such as "All things are possible" for Vancouver and "Something for everyone" for Visconsin. Here, the variety of the experience is used as a motivating factor for the tourists. 77 slogans which are used to describe the destination are called as "single descriptive". For instance, Roseville's slogan "perfectly positioned" and Toronto "Toronto is trending" are good examples for the category of "single descriptive". Therefore, this category mostly consists of slogans which attempt to describe destinations with only one expression such as "amazing, sparkling, mystic, wonderful, awesome, active, charming, original, and good".

Conversely some destinations chose not to point out one USP in their slogans but rather underline more than one attribute. Therefore, slogans having more than one descriptive statement are categorized as "multi descriptive" and it counts to 44 slogans. So, these destinations offering several products or experiences aim to communicate many of their features with a single slogan such as Trivalley's slogan "Authentic, charming, unspoilt" and Panama City's slogan "Real. Fun. Beach". Slogan of Colorado that is "pure & simple" may be another example for the category of multi descriptive.

CONCLUSIONS

Communicating slogans is an essential part of destination branding in creating a persuasive image. The destination slogans are created for a particular purpose such as representing the quality of the experience, enhancing the destination image and generating a brand reputation. As Avraham (2004) implies, due to the nature of stereotypes and prejudices targeted at any group or place, destination stereotypes are very difficult to change. But today, in the age of intense communication, the destinations strive hard to overcome this obstacle and seek for effective ways to rebuild a distinctive image. Therefore, creating a striking slogan is one way to deliver remarkable messages to prospective customers. Destination marketers combine a few words into phrases to tell something to tourists in favor of the destination and create a special meaning for them.

When the slogans are examined, it's found out that some slogans are hard to understand, remember or even pronounce. The meanings highlighted in the slogans by the destination marketers are categorized as nature, location, diversity, fun, adventure, history, etc… These categories represent the main focuses of USP used in building slogans. Some of the slogans deliver the nature of the destination as a message while some destinations take historical resources in the center. Belonging and emotion is also used to enhance the desirability of the destination. In some other slogans there has

been identified more than one meaning. While most of the slogans give a clear meaning to the tourists, a few of them were quite confusing. It's clear that meaningful slogans support the destination branding process more and makes the brand more recognizable. Here in this study, destination slogans were analyzed due to their unique selling proposition referring to the ability of the slogan to differentiate the destination from similar ones. The results of the study point out the difficulties in creating a distinctive slogan for destinations. Since there are many competing destinations offering more or less similar tourism products and experiences, the destinations fail to create distinctive branding attributes through slogans. Destinations subject to study are at varied levels such as country, state, city, county, and town located all over the world and the categorization of slogans are not based on the type of destinations. On the other hand, the number of coders limited to two in the survey is an issue that limits the generalization of the findings.

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