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## “MICE Destinations Branding from Corporate Branding perspective”

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### Abstract

The paper demonstrates that how branding and corporate branding approach has been utilized into destination branding, both tourist and MICE destination. The research addresses most common features in both MICE destination branding and corporate branding. An abductive approach of research was employed and the process was substantiated independently. The study detects and highlights that corporate branding issues may offer new intuitions in MICE destination branding. Consequently, the study suggests that corporate branding approach can be utilized for MICE destination branding. In addition, this provides new-fangled acumens for destination management organisation as well as for corporate branding researcher to conduct corporate branding research in different context.

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### 1.0 Introduction

Business tourism industry has been growing excellently within hospitality and tourism field (Lodge, 2004; Zhanga, Leunga, & Qu, 2007; Wagner & Peters, 2009). The expansion of the industry emerges that every country and major cities have to have their own convention bureau (Anholt, 2009, Hankinson, 2015). All Destination Management Organisation (DMO) at Convention Bureau (CVB) level promotes countries and cities as a place for Meeting, Incentives, Conference and Exhibition (Volgger & Pechlane, 2014). Interestingly, it is true that all cities are not able to attract business tourist at all, only countable major cities are successful for hosting “MICE” (meeting, incentive, conference and exhibition) (Hankinson G., 2005; Hankinson G., 2009). The million dollar question is that why other

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CVB are not successful at all. What are the tools, making them better and differ from thousands of CVB. In this context, researchers argue that effective branding is the main tool in their success (Buhus, 2012). Well, now the question is that what type branding approach should be employed for MICE destination branding.

Nowadays, interest in destination branding research and literature has been increasing. The academicians research focus only limited on destination branding for touristic aspects. Only few countable researches have been found on MICE destination branding. Yet, the notion of MICE destination branding need to conceptualize the theory. The study aims to develop an approach for MICE destination branding. The main concentration of this study

on MICE destination branding, and specifically the novel approach of corporate branding into MICE destination branding.

## 2.0 Literature review

### 2.1 Brand and Branding

Brand is a notion, what is differentiating itself from others (Datzira-Masip & Poluzzi, 2014). Brand can be defined as “the brand is more than a name, given to a product; it embodies a whole set of physical and socio-psychological attributes and beliefs (Simoes & Dibb, 2001, p. 217)”. Person (1996, p.6) states that:

*“A brand is a combination of features (what the product is), customer benefits (what needs and wants the product meets) and values (what the customer associates with the product). A brand is created when marketing adds value to a product and in the process differentiates it from other products with similar features and benefits.”*

In the context of service a scholar explains that,

*“Branding plays a special role in service companies because strong brands increase customers’ trust of the invisible purchase. Strong brands enable customers to better visualize and understand intangible products. .... Strong brands are the surrogates when the company offers no fabric to touch, no trousers to try on, no watermelons or apples to scrutinize, no automobile on test-drive (Berry, 2000, p. 128)”.*

### 2.2 Corporate branding

Branding in corporate context, can be defined as “a systematically planned and implemented process of creating and maintaining a favourable image and consequently a favourable reputation for the company as a whole by sending signals to all stakeholders and by managing behaviour, communication, and symbolism” (Einwiller & Will, 2002). As stated by Tilley (1999), the theory of corporate branding focus on the prominence of brand value. “Developing a brand is synonymous with developing the core values. The core value is dynamic, rather than an inactive description (Saraniemi & Ahonen, 2008).” It has been identified as the way a business entity links its’ identity (Kay, 2006). In line with this, Urde (2003) says that a brand’s identity is developed as ongoing and continuous interactions between the identities of the organisation and the clients. He also argues that the core value of brand recapitulates its identity. The corporate brand’s core means that promises, covenants with key stakeholders (Balmer, 2001; Lusch & Vargo, 2004). This value proposition and promise can be communicated through various channels and, can be experienced via services and products offered (Gray & Balmer, 2003).

### 2.3 Destination branding

According to UNTWO “Destination Brand: it is the destination’s brand essence, that endows it with a unique identity which differentiates it from everywhere else (Qu, Kim, & Im, 2011) and thereby enables it to stand out from its competitors in competing for the attention of potential customers (Anholt S. , 2009, p. 9)”. It is what makes the destination distinctive, memorable and prominent. The author argues that “a destination brand exists in the eyes of the beholder: it is a dynamic relationship between the destination and how it is perceived by potential customers and visitors (Anholt S. , 2009, p. 8)”. Furthermore, he also states that it is an integral part of marketing communication

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