



Tourism strategy development and facilitation of integrative processes among brand equity, marketing and motivation



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HIGHLIGHTS

- This study attempts to identify the important attributes of Kinmen tourism.
- This study employing combined methods to demonstrate the critical criteria.
- The Fuzzy Delphi method (FDM) identified the critical attributes.
- DEMATEL analysis demonstrates that *brand equity* has direct and indirect influences.
- Travel intention is the most critical element when ANP analysis is applied.

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ABSTRACT

With the absence of heavy industry and pollution from intense commercial development, Kinmen is a significant source of additional value for tourism in Taiwan. This calls for in-depth studies on tourism marketing, brand equity and travel motivation in Kinmen. This study attempts to identify the important attributes of Kinmen tourism and extend the related literature on marketing strategy, brand equity and travel motivation by employing a combination of the fuzzy Delphi method (FDM), decision-making trial and evaluation laboratory (DEMATEL) and analytic network process (ANP) approaches to demonstrate the interactions and relations among critical criteria. The FDM identified the critical attributes, which were used in DEMATEL analysis to demonstrate that brand equity has direct and indirect influences on marketing strategy and travel motivation. The use of the ANP with global weighting further reveals that travel intention is the most critical element of Kinmen tourism.

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1. Introduction

Over the past 20 years, the tourism industry has continued to expand and has become one of the highest-growth industries in the world. From 1990 to 2012, the number of visitors to Asia grew from 55.8 million to 233.6 million. Through the end of 2013, the population of tourists who visited the Asia–Pacific region grew 7% per year, and tourism revenue reached 107.5 million, growing faster than other regions of the world (Fan & Hsu, 2014). The Asia–Pacific region, including Taiwan and other emerging regions, is presenting

double-digit growth in tourism industry revenue; Taiwan's tourism sector experienced a 20% growth rate, becoming a high-growth area (UNWTO, 2013). The tourism industry has also become an important source of revenue for Taiwan's economy, and through more strategic marketing planning, tourism has become a policy development priority for Taiwan (Horng, Liu, Chou, Yin, & Tsai, 2013).

Destination tourism has had a positive effect on the country's economic development, particularly in terms of foreign exchange earnings, the employment rate, taxes and other areas (Richards, 2013). Chen (2010) asserts that Kinmen was a gate between Taiwan and China because of its location in World War II. Kinmen became an important stronghold to Taiwan in the confrontation between Taiwan and China, partly because of its unique natural and cultural resources. The area is only 153 square kilometers of island, but it had 1.16 million tourists in total in 2013; thus, Kinmen

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became the top tourist island destination in Taiwan. In addition, subject to its limited resources, tourism destination development must involve creating brand value through the effective use of marketing strategy (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Lumsdon, 1997; Pike, 2005). In particular, brand equity management of the tourist destination is the key factor in long-term development (Gartner, 2014; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Pike, 2005). This factor was the main area of investigation in past studies of tourism brand equity (Bianchi, Pike, & Lings, 2014; Gartner, 2014; Oh & Hsu, 2014). However, decision makers' opinions have been very critical of tourism policy strategy planning. Therefore, understanding the views of tourism stakeholders becomes increasingly important.

In this research, we provide a theoretical framework and integrate the concepts of brand equity, marketing strategy, and travel motivation to resolve some of the unanswered questions in tourism studies. Based on the above, this study aims to answer the following questions: first, what are the relationships among brand equity, marketing strategy and travel motivation in developing a destination strategy for Kinmen? Government officers, scholars, and tourism industry experts were invited to confirm the criteria for marketing strategy development, and fuzzy Delphi method (FDM) analysis was applied to check the appropriateness of these criteria. Second, can these criteria be managed individually, or must they be managed interdependently? To address this question, the decision-making trial and evaluation laboratory (DEMATEL) method is used to confirm the relationship of the tourism marketing strategy model and to build a network relation map (NRM) among the destination strategy development criteria. Third, what are the influential weights and rankings of these strategy development criteria? The analytic network process (ANP) approach was applied to rank and evaluate the key proposed tourism marketing strategy criteria for tourism development in Kinmen.

In the next section, the existing tourism marketing strategies are discussed to explain the relationship between tourism policy implementation and tourism industry development. The following section discusses the use of the hybrid MCDM model and other data and describes the test procedure. The methodology section presents the findings and results of the study. A discussion and conclusions are presented in the final section of this paper.

2. Literature review

2.1. The key factors of destination strategy development

Today's tourists choose places that offer variety, and the tourism market segmentation reflects this desire for diversity. With limited resources, the tourism destination must focus on brand development, marketing strategy and other influencing factors (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Lumsdon, 1997; Pike, 2005). First, marketing strategy (including product, price, promotion and place, the 4 Ps) has been a major factor in tourism strategy planning. Tourism destination development considerations include the need for attractive tourist products and adjustments according to the product lifecycle, while price impacts profits and affects changes in sales, primarily in promotions that involve communicating with customers and promoting tourist buying behavior. Finally, the place (distribution) is the point of contacting that attracts tourists to revisit tourist destinations through various channels (Lumsdon, 1997; Witt & Moutinho, 1994).

Second, because reaching busy consumers requires a succinct message, brand equity management of tourism destinations is also an important factor in attracting tourists, but brand management is complex and challenging and therefore must be strategic (Pike, 2005). Finally, travel motivation must also be considered in tourism destination development. For tourists, the tourism

destination image is formed from the travel environment, including its natural resources, and will directly or indirectly affect tourist travel intentions (Jang, Bai, Hu, & Wu, 2009; Pan, Lee, & Tsai, 2014). Based on the above, the tourism destination must consider travel motivation to analyze and strategically utilize its distinctive natural resources and to provide a safe and attractive travel environment to enhance tourist travel intentions. Therefore, marketing strategy, brand equity and travel are important factors in strategic tourism destination development. To understand relationship between the content of and factors involved in strategic tourism destination development, this study provides insight in the literature review below.

2.2. Brand equity

Since the 1990s, brand equity has been widely discussed as an important research topic in tourism marketing management. In particular, brand equity in tourism destination marketing development plays a very important role not only in establishing tourism product characteristics and marketing segments and enhancing tourists' loyalty but also in increasing tourism industry earnings (Horng, Liu, Chou, & Tsai, 2012). The development of brand equity can assist in communicating information about tourism destinations with tourists, including the attributes, benefits, value, culture and personality of a destination (Lockshin & Spawton, 2001). In addition, brand development also involves relationships among the following: personality, symbols, users, user image, country of origin, organizational affiliations, emotional aspects and self-expression interests (Aaker, 2009). Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2009) note that brand equity can be a brand, name and symbols that can serve as an advantage or disadvantage and can thus increase or decrease customer perceptions of the value of a product or service. Thus, brand equity can contribute to high financial performance for organizations because customers trust the brand and exhibit a high degree of loyalty (Aaker, 2009).

Brand equity also has a strong relationship with marketing; it accompanies a product through distribution, pricing, promotions and other sales activities during the process of creation and gives consumers products (or services) that generate added value (Russell & Kamakura, 1994). Thus, destination brand equity is based on the perceptions of tourists that lead to brand loyalty and, thus, travel motivation (Keller, Parameswaran, & Jacob, 2011).

In recent years, most studies measuring tourist destination brand equity, according to Aaker, propose that brand equity has five dimensions (Bianchi et al., 2014; Buil, de Chernatony, & Martínez, 2013; Gartner, 2014; Horng et al., 2012; Oh & Hsu, 2014). Aaker and Equity (1991) defines brand equity based on the following five dimensions: 1) brand loyalty: the attitudes and behaviors of visitors to a particular brand destination show their own unique preferences, and they recommend that others visit that destination; 2) brand awareness: this refers to the extent that consumers recognize and remember the destination; 3) perceived quality: this refers to the quality of the tourism products or services offered by the destination, the level and degree of satisfaction in the minds of consumers, and their subjective feelings; 4) brand association: this dimension refers to the destination brand in the minds of consumers, including what they think about the brand, its product features, its functions and levels, the consumers' interests, the product's relevance to the consumers' lives, associated personality traits, and its competitors or countries; and 5) other exclusive brand assets (other proprietary brand assets); this dimension includes patents, trademarks, and the relationship between a company and its competitors.

In tourism brand equity, related research has presented evidence that brand equity and travel intentions have a direct positive

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