The Strategic Research on Zhongyuan Culture and City Brand Marketing

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Abstract: Culture is an important factor in the present city brand marketing and also is an effective element in molding the image of small and middle city. The long history of Zhongyuan culture with Henan as representative is advantageous resource for developing city brand marketing and it should be regarded as the root of the orientation of Henan city brand. The special geographic environments in Zhongyuan have embraced Zhongyuan culture. Using zhongyuan culture to promote the city development is different from any other places in the world. We have to root in zhongyuan history culture resource to mould and promote Henan.

Keywords: zhongyuan culture, city brand, marketing strategy

With the heating competition in introduction of capital, city marketing as a problem needing to be solved urgently has been put forwards before city’s policy-makers. Culture as the important factor in molding city’s brand, which causes more and more attentions of city’s policy’ makers, Henan has achieved a certain fruit in applying culture to forging city brand, such as the setting-up of historical and culture traveling route and the protection of culture heritage, but from the angel of city marketing, we still have a far road to go in the integration of culture and resource and the molding of city’s brand. How to know zhongyuan culture? What are the features of zhongyuan culture? How to integrate zhongyuan culture to forge Henan city brand? They are the questions that need to be solved in this paper.

1. Introduction

City marketing can be dated back to 14 century of Italy. The real forming of city marketing theory happened in America in 1920s. Kotler (2003) puts forward the concept of location marketing, which regard one specified location as a company, the resource in this place as products and further analyze its inner and outer environment, the advantage and disadvantage in global competition as well as the opportunities and threats it is confronted with to fix its objective market aim. It is the process of fixing including objective people, objective industry, objective region and undertaking the activities such as invention, packaging and marketing and so on. The putting forward of city brand concept originated from the study of American famous branding expert Kevin Lane Keller professor, who have ever described in his books strategy brand management: Geographic location or a certain space can become a brand like products and services.

To the issue of city managing problem, foreign authorities studies mainly concentrate on traditional city image and city marketing based on function theories, which rarely pay attention to city brand issue. a few studying on this field are mainly embodied at: the putting forward of city brand concept, how to carry out city brand marketing for a company, the participating system for city beneficiaries in city management, the attractive value and shaping course of city brand to residents etc. As to the city brand marketing, the study is far from being systematical.

With central governmental right partly being given to local governments and the conversion of government functions as well as the studying and development of city marketing theories, partial scholars and city builders began to make explorations on city brand theory and its managing methods. As it is not long time before the start of city marketing theory researching and practice in china, the studying on it is still on the surface level, which embodies in the following three aspects: firstly, the researching on city brand locating isn’t enough. Secondly, the reorganization for city brand isn’t clear. Thirdly, the shaping method of city brand isn’t perfect.
2. The important role of culture in city brand marketing

“Every city has its own unique resources and advantages. The key is we need to make use of our merit and find our own value to form unique competing advantage.”[1] One kind of Culture is closely related with the arising, development, tradition and history of the region where it lies in and could hardly be substituted by other culture. Culture plays an insubstantial important role in the marketing of city brand. Aristotle said: “people gather in cities for living, and for living better they stay in city”. This can, from one angle, reflect the attraction degree of city to people life. The degree of a city’s attraction and competition ability largely depends on its culture resource and its developing level of culture. The attraction of a city isn’t not only because of its economic level, but also because of the different culture inside the city, as each city has its unique culture character.

Culture is the root of city and the soul of city development. “A city can be regarded as a story, a graph reflecting people’s relation, a space where integration and scattering co-exist, a field being affected by substance, a relevant decision series or a field full of conflicts.”[2] Behind all the comparison for city is culture. When we talk about the names of those big cities of the world, such as Singapore, London, New York, Frankfurt, Hong Kong and Tokyo, besides their good hardware facilities, what impress our mind is their unique culture environment and city character.

In modern city, as long as we have capital, city can be built very beautifully and within a short time we can take up superior position over economy, physical and traffic, but lacking culture, city’s development will become less shining. Giddes points out, with the influence of globalization, two basic vicissitudes occur. “Not only public institutions but also daily life is going far from tradition.”[3] This suggests that only the city abstracting aspiration and power from culture will have more advantages. Looking at the history of many cities in the world, the real difference between cities is the difference in culture; hence, culture is where a city’s soul lies in and where a city’s attraction comes from.

3. The regional environment for the forming of zhongyuan culture

The word zhongyuan has two kinds of explanations in Cihai, the first one referring to plane area and the second one meaning central country, different from different from remote place or zhongyuan is Henan and its neighborhood and till Dong Jin and Nan song dynasty it meant the place along Yellow river lower section. Ciyuan explains zhongyuan as Henan in narrow meaning, widely speaking it refers to the area along Yellow River lower section and even the whole area along Yellow River. From this, in Chinese history, the geographic scale of zhongyuan area is different and became larger or smaller with the different influence of centre area, which suggests the geographic scale of Zhongyuan area includes present Henan province and some places of other adjacent provinces and even extends to yellow river lower section. However the studying scale of this paper only refers to Henan province and zhongyuan culture only refers to Henan culture.

Good geographic condition and environment are pregnant with zhongyuan culture. Henan province lied in the middle and east part of china, the along yellow river middle and lower area and the western and southern area of Huanghuai hai plane place. Because it’s most part is in the south of Henan, so it is named Henan.2000 years ago, Henan was called Yu state, as one among the centre of nine states of china, so Henan has a brief name Yu and also is called zhongzhou and zhongyuan. Henan lies in a middle place connecting the east and west, the south and north, which determines its important status in Chinese economic and social life. In history, Nan province was a necessarily passing place for peoples’ traffic and was a place for various nations’ frequently communication and activity. So, ancient people say: the one getting plane place will get the whole country and if you want to get all the country, Henan is a place you should get first. And so on.

Henan has 15 cities, including: Zhengzhou, Kaifeng, Luoyang, Pingdingshan, Jiaozuo, Hebi, Xinxiang, Anyang, Puyang, Xuchang, Sanxia, Shangqiu, Xinyang, Zhoukou, and Zhumadian. The capital city Zhengzhou is the politics, economic, scientific, and educational and cultural centre of Henan province.
4. Culture brand marketing analysis of Henan classical analysis

We know any thing has two sides. When we talk about the long history and complexity of zhongyuan culture, in one hand, it is possibly the biggest advantage of ours, in the other hand; it may become the burden for us to undertake city brand marketing. The key is how we make use of our advantage and to dump away our disadvantage that doesn’t correspond to city brand marketing. The author will choose and make analysis on two typical city-Puyang and Xinzheng, getting some enlightenment about Henan city brand marketing from the two city’s experience over brand marketing.

4.1 Puyang city brand marketing

Puyang has long and thick history and culture. In 1987. The precious culture relics –oyster’s dragon picture, created around 6400 years ago was unearthed and it is called the first dragon of china, Puyang being called dragon hometown, which become the advantage for Puyang to undertake city brand marketing.

Based on this, Puyang began the work of city marketing, with the exploration of city culture as emphasis, to drive the economic development of whole city. Making use of the advantage of Chinese first dragon, Puyang established Dragon Park, attracting people worldwide to visit and with Dragon City Park as basis, they built one history and Culture Street, reviving puyang’s culture by the exploration of culture.

The above measures not only have increased the economic income of puyang but also have enhanced the reputation of puyang, becoming one shining point of puyang city brand marketing.

4.2 Xinzheng city brand marketing

Xinzheng history and culture is long and because of this, it is easy to be forgotten by people. Xinzheng has “8000 years of Peiligang culture, 5000 years of huangdi culture and 2700 years of zhenghan culture.” As xinzheng is the place where Chinese grandfather huangdi was bored so it is reputed as the hometown of huangdi and the first ancient city of china, which is also the start of xinzheng city brand.

In 2005, as response to the call from Henan culture industry, huangdi culture brand started to be plotted. What support xinzheng’s city brand are cultures. They make use of culture journey to forge city’s brand, which can be embodied at:

First, hold the meeting to worship Huangdi in his hometown, causing resonance of Chinese worldwide. Second, explore ancestor culture scenic area, such as huangdi hometown, Ancestor Mountain and Zhengfeng Yuan. In order to enlarge the reputation degree, the three scenic areas were open free of charge in April, 2006, letting people know of Xinzheng. With the influence of “the worshiping anniversary to ancestor”, the tourists to Henan sharply increased to 20 million and even some not famous scenic spots became bustling, bringing considerable tourism overcome for Henan. The final result using this culture to make city brand marketing makes this inland small city get its reputation well enhanced throughout the world.

We can say the culture resource of one region is fixed and potential. Its value lies in our exploration. The return brought by the exploration of culture resource is endless. In this aspect, the multiplier effect brought by Puyang and Xinzheng culture and resource exploration has been embodied out, but the culture advantage of other cities in Henan haven’t been brought into full play.

5. Marketing strategies for Henan City brand marketing

5.1 Make brand orientation of city using culture

A city will have real charm only when it have inherited its original feature and absorbed its cultural and historical nutrition. Henan’s cities belong to inland cities and only by taking culture as the core for competition and using culture making brand orientation to form our own feature and characteristics, could our cities have everlasting vitality.

Through the investigation and research into the development of Henan’s cities, the author should consider orientation point from the following aspects;

5.1.1 make use of the position of Henan as a tourism province
Henan is a big province in zhongyuan and is a big tourism province, having achieved great success in the field of tourism in recent years. Because of the thickness of zhongyuan culture, we need to use various kinds of marketing measures to make publicities, give prominence to the importance of zhongyuan culture in Henan city marketing to enhance the reputation of Henan’s city via zhongyuan culture. Besides that, we need make use of ecological culture and make it as the shining point in of zhongyuan culture, letting people feel it and remember Henan cities.

5.1.2 The features of Henan City itself

There are many ancient and young cities. Saying it’s ancient, because it has 7000 years of Yangshao culture heritage. Henan has three cities been listed in the seven ancient cities of china, they are Anyang, Luoyang and KaiFeng. Saying it’s young, because the time since some cities were established is very long, such a Xinxiang, Jiaozuo and Jiyuan in the north of Henan province. But just for this conflict, Henan has its special charm, ancient culture having been rooted in Henan and new industrial city having been immersed into modern breath. This is also a position of Henan City. What we need to do is to dig out our culture and history heritage and explore ancient civilization, offering the root of culture for modern people living in today’s lives.

Newsday many cities’ construction in Henan is the best explanation of Henan’s using culture to market city brand. The process of reviewing culture and analyzing culture feature is also a process of rediscovering history and re-understand city’s connation. The author thinks the positioning theme for the Henan city brand in 21 century: elegance inside and new outside. The comprehensive connation is: culture is the root for the positioning of Henan city brand, Travelling is the attraction of Henan City, and feature snack is the everlasting taste of Henan City. The construction of modern basic facilities is the guarantee for the brand image of Henan City.

5.2 Design Henan city brand visual image

Designing Henan city brand visual image is for conveying sprit and inside quality of the city to people and can help people visually remember city. The most direct visual embody of city brand is its image mark and a series of visual pattern.

People chase physical lives and spirituals lives, whereas culture is the comprehensive embodying of people’s spiritual lives and city’s feature. “It is the reflection of city function, the diversity of citizen life and it is the unique reflection of the coordination of city image, natural environment and human landscape.”[5] Without comprehensive culture connation, one city will lack feature and couldn't produce strong attraction and competition. Henan city brand visual image should embody city’s culture connation. Henan has many cities with long history, having formed its own culture features, including natural landscape features. Customary feature, spiritual feature etc. How to embody our own excellent cultural connation in the designing of Henan brand visual image appears very important.

5.3 The strategic promotion of Henan city brand

5.3.1 Emphasize city culture facilities construction and shape cultural and environmental brand

Henan City belongs to inland city and city construction needs a large mount of capital, while the construction of our city need embody uniqueness. In this way can we get benefit return, whether on the re-construction of old city or on the construction of new city, Henan needs to embody both our age appearance and culture feature, overall enhancing the taste of city culture, despite the fact that there are some cultural and historic relics in Henan’s cities which still failed to get benefit for Henan for improper publicity. We can shape Henan culture environmental brand through the following routes, combining practical situation.

---Take city Main Street and Garden Square as the main platform for displaying Zhongyuan culture. Behind a street always lies a story. But if we don’t explain, don’t mention it to the outsides people, even the local people may be not clear about this. Some cities with long history, such as KaiFeng, Luoyang, Anyang etc, have their feature historical culture, hero culture. Street and park square are absolutely good platform. We can use stone carving, statue, vegetable shape, lamp house to make historical story and heroically character reemerge and spread out zhongyuan culture comprehension to people in this way.

---construct feature culture street
Zhongyuan, with a history of five thousand years, is a place where numerous historical incidents occur, forming a thick culture atmosphere. We can release fully the thickness of zhongyuan regional culture to every person coming to Henan by constructing feature Culture Street to concentrate the essence of zhongyuan culture in order to attract more persons to Henan. We can construct various distinctive streets, such as a culture walk street, a P.E street, a folk customs street, a feature food street to promote mountain and water culture, flower and wood culture, flower and birds culture to form a harmonious culture character.

---construct culture broadcast centre
Culture transmission centre should undertake the responsibility of disseminating Zhongyuan culture. We can combine local culture feature of each city to develop various folk activities for the communication of economy and culture and also carry out official activity with the support from government. In this aspect, there are some pretty successful cities, such as the world Expo, which successfully disseminates Qingdao's ocean culture feature by holding beer festival and ocean festival. Kunming also makes the slogan “the ancestry of forestry, the south of colorful cloud” spread throughout the world, therefore holding various activities can not only promote city’s function, increase income but also is a effective route for broadcasting city image.” Hence, to a city, the day of successfully holding the World Expo is the best time for enhancing the city’s reputation.”[6] In the Sep. of 2007, Chinese zhongyuan culture heritage Expo commonly held by Xinxiang publicity department and Xinxiang culture image is an extremely good example.

5.3.2 Advocate traditional culture and explore city cultural industry brand
Zhongyuan region has rich historical culture, which is the necessarily splendid chapter in Chinese culture and the core of Chinese culture. Henan City should actively explore feature culture product s, forming culture industry brand-the necessary element for Henan city development. “On one hand by exploration and sorting out, on the other hand, by promotion and presentation, we could smartly use culture assets to promote the development of culture and economy and to innovating culture managerial system and to promote the conversion from culture career to culture industry.”[7] The advantageous condition for the development of Henan culture industry: first, Henan has many famous people in the history: the creator of Taoism Laos, musician Zhu zaiyong, photographic Xushen, national hero Yuefei and literature Hanyu, Sushi and his brother. the secondly, Henan classical folk culture: Runan Liangzhu culture, Xinyang folk song, Shan county daying zaohuo, Puyang dongbei acrobatics, Baofeng Zhaozhuang magic, Kaifeng night market etc. Thirdly, Henan feature product: Xinzheng jujube. Kaifeng bian embroidery, Lingbao apple, Xinyang maojian, Yuanyang rice, Queshan chestnut, Zhongmo garlic etc. The development of Zhongyuan culture industry can not only advocate Henan traditional culture but also create conditions for the brand marketing of Henan City.

6. Conclusion
City marketing is the offspring of city’s competition and is the necessary trend of city marketing and also is the highest stage of making use of regional culture feature to undertake city brand marketing. Therefore, whether Henan’s city is beautiful or not depends on not only how high its building is or how wide its roads are but also the culture feature reflected by the city. The thick culture and distinct historic skeleton are the most beautiful scenery in people’s heart.

References
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