

BRANDING MALAYSIA AND POSITIONING CULTURAL HERITAGE IN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Branding Malaysia has helped Malaysia moving forward in the competitive tourism industry globally and regionally. Branding Malaysia as Truly Asia has helped Malaysia presenting itself as a harmonious blend of cultures and a true symbol of pluralism. The country has converted itself into a brand that asserts it to be the true soul of Asia, which is an excellent example of destination branding, has been dynamic and has adapted with technical innovations over the years. Through intangible cultural heritage, mainly traditional performing arts and food heritage contribute great help to Malaysia to enhance its branding Malaysia Truly Asia. Multicultural of Malaysia represented by multi-type traditional cultural performances representing each type of races and ethnics Malay, Chinese, Indian, Indigenous and others which can be found all over the country. Malaysian food culture is also unique, which represents the pluralism of Malaysia. Traditional performing arts, authentic and hybrid food formed the mini Asia and showing the soul of Asia. Positioning both performing arts and food heritage in the Malaysian tourism promotion under the banner of Malaysia Truly Asia is very significant in developing Malaysian tourism industry. By using identity and culture as part of branding approaches, this paper will discuss how cultural heritage is helping to brand Malaysia as Truly Asia for the Tourism Development of Malaysia.

Keywords: *Branding, intangible cultural heritage, Malaysia Truly Asia, Tourism, Malaysia*

Introduction

Branding in a process that creates a unique image, identity, and name of a product or service in the consumers' minds. It is done through advertising campaigns. The prime purpose of branding is to establish an important and unique presence of the product or service in the market that attracts and retains loyal customers (Business Dictionary, online). Doyle (1992) suggests that 'a successful brand is a name, symbol, design, or some combination, which identifies the "product" of a particular organisation as having a sustainable differential advantage. Grant (2006) on a wider scope of a brand said that a brand is 'a cluster of strategic cultural ideas'. However, the foundations of their national identity, nation brands possess far richer and deeper cultural resources than any other types of brands, such as product brands or corporate brands (Dinnie, Keith, 2016). Holt (2004) said that brands become icons through creative interaction with their environment in a process that he termed as a 'cultural branding', a process that he considered particularly suitable for applying to nations.