
Volume 3 | Issue 1

2018

LIKE MOTHER, LIKE DAUGHTER? A DESTINATION IMAGE COMPARISON BETWEEN FLORIDA AND ORLANDO

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Recommended Citation

Tasci, Asli D.A. and Wei, Wei (2018) "LIKE MOTHER, LIKE DAUGHTER? A DESTINATION IMAGE COMPARISON BETWEEN FLORIDA AND ORLANDO," *ICHRIE Research Reports*: Vol. 3: Iss. 1, Article 6. Available at: https://via.library.depaul.edu/ichrie_rr/vol3/iss1/6

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LIKE MOTHER, LIKE DAUGHTER? A DESTINATION IMAGE COMPARISON BETWEEN FLORIDA AND ORLANDO

“Like mother, like daughter.” We say this often in our daily life. But is this true when it comes to the destination brand image of a state versus that of a city within that state? We conducted a study to investigate this. This is a short summary of the findings that have not been published in peer-reviewed outlets yet.

Mother brand vs. child brand

Marketers tend to believe that consumers likely transfer positive perceptions of a parent brand to its child brand. If that is true, the parent brand of products can deliver advantages to its child brand and the child brand can in turn strengthen the brand image of a parent brand by reinforcing consumers’ memories of the parent brand image². Yet, this transfer may not always occur. It often depends on the similarity that consumers perceive between a parent brand and its child brand. Marketers need to be aware that people’s perception of a parent brand and a child brand could be different based on the difference in perception of those two brands, and that the perceptions may not necessarily be consistent. Looking at a state versus a city within that state, it only sounds natural to refer to them as the “mother brand” and the “child brand.” It is thus interesting to ask that, in a destination context, do consumers simply transfer their perceptions of a mother brand (i.e., a state) to a child brand (i.e., a city)? If not, where do the differences lie and what are the potential reasons for those differences? Answers to these questions would help destination marketing organizations make mindful and informed decisions about positioning and promoting mother and child brands.

The Case of ‘Florida’ and ‘Orlando’

We conducted an online study on Amazon’s survey platform called Mechanical Turk to collect people’s perceptions of the destination image of Florida versus Orlando. We also measured important information sources in forming people’s perceptions of these destinations. Both are main tourist magnets in the United States. Florida boasted receiving 116.5 million tourists and Orlando contributes more than 50% of that, 68 million in 2016.

Both the mother brand Florida and the child brand Orlando were rated very positively. Interestingly, people’s perception of these two destinations differ: people’s perception of Florida as a tourism destination is dominantly driven by its beaches/water attractions, themed products, outdoor activities, and scenic beauty, while Orlando’s drawcards are themed products, events and activities, and outdoor activities. Nonetheless, the perception of the mother brand Florida was rated more positively than that of the child brand Orlando on most destination aspects, on average. It is also worth pointing out that, even though Florida is stronger in the overall image than Orlando, they are identical in overall fun and excitement.

Collaborative marketing for the mother and child brands

The information sources people rely on are different for Florida versus Orlando and that is a potential source of different perceptions of these two destinations. Unexpectedly, newspapers/

magazines/travel books played a lower role for both destinations. Internet's role is the same for both the mother brand and the child brand. For the mother brand Florida, prior visit, general knowledge from school, friends and relatives, and social media played a more important role. For the child brand Orlando, travel agency, people from Orlando, and movies or TV shows played a higher role. There are many popular shows portraying different cities of Florida playing an image-maker role for overall Florida as well, e.g., CSI Miami, the Glades, Invasion, Million Dollar Listing Miami, and Living the Dream. However, the Walt Disney Park in Orlando and the Disney movies may have a stronger effect on forming the image of Orlando. As the mother brand, Florida may also be receiving a spillover effect of this. Thus, collaborative marketing, by using shows and other media may be beneficial for both destinations.

There are potential benefits of collaborative marketing for the mother and child brands in the destination context. Florida's sea-sand-sun destination image and Orlando's theme park attraction image are the strongest image aspects of these destinations. Using these image attributes in collaborative marketing messages may synergize results for both brands. A visitor of Florida is a potential visitor of Orlando; they may or may not visit Orlando. On the other hand, a visitor of Orlando is definitely a visitor of Florida; once they visit Orlando, they will have visited Florida automatically. Hence, if Orlando and Florida conducts collaborative marketing, Florida will be the beneficiary in visitor numbers while Orlando may be the beneficiary in capitalizing on the stronger image of Florida. In return, having one of the most successful tourism product brands, Disney, Orlando may help its mother brand in her image-making through movies and TV shows.

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