

Research paper

What I say about myself: Communication of brand personality by African countries

Leyland F. Pitt^a, Robert Opoku^b, Magnus Hultman^b,
Russell Abratt^{c,*}, Stavroula Spyropoulou^d

^aFaculty of Business Administration, Simon Fraser University, 8888 University Drive, Burnaby, BC, Canada V5A 1S6

^bDivision of Industrial Marketing and e-Commerce, Lulea University of Technology, Lulea, Sweden

^cH. Wayne Huizenga School of Business and Entrepreneurship, Nova South-Eastern University, 3301 College Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33314, USA

^dLeeds University Business School, Leeds University Leeds LS2 9JT, UK

Received 7 November 2005; accepted 15 June 2006

Abstract

This study analyses website brand communication by African nations using Aaker's brand personality dimensions. A multistage methodology focused on 10 African countries, using a combination of content analysis and correspondence analysis. We found that some countries have specific brand personalities while others are failing to communicate their brand personalities distinctly. This article illustrates a powerful, but simple and relatively inexpensive way for international marketers to study communicated brand personality. Although there are 53 countries on the African continent, only 10 countries were covered by this research. The intent was, however, to demonstrate a research method, rather than have comprehensive coverage of the African continent. The major contribution of this study is the use of a new research approach and set of tools that both tourism researchers and managers can use. The technique is easy to use, and the results are easy to interpret.

© 2006 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Brand personality; Countries as Brands; Tourism websites; Africa

1. Introduction

It has been acknowledged that electronic commerce has a far-reaching impact on the way travel is marketed, distributed, sold and delivered (Pollack, 1995; Williams & Palmer, 1999), and is becoming an increasingly important destination-marketing tool for tourism organizations, including state tourism offices and national tourist organizations (Lee, Cai, & O'Leary, 2005). According to the Travel Industry Association 64.1 million people had used the Internet to make plans for travel in 2003 (TIA, 2004). Thus, websites have become an important medium in travel industry promotion.

According to Internet Week's survey, more than two-thirds of the travel and hospitality companies view the

Internet site as a significant competitive weapon within their industry and about 60% describe the Internet as being substantial in acquiring new customers (Mullin, 2000). Hotel companies continuously redesign their websites for ease and convenience, and upgrade web technology to make their websites more personalized for customers. They initiate web campaigns, develop brands and integrate branding strategy on the web, gather customer information, improve customer service, and streamline online reservations (Baloglu & Pekcan, 2006).

Brands are symbols around which social actors, including firms, suppliers, supplementary organizations, the public, customers and even nations construct identities. Branding is a critical issue in international marketing because brands allow actors, such as organizations, individuals and indeed countries to say things about themselves in foreign markets in ways that even language could not convey. For example, Visa is the international credit card, Perrier is French, McDonalds is American,

*Corresponding author. Tel.: +19542625123.

E-mail addresses: lpitt@sfu.ca (L.F. Pitt), Abratt@huizenga.nova.edu (R. Abratt).