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Diversify the Destination Image of Las Vegas to Chinese Market

by

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Part One

Introduction

Las Vegas, Nevada, is a renowned travel destination attracting tourists from all over the world. Gambling has been a dominant destination image of Las Vegas in the mind of both the national and international tourists, since the history and fast development of this city has always been related with the gambling industry. In more recent years, the business model of this city has gradually changed itself to a more complete tourist destination with mega resorts, high-end shops, amazing restaurants and incredible shows and etc. Las Vegas is now turning itself into an entertainment and business oriented travel destination along with the gambling (Ro, 2013).

Although domestic visitors are still the primary source of inbound tourists to Las Vegas, recent statistics of the inbound tourism market of Las Vegas show a great potential of international tourists market, which now contributes more to Las Vegas' revenue than ever before (Steinmetz, 2011). The Chinese market, as one of the four emerging markets, is a very dynamic one to Las Vegas in terms of its increasing visitation and more spending. In addition, the reform of US visa policy to the Chinese visitors, the current public policy in China, and the characteristics of Chinese tourist all positively impact Las Vegas to attract Chinese visitors.

In recent years, with the development of gambling industry in other areas such as Asia and Europe, Las Vegas is not the only gaming destination to attract tourists. Moreover, more than half of all visitors claimed their primary reason for visiting Vegas was vacation or

pleasure. Only 9% of them claimed that gambling was the primary visitation reason (Higgins, 2011).

Therefore, a simple gambling destination image of Las Vegas might not be enough to be competitive among other travel destinations. In order to attract more visitors and generate more revenue, it is important and necessary for Las Vegas to diversify its destination image to its inbound tourism market especially the Chinese market.

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to identify the reason for diversifying the destination image of Las Vegas to the Chinese market and to explore how to diversify the destination image of Las Vegas to attract more visitors from China.

Statement of Objective

Through a review of current literature and statistics, the paper will examine the current development of Las Vegas and the potential of Chinese market to identify the reasons for diversifying the destination image of Las Vegas to the Chinese market. The paper will also explore strategies that Las Vegas can use to diversify its destination image to attract more visitors from China.

Justification

Las Vegas has been gradually transforming from “sin city” to an entertainment and business city in recent years. However, this transformation has not been fully realized by the international market especially the Chinese market and has not been reflected into its destination image to the Chinese market.

In 2011, 6.2 million international travelers came to Las Vegas (Velotta, 2012). These international visitors generally spend more and stay longer than those domestic visitors in Las Vegas. China, as one of the four emerging international markets, had 87,000 visitors coming to Vegas in 2006 up to 148,000 in 2010, a near doubling of visitors in just four years (Sodoma, 2011). The average individual spending of Chinese visitors is \$6000 every visit to US, compared with \$4000 average spending of visitors from other countries (Clifford, 2012).

Given the growth rate and consumption level of the Chinese travelers, it is important for Las Vegas to pay more attention to this lucrative market. Moreover, the interests and purposes of Chinese visitors coming to Vegas have changed from gaming oriented to a more diverse range. Las Vegas is a destination that has the resources to meet current demands and characteristics of the Chinese market. In order to maximize the revenue by appealing to various kinds of Chinese visitors, Las Vegas needs to diversify its destination image to the Chinese market to reflect its current transformation and to be more consistent with the demands of that market.

Constraints

As with any paper, there are also some constraints with this paper. First, the statistics about the impression and purposes of Chinese visitors to Las Vegas are not very specific and sufficient to be representative to make a general conclusion. Second, the studies and data in this paper mainly focus on the mainland Chinese visitors. There might be some difference between the mainland Chinese and Chinese from special administration regions such as Hong Kong and Macau. The conclusions and recommendations in this paper may not be representative to apply to the other groups. Last but not the least, the recommendations and conclusions in this paper are made based on the combination of literature reviews and statistics and the author's understanding of the market, which may not be representative to a general level. Only with more specific and accurate statistics, more general and representative recommendations and conclusions can be made.

Part Two

Introduction

In this section, the literature review will focus on three parts. The first part will briefly introduce the important concept of destination image and its practical application in destination marketing. The second part will review the current transformation of Las Vegas and its inbound tourism market. The last part will examine several factors that make China a very potential emerging market to Las Vegas.

The Importance of Destination Image

The primary goal of tourism destination marketing organization is to attract visitors. Destination branding is a very effective and powerful way to help differentiate the destination from other competing destinations to attract more visitors (Ivanov, Illum, & Liang, 2010). In practice, destination branding includes first creating an image of destination and then popularizing and conveying it to target market through different channels such as internet, multi-medias, newspaper and magazines, and travel agencies.

Destination image generally refers to the perceptions and impressions about a destination based on the information gained from various sources over time (Ivanov, et al., 2010). When branding destinations, marketers usually link destinations with specific attributes such as celebrity, activities, and emotions etc. Through these links, it may be easier for potential tourists to remember a particular destination and then consider it when choosing a destination for a travel.

The quantity and quality of the attributes linked with a destination plays a significant role in creating a destination image. A destination image may be created too narrow if only one attribute is applied. In reverse, if the attributes linked with a destination are too wide and too diverse, its image may be diluted. Additionally, it is important for destination marketers to select appropriate and typical attributes linked with a destination to avoid any internal conflicts between them (Ivanov, et al., 2010). A distinguishable, attractive and memorable destination image can not only effectively differentiate the destination from other destinations but also help avoid the fierce price competition with similar destination products (Ivanov, et al., 2010).

The Change of Business Model and Inbound Tourism Market in Las Vegas

The Change of Gaming-centric Business in Las Vegas

Since 1999, Las Vegas has broadened its hospitality offerings beyond just gaming. According to the research from Bank of America Merrill Lynch, in 1990, 61% of revenue came from the category of casino. At that time, gambling was in the center of business for Las Vegas. However, in recent years, with the transformation of Las Vegas from an adult entertainment city into a more complete tourist destination with hotel, restaurant, retail and entertainment, the non-gaming revenue accounts for around 64% of total revenue mix of Las Vegas (Ro, 2013).

During the recent recession, Las Vegas also experienced downturn in gaming revenue. According to Nagourney (2010), Las Vegas was in its deepest economic rut since casino industry first began developing there in the 1940s. The gambling revenues had declined and

continued to decline from 2007 to 2010. Although more visitors came to Las Vegas, gambling receipts have remained stagnant. Keith Foley, a senior vice president at Moody's Investors Service who tracks the industry, pointed out when the economy comes back, it cannot be assumed that people will start gaming at the same level (Nagourney, 2010).

Besides the detrimental effect of economic recession, the legalization of Internet gambling is another threat to Las Vegas gambling industry. Nevada has already passed a law legalizing online gambling and New Jersey is likely to follow soon. California and Hawaii also consider legalizing online gambling (Stalker, 2012). The lucrative market of online gambling probably will become nation-wide, which might lure gamblers away from gambling in Vegas. Also, states have sponsored weekly lotteries, and legalized gambling has been permitted in many cities and Indian reservations, which has been another potential challenge for the gambling business in Las Vegas (Nagourney, 2010).

Although gaming is still the largest single generator of revenue in Las Vegas, the percentage of gaming revenue has been on a downward trend since at least 1984 (Wan, 2012). Currently, there is an increasing trend of developing non-gaming attractions along the famous Las Vegas strip. For example, Caesars Entertainment Corp is developing a \$550 million Project Linq, which is a complex combining retail, dining, entertainment, and observation wheel and will be located between the Flamingo and the Imperial Palace Hotel (Stutz, 2012). Also, MGM announced that it is going to develop a 20,000-seat indoor arena in Las Vegas located between New York- New York and Monte Carlo. The arena would be able to host

sporting events such as boxing, entertainment, and other special events. The project will include new retail shops, dining and entertainment (Staff, 2013).

Additionally, according to 2012 statistics from Las Vegas Conventions and Visitors Authority (LVCVA), Las Vegas has maintained the honor as the No.1 trade show destination in the United States for 18 consecutive years. The ranking from the Trade Show News Network (TSNN) shows that Las Vegas hosted 55 of the top 250 shows in the United States, more than the next two competitors combined (“Las Vegas Again Tops”, 2012).

Another study from Metropoll published in the late 2011, which is conducted among a national sample of major meeting and convention decision makers, shows that, among 40 major destinations in North America, Las Vegas ranks top for being good for large trade shows and international convention and excellent hotel meeting facilities. Also, Las Vegas ranks top 1 on 7 out of the 27 travel destination image attributes, and top 4 or better on 5 attributes (“Meeting Planners Rank”, 2011). See Table 1.

Table 1

Travel destination image attributes rank of Las Vegas

Rank	Destination Image Attribute
1	Inexpensive to get to
1	Good value for the money
1	Good hotels
1	Adequate number of hotel rooms
1	Good nightlife
1	Popular place
1	Good weekend getaway
2	Easy for delegates to get to
3	Moderate food and lodging costs
3	Good restaurants
4	Convenient airline service
4	Good shopping

International Market of the Inbound Tourism in Las Vegas

Southern Nevada is the most tourism-dependent economy in the United States, and Las Vegas as the typical city in that area could be the nation's most tourism-dependent city (Velotta, 2010a). The domestic and international visitors compose the inbound tourism market for Las Vegas, and domestic visitors especially the west area always accounts for a main portion of the inbound tourism market of Las Vegas.

Due to the economic recession, the domestic visitor market became stagnant, and both the visitations and spending decreased. However, recent statistics revealed a growth of international market in terms of both spending and visitation. In 2011, 6.2 million international travelers came to Las Vegas (Velotta, 2012). In 2012, 6.5 million international visitors came to Las Vegas and generated 27% of Las Vegas' total annual tourism revenue ("Las Vegas to Showcase", 2012). Currently there are about 6.75 million international travelers coming to Vegas, which accounts for about 17% of total visitors to Las Vegas (Velotta, 2013). Moreover, these international visitors generally spend more and stay longer than those domestic visitors in Las Vegas. International tourists averagely spend \$1146 and stay longer than four days in Vegas, compared with \$ 590 and three days by domestic tourists (Carroll, 2012 ; Velotta, 2012;). The international travelers are no doubt a lucrative market for Las Vegas to generate more revenue from.

In addition, according to the 2010 Las Vegas visitors report, 51% of visitors claimed that vacation or pleasure was the primary reason for visiting Las Vegas. The percentage was

higher than each of the previous three years. Only 9% of visitors came to Vegas strictly for gambling (Higgins, 2011). This probably will be a continuous trend in the future.

The Potential of Chinese Market

Increasing Visitation

It is no doubt that the international market is one of the identified growth markets for Las Vegas' inbound tourism. United Kingdom, Mexico and Canada are the three major international markets for Las Vegas, with 70% of the city's international visitors from those three countries. However, the great potential of emerging markets such as Brazil, China, India and Russia also cannot be overlooked. Among those emerging markets, China is especially likely to bring more and more tourists in to Las Vegas at a fast pace. According to the statistics from LVCVA, visitors from China coming to Vegas climbed from 87,000 in 2006 up to 148,000 in 2010, a near doubling of visitors in just four years (Sodoma, 2011). This increasing trend will be continuous in the near future. It is expected that Chinese tourism will expand by 274% through 2016, compared with Brazil 135% and Russian 131% (Carroll, 2012).

Change of Visa Policy

Unlike some other travel destinations, Las Vegas, as an international travel destination from United States, has a challenge of strict visa regulations in attracting overseas visitors from non-visa-waiver countries. For those countries without visa waiver program such as Brazil and China, tourists who want to travel to the US have to wait approximately 90 days or even more to attend an interview conducted at US consulate located in limited cities

of the countries for a tourist visa (Finnegan, 2010). The long waiting time and the travel expense to and from consulates can discourage the desires of tourists to come to US, including Vegas.

Fortunately, in recent years, although US still does not fully open to China in terms of the issue of visa, the reform of visa policy in China has helped reduce the extent of deterrent caused by strict US visa regulations and gradually stimulate the demand of Chinese outbound tourism to coming to US. Table 2 is a comparison between current and previous US visa application in China (Tan, Wang & Zheng, 2012; Zheng, 2012).

Table 2

Current and previous US visa application comparison in China

Visa application	Previous	Current
Interview waiting time	50-60 days	7-21 days
Renew visa	Interview waiver within 12 months of the visas expiration date	Interview waiver within 48 months of the visas expiration date
Non-immigration visa approval rate	Around 77%	Nearly 90 %
Scheduling appointments process	Only through call center	Through call center or new online system
Document needed to fill in	Three paper forms including DS-156, DS-157, and DS-158	Only DS-160 electronic online form
Fees	Scheduling appointments fees \$6-\$9	\$160 including all the fees
Fees	Visa application fee \$160	
Fees	Passport return mail fee \$7	
Application fee payment	Only through the counter service of appointed banks	Online payment by credit and debit cards or through ATM of appointed banks

Moreover, US recently has added 50 more visa officials to China to increase the visa processing capacity by 40% or more (Locke, 2012). The reform of US visa application and the ease of US visa acquisition for Chinese will benefit the whole US tourism market especially Las Vegas, which is usually included in most itinerary of US west coast travel package.

Economic Growth in China

In the past decade, China's economy has achieved a remarkable growth, and more Chinese are growing in affluence. With the rise of disposable income of Chinese people, their living standard has also been improved to a large extent. More and more people can afford the outbound travel or even the luxury tourism experiences to western countries, such as United States, Europe, and Australia etc. According to a survey conducted in Shanghai, a cosmopolitan metropolis of China, around 66% of total 505 respondents had made outbound trips, and nearly 30% of total 505 respondents reported to take a holiday overseas (Sparks & Pan, 2008). Moreover, the total spending of Chinese visitors in the US surged up to 5 billion dollars in 2010 with a 39% increase (Yu, 2012). The average individual spending of Chinese visitors is 6000 dollars every visit to US, compared with 4000 dollars average spending of visitors from other countries (Clifford, 2012). In addition, managing director Renee Ho-Phang from BrandStory, LVCVA's appointed marketing firm in China, pointed out that Chinese arrivals to Las Vegas not only had been growing at a 30% annually, but also tend to experience more deluxe or even luxurious travel experience. For example, they are inclined

to stay at upscale properties such as Caesars Palace, Wynn, MGM Grand Hotel & Casino instead of economical hotels in Las Vegas (Liang-Pholsena, 2012). This trend indicates a positive sign for Las Vegas to generate more revenue from this market.

Public Policy in China

Since ancient times, gambling has been considered to have negative social effects in traditional Chinese culture. Although it is common for Chinese to play poker or mahjong with friends and family in the gathering as a way of relaxing and entertainment, public does not hold a positive view about gambling under traditional Chinese social ethical standards. Welfare and sports lotteries are the only two kinds of legal gambling in China and are usually used to raise funds for social welfare and public construction purposes and sports activities. Macau, as one of the two special administrative regions of China, is the only place in China that has legalized other gambling activities. It is illegal to have any other gambling activity elsewhere in China (Liu, 2012). Because of the firm anti-gambling attitude, Chinese government even does not advocate people to go abroad strictly for gambling activities. The government does not hold a positive attitude towards any gambling-relevant advertisement or popularization of travel destination, which can hardly be approved to be distributed through the public media in China.

Chinese Visitors

Visitors from China now are also interested in other activities in Vegas. Shopping is the major activity for most Chinese visitors (Xu & McGehee, 2011). Chinese tourists are well known for their outbound shopping enthusiasm in western countries such as France, Italy and

Britain. Las Vegas is also not an exception for Chinese tourists to go shopping. Most Chinese tourists buy tour package products for their US trip. According to the observation from local tour guides, most Chinese tourists will spend more time on shopping even after the allotted shopping hours included in the tour package. It is very common for traditional Chinese to buy gifts during a trip for their friends and families. According to one study, most Chinese visitors in US go shopping not only for themselves but also for their relatives, friends, and colleagues (Xu & McGehee, 2011). Las Vegas is a perfect shopping center for them. Most shopping malls and flagship stores are located within walking distance from most hotels on the strip and brands are available from moderate price to high-end. Chinese tourists in Vegas have more convenience and choices to buy any brand they like not only for themselves but also for their families and friends. Even visitors coming to Vegas for meeting and convention business, they also spend a lot of time on shopping after their main business. Since some shopping malls are located in the same hotel building with those convention venues, attendees and exhibitors can conveniently get into the shopping malls right after finishing their main business. The variety in choices, convenient access, good service, and competitive price compared with the one in China give more credits for the shopping in Las Vegas for Chinese visitors. Shopping now has become a major activity for Chinese visitors in Vegas.

Convention business is another main purpose for more and more Chinese visitors coming to Vegas. With the recovery from the recession of 2008, Las Vegas has showed a surge in the convention and meeting industry recent years. Many conventions hosted in Vegas annually have seen more attendance (Velotta, 2010b). The increased attendance is

from both the domestic market and the international market. Licensing Expo, the world's largest and most famous licensing industry event, took place last year at Mandalay Bay Convention Center in Las Vegas and saw a 6% increase in attendance. Attendance from China doubled in this show compared with 30% increase from the Middle East ("Licensing Expo 2012 announces", 2012). Moreover, according to the observation of some Chinese authorized agencies, which usually organize the convention tourism for Chinese attendees coming to Vegas, most of their Chinese clients have continuously come to Vegas to attend the shows such as Consumer Electronics Show (CES), ADS trade show, and Magic show for several times. For this group of Chinese visitors, once they finish their main convention business in Vegas, then they become a group of leisure tourists. Their total stay in Vegas is usually about 4 to 5 days. Considering the potential of this growth group, LVCVA is going to organize trips for Chinese meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE) sellers next year to promote more business from China (Liang-Pholsena, 2012).

Different kinds of entertainment shows also become a popular attraction for Chinese visitors. It is hard to find shows in a similar scale and unique design in China, which increase more interest in the show among Chinese visitors. For example, the Le Reve show at Wynn uses an aquatic stage throughout the whole performance combined with the great lighting effect to create a magic entertainment experience for audience. Another attraction for Chinese visitors is the dining experience in Vegas. There is an old Chinese saying that bread is the staff of life. Chinese people love delicious foods from different areas. More and more Chinese middle class especially the younger generation loves to experience different cuisine

culture when they travel to a western country. Las Vegas is also a heaven for food lovers.

There are varieties of restaurant options in Vegas including Asian, Mediterranean, American, and European food etc. Different styles of foods are available from diverse small scale locally owned restaurants to traditional middle scale chain restaurants and to high-end Michelin-rated restaurants. Visitors can always find the one that best fits their preferences in Vegas.

Additionally, wedding industry in Las Vegas cannot be overlooked. More and more people including Chinese come to Las Vegas to get married. Some middle class couples from China dream of an authentic wedding chapel ceremony in a western country instead of a traditional Chinese wedding held in a local restaurant or hotel. Las Vegas is no doubt an ideal place for an authentic wedding chapel ceremony. Moreover, reasonable wedding expenditure is another advantage for Las Vegas to attract couples from China. A traditional wedding in major cities of China usually costs more than a common wedding chapel ceremony in Las Vegas. For example, an regular wedding ceremony in a fine restaurant in Hangzhou usually costs no less than \$15,800 (Yan, 2012). However, a common wedding chapel ceremony package in Las Vegas usually costs less than that amount. Besides, the wedding expenditure in Vegas varies from around one hundred dollar up to tens of thousands dollars, which provides more price point options for couples having wedding in Vegas. Having wedding ceremony in Las Vegas may become a new popular trend for Chinese couples to come to Vegas in the future.

Conclusion

The creation of appropriate destination image can effectively help the destination stand out from other competitors and draw more visitors. Las Vegas now is developing projects focusing on the non-gaming area such as retail, dining, entertainment, and events instead of building more casinos. This non-gaming business development trend in Las Vegas is driven by two facts. The gaming revenue has continued to decline over the past several years and the legalization and popularity of internet gambling.

Meanwhile, for the inbound tourism market in Las Vegas, the statistics showed a growth of international market in terms of its visitation and spending, which is worth more attention than the stagnant domestic market. Additionally, Las Vegas visitors report also revealed more than half of the visitors coming to Vegas mainly for vacation or pleasure. Only a very small percentage of visitors came to Vegas mainly for gambling.

China, as one of the emerging markets for Las Vegas' inbound tourism, has a fast increasing visitation rate. The reform of US visa policy has reduced the deterrent for Chinese visitors coming to US including Las Vegas. The economic growth in China drives more Chinese coming to US including Las Vegas and spending average more than visitors from other countries. The traditional social ethical standard in China holds a negative attitude towards gambling and do not advocate the advertisement and promotion of gambling. Shopping, convention, and other kinds of entertainment now become the major activities or purposes for Chinese visitors coming to Vegas.

Part Three

Introduction

Based on the information from literature review, this section will provide an insight into the reasons for Las Vegas to diversify the destination image to the Chinese market, and then explore the possible ways to diversify the destination images of Las Vegas in China. First part will identify and explain the reasons why Las Vegas needs to diversify its destination image and why choose the Chinese market. The second part will talk about the strategy of diversifying the image of Las Vegas in China. The conclusion part will summarize the key points of the findings of this paper.

Results

Why Las Vegas Needs to Diversify Its Destination Image

From the facts and statistics reviewed in the second part of the literature review, it is not hard to see that Las Vegas is gradually changing the way of doing business from a gaming-centric to a mixed use destination that offers other entertainment options for visitors that help maximize the revenue. It is important to diversify the traditional simple image of a gambling city to match current trends and development.

With the development of Las Vegas over the past decade, gambling is not the only and the most attractive entertainment for visitors coming to Vegas. The transformation of Las Vegas actually can bring more than just gaming for visitors to enjoy as a tourist destination. Since it is not easy to attract domestic visitors due to the current economy, Las Vegas should

now focus more on the international market than ever before in order to make up for the decreased revenue caused by the weak domestic market.

However, the traditional and dominant image of Las Vegas in most international visitors' mind is gambling. It might be easier and more accessible for domestic visitors to get the most updated information about the transformation of Las Vegas but not for international tourists as foreigners. Thus, it is necessary and important for Las Vegas to diversify its image to help international visitors know more about what Las Vegas can bring now other than just gambling.

Moreover, since the rise and development of gambling industry in other areas such as Asia and Europe, the gambling in Las Vegas is not as attractive as it was in the past to international tourists. International tourists now have more choices of gambling destinations. For example, Singapore and Macau in recent years attracts a large number of tourists from mainland China for gambling tourism. Because of the geographic advantage, tourists from the areas nearby can take less time to get to Macau or Singapore for gambling. Meanwhile, they can also experience some casinos similar to the ones in Vegas. There is no need for them to take more time and spend more on accommodation to come all the way to Las Vegas just for gambling experience.

Therefore, the simple image of gambling cannot make Las Vegas distinguishable and recognizable enough to differentiate itself from other similar competitors in attracting visitors. In order to remain competitive among similar destinations and to keep pace with the real

demand of current visitors, Las Vegas needs to diversify its image to be more unique, impressive, and attractive to catch the attentions of tourists especially from foreign countries.

Why Choose Chinese market

Based on the statistics and increasing trend reviewed in the last part of the literature review, it is obvious to see that compared with other emerging international markets such as Brazil and Russia, Chinese market especially is worth more attention from Las Vegas in terms of its fast increasing visitation rate and higher spending in US including Las Vegas.

The simplification and streamlining of the visa application process and the ease of getting US visa recent years for Chinese has helped and will continue to promote Chinese outbound tourism coming to US, from which Las Vegas will definitely benefits. Moreover, US is considering the issue of five-year visas for Chinese visitors coming to United States for study, travel or business. Currently, the US visas issuing to Chinese, such as student, business and tourist visas are only valid for one year. If this five-year plan can be implemented in the near future, Chinese visitors will no longer need to reapply the US visa every time they go to US within five years. This will largely increase the convenience for Chinese visitors to multiple enter into US and encourage them especially for those first-time visitors to come back for travel or business. Therefore, Las Vegas needs to take full advantage of this potential opportunity brought by the change of visa policy to attract more Chinese visitors.

Limited or no access to certain activities in China actually provides a good advantage for Las Vegas to catch the attention of Chinese visitors. Some kinds of entertainment activities are very limited or even forbidden in China but fully accessible in Vegas. Visitors

are willing to try and experience those activities that are not available in their own country, which can be an attractive attribute for them when choosing a travel destination. For example, China has a strict ban on the private possession of guns. There are also very few real gun-shooting clubs currently available in only limited cities of China. Chinese visitors especially male visitors show strong interest in experiencing shooting a real gun with live ammunition when they come to Vegas and learn that it is available to all tourists.

Moreover, adult entertainments such as “Gentleman’s Clubs” featuring topless dancers are strictly forbidden in China. With the development of the society, people in China now are becoming more and more open-minded especially the younger generation. Instead of holding a traditional conservative view about those entertainments, they are more exciting to try new experiences.

Furthermore, other entertainment shows targeting at the mass market such as KA show at MGM Grand, O show at Bellagio, and Le Reve aquatic show at Wynn are all first class shows in terms of the creative production, unique stage design, and vivid storytelling. It is hard to find the shows at comparable level elsewhere except in Las Vegas.

On top of that, the dominant gambling image of Las Vegas diverges from the traditional Chinese social ethical standards. In order to be more positively acceptable and popularized in public, Las Vegas needs to fully explore its available resources and merge them into its destination image rather than just a simple gambling image to better fit the Chinese market.

The change of Chinese tourists' traveling purposes and behaviors also encourage Vegas to diversify its destination image. Most Chinese visitors come to Vegas now not only for gambling experience but for entertainment, leisure or business.

With the development and rise of gambling industry in Macau, visitors from China who want to pursue gaming-centric travel experience can totally choose Macau as their gambling destination instead of Vegas. The reasons can be concluded into two points. First, compared with coming to Vegas, there is no complicated visa application process required to enter into Macau. Although the US visa application has already been simplified, it still takes longer time and requires more complicated process to secure visa to enter US cities than Macau. For gamblers, this means longer waiting time and inconvenient procedure until they are allowed to try their luck in Las Vegas. Second, even for visitors who have secured visas, they have to spend much longer travelling time to get to Vegas than to Macau. Since there is no direct flight from China to Vegas, they need to either transfer to US domestic flight or ride in car after their at least 12 hours international flight to get to Vegas. There is no need for them to come all the way to Vegas just for gambling. Macau is more easily accessible for Chinese visitors whose primary goal is gambling. Clearly, it becomes more difficult for Las Vegas to attract Chinese visitors only by gambling.

Therefore, Las Vegas is a destination that has the resources to meet current demands of Chinese market. Since the interests and purposes of Chinese visitors coming to Vegas has changed from gaming oriented to a wider range of entertainment options, Las Vegas need to

diversify its destination image to be more consistent with the current interests and purposes of Chinese visitors.

Suggestions for Diversifying the Image to Chinese Market

Strategy for the Chinese Public

Las Vegas needs to convey its diversification to the Chinese public by popularizing and strengthening its transformation from a sin city to an entertainment and business city. Las Vegas should take initiative to introduce its recent development and achievement to the Chinese public to diversify its destination image in their mind. It is important to choose appropriate channels to reach the Chinese public as many as possible.

As a new channel to broadcast products, micro-film advertisement is quite popular in China recently and has been used by many travel destinations, such as New Zealand, Australia, Malaysia, and Singapore etc. as well as some luxury brands including Louis Vuitton to promote their brands. Unlike regular TV advertisements, which usually last about 15 to 30 seconds, micro-film advertisements last much longer about 3 to 4 minutes and usually contain a story line. The length of this kind of advertisement may provide more room for Las Vegas to introduce its diversity. The story line feature of this kind of advertisement may be easier to catch the attentions of audiences. Through this micro-film advertisement, Las Vegas can fully present its charm including the architecture of its different hotels and casinos along the strip, the prosperity of its convention and event business, the Vegas style weddings, the amazing shopping and dining experience, the world-class shows, the premier hottest nightclubs and even day clubs as well as its surrounding natural landscape such as

Grand Canyon, Hoover Dam etc. This new form of advertisements might be an ideal channel for Las Vegas to emphasize its all-in-one entertainment, leisure, and business experiences.

Additionally, it might be more effective to promote the diversification image of Las Vegas with the involvement of a celebrity. Generally, Chinese public usually have respect for celebrities with good reputations and will pay more attention to a product or a travel destination if it is endorsed by a celebrity. Las Vegas may consider selecting a celebrity as its image ambassador for Chinese market to promote the diversification of its image. The involvement of selected celebrity in the promotion campaigns especially in the micro-film advertisement can help create buzz and generate more impact on Chinese public for Las Vegas. Take Malaysia as an example, it has chosen a famous singer as its image ambassador to act in the micro-film advertisement to promote Malaysia as a travel destination for Chinese outbound tourism market, which has helped increase Chinese visitations. This good example may shed some light on having an image ambassador for Vegas in Chinese market in order to receive better promotion effect.

Meanwhile, social media can be used as a complementary way together with the micro-film advertisement to popularize the diversification of Las Vegas to the Chinese public. Micro-blog is the hottest social media in China now with more than 274 million users (Sheng, 2012). Considering the boom of micro-blog among Chinese public, Las Vegas should take full advantage of this influential platform to strengthen its diversification to the Chinese market.

As an old saying goes, when in Rome, do as the Romans do. Instead of using traditional US-based social media such as Facebook or Twitter, Las Vegas should embrace a China-based popular social media such as Sina Weibo (a micro-blog service platform) to diversify its image to the Chinese public. This cannot only avoid the limited usage of certain US-based social media in mainland China, but also make Chinese public easier to accept with their familiar micro-blog service. It is important for Las Vegas to set up its separate account page on Chinese main micro-blog platforms instead of attaching to some general travel pages to post any information. A separate account page will be more professional and specific to ensure a two-way communication between only Las Vegas and the Chinese public. Generally, Chinese public get information about Las Vegas is through media report either online or on TV, and the information about Las Vegas is not frequently reported and only limited to some headline news. Chinese people usually will not intuitively search and track updated information of a foreign destination. These may lead to insufficient exposure of Las Vegas among Chinese public. However, the feature of micro-blogs make it possible to frequently keep Chinese public updated about everything happened in Vegas in a timely manner.

Through the micro-blog platforms, Las Vegas can post any relevant information to interact with Chinese public and increase their awareness of diversification of Las Vegas. For example, Las Vegas can post descriptions and photos of newly opened day clubs to popularize this new trendy available in Vegas. Whenever any large entertainment events such as boxing, concerts, festivals or shows are held in Las Vegas, relevant photos and news can be posted just as live reports to Chinese public to continuously emphasize the image of Las

Vegas as an entertainment capital. Also, shopping promotion news and fantastic dining experiences can be posted in a timely manner to highlight the all-in-one experience in Vegas and strengthen the diversification of Las Vegas. Moreover, Las Vegas can post special event information especially relevant to Chinese market such as Chinese New Year event held in Freemont Street to get more attention from Chinese public and make them realize that Las Vegas puts high value on them. Also, a city wide calendar of all the upcoming events covering the future 6 to 12 months in Las Vegas can be created and posted on micro-blog webpage as a good information outlet to keep Chinese market updated.

Las Vegas should accelerate the usage of China-based social media for better targeting and integrated it with the usage of micro-film advertisement to promote the diversification of Las Vegas and provide a more clear impression of what visitors can do in Vegas for Chinese market.

Strategy for Different Segmentations

In addition to the overall promotion of diversification of Las Vegas to Chinese public, Las Vegas also needs to develop specific strategies to enhance its images that are not well-known by Chinese public such as convention, meeting, event, and wedding etc.

The Chinese market is not be as well informed about the convention, meeting, and event industry in Vegas as US domestic market is. Although there is an increasing trend of Chinese attendees coming to Vegas for this business, the awareness of Las Vegas as a convention business center in Chinese market is still not strong enough to penetrate the whole market and bring more people there. Most factory owners or trade corporation owners in

China usually sign up as members of local commercial associations of different industries, so local commercial associations will be a good channel for Las Vegas to strengthen its image of convention business center among Chinese businessman. Las Vegas can work with some large convention show organizers to provide introduction of some successful trade show examples and relevant convincing statistics to emphasize its advantages as a convention destination along with its convenient accommodations and exciting entertainment experiences to those association members.

As for the wedding, most Chinese people put a high value on their wedding ceremonies and invest a lot of money and time on their wedding preparation. They usually will choose a package service from a professional wedding planning company or choose part of the services provided by the wedding planning company and then organize the rest parts by themselves. No matter what kind of ceremonies and services they choose, professional wedding photography is a necessity for any wedding. Therefore, the popularization of image of wedding destination can mainly focus on professional wedding planning companies and wedding photography studios and start from first-tier cities gradually to second-tier cities. Moreover, the influential celebrity effect can be used to help promote the image of Las Vegas as a wedding destination. According to the interview with a PR specialist from LVCVA Shanghai office, they invited a Chinese celebrity couple to host their wedding in Vegas before and received plenty of news reports about Las Vegas. It is clear that celebrity wedding can easily make their wedding destination become a public sensation and create buzz among

public. Las Vegas needs to continually make full use of this celebrity effect to impress Chinese public with its wedding image.

Conclusion

The gradual change of business in Las Vegas from previously gaming dominant industry to non-gaming along with the gaming industry and the change of inbound international tourism market both require Las Vegas to diversify its destination image in order to keep pace with the new trend and bring more visitations into Las Vegas. China, as one of the emerging international markets, has a great potential for the boom of Las Vegas inbound tourism market. The continuously increasing visitation from China and the far above average spending during their visitations make Chinese market a lucrative market to Las Vegas. The interests and purposes of Chinese visitors have changed to a broader scope. The limited or no access to some kinds of entertainment in China stimulates the strong interests of Chinese visitors to try and experience those entertainment activities abroad. Las Vegas is the destination that has the resources to meet all their demands and to provide one-of-a-kind experience for them. Additionally, the simplification of visa application process and the ease of getting US visa positively impact the probability of Chinese visitors coming to Las Vegas. With all these changes and developments, it is the right time for Las Vegas to diversify its destination image to the Chinese market for better targeting and generate more profits from this market.

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