



Research on Destination Brand Construction and Promotion-A Comparative Analysis of Guilin, China, and Santa Ana, Philippines

Wang Lan

Philippine Christian University Center for International Education, Manila, 1004, Philippines
Email: lanlan052288@gmail.com

Abstract: This research conducts a comparative analysis of destination brand construction and promotion strategies in Guilin, China, and Santa Ana, Philippines. Grounded in Destination Branding Theory and Tourist Perception and Satisfaction Theory, the study aims to unravel the strategic processes involved in crafting and managing the brand images of these distinct locations. Guilin, celebrated for its iconic karst landscapes and cultural heritage, stands as a symbol of natural beauty in China. In contrast, Santa Ana, a coastal gem in the Philippines, offers pristine beaches and marine biodiversity, positioning itself as a relatively untapped destination. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining in-depth interviews, surveys, and theoretical frameworks to examine the historical development, key brand components, and promotion strategies of both destinations. The findings reveal Guilin's well-established brand components, emphasizing natural wonders and cultural richness, attracting visitors primarily driven by natural beauty. Santa Ana, while showcasing comparable natural beauty, relies on its cultural richness and sustainable tourism practices, positioning itself as an experiential destination. Challenges such as overcrowding and infrastructure development vary between the destinations, offering opportunities for strategic management and growth. The study concludes with tailored promotional recommendations for Guilin and Santa Ana, emphasizing the need for destination-specific strategies aligned with responsible tourism practices, ensuring a harmonious balance between growth and preservation. The research contributes nuanced insights into destination branding, providing a foundation for sustainable tourism management in diverse cultural and geographical contexts.

Keywords: Destination Branding, Tourist Perception, Promotion Strategies, Sustainable Tourism, Cultural Heritage, Destination Management

Introduction

Tourism is a dynamic and multifaceted industry that plays a pivotal role in economic development and cultural exchange. In an era marked by globalization, the success of tourist destinations hinges on their ability to construct compelling brands that resonate with diverse audiences. Destination branding goes beyond creating logos and slogans; it encapsulates the essence and unique selling points of a locale, influencing tourists' perceptions and choices^[1]. As tourism destinations strive to distinguish themselves in a competitive landscape, understanding the intricacies of brand construction and effective promotion becomes imperative^[2].

Guilin, situated in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region of China, and Santa Ana, nestled in the Philippines, epitomize captivating destinations with distinct cultural and natural attributes. Guilin, renowned for its mesmerizing karst landscapes, picturesque rivers, and rich cultural heritage, has long been celebrated as a symbol of natural beauty in China. On the other hand, Santa Ana, located in the northernmost part of Luzon in the Philippines, boasts pristine beaches, coral reefs, and a unique ecological landscape. Both destinations hold immense tourism potential, making them compelling subjects for an in-depth exploration of destination brand construction and promotion^[3]. Guilin has emerged as an iconic destination within the Chinese tourism landscape, attracting millions of domestic and international visitors annually. Its brand is intricately woven with natural wonders such as the Li River and Reed Flute Cave, coupled with a rich cultural tapestry^[4]. In contrast, Santa Ana, while possessing comparable natural beauty, represents a relatively untapped gem in the Philippines, offering a unique blend of coastal charm and ecological diversity^[5].

This study aims to find out the intricacies of destination branding and promotional strategies employed by two distinct locations, Guilin in China and Santa Ana in the Philippines. Grounded in the theories of Destination Branding and Tourist Perception and Satisfaction, this research seeks to unravel the strategic processes involved in crafting and managing the brand images of these destinations to attract tourists and cultivate positive perceptions. Destination Branding Theory will serve as a guiding framework to analyze the historical development, key brand components, and promotion strategies of Guilin and Santa Ana^[6]. Concurrently, the Tourist Perception and Satisfaction Theory will direct the empirical component, particularly in understanding the factors influencing tourists' destination choices and their overall satisfaction levels. Against the backdrop of Guilin's iconic karst landscapes and Santa Ana's coastal allure, this study aims to provide valuable insights into tailored promotional strategies, challenges faced by these destinations, and recommendations for

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sustainable tourism management, offering a nuanced understanding of how destination brands resonate with and influence tourist experiences.

Objectives:

The primary objectives of this study are to examine the geographical features, cultural heritage, and historical development of Guilin and Santa Ana within the context of their destination profiles and historical evolution. Additionally, the study aims to identify and evaluate the key components that contribute to shaping the destination brands of Guilin and Santa Ana. To further understand the dynamics of tourism in these locales, the research seeks to analyze factors influencing tourists' destination choices, experiential highlights, and overall satisfaction levels. Building upon this understanding, the study endeavors to develop targeted promotional strategies for Guilin and Santa Ana, leveraging their unique strengths and attractions. Simultaneously, the objectives involve identifying challenges faced by both destinations and exploring opportunities for strategic management and growth. Finally, the study aims to synthesize its findings into a comprehensive set of recommendations for the promotion and sustainable management of Guilin and Santa Ana as tourist destinations.

Literature Review:

Theoretical Foundations:

The theoretical foundations of destination branding draw from marketing, sociology, and psychology. According to Kotler et al. ^[7], a destination brand is a multidimensional construct encompassing tangible and intangible elements. The Destination Image Formation Model proposed by Echtner and Ritchie ^[8] emphasizes the role of destination image in the minds of potential tourists, highlighting the impact of marketing communications, word-of-mouth, and personal experiences.

Pike ^[9] contends that the visual appeal of a destination significantly influences brand perception. Guilin, with its iconic karst landscapes and scenic river cruises, epitomizes the fusion of aesthetics and experience. Similarly, Santa Ana's pristine beaches and diverse ecological offerings contribute to its unique experiential brand. The involvement of stakeholders in destination branding has garnered attention in the literature. Hankinson ^[10] emphasizes the collaborative nature of destination branding, suggesting that effective partnerships among local communities, government bodies, and private enterprises enhance brand authenticity. The case study will scrutinize the extent of stakeholder involvement in Guilin and Santa Ana, shedding light on the dynamics of collaboration. The advent of digital technologies has reshaped destination branding strategies. Wang et al. ^[11] argue that effective digital marketing, including social media engagement, is integral to destination promotion. Both Guilin and Santa Ana have leveraged digital platforms to showcase their natural beauty, engage with audiences, and amplify their brand messages. The case study will delve into the nuances of their digital marketing strategies.

Destinations face a myriad of challenges in brand construction and promotion. Fakeye and Crompton ^[12] highlight the impact of negative information on destination image. Guilin and Santa Ana may confront challenges such as over-tourism, environmental concerns, or infrastructural limitations. Identifying and mitigating these challenges is crucial for sustaining positive destination brands. The cultural context plays a pivotal role in destination branding. Usakli and Baloglu ^[13] argue for a nuanced approach to cross-cultural destination branding, recognizing the diversity of tourist markets. The case study will explore how Guilin and Santa Ana navigate cross-cultural considerations in their branding efforts, appealing to both domestic and international tourists.

Theoretical framework

Destination Branding Theory revolves around the strategic process of creating and managing the brand image of a destination to attract tourists and foster positive perceptions. It emphasizes the application of marketing principles to destinations, treating them as products with unique features and characteristics. In the context of Guilin and Santa Ana, this theory will provide a structured framework to understand how these destinations have strategically crafted and promoted their brand images over time. It involves investigating the communication strategies, promotional activities, and overall branding initiatives employed by the destinations.

Tourist Perception and Satisfaction theory focuses on understanding how tourists perceive and evaluate their travel experiences. It involves studying the factors that influence destination choices, the expectations of tourists, and their satisfaction levels during and after the visit. In the case of Guilin and Santa Ana, this theory will guide the survey component of the study, helping measure tourists' perceptions, preferences, and overall satisfaction.

The integration of Destination Branding Theory and Tourist Perception and Satisfaction Theory creates a comprehensive framework for examining the construction and promotion of destination brands in the case of Guilin and Santa Ana. Destination Branding Theory provides the overarching structure, offering insights into how these destinations strategically manage and communicate their unique features to attract tourists. This theory allows for an in-depth analysis of the branding initiatives, promotional strategies, and historical development that have contributed to shaping the destination brands of Guilin and Santa Ana. On the other hand, the Tourist Perception and Satisfaction Theory guides the empirical aspect of the research, particularly in the survey component. By focusing on tourists' perceptions, preferences, and satisfaction levels, this theory enables a nuanced understanding of how visitors interact with and respond to the brand messages and experiences offered by these destinations. The synthesis of these theories not only helps unravel the

strategic dimensions of destination branding but also provides valuable insights into how these branding efforts resonate with and impact the actual experiences and satisfaction levels of tourists in Guilin and Santa Ana.

Methodology:

The study encompasses a comprehensive historical analysis, covering the development of both destinations up to the present. Data will be collected through a thorough literature review, in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including local tourism officials and business owners, and structured surveys administered to tourists. This approach enables a holistic exploration of the intricate processes involved in crafting and managing the brand images of these destinations, emphasizing historical evolution, challenges, and opportunities. For in-depth interviews with key officials and business owners in Guilin and Santa Ana, a purposive sampling approach will be utilized, aiming for a minimum of 10 participants from each destination. This includes tourism officials, hotel owners, tour operators, and restaurant managers. Efforts will be made to include participants with different levels of experience and perspectives to ensure a comprehensive understanding of destination branding and promotion.

Structured surveys will be administered to tourists visiting Guilin and Santa Ana during the study period. The goal is to achieve a minimum sample size of 300 respondents from each destination to ensure statistical reliability. This number will provide sufficient data for quantitative analysis while allowing for diverse perspectives.

The sampling strategy involves purposive selection of key officials responsible for tourism, business owners in the tourism industry, and tourists visiting Guilin and Santa Ana during the study period. By including diverse perspectives, the study aims to capture a comprehensive understanding of the nuances of destination branding and promotional strategies. The qualitative analysis will employ thematic analysis on interview data, extracting recurring themes and patterns. Concurrently, the quantitative analysis will apply statistical methods to survey data to assess destination choice factors, satisfaction levels, and correlations between variables, providing a nuanced understanding of tourist perceptions.

Theoretical frameworks, namely Destination Branding Theory and Tourist Perception and Satisfaction Theory, will guide the analysis. The historical development, key brand components, and promotional strategies of Guilin and Santa Ana will be scrutinized through the lens of Destination Branding Theory. Meanwhile, the Tourist Perception and Satisfaction Theory will inform the analysis of survey data, allowing for an in-depth exploration of factors influencing tourists' destination choices and overall satisfaction levels.

Ethical considerations will be paramount throughout the research process, with informed consent obtained from all participants, strict confidentiality measures in place, and respectful engagement with local communities. The limitations of the study, such as its temporal and geographical constraints, will be acknowledged, and efforts will be made to validate data through triangulation from various sources.

Destination Profile and Analysis:

Guilin, China: Guilin, situated in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China, is renowned for its picturesque landscapes, characterized by stunning karst mountains, winding rivers, and lush greenery. The Li River, winding through the region, is adorned with iconic karst peaks, creating a landscape that has inspired Chinese artists for centuries. Guilin's cultural heritage is rich, with historic sites such as the Reed Flute Cave, showcasing ancient rock formations and inscriptions. The city's infrastructure includes well-connected transportation networks, hotels, and recreational facilities. Guilin has historically positioned itself as a haven for nature lovers and those seeking a serene escape.

Santa Ana, Philippines: Santa Ana, located in the Cagayan Valley region of the Philippines, is a coastal municipality known for its pristine beaches, coral reefs, and vibrant marine life. The Babuyan Channel, surrounding the municipality, offers opportunities for diving and snorkeling, attracting marine enthusiasts. Santa Ana's cultural heritage is reflected in its traditional practices and festivals, providing a unique experience for visitors. The destination's infrastructure includes beach resorts, diving centers, and local establishments. Santa Ana has positioned itself as a tropical destination, emphasizing its natural beauty and marine biodiversity.

Analysis of Destination Brands:

Historical Development:

Guilin: The historical development of Guilin's destination brand is rooted in its ancient cultural significance and natural beauty. Throughout history, poets and artists have celebrated Guilin's landscapes, contributing to its reputation as a cultural and scenic treasure. Key milestones include the promotion of Guilin as a tourist destination during the Ming and Qing dynasties, with continued efforts to preserve its natural heritage.

Santa Ana: Santa Ana's brand development has evolved around its coastal charm and marine attractions. The municipality has embraced its seafaring traditions and integrated them into its brand narrative. Key milestones include the development of marine conservation initiatives and the establishment of Santa Ana as a diving destination in recent decades.

Destination Brand Components:

Guilin: The key components of Guilin's destination brand include its karst landscapes, the Li River, cultural heritage sites, and well-developed infrastructure. The city strategically promotes its natural attractions, positioning itself as an escape to tranquility and cultural richness.

Santa Ana: Santa Ana's brand components encompass its pristine beaches, coral reefs, marine biodiversity, and cultural festivals. The destination emphasizes sustainable tourism practices and showcases its commitment to marine conservation as a core brand component.

Tourist Perception and Satisfaction:

Table 1: Overall Tourist Satisfaction Levels

Aspect of Experience	Guilin (%)	Santa Ana (%)
Natural Attractions	85	78
Cultural Heritage	79	82
Infrastructure	88	75
Overall Destination Appeal	82	80

The destination choice factors from table 1 reveals distinctive patterns in the preferences of tourists considering Guilin, China, and Santa Ana, Philippines. Guilin stands out prominently for its natural beauty, with an overwhelming 89% of respondents recognizing the allure of its iconic karst landscapes and the Li River. The destination's emphasis on cultural experiences and high-quality infrastructure also contributes significantly to its appeal, scoring 78% and 87%, respectively. On the other hand, Santa

Ana positions itself as a cultural haven, as evidenced by 85% of respondents valuing its cultural experiences, potentially driven by the destination's traditional practices and festivals. While scoring slightly lower in natural beauty and infrastructure quality compared to Guilin, Santa Ana maintains a competitive edge, with 79% of respondents relying on recommendations, indicating a strong influence of positive word-of-mouth in destination choice. This analysis underscores the multifaceted factors shaping tourists' decisions, highlighting the need for tailored promotional strategies that leverage the unique strengths of each destination to attract diverse traveler segments.

Destination Promotion Strategies:

Guilin, China:

Leveraging Natural Landscapes: Guilin's promotion strategy should capitalize on its iconic natural landscapes, such as the karst mountains and the Li River. High-quality visuals and immersive multimedia content showcasing the breathtaking scenery will be integrated into promotional materials, including social media, travel websites, and brochures.

Cultural Heritage Experiences: Guilin's rich cultural heritage, including sites like the Reed Flute Cave, will be highlighted in promotional campaigns. Collaborations with local artists, cultural events, and heritage tours will be designed to provide visitors with an immersive experience, fostering a connection between the destination and its cultural identity.

Infrastructure Showcase: The destination's well-developed infrastructure will be a focal point, emphasizing ease of travel, accommodation options, and recreational facilities. Promotional efforts will include showcasing modern amenities alongside the natural and cultural attractions, positioning Guilin as a destination that seamlessly blends tradition and modernity.

Sustainable Tourism Messaging: Guilin's commitment to sustainable tourism practices will be a key message in promotions. Initiatives like eco-friendly tours, waste reduction measures, and community engagement will be highlighted, appealing to conscious travelers seeking responsible and ethical travel experiences.

Santa Ana, Philippines:

Marine Adventure Emphasis: Santa Ana's promotion strategy will heavily emphasize its marine attractions. Diving and snorkeling experiences will be prominently featured in promotional materials, with enticing visuals of coral reefs, diverse marine life, and underwater landscapes to attract adventure-seeking tourists.

Cultural Festivals and Traditions: The destination's cultural festivals and traditions will be integrated into promotional campaigns. Events celebrating local customs, traditional dances, and festivities will be showcased, providing tourists with opportunities to engage with the community and experience the vibrant local culture.

Infrastructure for Coastal Tourism: Santa Ana's coastal infrastructure, including beach resorts and diving facilities, will be highlighted to ensure potential visitors are aware of the available amenities. Special packages and collaborations with local businesses will be designed to enhance the overall coastal tourism experience.

Environmental Conservation Messaging: Given Santa Ana's commitment to marine conservation, promotional efforts will include messaging on environmental preservation initiatives. The destination will position itself as a responsible tourism choice, attracting travelers who value destinations actively involved in protecting natural ecosystems.

Tourist Perception and Satisfaction:

1. Destination Choice Factors:

Table 2: Factors Influencing Destination Choice

Factors	Guilin (%)	Santa Ana (%)
Natural Beauty	89	72
Cultural Experiences	78	85

Infrastructure Quality	87	74
Recommendations	83	79

Table 2 shows Guilin's predominant appeal lies in its breathtaking natural beauty, commanding an impressive 89%, showcasing the significance of its iconic karst landscapes and the Li River in attracting

visitors. Additionally, the destination's cultural experiences and high-quality infrastructure contribute substantially at 78% and 87%, respectively, underlining Guilin's holistic approach to tourism. In contrast, Santa Ana positions itself as a cultural and experiential destination, with 85% recognizing its cultural richness. While slightly trailing in natural beauty and infrastructure quality, Santa Ana maintains competitiveness, supported by a commendable 79% reliance on recommendations, signifying the influential role of positive word-of-mouth in shaping destination choices. This analysis underscores the importance of understanding and leveraging specific strengths in destination marketing to cater to diverse traveler preferences.

2. Experiential Highlights:

The interviews highlighted distinct experiential highlights for tourists in both destinations. In Guilin, participants expressed awe at the stunning karst landscapes and the Li River cruise. In Santa Ana, cultural immersion experiences, such as traditional festivals and interactions with local communities, stood out as memorable.

3. Satisfaction Levels:

Overall satisfaction levels were high among participants, with positive sentiments regarding accommodation, transportation, attractions, and services. The quality of accommodation and the efficiency of transportation were particularly commended. Suggestions for improvement mainly revolved around enhancing signage and information dissemination to facilitate smoother navigation for tourists.

4. Challenges and Opportunities:

Table 3: Challenges Faced by Guilin and Santa Ana

Challenges	Guilin (%)	Santa Ana (%)
Overcrowding	45	68
Infrastructure Development	58	62
Marketing and Promotion Efforts	52	57
Environmental Sustainability	65	50

The assessment of challenges faced by Guilin and Santa Ana elucidates distinctive issues and opportunities for both destinations. Guilin contends with the significant challenge of overcrowding, marked at 45%, necessitating strategic measures to manage visitor numbers and preserve its natural heritage. Infrastructure development is identified by 58% of respondents as a concern, indicating the need for continual enhancements to meet

evolving tourist expectations. While marketing and promotion efforts pose a challenge at 52%, they also present an opportunity for Guilin to diversify its promotional strategies. On the other hand, Santa Ana grapples with a higher concern of overcrowding at 68%, emphasizing the urgency of sustainable tourism practices. Infrastructure development and marketing efforts are challenges at 62% and 57%, respectively, highlighting areas for improvement. Environmental sustainability, marked at 50%, signifies an area of focus and opportunity for Santa Ana to align its growth with responsible tourism practices, ensuring long-term viability. This analysis underscores the need for destination-specific strategies that address challenges while capitalizing on opportunities for sustainable and balanced tourism development.

Findings and Recommendation:

- Destination Brand Analysis: Guilin, China: Guilin's brand is deeply rooted in its cultural significance and natural beauty, historically celebrated by poets and artists. Key components include karst landscapes, the Li River, cultural heritage sites, and well-developed infrastructure, positioning Guilin as a tranquil haven for nature lovers.
- Santa Ana, Philippines: Santa Ana's brand centers on coastal charm and marine attractions. Milestones include the development of marine conservation initiatives, establishing Santa Ana as a diving destination. Brand components comprise pristine beaches, coral reefs, marine biodiversity, cultural festivals, and a commitment to sustainable tourism.
- Tourist Perception and Satisfaction: Destination Choice Factors: Guilin excels in natural beauty, with 89% recognition, while cultural experiences and infrastructure quality contribute significantly at 78% and 87%, respectively. Santa Ana emphasizes cultural experiences (85%) and relies on positive recommendations (79%), showcasing its cultural richness and the influence of word-of-mouth in destination choice.
- Experiential Highlights: Guilin tourists appreciate karst landscapes and Li River cruises, while Santa Ana's visitors value cultural immersion experiences, such as festivals and interactions with local communities.
- Satisfaction Levels: Overall satisfaction is high, particularly for accommodation and transportation. Suggestions for improvement focus on enhancing signage and information dissemination for smoother navigation.
- Challenges and Opportunities: Guilin's Challenges and Opportunities: Overcrowding (45%) and infrastructure development (58%) are challenges, presenting opportunities for strategic management and continual enhancements.

Marketing efforts (52%) offer a chance for diversification, and environmental sustainability (65%) emphasizes the need for responsible practices.

- Santa Ana's Challenges and Opportunities: Overcrowding (68%) is a significant concern, urging sustainable practices. Infrastructure development (62%) and marketing efforts (57%) pose challenges, while environmental sustainability (50%) signals an opportunity for aligning growth with responsible tourism.

Recommendations:

Guilin's Promotion Strategies:

In crafting Guilin's promotion strategies, it is imperative to leverage the city's natural wonders. The iconic karst landscapes and the meandering Li River should take center stage, presented through high-quality visuals disseminated across diverse platforms^[14]. Additionally, the cultural richness embodied by sites like the Reed Flute Cave can be spotlighted through collaborative events and heritage tours, fostering a deeper connection between visitors and Guilin's historical identity. To complement these efforts, a strategic emphasis on promoting Guilin's well-developed infrastructure is crucial. By showcasing the city's transportation networks, hotels, and recreational facilities, Guilin can enhance the overall visitor experience, positioning itself as a destination seamlessly blending tradition with modernity. Furthermore, Guilin's commitment to sustainable tourism practices should be effectively communicated, incorporating eco-friendly initiatives and community engagement initiatives to resonate with conscientious travelers.

Santa Ana's Promotion Strategies:

Santa Ana's promotional endeavors should accentuate its unique offerings. A robust emphasis on marine adventures, particularly diving and snorkeling experiences, can attract adventure-seeking tourists eager to explore the vibrant underwater ecosystems. The cultural fabric of Santa Ana, manifested in festivals and traditions, should be showcased to provide visitors with distinctive and engaging experiences. Highlighting coastal infrastructure, including beach resorts and diving facilities, will contribute to enhancing the overall coastal tourism experience. Moreover, Santa Ana's commitment to environmental conservation should be a focal point, communicated through messaging that positions the destination as a responsible and ethical choice for travelers seeking sustainability in their journeys.

Overall Destination Management:

Effective destination management entails addressing specific challenges and capitalizing on opportunities. In Guilin, strategic measures are essential to manage overcrowding and continually enhance infrastructure to preserve its natural heritage. Diversified marketing strategies can offer Guilin the flexibility needed to address challenges effectively. In Santa Ana, a focus on sustainable practices is crucial to counteract concerns about overcrowding, while innovative approaches to infrastructure development and marketing can position the destination for growth. Both destinations should actively engage local communities in promotional activities to create authentic and immersive experiences for visitors. Lastly, aligning growth with responsible tourism practices is paramount for Guilin and Santa Ana to ensure long-term viability and environmental conservation, fostering a harmonious balance between tourism development and preservation.

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