

The Strategic Analysis of Singapore`s Brand and Rebrand Campaigns¹

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Abstract

“Uniquely Singapore” and “YourSingapore”! Brand and rebrand! 2004 and 2010! From the economic point of view Singapore has grown exponentially in the last half century. The beginning of the third millennium has brought the need of finding new sources of growth by correctly identifying the opportunities that the competitive environment has to offer. Thus, a branding campaign was born in order to present Singapore as a unique tourist destination: a dynamic state, rich in contrasts and colors, offering a mix of culture, art, architecture and cuisine in a unique blend of modernity and tradition. Even if in 2009 the effects of the economic and financial crisis temporarily limited the upward trend of the campaign’s positive effects, the Singapore authorities found new tools to improve the country’s brand by adapting to new digital media, promotion through events and direct-marketing aggressively. The paper analyses how the campaigns were created and applied branding / rebranding of the city-state of Singapore in 2004 and 2010, as well as the economic effects of these efforts that have proved successful.

Keywords: *country brand, rebranding, tourism brand, promoting campaigns, strategic development, economic crisis*

JEL classification: M30, M37, M39

1. Introduction

A country has so many "faces", so that it is very difficult to define its personality and its brand. Therefore, the branding of the country is a long process that requires sustained efforts from all participants to a nation’s life. Country branding is a set of programs that make a country to be distinguished from others (Popescu, 2007, p. 87). This process is intended to provide an identity to that country, forming a true, positive and attractive image. In fact, it is the visiting card of a state. The audience mainly targeted by country brand campaigns are tourists and businessmen. In the process of branding, social, educational, architectural and travel programs concerning the environment and the investments, are included.

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We need real leaders for developing a strategic approach that is able to connect the vision with the operational issues (Năstase, 2010, p. 456). The branding of a country is a complex project, usually conducted by a consortium of branding companies, PR and publicity, which has the responsibility of "redraw", among others, the image of state institutions (ministries, police, government agencies, etc.). This type of public-private partnership, between private companies and state institutions aimed at building a strong country brand has resulted into a world-wide instrument for governments facing insufficient resources to meet high demands for quality services and infrastructure (Mina, 2010, p. 329).

Branding principles apply equally to both companies and countries. Only the methods of application are different (Interbrand, 2003, p. 2). In the business environment, the brand has brought value and huge profits to products, services and companies. It is the same in the case of countries. Thus, the development of a brand is a more simple and effective way of selling things. The old expression: "Nothing happens until someone sells something" is gradually replaced by the slogan "Nothing happens until a brand is created". The product itself (viewed as an asset, a country, a region, a city) is of a great importance, being difficult to change. One of the fundamental goals pursued in a commercial transaction is the profit, and the sale takes place when the product enters the mind of the customer and, ideally, remains there as much as possible. This is where the branding comes, and its best known form of manifestation is advertising. The sale represents an important component of the brand. In the era of multimedia, the product warranty is given by the brand name rather than by a salesperson's advice. The power of a brand lies in its ability to influence the purchasing behaviour. But a brand name on a packaging is not the same as a brand name in the consumers' minds. In conclusion, one of the first advantages of branding is that the loyalty of the clients is enhanced. We speak both of the behavioral and emotional loyalty. When branding is in place, clients are more likely to remain loyal to their brand, even when the promise of another brand is appealing or our brand is facing quality problems on the short-run (Barbu, Ogarcă, Barbu, 2010, p. 36).

The country brand behaves in many ways the same as the product brand, it is perceived in a certain way by a large group, both in the home country and abroad, and it is associated with certain qualities and characteristics (Anholt, 2003). Countries are faced daily with powerful competitive environment, and those that are unknown or have a reputation as "poor" are marginalized. On the other hand, the products of states that have a strong brand are highly sought and appreciated.

In the past, it was quite easy to form a "natural" brand for different locations, due to history, customs and various industries in the area. However, globalization tends to erase the differences, technology is changing the way of life, and what was representative for decades or even centuries for the state does not define it anymore. As in the case of commercial brands, some country brands erode over time, becoming outdated with the "product", namely with the new habits in an area or with the new lifestyle. Therefore, a country branding strategy should be based on a clear vision of the future.

A strong and positive national brand offers a crucial competitive advantage. This was understood also by the Asian countries, which began to concentrate on creating an image, a country brand that would help them build a good reputation worldwide, in order to add value to the national economy by attracting tourists, foreign investments, and by facilitating the exports (Anholt, 2008, p. 266).

2. Short presentation

The Republic of Singapore is an island city-state – the smallest country in Southeast Asia. It is located in the southern extremity of the Malacca Peninsula, separated from Malaysia by a narrow straight.

Singapore has an area of 710.2 km² and a population of 4.9 million inhabitants (Statistics Singapore, 2009). The country is made up of 62 islands.

Singapore is one of the most developed countries in South-East Asia and together with Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan, is one of the Southeast Asia's Dragons.

The economy is very much depending of refining imported goods. The manufacturing industry accounted in 2005 for 26% of its GDP. Electronics, petroleum and chemical products refining, mechanical engineering and biomedical products are well developed. In 2006, Singapore accounted for about 10% of the world production of electronic chips. It is the largest port in the world in terms of tonnage shipped and is the world's fourth largest foreign exchange trading centre after London, New York and Tokyo.

It is said that Singapore has long ago entered the third millennium and now is looking for ways surpassing itself! This country, with a population consisting of a multi-ethnic mosaic, combines into a recipe Western modernity, Eastern richness and the island's colonial past.

3. Singapore's branding strategy (2004-2009)

3.1. The brand "Uniquely Singapore" (2004-2009)

The branding process began in July 2003. The branding consultancy firm – Future Brand, over 400 stakeholders from the markets considered "key" to that period, the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) and other local partners were committed to finding the most suitable opportunities for creating the brand.

STB decided that the only word that best captures the characteristics of this city state is **UNIQUE**. Being a highly dynamic state, rich in contrast and color, Singapore offers a mix of culture, art, architecture and cuisine.

Singapore became **unique**, with a distinct identity through people, landscapes, and its place in world history. Thus, Singapore has evolved into a **unique way**, spectacularly combining old traditions with cutting-edge innovations (such as environmental technologies, modern buildings etc.), placing itself among the most developed countries in Southeast Asia and the world. Urban management

was transiting from conventional to sustainable energy technologies, which has led to a rapid development of cities (Zamfir, 2011, p. 45).

By bringing together a multicultural population in a cosmopolitan city, Singapore offers **unique experiences**. The mix of Asian and European roots, and even American ones (77% Chinese, 14% Malaysians and Indonesians, 8% Indians and Pakistanis, and 1% Eurasians) is the key element that provides people of all nationalities a pleasant, clean, safe and friendly environment.

The variety of tourist attractions and infinite leisure-time opportunities are other unique features of this nation. Delicious food, modern and traditional architecture, cultural tours in different ethnic neighborhoods, recreation areas and beaches are just some of the attractions of an environment perfect for relaxation (www.visitsingapore.com).

In this context, on 9 March 2004 the country brand *Uniquely Singapore*³ was launched, showing the world a warm, energizing and memorable place – Singapore. The new brand had to be compelling, exciting, different, bold, and based on tangible characteristics of the country, to allow it to differentiate itself from other competitors (see Figure 1).



Figure 1 The logo and slogan for the “Uniquely Singapore”

Source: *namedevelopment.com*

Uniquely Singapore was launched at the International Tourism Exchange (International Tourism Bourse) in Berlin which ran from 12 to 16 March 2004. Presenting this brand, the STB team won the award for the best brand design, ahead of all countries of the Pacific Asia Travel Association.

3.2. *The promoting campaign Beyond Words*

On 18 July 2006, STB announced the new campaign – *Beyond Words*. This second stage of the brand “Uniquely Singapore” was designed to overcome the promoting phase of the country as a mere “product”, aiming to highlight the depth of the Singapore experience. Thus, to show the depth, scale and mix of experiences that reflect what Singapore offers to tourists, the campaign captured moments “which are sometimes euphoric, sometimes indulgent, sometimes inspired, other times delightful, happy or peaceful, but always present an experience which is unique to Singapore” (www.visitsingapore.com).

³ The previous country brand was used for 7 years, under the name *Singapore – New Asia*.

STB chose nine themes through which to promote the country both locally and internationally (see Figure 2).



Figure 2 The themes of Beyond Words campaign
Source: www.visitsingapore.com

The *Beyond Words* campaign used as a means of promotion TV and audio spots (see Figure 3), press models, posters and billboards located on the target markets (India, China, South Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Japan, Germany, UK, Australia, New Zealand and the United Arab Emirates) in order

awaken the interest of visitors, but also to define Singapore as a destination that must be seen.



Figure 3 TV spots of Beyond Words campaign

Source: www.visitsingapore.com

In addition, STB has worked with many travel agencies around the world to create tourism packages to attract tourists to what can be an experience “beyond words”.

The *Beyond Words* campaign marked the evolution of the *Uniquely Singapore* brand, providing a unique blend of modernity and tradition, thus enriching the personal experience of every tourist: “Visitors are looking for destinations that provide memorable experiences. Our new campaign focuses on a unique personal experience that impresses them individually. The key objective is to evolve, and *Uniquely Singapore* allows the country to differentiate itself from other destinations and to strengthen its brand globally, involving all aspects that tourism offers” (www.visitsingapore.com).

The new creative experience of the *Beyond Words* managed to involve Singapore’s residents (local families and businessmen alike). This campaign was designed to promote direct interaction between residents and visitors in order to enhance “personal experiences” which is what means *Beyond Words*.

Together with *Beyond Words* until 2009 there were also launched complementary campaigns or extensions thereof:

- *Singapore – Where Great Things Happen*⁴ was aimed at positioning Singapore among the best destinations for business events;

⁴ Launched by Business Travel and Meetings, Incentive Travel, Conventions and Exhibition.

- *Make it Singapore* [2004 - 2007] aimed at promoting business tourism and increasing the number of MICE events (Meetings Incentives Conventions Expositions) in Singapore;
- *The Global Brand Media Campaign* [2008];
- *2009 Reasons to enjoy Singapore* [2009] (see Figure 4).



Figure 4 Model press release for the campaign “2009 Reasons to enjoy Singapore”
 Source: <http://www.visitsingapore.com>

4. Target markets for the 2004-2009 campaign

The place of origin for tourists who visited Singapore between 2004 and 2009 are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Top 10 target markets, 2004-2009

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
1.	Indonesia	Indonesia	Indonesia	Indonesia	Indonesia	Indonesia
2.	China	China	China	China	China	China
3.	Japan	Australia	Australia	Australia	Australia	Australia
4.	Australia	Japan	India	India	India	Malaysia
5.	Malaysia	India	Malaysia	Malaysia	Malaysia	India
6.	India	Malaysia	Japan	Japan	Japan	Japan
7.	UK	UK	UK	UK	UK	UK
8.	South Korea	Thailand	South Korea	South Korea	South Korea	Philippines
9.	Thailand	SUA	SUA	Philippines	Philippines	SUA
10.	SUA	South Korea	Philippines	SUA	SUA	Thailand

Source: Singapore Tourism Board (2010). Annual Report on Tourism Statistics 2009, p. 3

Analysis of these data reveals that during this period, the same pattern of target markets was maintained; the ranking is dominated by Indonesia, China and Australia, which shows the consistency in providing quality travel services that has generated customer loyalty.

In 2009, most tourists came from Asia (71%) and the least from the black continent (1%, down by 15.7% compared to 2008) (see Figure 5).

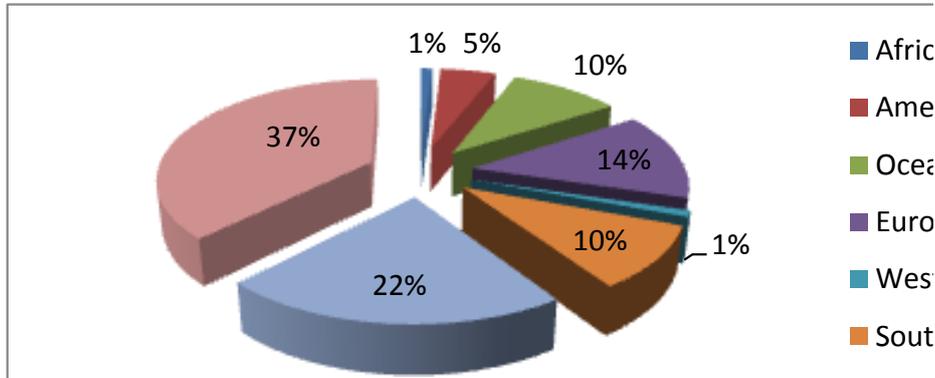


Figure 5 Number of tourists by global regions in 2009

Source: Singapore Tourism Board (2010). Annual Report on Tourism Statistics 2009, p.2

In 2009 South Korea leaves the ranking and was replaced by Thailand. Malaysia (+18%) and Philippines (+3.1%) registered the most significant increases, while China (-13.2%) and Japan (-14.2%) registered double-digit declines (see Figure 6).

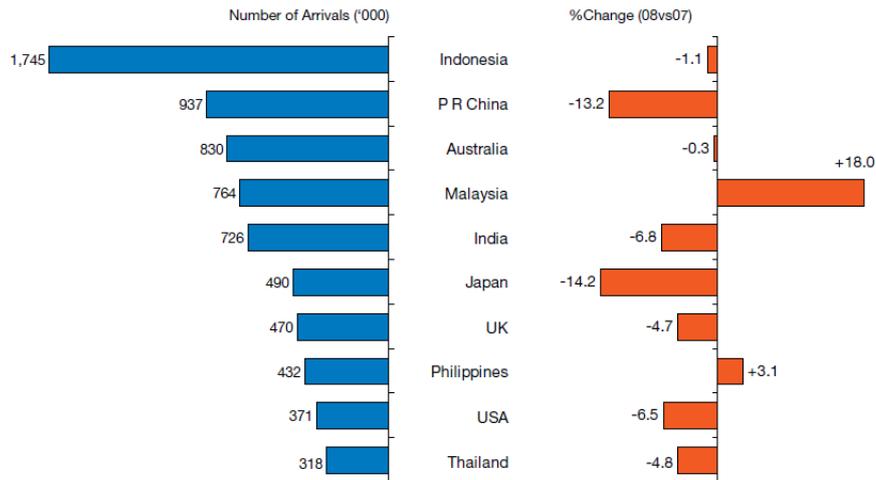


Figure 6 Top 10 target markets in 2009

Source: Singapore Tourism Board (2010). Annual Report on Tourism Statistics 2009, p.1

In 2009, 36% of tourists came to Singapore for their annual holiday. However, both business / events trips, as well as holidays spent in Singapore fell with 3%, compared with 2008 (see Figure 7).

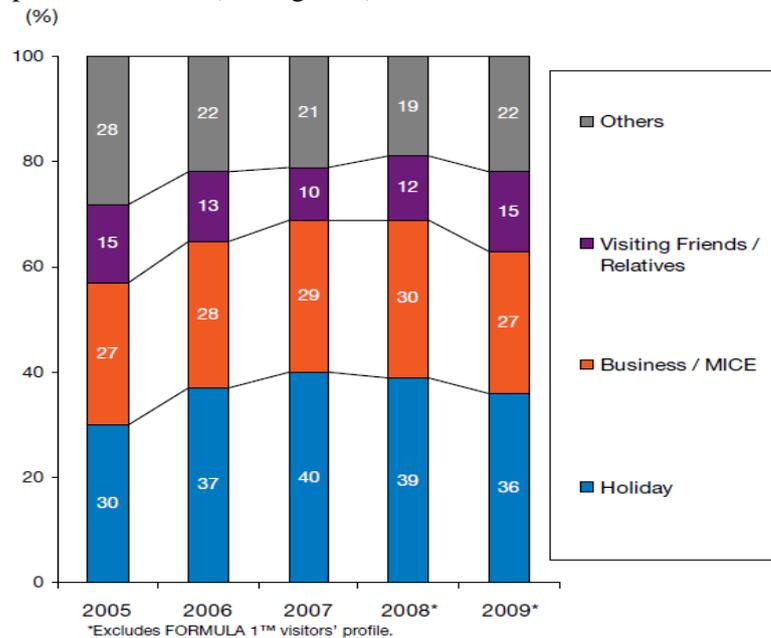


Figure 7 Number of tourists (%) by scope of visit (2005-2009)

Source: Singapore Tourism Board (2010). Annual Report on Tourism Statistics 2009, p. 4

In 2009, 61% of visitors lodged in hotels, 3% more than in 2008 (58%) (see Figure 8).

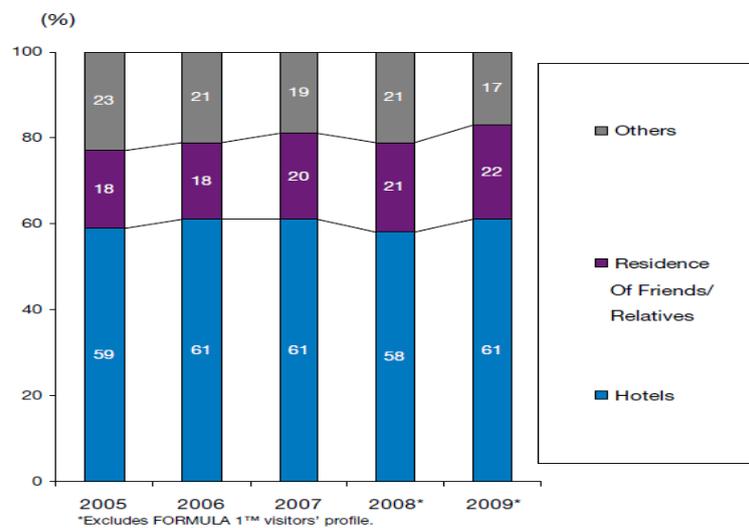


Figure 8 Number of tourists (%) by type of accommodation (2005-2009)

Source: Singapore Tourism Board (2010). Annual Report on Tourism Statistics 2009, p. 4

5. Results of the branding campaign 2004-2009

The campaign's effects could be seen in the number of visitors who arrived in Singapore in the years after the campaign was launched, in the revenues from tourism and hotel occupancy levels from one year to another.

5.1. Number of visitors 2003-2009

Table 2: Number of tourists before and after the branding campaign

Year	Number of tourists	Change from previous year
2003	6.127.291	- 19,04
2004	8.328.720	+ 35,92
2005	8.943.029	+ 7,4
2006	9.751.141	+ 9,0
2007	10.284.545	+ 5,55
2008	10.116.054	- 1,63%
2009	9.682.690	- 4,29%

Source: Singapore Tourism Board (2010), Annual Report 2009, p.15

One can observe that if in 2003 the number of visitors decreased by 19%, in 2004 after the launch, there was a growth of almost 36% (see Table 2). This spectacular growth has not continued in subsequent years (see Figure 9), but evolution in the number of tourists has had an upward trend, registering annual changes of about 7% (in 2005), 9% (in 2006) and 5.5 % (in 2007).

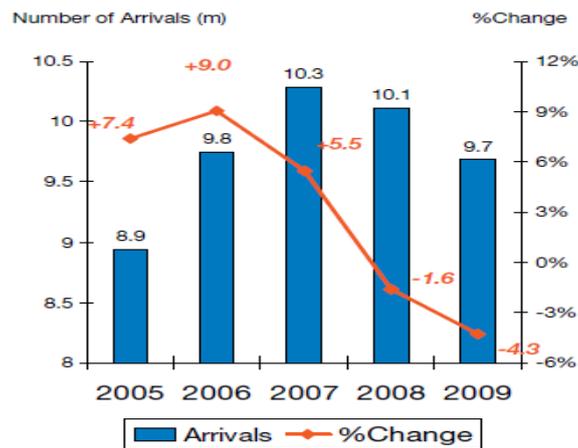


Figure 9 Number of visitors 2005-2009

Source: Singapore Tourism Board (2010). Annual Report on Tourism Statistics 2009, p. 2

As regards the years 2008 and 2009, Singapore recorded a total of 10.1 million visitors, respectively 9.7 (4.3% less than in 2008), the decrease was due to economic crisis (Singapore Tourism Board, 2010).

5.2. Revenue from tourism 2003-2009

In terms of revenue from tourism in the national economy, we can see that they have increased dramatically in 2004 compared with 2003 by 128% and continued to grow from year to year until 2008 inclusive (see Table 3 and Figure 10).

Table 3: Revenue from tourism during 2003-2009 period

Year	Revenues (billion \$)	Change from previous year (%)
2003	4,3	
2004	9,8	+ 128
2005	10,9	+ 11,2
2006	12,4	+ 13,76
2007	14,1	+ 13,7
2008	15,2	+ 7,8
2009	12,8	-15,78

Source: Singapore Tourism Board, Annual Report 08/09, p. 14

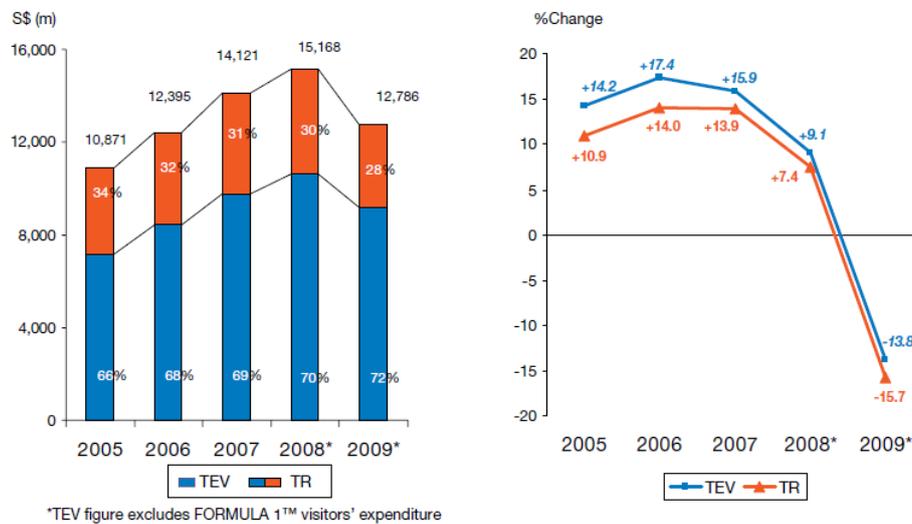


Figure 10 Revenue from tourism in the 2005-2009 period

Source: Singapore Tourism Board (2010). Annual Report on Tourism Statistics 2009, p. 7

In 2009, revenue from tourism was down by 15.7%, to 12.8 billion dollars (see Figure 11). Decline in revenue from tourism had more causes:

- Visitors' arrivals fell with 4.3%
- Average expenses on tourist fell by 10.0%.

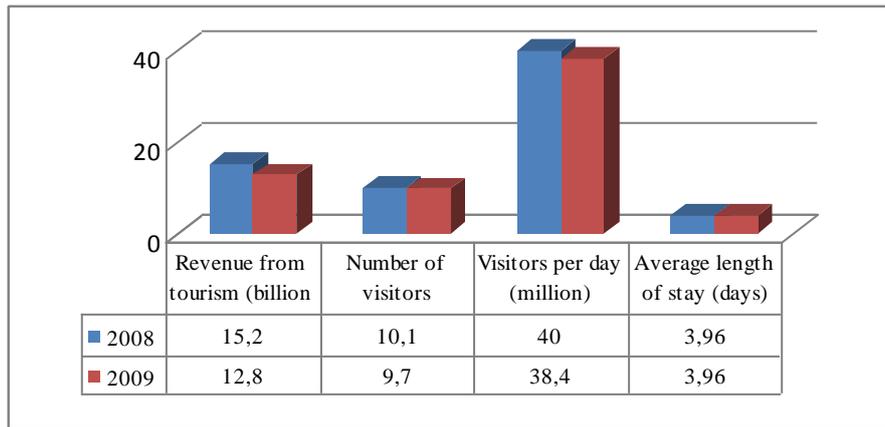


Figure 11 Revenue from tourism, number of visitors, number of visitors per day and average length of stay (2008-2009)

Source: Singapore Tourism Board (2010). Annual Report on Tourism Statistics 2009, p.1

The top five revenue-generating markets in 2009 were Indonesia, China, Australia, India and Malaysia. These markets accounted for 46% of total revenues from tourism. Malaysia was the only market which has had a positive growth (+11.5%) in terms of tourism receipts, bringing the city-state of Singapore grossed revenues of \$ 678,000,000.

Total expenditures from visitors decreased by 13.8% compared to 2008. As seen in Figure 14, only Malaysia has recorded a growth of 23.1% for this indicator.

6. Rebranding: “YourSingapore” (2010)

The *Uniquely Singapore* brand has been used with good results for almost six years, helping to improve the country’s image throughout the world and increase revenues from the state’s trade with foreign partners. But in the context of a changing environment and increasingly digitized, the Singapore authorities found the need to update the image in relation to the new and challenging travel experiences.

Therefore, STB decided in 2009 to work with agencies BBH, XM Asia and MEC in a rebranding campaign that takes into account the emerging needs of tourists.

6.1. The new brand: *YourSingapore*

The launch of the new brand – *YourSingapore* – took place at the beginning of 2010.

According to STB, *YourSingapore*’s brand development strategy has three objectives:

- take advantage of capital created by the brand *Uniquely Singapore*;
- use an emotional connection that visitors experience in Singapore;
- to connect with potential visitors through the digital space.

Thus, *YourSingapore* serves to emphasize motivational factors affecting the decision of tourists and, at the same time to differentiate Singapore on the country brands market.

The brand's components are considering a "live" logo with eight intertwined squares (see Figure 12), designed for digital screens, showing different aspects of the country and a new website (YouSingapore.com) which replaced VisitSingapore.com.



Figure 12 "YourSingapore" logo and slogan

Source: <http://www.yoursingapore.com>

STB said that *YourSingapore* is a continuation and completion of the *Uniquely Singapore* brand that has positioned the country as a destination that must be visited, highlighting the advantages of the nation – the concentration of places, sounds, tastes, cultures and sights – that can be combined in unique and perfectly tailored experience for each of us.

The new *YourSingapore* brand emphasizes the uniqueness of Singapore and captures what tourists are looking for: a personalized vacation experience. The main advantage of the new brand is that such an experience gives visitors a feeling of power and freedom as it allows them to travel on their own, according to their needs, preferences and personal interests.

The new brand represents the promise of Singapore to provide multidimensional travel experiences tailored to each individual and also positioned as a future-oriented destination.

At the heart of the new campaign there is a digital approach, with an innovative and interactive new website – yoursingapore.com – which allows travelers to design and plan their trip to Singapore in a simple and friendly manner. The site also facilitates the exchange of experiences among both tourists and residents and has an updated multimedia content.

The development of digital and social media platforms changed the way in which tourists plan and book their holidays, from passive consumption to active involvement in the proposed package; tourists now get their information through online news, blogs, forums and Web sites. Therefore *YourSingapore* is intended as a response to the rise of digital media and consumer demand for personalized travel plans.

The new logo (see Figure 13) is "tireless and dynamic, being in constant motion and transformation, suggested by a variety of themes, symbols, moods and emotions". *YourSingapore* is represented by using cubes, referring to the cubist school where geometry forms are used to reflect the different 2D perspectives, suggesting the different facets of the island. Placing the cubes in an apparently disorder suggests that the island is constantly changing. In terms of the thematic

logo, *YourSingapore* proposes an image that can reflect events, attractions, states or even textures.



Figure 13 Different versions of the YourSingapore logo
Source: <http://www.yoursingapore.com>

6.2. The promoting campaign

The promoting was made using various channels:

a) *Direct marketing*

Because consumers are increasingly migrating to the online, *YourSingapore* is based on a communication strategy mostly with a digital approach, which includes a new website, search engines optimization, campaigns on blogs, mobile phones content, presence in social media and e-Commerce platform for tourism. Brand new banners have appeared on a combination of business, leisure and lifestyle websites, redirecting visitors to www.yoursingapore.com (see Figure 14).

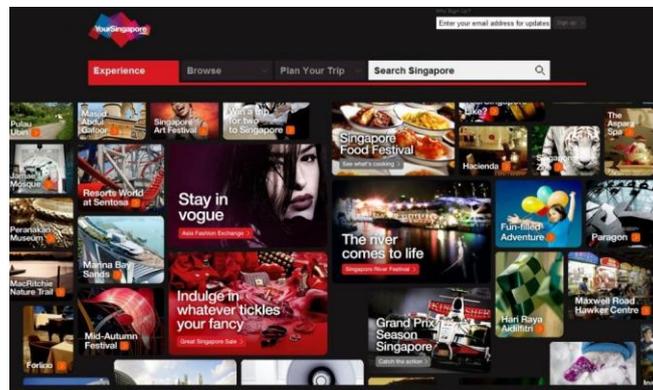


Figure 14 Yoursingapore.com official website
Source: www.yoursingapore.com

The new website www.yoursingapore.com represents an innovative and interactive communication platform that offers more than just information regarding the destination. It:

- allows users to create their own itinerary in Singapore in a simple manner, by surfing between various attractions, festivals, activities and other information relevant to travel (see Figure 15). Also, tourists are able to send the itinerary to friends and family through social networks or by email;
- gives the opportunity to share experiences;
- includes virtual tours, maps easily accessible, guidelines and programs for all events in Singapore;
- enables travel agencies in Singapore to connect their own sites to it or come into contact with visitors to give suggestions on possible routes.



Figure 15 Personalized page on Yoursingapore.com
Source: www.yoursingapore.com

b) **Mass-media: Television.** The marketing campaign uses an energizing TV spot, which aims to convey the essence of Singapore. The spot's target audience is represented by families, youth and business people and is run on various news and entertainment channels in English. In the closing of the TV spot one can find the essence of the campaign: the viewer is invited to explore a world that will enable them to design their own personalized holiday

c) *Promoting through events:*

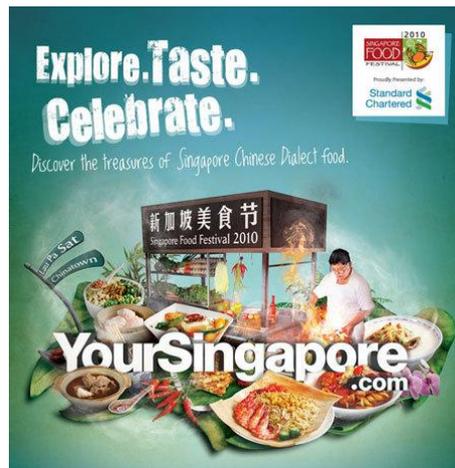


Figure 16 Promoting through “Singapore Food Festival 2010”

Source: <http://singaporefoodfestival.com.sg/>



Figure 17 Promoting through “Great Singapore Sale”

Source: www.yoursingapore.com

The first effects of the rebranding campaign show that in 2010 (Singapore Tourism Board, 2011):

- Singapore recorded a total of 11.6 million visitors (20% more than in 2009);
- the main target markets were: Indonesia (2,305,000), P.R. China (1,171,000), Malaysia (1,037,000), Australia (880,000) and India (829,000). They have held the top five positions among the countries that generate visitors to Singapore and represented 53% of the total international visitors' arrivals;

- revenues from tourism were in amount of USD 18.8 billion (+49% compared to 2009), while the revenues forecasted for this year are between USD 17.5-18.5 billion;
- the hotels recorded a revenue of USD 1.9 billion (+21.8% compared to 2009), the hotel occupancy rate was of 86%, a increase of 9.8% compared to 2009;
- Singapore held the 15th position in the nations' overall ranking in the Future Brand top (<http://www.futurebrand.com/>).

Conclusions

The analysis conducted in this study reveals that Singapore's efforts to build a strong country brand were a success both economically and socially in the 2004-2009 period. Values of key economic indicators of efficiency and effectiveness of the country brand show performance through the: increase in the number of tourists, increase in revenue from tourism, increased employment in tourism, development of complementary areas to tourism (restaurants, culture, business environment etc.), increase in the share of tourism in the economy. The upward trend was interrupted in 2009 by the global economic and financial crisis. But Singapore authorities have reorganized by identifying the appropriate time to launch a rebranding campaign, by adding new vectors of growth to the brand: digital media, promotion through events and aggressive direct-marketing. And the campaign's first results (summarized by the increase with 21,2% in number of tourists in 2010 compared to 2009) shows that the instruments used were the right ones.

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