

Independent study title: An Exploration of Integrated Marketing Communication Strategies:
A Case of Suzhou's Unique City Brand

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Abstract

The research objectives were as follows: 1) to investigate the key components that contribute to the uniqueness of Suzhou's city brand; 2) to study the effectiveness of Suzhou's integrated marketing communication strategies in promoting the city brand; and 3) to propose initiatives for enhancing Suzhou's unique city brand through integrated marketing communication strategies. This research utilized qualitative research methods and collected primary data through interviews with a total of 15 key informants, divided into 3 groups, each comprising 5 individuals: those involved in cultural tourism brand integration, representatives of companies promoting Suzhou's cultural heritage, and enterprises with significant visibility in the local tourism industry. Their insights offered valuable perspectives on Suzhou's cultural tourism landscape. Secondary data were gathered from previous reports, studies, and documents related to Suzhou City. Qualitative data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis.

The research findings revealed that; 1) Suzhou's city brand was uniquely characterized by four key components: historical and cultural heritage, economic strengths, market potential, and resident quality of life. The city's rich historical and cultural heritage included elements such as garden art, silk culture, and renowned Suzhou Gardens. Its robust economic foundation was marked by key industries, diverse sectors, and geographical advantages. Suzhou's promising market potential was driven by attractive demographics, urbanization, and government support. The city also prioritized resident quality of life through cultural preservation, infrastructure, and amenities; 2) Suzhou employed integrated marketing communication strategies to promote its city brand. Online marketing involved social media campaigns, influencer collaborations, and live-streamed cultural performances. Challenges included limited digital infrastructure, language barriers, and intense online competition. Offline activities focused on appealing content, strategic venue selection, and partnerships. Brand awareness was measured through surveys and online data analysis. Despite challenges, Suzhou's success lay in showcasing cultural heritage, enhancing visitor experiences, and fostering positive brand perceptions both online and offline and; 3) the initiatives outlined for enhancing Suzhou's city brand through integrated marketing communication strategies encompassed strengthening online and offline synergy, establishing a unified visual identity, seamlessly integrating online and offline activities, addressing potential challenges, showcasing cultural heritage, learning from successful cases, and employing audience segmentation.

Keywords: Suzhou city brand, Integrated marketing communication, Marketing strategies

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