

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### Background and Significance of Research Problem

#### 1. General Introduction of Suzhou

In today's globalized world, city branding and integrated marketing communication strategies are becoming increasingly important. With increasingly fierce competition among cities, a unique and attractive city brand can help a city stand out on the global stage and attract investment, tourists and talent.

In a globalized and increasingly competitive market, city brands and their overall image play a key role in attracting investment, promoting tourism and stimulating overall economic growth (Smith, 2010, pp. 47-57; Kavaratzis, 2012, pp. 7-19). Therefore, to explore the city brand construction and research of integrated marketing communication strategy is particularly urgent.

Taking Suzhou, China as an example, this city with profound historical and cultural heritage has demonstrated its unique charm and huge market potential of city brand to the world with its rich tourism resources and dynamic economy (Suzhou Tourism Bureau, 2019; Suzhou Industrial Park Management Committee, 2020). Therefore, the study of Suzhou city brand and its integrated marketing communication strategy will provide useful insights for theoretical discussion and practical application.

In the current process of urban development, city brand and integrated marketing communication strategy play a central role. Because of globalization and increasingly fierce market competition, cities need to be on the global stage show its unique attraction and the competitive advantage (Hankinson, 2004, pp. 6-14; Kotler & Armstrong, 2017, pp. 39-48). Therefore, in building a city brand, we must comprehensively consider various factors, such as history and culture, tourism resources, economic characteristics and residents' quality of life (An Hao, 2007; Wang & Chen, 2018, p. 112). By adopting effective integrated marketing communication strategies, cities are able to communicate their core values and unique attractions to target audiences such as tourists, investors, and local residents (Kavaratzis and Mary, 2013, pp. 69-86; Morgan et al., 2016, pp. 285-299).

After the significant impact in 2020, Suzhou's tourism industry gradually recovered in 2021 and 2022, showing strong resilience and future potential (China

Tourism Academy, 2021; 2022). In addition, Suzhou has performed well in the development of its cultural industry. According to Suzhou Bureau of Statistics (2020; 2021; In 2019, the total output value of Suzhou's cultural industry reached 267.4-billion-yuan, accounting for 13.8 percent of GDP, and has become an important pillar supporting the city's economic development.

The case of Suzhou has shown us how to make effective use of its rich historical and cultural resources, strong economic strength and market potential to build a unique city brand and implement effective marketing strategies. Further research on Suzhou's brand image and integrated marketing communication strategies can provide insight into how city brands and marketing communication interact to promote economic and social development. Suzhou has formed a unique city brand with its rich historical and cultural resources such as classical gardens, ancient towns and water towns, as well as emerging special economic zones such as Suzhou Industrial Park (Zhang & Zhao, 2009, pp. 245-254; Zhu, 2015). This dual attribute of combining traditional culture with modern economic vitality makes Suzhou present a unique city brand image in the global market competition.

In addition, Suzhou's integrated marketing communication strategy is also worthy of our in-depth attention. Huang, et al. (2020), Suzhou adopted in the integrated marketing communications "online combining" strategy. On the Internet, Suzhou promotes city brands and tourism resources through various channels such as social media and online advertising. Offline, there group Suzhou international tourism fair in my city, the silk road international tourism festival activities, attract tourists and investors. This integrated marketing communication strategy, which combines online and offline, has not only improved Suzhou's popularity, but also further strengthened the influence of the city's brand.

The success of Suzhou's city brand and IMC strategy has provided us with valuable experience and insights. First of all, the city needs to build a unique city brand based on its own history and culture, economic strength and market potential. Second, by using the integrated marketing communication strategy of combining online, cities can effectively promote their brand, attract more tourists and investors. Finally, cities also need to continuously invest and innovate to cope with the challenges brought by globalization and market competition.

(1) Review of the development of culture and tourism in the 13th Five-Year Plan

The reform of cultural and tourism institutions progressed smoothly. On January 9, 2019, according to the "Suzhou Municipal Institutional Reform Plan", the

responsibilities of Suzhou Municipal Bureau of Culture, Radio, Television, Press and Publication (Municipal Cultural Heritage Bureau) and Suzhou Municipal Tourism Bureau were integrated, and Suzhou Municipal Culture, Radio, Television and Tourism Bureau was established as the working department of the municipal government to realize the integration of cultural and tourism forms.

The integration of culture and tourism has achieved initial results. Carrier construction was further advanced. Wuzhong District successfully established the second batch of national tourism demonstration zones, and the other nine county-level cities (districts) of the city were all awarded the Jiangsu Provincial Tourism Demonstration Zone. Yuanhetang Cultural Industrial Park was selected into the list of state-level demonstration parks. Yonglian Jiangnan rural style town, Zhenze silk style town, Wangshan cultural tourism style town, Zhouzhuang water town style town was selected to create the list of provincial characteristic towns of cultural tourism. Yonglian Village, Nanfeng Town, Zhangjiagang City, Jiangxiang Village, Zhitang Town, Changshu City, and Shushan Village, Tongan Town, High-tech zone, were selected for the list of key rural tourism villages. Investment in cultural tourism was increased. During the "13th Five-Year Plan" period, the city has invested 460 million yuan in cultural industry special support funds, completed cultural tourism project investment of more than 100 billion yuan, Kunshan City Zhujiadian ancient kiln, industrial park Huayi Brothers Cinema, Wujiang District Taihu Suzhou Bay Resort, Taicang City, a number of key cultural and tourism integration projects landed. Cultural travel consumption will be further stimulated. Continued to promote the construction of national cultural consumption pilot cities, held the "Quality Suzhou · Better Life" cultural tourism consumption month activity for four consecutive years, and was awarded the 2019 Cultural Tourism Consumption Promotion Action Implementation project of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Night economic construction such as "8:30 in Gusu" and "Jiangnan Little Theater" has gradually become a model, and the Guanqian night cultural tourism consumption cluster area, Jinji Lake scenic area, and Night Zhouzhuang have been selected as the provincial night cultural tourism consumption cluster construction list. Cultural travel brand continues to polish. Promote the construction of international brands such as "Handicraft and folk art City" and "World Heritage Model City", and actively build Suzhou business cards such as "City of 100 Gardens", "City of 100 dramas" and "City of 100 pavilions". China Suzhou Jiangnan Culture and Art. International Tourism Festival, China Suzhou Innovation Expo, Suzhou International Design Week, Suzhou Cultural Tourism (Paris) Promotion, Venice Suzhou Week, iSING! Suzhou International Young Singers Art Festival and other activities.

Outstanding achievements have been made in the protection of cultural heritage. The demonstration effect of cultural relics protection appears. Two new national key cultural relic protection units and 18 provincial-level cultural relic protection units were added. By the end of 2020, there will be 61 national protection units, 128 provincial protection units, 692 municipal protection units, and 613 municipal control and protection buildings in the city. Suzhou successfully entered the list of the first batch of national cultural relics protection and utilization demonstration zones. Non-genetic capacity enhancement. There were 11 national representative inheritors, 45 provincial representative projects and 21 municipal representative projects of intangible cultural heritage. By the end of 2020, the city has a total of 6 UN intangible cultural heritage Representative List items, 32 national, 124 provincial and 172 municipal representative list items, and 50 national, 143 provincial and 334 municipal representative inheritors of intangible cultural heritage. The country is the first to carry out the evaluation of representative inheritors of intangible cultural heritage and protection units of intangible cultural heritage projects, which has made useful exploration for the establishment of the withdrawal mechanism of intangible cultural heritage projects. The Suzhou Intangible Cultural Heritage Museum was completed and opened. Suzhou Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection and Management Office was awarded the National Advanced unit of intangible cultural heritage protection. The influence of heritage protection has increased. In 2018, Suzhou was awarded the title of "World Heritage Model City" and became the only official member city of the World Heritage Cities Organization in China. Keyuan Restoration project won the UNESCO Award for the Protection of Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region. Entrusted by the State Administration of Cultural Heritage, it led the promotion of the joint application project of "Jiangnan Water Towns", and Suzhou accounted for 7 of the 11 ancient towns applying for heritage. Zhangjiagang Huangsipu Site was included in the "Maritime Silk Road" heritage application project as an additional project, and was awarded the top ten national archaeological discoveries in 2018. The monitoring and management of the Suzhou section of the Grand Canal will be carried out in a coordinated way, covering 59 indicators such as the flow of people, revegeting, water quality, shipping, and weather. Great efforts have been made to protect the heritage and improve the environment of the Grand Canal, and successively completed the maintenance of Huqiu Yunyan Temple Tower, the repair of Quanjin Guild Hall, the repair of Wujiang ancient towpath, the revegeting of the inner-city river of Panmen and the restoration of the city wall, and the repair of the city wall of Xumen. The construction of

Museum City continues to advance. By the end of 2020, the city will open 102 museums (memorials, galleries, art galleries). Suzhou Museum was awarded "Excellent" in the national first-class museum operation evaluation, and Suzhou Museum's exhibition "Painting Screen: Tradition and Future" won the National Museum Top Ten Exhibition Excellence Award. The Wuzhong Museum was completed and opened to create a new window for displaying Wu culture.

Cultural tourism "going out" step up. Cultural exchanges with foreign countries are frequent. Relying on characteristic brands such as Kunqu Opera, Pingping Opera, "Wmen Painting School" and "The City of Handicrafts and Folk Arts", we have organized and carried out nearly 190 batches of cultural exchange activities with foreign countries and Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, covering more than 30 countries and regions. We actively participated in cultural exchanges with other countries such as the "Happy Chinese New Year" activities and cultural activities marking the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties with China. The development of platforms for Sino-foreign cooperation has improved. We will promote the preparations for the Fifth China-France Cultural Forum. We promoted the successful registration of the Chinese Cultural Center in Budapest, Hungary, which was jointly built by the Ministry and the city, and became an important platform for displaying the national image and Suzhou's excellent traditional culture in an all-round way. Open "@visitsuzhou" Suzhou Tourism promotion account on Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter. Cultural enterprises have deepened their participation in international exchanges and cooperation. A number of enterprises have been selected as the "National Cultural Export key enterprises" list, and a number of projects have been selected as the national "Belt and Road" cultural trade and investment key projects, the number of which are in the forefront of the province. Suzhou launched the "Belt and Road" overseas cultural trade promotion project, and organized more than 50 Suzhou cultural enterprises to participate in the UAE, India and Russia in two phases.

(2) Suzhou City "14th Five-Year Plan" culture and tourism integration development plan

Looking forward to 2035, Suzhou's long-term goals are: Excellent cultural products and high-quality tourism products with Jiangnan culture as the core fully meet people's needs for a better life, and Suzhou has become a world tourism destination city in line with international standards, a world Heritage model city with sustainable and prosperous culture, an international consumption center city driven by cultural and tourism innovation, and a Jiangnan life model city jointly built and

shared by all people. To mark the famous international cultural city, make good use of Jiangnan cultural resources, promote the high-quality development of Suzhou culture and tourism with the "Jiangnan culture" brand construction, consciously carry the "Jiangnan cultural highland" with the "Suzhou most Jiangnan" culture, and build Suzhou into the core city of "Jiangnan culture".

i. Highlight the core connotation of Jiangnan culture

Strengthen the academic research of Jiangnan culture. In-depth exploration of Jiangnan culture concept category, evolution vein, element pedigree, change momentum and other content, clear "Suzhou most Jiangnan" inheritance content and innovation direction. Jointly build a number of Jiangnan cultural research bases and academic platforms with universities and research centers at home and abroad, and explore the establishment of "Jiangnan Cultural Research Alliance". We will host the "Most Jiangnan in Suzhou" high-level Scholars Forum to expand Suzhou's voice in the field of Jiangnan historical and cultural research.

Build Jiangnan cultural source center. Further explore the existing Jiangnan cultural resources such as "historic and cultural city", "Jiangnan Water Town" and "Heaven on Earth", and launch a series of video and audio programs of "Jiangnan celebrity anecdotes", "Jiangnan Cultural and architectural symbols" and "Canal Culture". In the network novels, movies and TV dramas and other works, the flexible implantation of Jiangnan cultural elements with Suzhou characteristics, launched a series of derivative cultural products with IP effect. Joint authoritative institutions regularly publish the "TOP List of Jiangnan Cities" and "Jiangnan Cultural Life Index". Taking advantage of the Internet platform, effectively play the advantages of traditional media and new media, and create a high standard of Jiangnan cultural characteristics communication channel.

Spread Jiangnan culture and life style. Explore Suzhou classical gardens, Grand Canal, ancient towns, villages and streets and other unique cultural resources, and develop scene-style comprehensive cultural experience tourism projects. Organize non-genetic inheritors, folk artists and professional groups to integrate Soviet-style traditional cultural masterpieces, folk festivals and intangible cultural heritage exhibitions into scenic spots, and explore interactive and experiential ways of cultural transmission. Implement the plan of "The most Jiangnan · Public Cultural Characteristic Space" to create 100 cultural Spaces with Jiangnan characteristics, cultural quality, aesthetic taste and public character.

ii. Shaping Jiangnan cultural brand image

Build a cultural tourism city brand. With the ancient city as the core, we strive to build world-class Suzhou cultural tourism brands such as "World Heritage Model City", "handicraft and folk-art city", "Garden city", "One city with 100 museums and museums Suzhou". To further enrich the cultural display and cultural experience of Jiangnan water town, integrate more cultural heritage connotations into tourism products, and gradually make Jiangnan Water Town become a cultural leisure holiday brand with distinctive characteristics in China. Accelerate the improvement of the supporting facilities and service functions of cultural tourism around Taihu Lake and Yangcheng Lake, make reasonable use of the resource advantages of nature and humanity in the lake area, and build a first-class humanistic ecological holiday tourism brand in China. Give full play to the business and commercial advantages of the surrounding Jinji Lake, Shishan Business District and other places, and build a cultural, commercial and leisure tourism destination brand with Jiangnan cultural characteristics.

Create a cultural travel product brand. Innovative development of night cultural tourism brands, encourage the development of night Tours, theme night dining, night folk activities and other formats. Launch the water tourism brand, through the diversification and combination of water products, water and land linkage, the development of cruise sightseeing leisure products, water and shore linkage combination products, water sports events, water theme activities, and comprehensively do a good job in Suzhou tourism "water article". Promote "Su Bang food", "Su style noodle restaurant", "Su style dim sum" and other Su food brands. We will guide the development of boutique resort hotels, culture-themed hotels, and boutique B&Bs, and build a number of high-end hotel brands. Focus on Suzhou characteristics of the "Jiangnan small theatre" and "Jiangnan Small book" performing arts brand.

Build a brand of "Soviet-style life". Promote the brand construction of "Soviet-style life", and make "Soviet-style life" a lifestyle that everyone longs for. Build the IP image of "Soviet-style life" urban cultural tourism, and create multi-level "Soviet-style life" IP experience content through online travel scenes, cultural and creative commodity design, film and television performing arts activities, catering and accommodation space and other product formats. Carry out the Suzhou Corner market plan, focusing on culture and art, leisure and entertainment, community life, modern industry, etc., to create a whole region, all forms of business, all types of Soviet-style city corner. Enrich festival activities, and build a full-season holiday cross-

time festival activity system with the theme of "folk custom + festival + event + consumption".

iii. Enhance the influence of Jiangnan cultural City

Continue to promote the logo image of Jiangnan culture. Join forces to launch the "Four Seasons Suzhou · the most Jiangnan" general brand, the county-level city (district) in the promotion of the content of the unified use of "Suzhou" words and Suzhou cultural tourism LOGO. Urban linkage, government-enterprise cooperation, online and offline linkage, integrate the logo image into the design of tourist attractions, public places, and characteristic tourism products, and continue to shape, spread and solidify the "most Jiangnan" brand image of Suzhou.

Continue to build Jiangnan cultural brand activities. Enhance the scale, quality and internationalization of various brand activities such as Jiangnan Culture and Art in Suzhou, China, International Tourism Festival, Hanshan Temple New Year Bell Listening, etc., hold international exchange activities such as Sino-French Cultural Forum and Global Handicraft Forum with high quality, and take the initiative to host various international and domestic festival events and large-scale international conferences. The image of Suzhou Jiangnan Cultural Highland is highlighted by rich cultural tourism brand activities.

Continue to do a good job of Jiangnan culture publicity and marketing. Develop overseas publicity and marketing plans for Jiangnan Culture, and rely on institutions such as the Chinese Cultural Center in Budapest to showcase the charm of Jiangnan culture in Suzhou on a broader international stage. Promote Suzhou to join international organizations in the field of culture and tourism, and deepen international exchanges in Suzhou's cultural heritage protection, folk art protection and inheritance, tourism product marketing and other aspects. Increase tourism publicity and marketing, vigorously publicize and promote cultural tourism products rich in Jiangnan culture connotation, and improve the landing rate of Jiangnan cultural theme tourism routes. Actively exert the role of new media and international social media in tourism marketing, and expand the visibility and influence of Jiangnan culture through tourism promotion.

## 2. Research significance

Practical significance. A successful city brand has an important impact on the shaping of the city's image in the process of communication. The integration of tradition and modernity, the reflection of history and culture, and the complementarity of openness and inclusiveness have built a bridge for Suzhou to communicate with the world. At the same time, with the competing reports of domestic and foreign



media, Suzhou has attracted wide attention from people. Suzhou municipal government has held a series of marketing activities to successfully improve the popularity of Suzhou city brand, to a certain extent, give full play to the advantages of the thick cultural heritage, and shape and enhance the reputation of the city brand. Building a successful city brand can effectively show the city style, show the city's characteristic elements from multiple angles, spread the city's core values from multiple aspects, and inject a booster for the city's economic development. A successful city brand can also maintain the social order, because the city brand represents the spirit of the city, and the spirit of the city will guide the public's behavior, and produce a huge social power. The power of city brand can make the public have a sense of belonging, honor and identity to the city. A successful city brand can also promote the prosperity of culture. City brand also plays an important role in the establishment of city culture, which is one of the key components. In the process of building city culture, we strive to build a city brand that can represent the essence of Suzhou culture, which virtually promotes the public to take the initiative to participate in the construction of city culture, and subtly improves the cultural accomplishment of individuals. In the process of city brand building, Suzhou municipal government adheres to the policy of grasping both economic construction and cultural inheritance, continuously excavates the potential of cultural industry, and comprehensively shapes Suzhou city brand with characteristics. The above is the practical significance of studying Suzhou city brand.

Theoretical significance. According to the research object of this paper, after combing the literature on city brand, the author finds that most of the studies discuss the management and development of city from the perspective of urban planning and business administration, and few studies study city brand from the direction of integrated marketing communication. Therefore, based on the current media environment, this paper takes the theory of integrated marketing communication as the entry point, and uses the theories of city branding, communication and branding to analyze how to build the city brand in Suzhou from multiple perspectives, so as to make the theoretical system of city brand direction more diversified and provide theoretical support for the development and enrich the theory of city brand.

## Research Objectives

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.
3. To propose initiatives for enhancing Suzhou's unique city brand through integrated marketing communication strategies.

## Scope of Study

### 1. Scope of content

The content of this research mainly includes two theories and concepts of brand integrated marketing strategy and city brand. Brand integrated marketing (IMC) is a marketing communication plan concept proposed by Don Schultz in 1993 and studied in depth, that is, different forms of communication such as advertising, public relations and other means are estimated in the plan, scattered information is integrated, and through various forms of combination, clear, consistent and maximum communication is achieved. City brand is a theory of city branding proposed by Kevin Lane Keller, and believes that branding a city can make the audience understand the city and generate brand association, so that the city spirit is integrated into the city brand. (Keller, 2009, p. 99)

Key components of Suzhou's city brand, which will be studied, include historical and cultural heritage, economic strengths, market potential, and the quality of life for residents. The areas to be examined regarding the effectiveness of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) strategies are online channels (social media, online advertising), offline activities (tourism festivals, investor events), and brand visibility and engagement. As for the proposed initiatives for enhancing Suzhou's unique city brand, they encompass online and offline synergy, content strategy, and targeted audience segmentation.

### 2. Scope of Population and the sample

The research scope of this study is Suzhou city tourism brand managers. Since this study is qualitative, a purposeful sampling method is adopted to sample the participants of Suzhou tourism brand integrated marketing. This study finally selected 15 urban tourism brand managers as samples. The sample size was chosen because there are many existing tourism brands in Suzhou, some of which did not

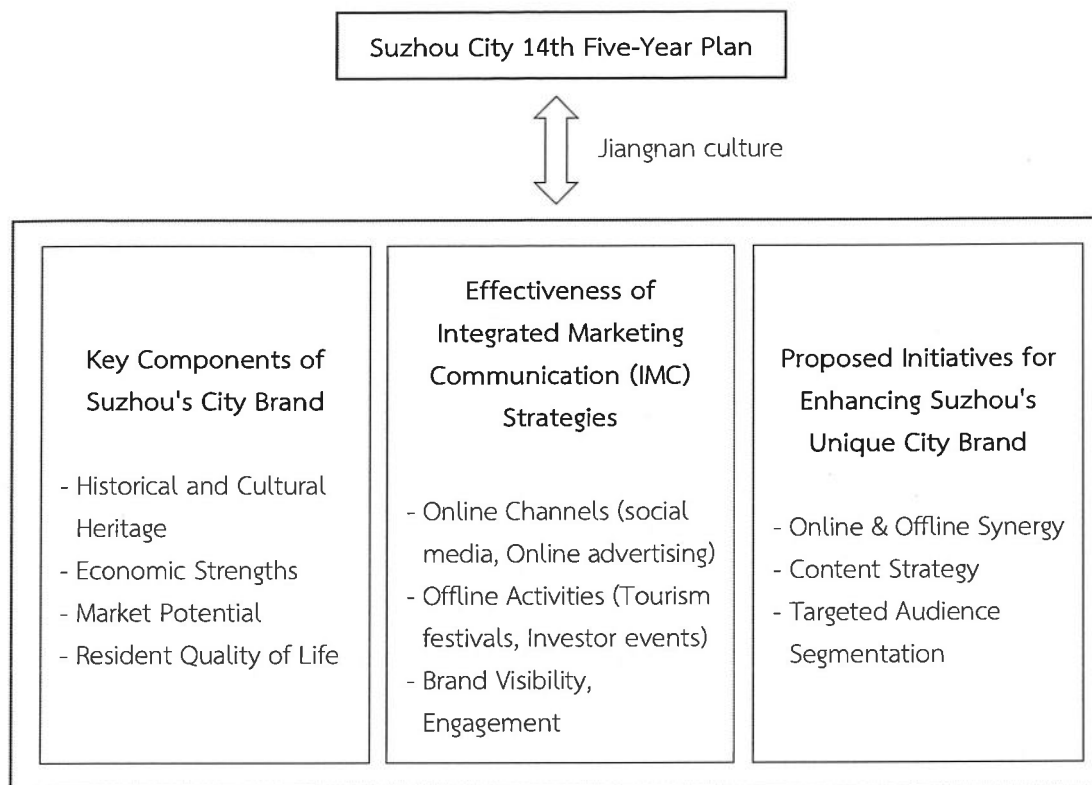
participate in the integration of Suzhou tourism brands in the post-epidemic era. In addition, although some tourism brand enterprises did not participate in the integration process, they have a very deep understanding of local culture, or are representative in the local cultural industry. Therefore, this paper also selected some samples from these enterprises for interview research. In general, this paper selected a total of 15 sample enterprises and divided them into three research groups according to the criteria of participating in the integration of tourism brands, having a certain representation of local culture, and having a certain visibility and representation in the local cultural industry. Then, the principals of these enterprises were interviewed respectively.

### **3. Scope of Time**

This study provides a comprehensive overview of Suzhou's branding and marketing strategies before, using the period from 2019 to 2023. This time frame is particularly important because it provides a unique opportunity to observe and analyze the evolution of a city's brand and marketing strategy in the face of an unprecedented global crisis. Interview data collection on December 2023.

## **Conceptual Framework**

This research aims to investigate the key components that contribute to the uniqueness of Suzhou's city brand, assess the effectiveness of Suzhou's integrated marketing communication strategies in promoting the city brand, and propose initiatives for enhancing Suzhou's unique city brand through integrated marketing communication strategies. This is to align with the objectives of Suzhou City's 14th Five-Year Plan, with a particular focus on highlighting the role of Jiangnan culture in the research initiatives to enhance Suzhou's unique city brand. Conceptual framework as shown in Figure 1.1



**Figure 1.1** Conceptual framework

Key components represent the pillars of Suzhou's city brand. Each element contributes to the uniqueness and attractiveness of the city, making it a desirable destination for tourists, a hub for economic activities, and a great place to live.

The historical and cultural heritage component encompasses the rich historical and cultural assets and heritage of Suzhou. It includes elements such as ancient architecture, classical gardens, traditional festivals, historical sites, and artistic traditions. Suzhou's historical and cultural heritage is a significant part of what makes the city unique and attractive to tourists, investors, and residents alike.

Economic strengths refer to the city's robust economic performance and attributes. Suzhou's economic strengths may include factors such as its industrial base, economic stability, business opportunities, and economic growth potential. This component reflects the city's ability to provide economic opportunities and prosperity, making it appealing for businesses and investors. Market potential assesses the attractiveness of Suzhou's market for various industries and sectors. It includes factors such as market size, consumer demographics, and the growth potential of different sectors. Suzhou's market potential is crucial for attracting businesses, entrepreneurs, and investors looking to capitalize on the city's market opportunities.

Resident quality of life focuses on the overall quality of life for the residents of Suzhou. It includes aspects such as education, healthcare, housing, safety, cultural amenities, and recreational opportunities. A high quality of life can contribute to resident satisfaction and retention and can also be a draw for potential new residents and talent.

In studying the effectiveness of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) strategies, the focus is on online channels (social media, online advertising), which involve the use of digital platforms, primarily social media and online advertising, in Suzhou's marketing communication efforts. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WeChat can be utilized to create and share content, engage with the audience, and promote Suzhou's city brand. Online advertising can include paid advertisements on websites, search engines, and social media platforms to reach a wider online audience. Similarly, offline activities (Tourism Festivals, Investor Events) will be examined, which encompass physical events and activities that take place in the real world to promote Suzhou's city brand. For instance, Suzhou may organize tourism festivals that showcase its cultural heritage, such as traditional performances or heritage site tours. Investor events can involve seminars, conferences, or business networking sessions aimed at attracting potential investors to the city. These offline activities offer direct, hands-on experiences related to the city's brand. In terms of brand visibility and engagement, the analysis aims to assess how well Suzhou's city brand is recognized and perceived by the target audience. It measures the extent to which people are aware of Suzhou and its unique attributes. Engagement, on the other hand, gauges the level of interaction and involvement the audience has with Suzhou's brand. This can encompass likes, shares, comments on social media posts, event attendance, or inquiries from potential investors. Both visibility and engagement serve as key indicators of the effectiveness of Suzhou's integrated marketing communication strategies.

For the proposed initiatives aimed at enhancing Suzhou's Unique City Brand through integrated marketing communication strategies, the focus will be on achieving online and offline synergy. In other words, this initiative suggests that Suzhou should seamlessly integrate its online and offline marketing efforts. This synergy ensures consistency in the city's branding message and creates a more immersive experience for its target audience.

The content strategy aims to make Suzhou develop a strategic approach to content creation and dissemination. This involves crafting and delivering content that highlights both the city's rich cultural heritage and its economic opportunities.

Content can include articles, videos, images, and stories that portray Suzhou's unique blend of tradition and modernity.

The final point is targeted audience segmentation, emphasizing that Suzhou should prioritize segmenting its target audiences. Different groups, such as tourists, investors, and local residents, may have unique interests and needs. Tailoring marketing messages and initiatives to these segments can enhance engagement and effectiveness.

## Definitions of Terms

1. City brand: refers to the strategy developed for a city to create a unique image for the city by highlighting its unique cultural, historical and other characteristics to make it stand out globally. In this study, city branding for Suzhou is leveraging its rich cultural and historical heritage, as well as its modern economic vitality. This unique combination makes Suzhou a compelling city brand that resonates with both local and international audiences. City branding strategy is not a static process; It evolves and ADAPTS as cultural, social and economic circumstances change.

2. Integrated Marketing communication: a comprehensive communication strategy that integrates multiple traditional and digital media channels to ensure that brand messages remain consistent across all touchpoints, the concept in this paper represents the various communication methods and channels used by Suzhou to disseminate its brand messages. Considering the importance of contact with a wide range of global audience, Suzhou has adopted the combination of traditional and digital transmission platform, from printed materials and physical activity to social media and online advertising. This integrated approach ensures the consistency and coordination of brand messages across all channels, increasing the overall influence and recall of Suzhou city brands.

3. Rate of tourism revenue and economic resilience: Tourism revenue is a direct measure of a city's attractiveness to tourists. It refers to the total monetary income obtained by the tourism reception department (or country or region) through the sale of tourism commodities in a certain period. On this basis, rate of tourism revenue means the share of tourism revenue in GDP.

4. Financial investment in tourism: it refers to the annual financial expenditure of Suzhou local government on tourism development, which is reflected in the relevant columns of tourism in the Statistical yearbook. It is used to represent the importance of Suzhou local government on tourism and the strength of policy support for tourism.

5. Marketing investment in tourism: The variable of publicity input in this paper refers to the expenditure of Suzhou local tourism industry on advertising and media publicity for scenic spots and shops, which is used to represent the importance and implementation of tourism brand marketing by the local tourism industry.

6. Number of tourists: The variable of number of tourists in this paper refers to the number of tourists received by Suzhou every year, which represents the prosperity of the local tourism industry and the recovery degree of the tourism industry from external shocks.

7. Online and offline: Online refers to the activities that rely on the network and are solely initiated on the Internet, but are carried out entirely or mostly on the Internet, such as the propaganda push of wechat or Weibo and other network platforms; Offline is an extension of the online, attached to the propaganda goal and in reality to organize a variety of ways to promote, such as the life of leaflets and posters, in the radio and some important advertising sites in various cities to display information. The main difference between online and offline is that one focuses on emerging media platforms, and the other focuses on traditional media means. The difference in propaganda means is the main feature of these two propaganda methods.

## **Expected Benefits**

### **1. Benefits of Academics**

This study aims to provide new insights into the field of urban branding and IMC. Specifically, the study focuses on Suzhou, which has a rich cultural and historical background. In the globalization today, city brand research is becoming more and more important. Through this study, we hope to provide valuable data, the opinions of scholars in related field. In addition, this study will also lay a theoretical and empirical foundation for future research in this field. In order to ensure the validity and logical consistency of the research results, we strictly followed the standards of academic journals. By exploring how Suzhou has successfully built its brand in the context of globalization and economic recovery, we hope to provide new perspectives and dimensions to the theory of city branding.

### **2. Practical Benefits**

This study has practical implications for city managers and marketing experts on how to effectively promote city brands. By studying the success of Suzhou, other cities can be as a marketing strategy of the template. Policy makers, urban

planners and marketing experts can develop more targeted and effective brand strategies based on the research results.

### **3. Help to Suzhou's tourism industry**

First of all, it provides a universal communication law and an effective communication model for the brand of tourist attractions, which plays an important role in promoting the brand construction and development of tourist attractions. Second, the spread of scientific way to create quality brands, to promote tourism scenic spot of publicity, increase liking tourists and visitors viscous, achieve brand value; Third, brand integrated marketing as the breakthrough point, through excavating suzhou tourism scenic area the new channels of brand communication, let the scenic spots and tourist interactive activities in the process of transmission and reduce transmission errors, make more accurate and effective brand communication, raised strong industry competitiveness of scenic spots; Fourth, adapt to the rapid development momentum of tourism, optimize the brand communication link, promote the economic development of the whole industry.

### **4. Help to the economic development of Suzhou**

By analyzing how to use the city's cultural, historical and other resources to attract tourists and promote economic growth, this study explores possible measures to help Suzhou's tourism industry achieve development and improve Suzhou's economic growth under the brand integrated marketing, and provides suggestions for reference.