

A Study on the Driving Factors of Tourism Destination Brand Equity Based on Internet Sharing Content: A Case Study of Shenzhen Happy Valley

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Abstract

Thanks to increasing mature tourists, continuous innovation on science and technology, improved accessibility of attractions, the destination has to confront the growing competition tourism destinations leading to the importance of consumer based brand equity. The paper, taking the tourists' evaluation and sharing contents of Shenzhen Happy Valley obtained on Mafengwo website as the text material, constructs a tourism destination brand equity driving factor model with "product", "experience" and "marketing" as the core category based on the grounded theory Through the study, the driving factors of brand equity of destination are identified, and corresponding suggestions are provided for the management of destination brand equity.

Keywords

Destination, Brand Equity, Driving Factors, Grounded Theory

1. Introduction

Continuous development of science and information technology, improved accessibility lead to more competitive environments for tourism destinations, and the differences between destinations have been decreasing at the same time. With more matured tourists, the competition among tourism destinations is becoming increasingly fierce. Brand equity is an important and new concept put forward in the field of marketing research and practice in the 1980s, and it mainly refers to the market benefits that only brand can produce. In the context

of the increasing convergence of tourism destinations, brand has become the key to making tourism destinations stand out. The value of a strong brand is unlimited because it simplifies customer decision making, reduces risks and generates expectations [1]. Thus, the fundamental reason why brands bring added value to enterprises is that brands can bring added value to customers [2]. For all kinds of space and types of tourism destinations, the brand building of tourism destinations has become an important tool in destination management [3]. However, the research on the brand equity of tourism destinations started relatively late, and the domestic and foreign research on this kind of brand equity is not mature. In particular, there are many research areas and contents in the aspect of equity driving factors. This study can supplement the existing research results to a certain extent.

In this paper, the content of network sharing is taken as the text data of the study, and the grounded theory is used to explore the main factors driving the brand equity of tourist destination from the perspective of tourists, and help destination managers and builders find brand equity drivers that attract tourists to choose and revisit destinations so as to provide some help and reference for the management of tourism destinations.

There were five parts in this paper; they were introduction, summary of literature, research design and method, results, conclusion and discussion.

2. Literature Review Research

The research on brand equity began in the 1980s, and the academic circles mainly defined it from the financial perspective, market perspective and consumer perspective. The most common definition of brand equity is based on Aaker's (1991) research, that is, brand equity refers to a kind of assets and liabilities related to a brand, including brand name, logo, and the value of products or services provided by a company to consumers. It can be divided into five categories: brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality and other intellectual property rights—patents, trademarks and channel relationships [4].

Tourism destination brand refers to the identification and differentiation of a series of consistent brand elements through positive image building [5]. Unlike the specific product manufacturing industry, tourism destinations are considered as “integrated tourism experience of individual products and experience opportunities” [6]. The concept of the tourist destination brand enables tourists to regard the tourist destination as a whole product. Their characteristics of destination can be judged by emotional and cognitive processes [7]. For tourism destination and its competitors, it is not only the only feature and logo, but also the combination of brand function, characteristics and experience of tourism destination [8]. Morgan *et al.* pointed out that tourism destination branding increases productivity, competitiveness and differentiation, so it is the most powerful weapon for tourism destination marketers [9]. According to Ooi (2004),

four functions of tourism destination brand equity were put forward: the first is to shape the public perception of tourism destination; The second is to have selective aesthetic packaging for tourism destinations.; The third is to make tourism destinations stand out in the global tourism market and improve the competitiveness of tourism destinations; The fourth is to form tourists' tourism experience. These functions have a fundamental impact on the decision making of tourists to some extent [10]. Liang Mingzhu and Wu Feng (2004) constructed the brand value model of tourism destination from the perspective of tourism behavior [11]. Cui Fengjun and Gu Yongjian (2009) put forward the economic and non-economic index system for evaluating the brand equity of scenic spots on the basis of defining the concept of brand equity [12].

The brand equity driving factors of tourism destination refer to the combination of internal and external factors that can actively and actively affect tourists and make them form brand loyalty and brand value. Tourism scholars basically use the conceptual dimension proposed by Keller and Aaker as the research basis, while combining the destination image and the theory and concepts related to brand design research. With the research on driving factors of tourism destination brand equity, many researchers have studied the driving factors of tourism destination brand equity on the basis of referring to the brand equity driving model in the field of market, and attempted to establish a driving model of tourism destination brand equity including brand value, brand personality and brand core [13] [14]. Keller (2003) proposed that brand equity is a multi-dimensional and complex concept, which requires different types of measurement methods [15], but the measurement based on tourists perception angle is the most widely used. Cai (2002) constructed a driving factor model of tourism destination brand equity on the basis of Keller's association type and Gartner's (1993) [16] image composition (cognition, emotion and function). Motameni & Shahrokhi (1998) proposed that Tourist-based effectiveness factors include brand awareness, brand association, intuitive quality and brand power [17]. Kaplanidou & Vogt (2003) proposed a brand equity-driven model for tourism destinations, which includes brand awareness, tourists "perception of brand, tourists" perception of brand, tourists' attitudes towards brand, brand loyalty and tourism behavior [8]. Deslandes (2003) tried to establish a driving factor model of tourism destination brand equity based on tourists' perception priority, including perceived quality, perceived price, brand image, satisfaction and willingness to travel, but the overall data fit of this model is not very high [18].

Previous studies on the brand equity of tourism destinations have made a lot of achievements, but the overall study is not deep enough. First of all, the definition of some related concepts has not been unanimously recognized by the academic community. This not only shows that its basic theoretical research is not solid enough, but also restricts the systematic development of research to a certain extent, so the relevant research still needs to be clarified again. The research on brand equity mainly focuses on the connotation, dimensions and measurement model of brand equity, but the driving factors of brand equity are relatively

lacking. Some of the studies involving the driving factors of brand equity are scattered empirical studies, and the conclusions of these studies are different and inconsistent. There is no comprehensive and systematic study on the driving factors of brand equity in the past. Although some studies have attempted to establish corresponding driving models, they are at an exploratory stage that lacks mature measurement scales.

All in all, researchers have begun to find that brand equity is of great theoretical and practical significance to tourism destinations in the past, but the relevant research is relatively lacking because it is in the initial stage, and there is no mature driving force model which has an important impact on brand equity construction. Therefore, in order to further explore the tourism destination brand equity and promote the management of tourism destination, it is of great significance and value to study the driving factors of tourism destination brand equity.

3. Research Design and Method

3.1. Grounded Theory and Its Research Process

In this paper, by means of the grounded theory, through scientific logic, induction, deduction, comparison and analysis, the abstract levels of concepts and their relations are gradually raised in a spiral cycle, and new concepts or theories are finally formed [19].

The operation process of grounded theory is illustrated in **Figure 1**.

There is no mature theoretical model in the study of tourism destination brand equity at home and abroad, and the research on driving factors is less involved. Under this research background, the grounded theory research method is selected to explore the driving factors of tourism destination brand equity. In the past, most of the researches on brand equity of tourism destinations were conducted by questionnaire or in-depth interviews, and few of them studied the content that tourists shared on the Internet. However, the previous quantitative research on the driving factors of tourism destination brand equity has a lot of inappropriateness, because it is difficult to quantify the content as a driving

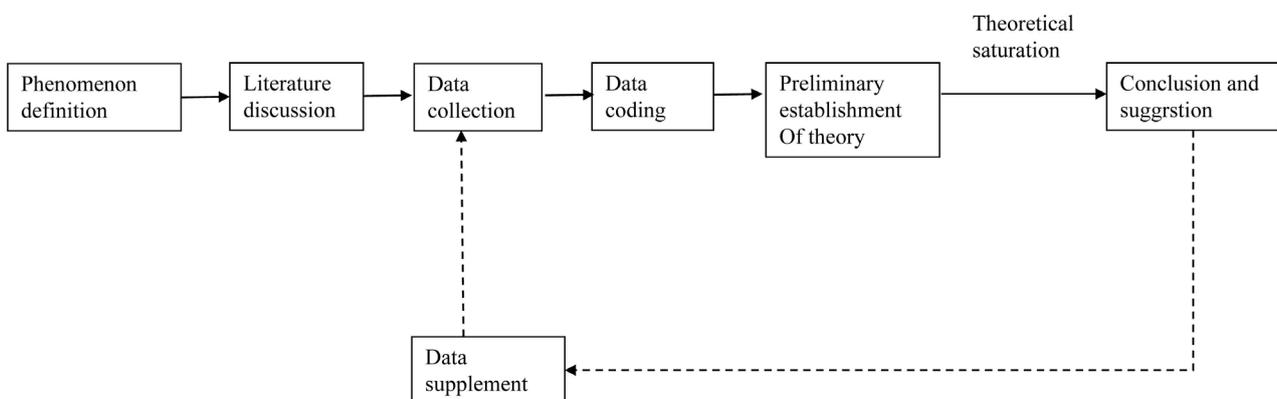


Figure 1. Research process of the grounded theory.

factor, and the choice of qualitative research methods is obviously more appropriate. At the same time, with the rapid development of science and technology, people are not only keen to obtain information through the network channels, but also keen to share their own experiences through the network. In this way, it enables us to get a lot of data on the Internet for analysis and research.

3.2. Driving Factor Identification of Tourism Destination Brand Equity Text Data Collection

For the grounded theory, everything is data [19]. Thus, the data contain everything, including the existing literature, various reports and propaganda of research objects. In the previous studies, more data were collected by issuing questionnaires or in-depth interviews designed by researchers about tourist destination brand equity, and less research was conducted by sharing content on the Internet. However, in the context of the popularization and development of information technology, combined with the characteristics of tourism itself, the combination of tourism and the Internet is what we expected. Tourists produce and use network information in the process of the generation of tourism intention, the conduct of tourism behavior and the end of tourism. Tourists are not only the users and beneficiaries of travel sharing information on the Internet, but also the producers of these sharing contents. Meanwhile, the amount of sharing content is very considerable, so more and more researchers have begun to find the great potential of sharing content as research materials. In this paper, under such a background and trend, the content of online sharing generated by tourists during their play is selected as the text of the study.

In this paper, the content of tourism evaluation on Shenzhen Happy Valley is selected as the text material of the grounded theory. First of all, in order to ensure the relevance and concentration of content selection, tourism and sharing sites are selected in this paper, such as Qunar, Dianping, Chanyouji, Mafengwo, Ctrip and Tuniu. During the selection process, it is found that some websites are excluded from sharing too little information about Shenzhen Happy Valley, such as Chanyouji. Some websites sell tickets to Shenzhen Happy Valley, the evaluation and sharing content on the websites are more related to the purchase experience, so they are excluded, such as, Dianping, Ctrip and Tuniu. In this paper, the shared content about Shenzhen Happy Valley on Mafengwo's website is finally selected. Mafengwo mainly focuses on tourism strategy and travel notes sharing, so the sharing content on the website is highly targeted. Instead of falling into such a situation that the comments on Dianping are all about the sharing of ticket purchase experience, Mafengwo is only for tourists to share their content in Shenzhen's Happy Valley. Meanwhile, as a well-known travel sharing website, compared with the newer and less well-known sites like Chanyouji, Mafengwo has more abundant corpus content in Shenzhen Happy Valley. Therefore, in this study, the sharing corpus of Shenzhen Happy Valley is selected, and the web crawler technology is used to obtain a total of 1523 travel notes sharing and evaluation sharing, with a total of 74,633 words.

1) Open decoding

The purpose of open decoding is to conceptualize and categorize the data, that is, by taking the content that can be encoded as a concept in the original data as a label, the data is constantly compared and analyzed, and the corresponding categories are independently reduced step by step. Simply speaking, open coding can identify phenomena, define concepts, and find categories and aggregate problems. Through data collection and collation, a total of 75 concepts are acquired, including stimulation, adventure, convenient transportation, childhood memory, pressure release, Halloween, expensive tickets, Foreigner's performances, etc. At the same time, the 75 concepts are summarized into 18 categories, such as A1 Festival, A2 Price, A3 Traffic, A4 Experience, A5 Memory, A6 Popularity, A7 Attraction, A8 Employee management, A9 Security, A10 Similarity, A11 Number Control, A12 Surrounding entertainment, A13 Park Atmosphere, A14 Theme, A15 Public Facilities, A16 Landscape, A17 Recreational Facilities, A18 Contrast, etc. **Table 1** is an open decoding process for some data.

2) Axial coding

The main task of axial decoding is to excavate the category and link the categories by decoding the canonical model. Categories extracted in the conceptualization and categorization stages are independent of each other, so they are linked by the canonical model of "causal conditions-phenomena-context-intermediary conditions-action/interaction strategies and results" to determine the relationship between the main category and the sub-category.

As shown in the **Table 2**, eight main categories are found by the model, namely, MF1 product quality, MF2 surrounding environment, MF3 safety guarantee, MF4 tourist experience, MF5 product innovation, MF6 human resources, MF7 brand promotion and MF8 cultural image.

Table 2 illustrates the process of axial decoding.

Product quality (MF1) consists of memory (A5), popularity (A6), attraction (A7), employee management (A8), price (A1), recreational facilities (A17), employee attitude (a23), old (a32), rich facilities (a41), park construction (a33), service personnel (a21), etc.

Through the analysis of the canonical model, we can know that the product quality of the tourist destination is determined by the attitude of the staff and the quality of various facilities. At the same time, the product quality is related to the memory of the tourists and the attraction and popularity of the destination. The upgrading of park construction, staff management and price adjustment will improve product quality accordingly.

3) Selective coding

Selective decoding is to select the core category among the many conceptual categories formed in the previous coding. The core category should have the characteristics of strong relevance, generalization and high abstraction, and can concentrate different concepts in its theoretical category as far as possible.

Table 1. Open decoding process for evaluation data of Shenzhen Happy Valley.

Evaluation data	Conceptualization	categorization	Type
<p>...It has all the things you want to play here and it will plan the theme (a1) according to the festival (a1).</p>	a1: Holiday theme	A1 (a1, a2, a14, a26): Festival	A1: Activities related to festivals
<p>For example, we now have the theme of Halloween (a2) in October. Usually, there will also be Magic Festival, Water-splashing Festival (a1), etc. Anyway, each theme has its own characteristics. The tickets are expensive (a3), which cost RMB 170, but there is a discount for students with student cards. It is recommended to visit other places. If you have a special ticket or choose to go in the evening, it will be much cheaper.</p>	a2: Halloween a3: Tickets	A2 (a3, a5): Price	A2: Various costs of destination
<p>If you take the subway, you can get off at the windows of the world, and you can also take a bus to get there (a4). When you go there, you can bring your own water in, because the water inside is very expensive (a5), you can also bring food. You have to remember to do the sun protection, because it is very dry, and you should be careful of sunstroke (a6)</p>	a4: Easy to reach a5: Dining a6: Sunstroke	A3 (a4, a11): Traffic	A3: Accessibility and convenience of scenic spots
<p>...Happy Valley is a good choice for adventurous (a7) people.</p>	a7: Spirit of adventure	A4 (a7, a9, a10, a24): Experience	A4: Tourist experience
<p>...You have to queue up for any project (a8), and you may have to wait 1 hour for hot items such as roller coaster.</p>	a8: Line up		
<p>...It's very exciting (a9)! It is a good place to get cool and relieve pressure (a10). The traffic is very convenient, and it also has its own parking lot (a11).</p>	a9: Stimulation a10: Pressure release a11: Convenient parking		
<p>...This is a wonderful memory of childhood. When I was young, I went there two times, so I was very impressed. When I grow up, I want to go there again. (a12).</p>	a12: Childhood memories	A5 (a12, a13): Memory	A5: The content of memory produced after play
<p>...I remembered that I went on a graduation trip together with a group of friends. When I was a kid, I stayed outside for the first time. That's the best memory. (a13). Jumping machines and haunted houses (a14) are wonderful.</p>	a13: Past experience a14: Haunted House		
<p>...Compared with the old amusement theme park (a15), mobile games are the best in Guangdong. ...is the first batch of 5A level tourist attractions in the country (a16).</p>	a15: Old brand a16: 5AScenic spot	A6 (a15, a16): Popularity...	A6: The reputation of the destination itself
...

The content of tourism evaluation on Shenzhen Happy Valley is selected as the text material of the grounded theory.

Therefore, selective decoding is to systematically link the core category with other categories more scientifically and logically to establish a preliminary theoretical framework. By repeatedly collecting data and decoding, the theoretical saturation is finally achieved.

Table 2. Canonical model of product quality and sub category in the main category

Causal factors:	Phenomenon:
Employee attitude (a23) old (a32) Rich facilities (a41)	Product quality (MF1)
Choroid: Memory (A5) Popularity (A6) Attraction (A7)	Intermediary conditions: Employee management (A8) Price (A1) Recreational facilities (A17)
Action/interaction strategy: upgrading and construction of park (a33) and upgrading of service personnel capability (a21)	
Results: improve product quality	

For this study, eight main categories were identified through a further study of 75 categories. As well as a further study and analysis of the eight main categories of product quality (MF1), surrounding environment (MF2), safety guarantee (MF3), tourist experience (MF4), product innovation (MF5), human resources (MF6), brand promotion (MF7), cultural image (MF8) and their corresponding sub-categories, and a repeated comparison, questioning and induction with the collected data, it can be found that the three categories of product quality, product innovation and the surrounding environment as the entity factors will affect the brand equity firstly, while the categories of safety guarantee, tourist experience and human resources indirectly influence brand equity by influencing the external experience of tourists. Brand promotion and cultural image are influenced by the brand building of the destination itself. “Product”, “Experience” and “Marketing” are not only easy to connect with other categories, but also highly abstract and generalize the main category. These three categories play the most powerful driving role for the tourism destination brand equity, so they are identified as the core category of this study.

The quality of products will first affect the tourists’ perception of the tourist destination, and then affect the tourists’ brand association and brand awareness of the tourist destination through the network or sharing and dissemination in reality. High-quality product can establish a good brand association and enhance brand awareness. On the contrary, poor product quality will make tourists have bad brand associations to tourism destinations, and its brand awareness will also be damaged. The product will also affect the tourist’s memories and feelings about the destination and influence the brand loyalty and market behavior. That is, it will affect tourists’ willingness to revisit the destinations and their willingness to choose destinations.

Experience can directly affect the perceived quality of tourism destinations, as well as the brand loyalty of tourists who have already visited tourism destinations, that is, tourists will choose whether to revisit or recommend tourism destinations to other tourists. For other tourists who have not yet visited the tourist

destination, the sharing content produced by the tourists will mainly affect the brand association, brand awareness and market behavior of the tourist destination. A good experience will produce a good brand association of tourism destinations, enhance brand awareness and have a positive impact on the choice of tourism destinations. In this regard, it is of great significance to the brand equity construction of tourism destinations.

The construction of its own cultural image in marketing is before the brand promotion, and brand promotion is simply a series of activities that enterprises shape their own or product brand image and make consumers generally agree. For tourism destination brand equity, brand promotion will first affect brand association, brand awareness and market behavior. Brand promotion can make potential tourists associate with tourism destination brand, improve the brand awareness of tourism destination, and have a positive impact on the choice of tourism destination for potential tourists. Furthermore, brand promotion will affect perceived quality and brand loyalty in tourism destination brand equity. These are mainly the contents of tourists' influence on tourism destinations. Whether the marketing content matches and highlights the characteristics and advantages of tourism destinations has a significant impact on the perceived quality and the willingness to revisit or recommend to other tourists.

4. Results

Based on the grounded research on the online sharing content of Shenzhen Happy Valley, and the repeated deliberation, questioning and comparison of the preliminary results of the study, it is concluded that the driving factors of tourism destination brand equity are composed of tourism destination products, tourists experience and destination marketing. They are interrelated and influence each other to form a system that can bring value-added to tourism destination brand equity and competitive advantage to tourism destinations.

As can be seen from **Figure 2**, the storyline around the core category can be summarized as follows: As a tourist destination, we should attach great importance to its own location, high quality and innovative tourism products in brand building; create a good sense of experience for tourists through staff management and product management; actively adopt appropriate marketing strategies for brand marketing. In this regard, we should understand the surrounding environment of the tourist destination, and actively participate in the construction of a good surrounding environment to ensure that the excellent product quality of the destination can enable its brand to be established, and timely understand the market trends for product innovation, and strengthen the management of human resources and the safety guarantee of tourism destinations. Safety guarantee is directly related to tourism experience and destination evaluation. Interaction between staff and tourists in tourism destinations will also affect tourist experience, and the sharing and dissemination of good tourism experience will naturally bring about the value-added of brand equity in tourism destinations.

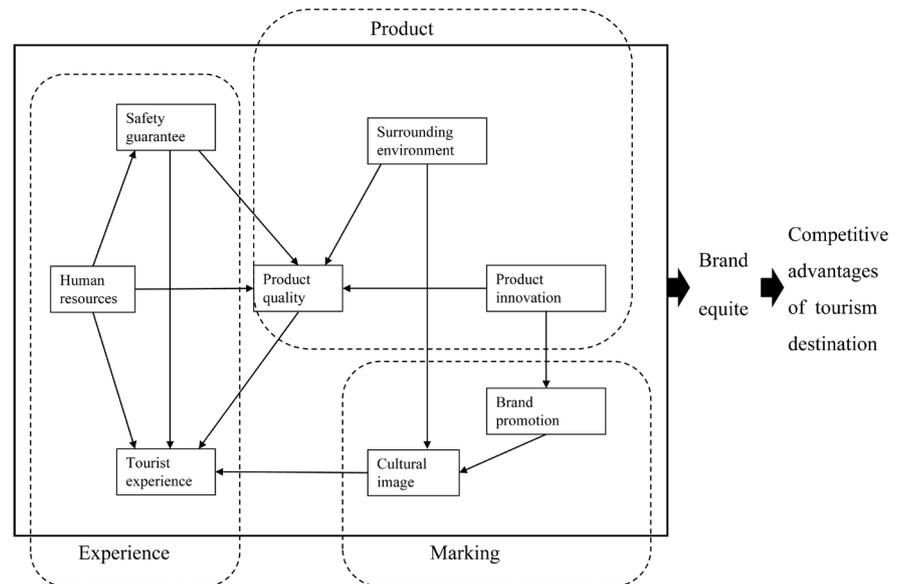


Figure 2. The main driving factors of brand equity in tourism destinations based on grounded theory.

To a great extent, the shaping of tourism destination's own cultural image will affect the tourists' impression of the tourism destination brand. Therefore, it is very meaningful to create a unique cultural image and promote the brand. The importance of these factors makes the tourist destination brand equity increase in value, and also makes tourism destinations gain long-term competitive advantage in the same kind of competition.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

Through the study of this paper, we know that product quality, surrounding environment, safety guarantee, tourist experience, product innovation, human resources, brand promotion, cultural image are the driving factors of tourism destination brand equity. According to the research results of grounded theory and the summary of literature review, the following suggestions are put forward for the management of tourism destination brand equity.

First of all, we should improve the construction of tourism destinations. The construction of tourist destination includes not only the construction of main tourist facilities but also the construction of corresponding public facilities. For Shenzhen Happy Valley, the recreational facilities in the park are the first attraction for most tourists, so the experience of the recreational facilities is the core of the tourists' overall experience of Shenzhen Happy Valley. The construction of public facilities, such as whether there is a shelter or not while waiting in line, and the provision of chairs and benches to rest in line, will also directly affect tourists' evaluation of Happy Valley. Therefore, the improvement of tourism destination construction is to improve the quality of tourism destination products, safety guarantee and tourist experience, because this is very important for the construction of tourism destination brand equity.

Secondly, we need to improve the service quality of employees. As a tourist destination service employee who contacts with tourists directly, the interaction and communication between employees and tourists have a direct impact on tourists' evaluation of tourism destinations and tourists experience. At the same time, although the service quality of employees is not entity products, for the service-oriented tourism industry, the service quality of employees undoubtedly represents the important product quality of tourism destinations. According to the text sharing about Shenzhen Happy Valley, tourists pay more attention to employees' attitudes and working abilities. These important factors, such as human resources, product quality, and tourist experience and safety guarantee, which affect the construction of tourist destination brand equity, will need the attention of tourist destination managers. Moreover, high service quality can provide strong support for the promotion of tourism destination brand equity.

Thirdly, we should choose the right marketing strategy. With the rapid development of information and technology, people have a wider range of choices of tourism destinations. Similarly, the competition among tourism destinations is becoming increasingly intense, and the marketing means and methods among various tourism destinations are emerging in endlessly. However, in the marketing of tourism destinations, it is necessary for marketers to keep up with the development of the times and grasp the psychology of tourists to choose the appropriate marketing strategy. With regard to the tourist sharing of Shenzhen Happy Valley, we can find that many tourists come to Shenzhen Happy Valley because it is the first theme park in China. At the same time, many tourists come to visit Shenzhen Happy Valley for pleasure or stress relief, and these are exactly what Happy Valley has been promoting as its main marketing direction. On the basis of the study, some tourists come to visit Shenzhen Happy Valley because of their memories in their childhood. This is what it misses when it comes to brand promotion for Shenzhen Happy Valley, and it is also a very promising part of the development. For Shenzhen Happy Valley, as time goes on, more and more tourists will leave their memories here, and the convergent products will constantly emerge in the market. As an old theme park in China, brand marketing in the memory of tourists is a very promising marketing strategy, which will not only affect potential tourists but also increase the re-visit rate of tourism destinations. Therefore, the appropriate marketing strategy is not only very important for the cultural image and brand promotion, but also very meaningful for the construction of tourism destination brand equity.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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