

Tourism Branding Proposition for Marikina City, Philippines: Towards Destination Sustainability

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ABSTRACT

Aim: Tourism has grown to become one of the world's most significant social and economic activity. In order to attract investment and visitors, urban planning has been linked to city branding. The employment of marketing methods to give a city a distinct identity in the eyes of residents, tourists, businesses, and investors is known as city branding. The tourism branding proposal for Marikina City in terms of destination sustainability was examined in this research. The goal of this study was to establish a brand position for Marikina.

Methodology: To arrive at interpretations, the research used a descriptive-qualitative method based on statement discourse analysis, specifically progressive focusing.

Results: The city of Marikina, according to the 24 locals and 15 non-residents who participated in this research, deserved to be labeled as the shoe capital, clean, and disciplined city. Respondents, on the other hand, discovered several pleasant and unpleasant traits that were addressed in the research. The majority of individuals are attracted to the city because of its positive characteristics. The research also discovered that there are three tourist brands that the city government could investigate and promote, including being the shoe capital, disaster-resilient, and renowned for its culinary business. These results, as suggested by this research, should be addressed by the city administration.

Conclusion: This will help barangay and the city as a whole to develop and engage the citizens in order to continue with its tourism brands for the country. It is recommended that the municipal administration look into Marikina City's tourist branding and make a proposal to look into the potential of being recognized and ways to enhance this branding.

Keywords: *Tourism, Tourist Destination, Sustainability, Marikina Shoe Capital, Branding*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the world's fastest growing and most significant social and economic activity nowadays. Because the number of domestic and international visitors is constantly growing, several nations are attempting to create more tourism businesses. Recently, city branding has been linked to urban planning aimed at luring investment and visitors. The employment of marketing methods to give a city a distinct identity in the eyes of residents, tourists, businesses, and investors is known as city branding. Since the eighteenth century, people have been marketing urban areas. Tourists flock to places that have unique images and facilities. This resulted in a global adaption of city branding techniques, which has developed as a separate and complex subject within urban studies. Cities have started to develop unique identities in order to obtain a competitive edge over others. These companies typically highlight 'unique,' 'attractive,' and 'interesting' aspects of cities based on their local traits (Uyzal, et al, 2017). Tourism Products according to

the National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) for 2011-2016 called for the implementation of a tourism product strategy that included the enhancement of existing products and the introduction of new ones in order to diversify the country's product portfolio and improve visitors' travel experiences.

Most Filipinos consider Marikina to be the Philippines' shoe capital. This is due to the shoemaking business, which flourished in the late 1880s. During this period in Marikina, shoes were often handcrafted and well-known for their workmanship, which easily matched, if not exceeded, the quality of imported shoes. Marikina had 139 shoe stores and over 2,500 employees working directly in the shoemaking sector by 1935. The city has generated the most number of domestically manufactured shoes in the nation. Marikina City set a Guinness World Record in 2002 by producing the world's biggest pair of shoes. These shoes are now housed at Marikina's Shoe Museum, a famous tourist destination. The city is more than a former shoemaking center. It has become a favorite

destination for foodies seeking for more than famous foreign franchises and milk-tea joints. Marikina offers a plethora of homegrown companies that appeal to both residents and visitors. While there is growing interest in applying brand theory to practice in tourism, there is a scarcity of published research to help Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs). There has been little discussion of the complexities involved in capturing the essence of a multi-attributed destination with a succinct and focused brand position, in a way that is both meaningful to the diverse target audiences of interest to stakeholders and effectively differentiates the destination from competitors (Pike, 2005). Sustainable tourism is a concept that encompasses the entire tourism experience, including consideration for economic, social, and environmental concerns, as well as a focus on enhancing visitor experiences and meeting the requirements of host communities.

In a progressive manner, the underlying assumptions of one wave shape the next. The most common explanation is that cities all over the globe invest in marketing and branding in order to remain competitive and relevant in the global market. Cities must compete in all areas where they can: tourism capacity, competitive advantage, quality of place, history, lifestyle, and so on. Three innovations in the marketing discipline hastened the theoretical formation of location marketing: marketing in non-profit organizations, social marketing, and image marketing. Studies on city branding have been conducted by academics and practitioners over the past three decades as a subset of place branding, since cities all over the globe participate in marketing and branding activities in order to remain competitive and relevant in the global market. Such cities, as well as countries and regions, are no longer regarded only as tourist attractions. With globalization and the free and easy movement of money, commodities, and people, cities strive to attract workers, residents, investors, and visitors. The “purposeful symbolic embodiment of all information related to a city in order to generate associations around it” has been described as city branding. It may be utilized as a strategic instrument to offer economic, political, and cultural benefit to cities. It may also be seen as a tool for communicating the city's competitive advantage, quality of place, history, lifestyle, and culture. There is an expanding corpus of study and practice in the field of city branding. Many cities have now recognized the necessity to brand themselves in order to thrive in the globalized world without losing individuality, placing those “without a brand under pressure to create one.” Nonetheless, cities are “highly complex brands” that serve many objectives while simultaneously targeting various groups and people, making them “more challenging to manage than traditional product brands.” Furthermore, it has been noted that the

majority of scholarly papers concentrate on what branding is not, rather than directing empirical research to plan a city's actual requirements. Many towns across the globe are now in different stages of branding.

The purpose of this research was to provide Marikina with a brand position. This study looked at the tourism brand and how to promote a city successfully. A city's image may be improved through good branding. It must have favorable qualities in order to successfully promote itself. Collaboration between people and local government is one of the most significant factors in assessing a city's branding potential. Weaknesses and strengths will also be evaluated to determine areas for improvements.

METHODOLOGY

To arrive at interpretations, the research used a descriptive-qualitative method based on statement discourse analysis, specifically progressive focusing. Qualitative data analysis is an iterative and reflexive process that starts during data gathering rather than after data collection has ended (Yazan, 2015).

When it becomes clear that more concepts or new connections need to be examined, the analyst changes the data gathering method itself. This is known as progressive focusing (Parlett & Hamilton 2018). The analyst interacts directly with the data via progressive focus, and emergent ideas are gradually re-focused.

Convenience sampling was used in determining the 39 informants who were directly engaged in the research. There were twenty-four (24) from Marikina City and fifteen (15) from non-Marikina residents. For data gathering, a semi-structured interview guide was utilized. Stuckey (2015) defined coding as a technique utilized in qualitative research analysis that requires time and ingenuity. (1) Reading through the data and developing a narrative; (2) categorizing the data into codes; (3) using notes for clarity and interpretation are the three stages; (4) using frequency and percentage in the Marikina City famous characteristics. Thematic analysis was also utilized to determine the themes of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Q1: What are the hallmarks of Marikina City?

Table 1: The Hallmarks of Marikina City

Response	Residents	Percentage	Non-residents	Percentage
Shoe capital of	24	100	15	100

the Philippines				
Cleanliness	20	83.33	15	100
Discipline	20	83.33	15	100

Marikina people thought they were renowned as the shoe capital of the Philippines, with 100 percent of residents and non-residents concurring. This is followed by cleanliness and discipline, which received 83.33 percent among Marikina City residents and a hundred percent among non-residents. Non-residents, on the other hand, have a firm conviction that the city is the shoe capital, and that it is renowned for its cleanliness and discipline. Residents of Marikina said that they are always pleased that their city is known as the Shoe Capital of the Philippines. The following are some of the residents' impressions:

"Marikina is known for being the shoe capital of the Philippines and Metro Manila's emerging food hub." (R1)

Noted in the history of this place, a huge shoe was created to showcase their skills and talent as shoe capital city.



Marikina City as the Shoe Capital City Photo (Source: www.Marikina.gov.ph)

In another statement, another resident highlighted the importance of cleanliness and discipline in their city and he mentioned that:

"Cleanliness is a priority in the city of Markina, thus, I am proud to be part of this city." (R2)

"I will never leave this city because this is where I belong. The shoe capital and the cleanest city in the country." (R3)

"I am satisfied to live in this place because people are trained to be disciplined at all times." (R4)

"Marikina is known as a place where people with good discipline live and is one of the cleanest cities in the Philippines." (R5)

It was noted that people do recognize the efforts of the city by being proud of its brand as the shoe capital. People are satisfied to live because they observed cleanliness, trained people, and disciplined neighborhoods. On the other hand, it was so amazing to note the initial impression of the non-residents were the same as the locals. In this question, the most **emerging themes were cleanliness, disciplined, and organized city.** **Some of the non-residents' responses include the following:**

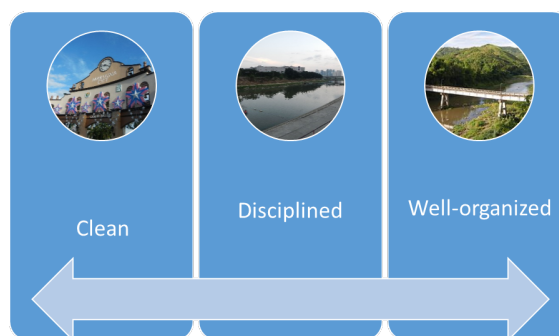


Figure 1: Non-residents' Impression About Marikina City

"I was amazed by how they are maintaining the cleanliness, even in the public toilets/comfort rooms." (NR1)

"I was shocked and deeply overwhelmed because of its cleanliness and very organized surroundings also the environment." (NR2)

"Everyone here in Marikina is disciplined and well-mannered. They follow the government rules and regulations." (NR3)

Being the shoe capital city of the country, this has been noted in the history of Marikina. Marikina, which began in 1887, had become a shoemaker's village by the turn of the twentieth century. Years of shoe manufacture had honed the locals' industrial work ethic, preparing them for the entrance of heavy industries in the 1950s. With the arrival of the industrial plants came waves of homeless families, who began to occupy every available area. Marikina would expand helter-skelter over the following three decades, a victim of uncontrolled expansion. It would not be until 1992 that it would be able to turn the corner and re-establish the trend under new leadership. It was December 8, 1996 when Marikina was designated as a city by Republic Act 8223. Marikina has subsequently evolved from a backwater community to one with a flourishing economy and people that are industrious, tenacious, and disciplined. Marikina

is now a multi-award-winning city, often praised for its thriving business community, highly trained workforce, and responsive local government that prioritizes governance, sustainable urban development, and public service (www.Marikina.gov.ph).

According to a writer from a local newspaper, when Fernando, better known as BF, was mayor, he was a strict disciplinarian. Teodoro, who is now the current Mayor, says he sees the logic in establishing discipline to make government function. When he became mayor for the first time in 2016, he carried on the changes begun by the former Mayor, who went on to become a lawmaker. One example was well ahead of the curve in enacting anti-loitering regulations in his city – what we refer to as “anti-tambay” local laws. Teodoro claims that Marikina has been implementing laws prohibiting people from walking around half-naked in public since long before the President of the Philippines President took office. The Mayor believes that proper clothing is a show of respect for oneself and others (Pamintuan, 2019). This also confirms the impressions of the residents as well as the non-residents as clean, self-disciplined, and well-organized city.

Q2: What is Marikina City’s Famous Character?

Table 2: The Marikina City’s Famous Characteristics

Response	Residents	%	Non-residents	%
Good reputation being the shoe capital city as their unique livelihood	24	100	15%	100
Low cost of Living	20	83.33	10	66.67
Emerging Food Hubs	24	100	15	100
Resilience in Disasters and Emergencies	21	87.5	14	93.33
Congestion	24	100	15	100
Clean Roads/routes/parks/other areas	24	100	15	100

Well-maintained environment	24	100	10	66.67
Flooding Area and Presence of Fault Lines	18	75	13	86.67

Marikina City takes pride of itself being the country’s shoe capital and it is very evident in the notion of its residents which was supported by this statement “high quality shoes made in Marikina, the only one in the Country”. Another surprising emerging theme is that residents deem that the City has a variably low cost of living which was reiterated by the statement of a resident, “low house and lot amortization and also low city residential taxes (Amilyar) likewise they also produce bazaars and affordable items on their public market.”. Marikina residents also take prides of their emergent food hubs and restaurants offering vast variety of food options. In a resident informant’s statement, it was mentioned that “Marikina City is it is known for being the shoe capital and now as to being famous food spot especially in Lilac St”. Marikina has been much known of its perennial problem of flooding and most residents proudly stated that they have developed resilience over years of disaster. A resident expounded on this with “Discipline and values, Alertness whenever a disaster happens is something to be proud of in the City of Marikina”.

Sources of dissatisfaction among Marikina residents were traffic. It was mentioned numerous times that especially along Barangka to Riverbanks which was attributed to a single highway system in the city. Overcrowding was also a source of dissatisfaction, it was noted by a resident that “I am dissatisfied about the overcrowded areas, there are cars and people that stays in one place”. As with any urban centers in the country, petty crimes were likewise observed in the city and is a major source of dissatisfaction. One resident mentioned that “there is rampant robbery, noisy and messy surroundings, fighting and gang wars”.

Non-Marikina residents highlighted certain strengths of Marikina as a city. One was available good areas and roads. It was strengthened by the statement “Nice to walk on the streets because of trees. Well-developed but cares for the environment”. However, they are concerned that the City is experiencing perennial flooding making it unpleasant to stay in the city. One informant strongly mentioned that Marikina is unattractive because of its proximity to the fault line whereas

"It's a nice city, well maintained but scared of fault line, very dangerous and scary."

Q3: What is Marikina's Unique Brand?

Marikina's distinct brand is that of the Shoe Capital. This is what every Marikina resident says about their city. People are eager to reveal their real selves, and they can tell that distinctive shoe workers can be found in Marikina. The shoes are inexpensive, yet they are long-lasting and of high quality. Although there has been some negative criticism in this city, such as the city being replaced by a wide range of food stores and a lack of government backing, the majority of residents appreciate the city's distinct identity.

Evidently, Marikina residents truly identify themselves as the "shoe experts". As a matter of fact, a resident was very proud to mention that "As more people to wear shoes from Marikina, it makes me happy."

Another strong statement was "Marikina is the biggest manufacturer of shoes in the Philippines, producing almost 70% of shoes made in the country". Moreover, majority of the informants mentioned that it is only in Marikina where you will find workers who are loyal to shoe making and that their products are cheap but very durable. An informant stated that "If you ask Marikeño whose family lived here in Marikina and grow its culture, most the household family names has a thing called "May dugong sapatero."

However, other sources said that Marikina's status as the Philippines' shoe capital is a thing of the past and has been forgotten by the people. According to one source, "nowadays, it's extremely uncommon to hear from people that Marikina is the shoe capital of the Philippines." It has evolved over the years, and it is currently popular mainly because of its cleanliness and the food stops that can be found there. The development of food variety hubs and food strips was a major contributor to this. According to one source, "the shoe business is starting to collapse, and Marikina is developing as a culinary center." Similarly, another source said that "the government still attempts to live up to this designation since that is where Marikina City was renowned for back in the day, but today food companies are all over the city." The collapse of the shoe business in the city was also linked to a lack of

government assistance, as one informant said, "Marikina is still undertaking programs and steps to encourage the development of the shoe industry, but it cannot do it on its own without the National Government." It was also observed that the local government's focus is in the food sector, which is to be anticipated given the city's growing population.

Q4: What can you say about Marikina as the Culinary Hub of the East

According to the informants, the culinary sector in Marikina is a growing one, as shown by the growth of food options and stores in the city, especially on Lilac St. An informant said in a statement that "there is a potential increase in terms of food business with the current food trends, hole-in-the-wall eateries, food parks, and so on." Another source echoed this, saying, "In my experience, there are so many culinary hubs in Lilac, and their cuisine is excellent." Marikina is the gastronomic capital of the east, in my opinion." The municipal government mostly supports these efforts via specialized advertising posts for new businesses. An insider corroborated this, saying, "I can tell that Marikina is a large location to start business and its people are extremely helpful to new restaurants and it has its own organization called "Marikina News" who promote new companies."

However, it was discovered that there is now fierce rivalry among new food centers in the city, with some of those previously shuttered. According to one source, "it's gaining popularity all the time." However, a few food parks have already closed owing to a lack of sales and stiff competition." Marikina's initial name as the "Shoe Capital of the Philippines" is the most emerging theme that prevents informants from calling it the Culinary Hub of the East. "To be honest, I really don't believe Marikina City was dubbed the gastronomic center of the east, since for one thing, the dishes here were simply typical throughout all places," said one source. Marikina's inhabitants were adamant about restoring the city's true character. A local informant said unequivocally, "For me, the government should still regard Marikina's original tag line, which is the shoe capital, since that is what distinguishes Marikina from other cities." Similarly, another local informant said, "It's simply unfortunate that people forget that Marikina City was the shoe center of the Philippines."

Q5: What touristic brand essence of Marikina City could be developed?

The study's dominant emerging topic is preserving Marikina City's tourism brand identity as the Philippine Shoe Capital. It was a feeling echoed by both the study's resident and non-resident respondents. An informant said emphatically,

"Marikina should be recognized for its brand as the shoe capital since we are excellent in this aspect and no other provinces or municipalities can establish like what we have now here in Marikina famous for its genuine quality shoes." However, an insider recommended that the phrase Shoe Capital be re-trended, stating, "It tends to become overvalued if it solely centered its essence on shoes." A fresh line of mix or uniqueness may set a tourist offering out from the crowd."

Marikina City is renowned for its high-quality items, especially shoes and leather goods, but another recurring motif was the people's endurance and dependability, particularly after a catastrophe. According to one informant, "reliability and durability - these are the qualities that sprang to mind regarding Marikina City, both its shoes and its people, robust despite all that occurred, even disasters." An informant said, "The shoes symbolize the Marikenios since Marikenios are strong people that even if there is a catastrophe, the Marikina's would always stand up."

According to one study, there are several research avenues for tourist marketing scholars and marketing practitioners to pursue, but the most essential areas to focus on include consumer behavior, branding, marketing, and strategic marketing (Tsitsou & Ratten, 2010).

Q6: What proposed Tourism Branding for the City of Marikina



Figure 2: Tourism Branding for the City of Marikina

Unanimously, the respondents mentioned that the tourism brand for Marikina City is being the shoe industry, disaster resilience, and flourishing culinary industry. In a study conducted by Tanchuco (n.d.) entitled, "Liberalization and the imperative of value chain upgrading in the Marikina footwear industry," he mentioned that Marikina footwear companies are mainly focused on the local market; ii)

The majority of Marikina footwear is leather and non-leather in classified 16 iii) Marikina footwear customers are price sensitive iv) These consumers represent the low to medium sector of the local market v) China is recognized as the major rival, with cheap pricing as its key approach vi) Other competitors identified are mainly Asian nations. However, despite its competitors' cheap price, this city has gained so many clients not only in the Philippines but around the globe. When looking at Marikina's shoe industry today, two things are clear: first, significant changes in production methods must be implemented; second, given the presence of footwear clusters elsewhere, a new approach to pricing, marketing, and distribution must be implemented in order for the industry to survive, if not thrive. The study's concept is based on these two findings. The present outlook of Marikina footwear producers, particularly those with lower production capacities, is one of despair and pessimism (Tanchuco, n.d.). Aside from being the shoe capital, this city is branded as disaster resilient. Risks of disaster are significant stumbling blocks to economic growth. Since 1971, catastrophes in the Asia-Pacific area have resulted in 2 million fatalities and \$2.4 trillion in economic damage. Disasters are becoming more powerful as a result of climate change, and they are disproportionately impacting individuals in emerging nations and the poorest of the population. Despite the increasing body of knowledge on disaster risk management (DRM), there are still knowledge gaps, especially in terms of how to build local institutions to manage hazards. The institutionalization process of the Marikina City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (MCDRRMO), being one of the first of its type in the Philippines, may offer lessons on how to establish and maintain local DRM organizations (Dangcalan et al., 2019). Marikina City has survived disasters in many decades and that it is proven to be resilient on disasters. Handicrafts, sweet delights, leather, textiles, food processing, purses, accessories, and footwear are just a few of Marikina's native goods. However, Marikina is also known in culinary industry. Some food that Marikina is famous for include: carbonara from Café Lidia, tapsilog from Tapsi ni Vivian, breakfast steak, chicken wings, special pansit canton, and cheeseburger. This makes Marikina unique and well-known for its culinary industry. In summary, Marikina City is not only good at footwear, but it is also famous for its being resilient during disasters, and known for its delicious and unique food of the city. As a result, Marikina Municipal's tourist branding should be explored and evaluated, and the city administration should pay greater attention to it. By engaging the leaders of the barangays in planning, coordinating, and executing excellent initiatives for the city, the people of Marikina should be more

focused and feel that they are a part of Marikina City's pride (Department of Tourism, 2017).

CONCLUSION

Marikina City is known for being the shoe capital, cleanliness, and discipline, according to residents and visitors alike. The characteristics, according are the Marikina City's pride. On the other hand, the well-known features included both good and negative aspects, as well as many possibilities for development. Anyone in the city is enthralled by its present features. "May dugong Marikeno" is the name given to every typical Marikeno. This city's food industry has the potential to grow as a culinary center. Tourism branding should be proclaimed, explored, and given special importance to improve as a consequence of this study. The concerned leaders in the city of Marikina should develop programs and projects to sustain the city branding. The city's tourist brands include being the country's shoe capital, being disaster-resilient, and having a thriving food industry.

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