2009
GLOBAL BRAND PLAN

Stage 2
Tourism Malaysia
Brand Optimisation Programme

Final Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2009 Global Brand Plan, which is Stage 2 of a three-stage Brand Optimization Programme, provides a comprehensive look at what is required to brand Malaysian tourism for international audiences in an uncertain environment. This environment is both increasingly competitive and influenced by the Internet and other aspects of Web marketing ("Tourism 2.0"). The Global Brand Plan provides actionable, specific recommendations dedicated to achieving the three strategic imperatives of Tourism Malaysia (TM) -- increasing arrivals; increasing yield; and increasing retention. Wherever possible, special emphasis is placed on measurement to ensure accountability and a return on marketing investments.

Based on the extensive international research conducted during Stage 1, the 2009 Global Brand Plan covers almost every aspect of marketing and branding, including advertising, public relations, partner communications, and visual consistency, impact, and appeal. The Global Brand Plan provides the strategic framework for 12 complementary Local Brand Plans as well as guidance for specific plans covering advertising, research, PR and other key marketing areas.

The 2009 Global Brand Plan does not address the challenges TM faces from a mass-marketing perspective. Because of the rise of the Internet and empowered consumers, mass-marketing techniques are widely acknowledged to be increasingly ineffective. Rather, recommended branding activities reflect today's marketing realities. These include the role of the Internet, peer-to-peer (P2P) branding (consumers, not companies, define brands), experiential branding, and the increasing role of video and other imagery in branding. The 2009 Global Brand Plan also incorporates emerging trends such as Tourism 2.0, "podcasting," landing pages, interactivity and other issues to help ensure that Tourism Malaysia stays on top of emerging trends instead of being overwhelmed by them. Special attention is played to research to make this a data-driven plan. Without research about past, current and prospective tourists, decision-makers can only make guesses instead of what is required, instead of what these tourists value. Such research also provides benchmarks for accountability. Finally, the 2009 Global Brand Plan addresses the organizational and some personnel issues that were raised during Stage 1 research.

For context, the 2009 Global Brand Plan briefly looks at industry and travel trends, then conducts a SWOT analysis on key issues affecting travel to Malaysia. Discussion of the three strategic imperatives incorporates the messages required to attract the primary high-yield tourist segments, which include golf, A1/F1 auto racing, romance, wellness, ocean fun, and other niches.

The branding principles that drive all branding activities are outlined. These include strengthening digital branding, enhancing PR, increasing the effectiveness of private sector involvement, and more testimonials and endorsements. It also includes stronger internal branding, critical to delivering the value stakeholders expect.

Closely related to branding principles are brand imperatives. These are the activities that must be done to deliver a clear, consistent brand that is universally and instantly acknowledged to represent "Brand Malaysia." These include the core messages (eg, "Diversity, Variety, Choice," "Authenticity," "Value," etc.), and a strong continuing emphasis on bold, iconic images and colours instead of weaker photo montages. Other brand imperatives include improving service and execution.

The final sections of the 2009 Global Brand Plan deal with internal and external marketing tools. Internal tools are organizational weapons to provide the framework and support for external marketing efforts, such as improved data collection and analysis, outsourcing, internal branding, and crisis management and planning. External tools include digital branding, especially in the area of "Web 2.0," which is based on social networking, greater interactivity, and increased use of video. Other tools to promote Brand Malaysia to external stakeholders include testimonials and endorsements, PR, advertising, merchandising, collateral, and promotional enhancements. Finally, brand experiences and relationships are explored in discussions about events, sponsorships, and partner communications.