

TAIWAN'S COMPETITIVE IDENTITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

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Abstract

The outlook for Southeast Asian market remains robust due to its large labor force and the growth in its middle-class consumers. Hence, Southeast Asia is targeted by Taiwan to present its competitiveness via its New Southbound Policy (NSP). Taiwan and Southeast Asia have engaged with each other significantly through the Southeast Asian immigrants since 1960s. Moreover, Taiwan becomes important to the global economy since the world depends largely on its chip manufacturing. However, Taiwan's role in Southeast Asia is barely significant. In general, Southeast Asian consumers are not aware of Taiwan's brands. In terms of destination for Southeast Asian tourists, expats, and students, Taiwan has not been as popular as Japan and South Korea yet. Based on Simon Anholt's Competitive Identity (CI) approach, this research investigates Southeast Asian perceptions of Taiwan's competitiveness in six realms; culture, investment, brands, policy, people, and tourism. It illustrates qualitatively that the positive perception of Taiwan's Competitive Identity is greater than the negative one in every realm. Taiwan's responsible investment, friendly people, accountability policy, fascinating tourism, popular culture, and good quality of products are perceived by the respondents. However, the lack of branding and promotion has limited the positive perception to the small group of people. Interestingly, Taiwan has potential for exporting its popular culture but One-China Policy and its unstable domestic politics are the two threats that it must stay cautious. Furthermore, these threats will unavoidably affect Southeast Asia.

Keywords: Competitive Identity, Southeast Asia, Taiwan

Introduction

The process of globalization has transformed the world to be a single place where every nation has to compete with one another for the limited resources. Meanwhile, it also complicates the threats such as pandemics, natural disasters, terrorism, and

financial crises to the level that a nation cannot handle alone by itself. Hence, nation branding becomes increasingly important. Today, nations need to market their competitiveness so as to be able to join international organizations and trade agreements. Their member status will qualify

them to access the limited global resources and to raise their voice in order to protect their interest at the international forums.

Taiwan, which has been isolated from the global platform by China, is well aware of how important Competitive Identity (CI) is for its national prosperity and national security. As a result, in 2016, President Tsai Ing-wen pursued New Southbound Policy (NSP) right after her election victory with an attempt to expand and strengthen its ties with eighteen countries. Ten of them are from Southeast Asia namely Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. However, the road to success is not rosy and full of thorns. Taiwan faces more hardships than others due to the fact that China is adamant about One-China policy which negatively affects Taiwan's national identity and international role. Taiwan lost its membership at the UN to China in 1971, and consequently lost diplomatic relations with Southeast Asian countries and many others. Products of Taiwan are admired for its good quality but the land of origin is barely perceived among Southeast Asian consumers. Taiwan tried to increase its international outreach to Southeast Asia during its two former President, Lee Teng Hui and Chen Shui-bian, but the result was not very apparent. The limited international credibility, unclear national identity, and One-China policy have driven Taiwan to shift its exports and investment from China to other markets with the aim to reduce its economic dependence on China. These challenges make

the case of Taiwan's CI unique and worth studying. Since Southeast Asia is targeted by the NSP, the perspectives from Southeast Asian experts will shed light on how Taiwan's CI has been perceived and how Taiwan should improve its presence in Southeast Asia.

Objectives

1. To describe some perceptions of Taiwan's CI in the seven Southeast Asian countries.
2. To explain the major causes of Taiwan's weak CI in the seven Southeast Asian countries.
3. To explore some possible ways to improve Taiwan's CI in the seven Southeast Asian countries.

Literature Review

Globalization

During 1970s, a lot of theorists have begun to notice about the emergence of globalization. "By the 1980s this was already becoming one of the key vogue concepts pushed in both the academic literature on management and in the popular business literature" (Jones, 2010, p. 7). "The economic interconnections among countries were dramatically increased with the advent of free-trade areas in the 1990s" (Thomas & Peterson, 2015, p. 3). Then, the term 'globalization' has become a buzzword since the 1990s. The term 'globalization' is quite contentious with various definitions. According to Ahmed (2013, p. 1), it means "the process of architecting this world order

through the institutions whose activities affect billions of people, multiple resources, and diverse cultures and environments as a large interconnected and interdependent system with a variety of subsystems within it". In view of this, Verde (2017) explains that the innovations of technology have made the movements of trades, capital, and people easier and freer. Such dynamic process is called globalization. "The world is becoming noticeably "smaller" as distant lands are being linked ever more closely together. At the same time, the world is becoming "larger" because our horizons have never been so broad" (Osterhammel & Peterson, 2009, p. 3). In conclusion, the globalization is the dynamic ongoing process that integrates countries around the world together as a single community via the innovations of technology. Every nation competes with each other for the limited resources in this competitive community. The international organizations who are influenced by the advanced economies are the key players in controlling the resources. They manage to maintain their power by sharing the resources only among their members. The concept of the globalization portrays the current global situation where Taiwan is struggling for its prosperity and security.

Nation Branding

The term 'nation brand' was first coined in Anholt (2007). Conforming with the process of globalization, nation branding gains substantial attention from both academic researchers and governments. "In the last

fifteen years, most nations have engaged in nation branding efforts, and as a result, nation brands today have high policy value" (Viktorin et al., 2018, p. 3). Nation branding is different from the product branding even though many of its techniques and strategies originate from product marketing. "What makes this kind of nation branding modern is not just the sophisticated use of commercial marketing techniques like focus groups, test runs, and market segmentation but also the realization that narrative influences perception" (Twitchell, 2004, p. 292). According to Valaskivi (2016, p. 53) 'nation branding' is "a transnationally circulating practice that has come to define some of the ways in which government represent their countries in the international arena as well as within the nation. Nation branding is a way to create competitiveness for the nation by using place marketing to articulate national identity and present them to the global audiences including their citizens. Whereas Aronczyk (2013, p. 2) provisionally defines it as "the result of the interpenetration of commercial and public sector interests to communicate national priorities among domestic and international populations for a variety of interrelated purposes". The effects of a nation brand include: "the public diplomacy; the interests of the export industry; enterprises and investors; destination marketing; and the identity and self-confidence of the people of the country" (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009, pp. 28-29). Since nation branding could create great impacts on the whole nation and beyond, social responsibility

is supposed to be the first priority. “When applying the concept of a brand to nations rather than to mere products, there is an ethical obligation to do so in an honest, respectful manner and to acknowledge the limits of how appropriate it is to treat nations as brands” (Dinnie, 2015, p. 5). ‘Nation branding’ is a large scale of work and requires collaboration of efforts from the local and foreign experts from different fields of work. The review of the concept of nation branding explains why Taiwan pursues the NSP.

Competitive Identity (CI)

It is a theory created by Anholt (2007) as an extension of his nation branding by including national identity and politics and economics of competitiveness. Surowiec (2017, p. 21) criticizes that the extension does not reveal a modus operandi of nation branding and requires conceptual reflection and empirical insights. However, this research argues that it can more or less reveal a modus operandi of nation branding through qualitative research. Moreover, it qualitatively illustrates the nation’s brand image since most nations present their competitiveness via the six areas: policy, tourism, brands, culture, people, and investment.

Methodology

Qualitative method is selected for this research due to three reasons. Firstly, the issue of the identity and the status of Taiwan is quite sensitive not just only among Taiwanese but also among non-Taiwanese who relate to China in one way or another. The qualitative

method can help to reduce the chance of getting dishonest response from the respondents. Secondly, the case of Taiwan’s Competitive Identity is complicated, so it requires further discussion for the clarification. The qualitative method is useful when the researcher needs to understand as much as possible the perspectives attached by the participants. Thirdly, this research aims to obtain the ‘perception’, ‘opinion’, and ‘experiences’ from the participants which are subjective, so they are hard to quantify.

Multiple sources of evidence; direct observation, documentation, and expert interviews are used so as to construct validity and reliability of the case study evidence. Following the general analytic strategy, ‘theoretical propositions’ is used in order to provide guidelines for what to analyze and why. The theory used for this purpose is Anholt’s Hexagon of the Competitive Identity (CI). Due to the unique status of Taiwan, the case is pre-selected, and it is designed as an embedded single-case study. At the holistic level, Taiwan’s nation branding is the main unit whereas the six embedded units of analysis, which are based on the CI, exist as entities. Based on Anholt (2007), the six units are policy, tourism, brands, culture, people, and investment and can be explained as following: 1) Policy is the master plan that assign the role for the nation in the global community. For example, the role of the U.S. as the global leader was undermined by America First policy. The effective policy will attract attention and cooperation from

the public and it basically comes from the credibility of its government. 2) Tourism can impress the tourists greatly since it presents the nation's CI, e.g., history, culture, people, products, facilities, and prosperity of the country to the tourists. The impression may further attract workers and students. Nowadays, it is a main driver of economic growth for many countries. 3) Brands of the exported products and services and the outward investment can promote the national image through the success and ethics in doing business such as the good quality of products, responsible investment, and technology advancement, etc. The consumers will remember the brand or the name of the company and refer to the place of origin. 4) Culture is the way of life so it can be traditional and popular culture, e.g., language, religion, cuisine, social habit, movies, and music. Since it unites the nation in many ways, a nation will not survive without it. It reflects the national, subnational, or cross-national identity so it is more eloquent than commercial brands in promoting CI. 5) People are the representatives of national culture. Their behavior when they welcome tourists in their country or when they visit foreign country will create impression towards their nation. Celebrities such as politicians, athletes, and movie stars also promote the nation's CI through their success and fame. 6) Investment are the ways the institutes or agencies attract inward investment, expats, foreign labors, and foreign students into their country. It explains the nation's identity such as quality of life,

education system, and economic development.

Among the non-probability sampling strategies, 'expert sampling' is selected. In this strategy, experts are the key informants who are willing to share their special knowledge of the topic of interest which is 'Taiwan's CI in Southeast Asia' and their experiences with the 'Southeast Asian people'. The perception and experiences, that they share via semi-structured interviews, are considered as evidence of validity. As shown in Table 1, 'experts' in this study are fourteen natives of Southeast Asia. They are divided as seven males and seven females. They come from seven Southeast Asian countries namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. They are from different professional fields namely, International Relations, Social Science, Southeast Asian Studies, China and ASEAN Studies, Social Development, Filipino language, Finance, Development, and Regionalization. All of them have stayed in Taiwan before either as tourists or as one of the following: students, scholars, residents, military trainees, and employees. Among the ten targeted Southeast Asian countries, Cambodia, Brunei, and Laos are excluded here because they have significantly less exchange with Taiwan comparing with the selected seven countries. China has much stronger relations with Cambodia and Laos. For Brunei, who adopts sharia law which is Islam's legal system, Taiwan who is new to Muslim market has not been much attractive for Brunei citizens yet. Therefore, the number of tourists, experts, exchange students, migrants, and immigrants from Cambodia, Brunei, and

Laos are a lot less than the selected seven countries. Moreover, Taipei Economic and Culture Office has not been established in Cambodia and Laos yet.

Table 1 Demographics of respondents (experts from Southeast Asian countries)

Respondent's ID	Nationality	Gender	Occupation	Area of Expert	Purpose of Stay
E1	Indonesian	Female	Research Fellow	International Relations	Work
E2	Indonesian	Male	Lecturer	International Relations	Work
E3	Malaysian	Male	Research Fellow	Social Science	Work
E4	Malaysian	Male	Master Degree Student in Social Science	Southeast Asian Studies	Study and Work
E5	Vietnamese	Male	Researcher – Ph.D. Candidate	Social Science	Study
E6	Vietnamese	Male	Researcher – Ph.D. Candidate	Social Science	Study
E7	Thai	Female	Lecturer	China and ASEAN Studies	Study and Work
E8	Thai	Female	Lecturer	Social Development	Travel and Work
E9	Burmese	Female	Researcher – Ph.D. Candidate	Southeast Asian Studies	Study
E10	Burmese	Female	Lecturer	Southeast Asian Studies	Work
E11	Filipino	Male	Research Fellow	Southeast Asian Studies	Work
E12	Filipino	Female	Lecturer	Filipino Language	Travel
E13	Singaporean	Female	Fund Manager	Finance	Travel and Work
E14	Singaporean	Male	Regional Director	Development and Regionalization	Military Training and Work

Framework analysis is used for data analysis. It consists of familiarization, thematic analysis indexing, summarizing (including counting mentions), mapping and interpretation. Since the resulting frequency within the theoretical framework has something to do with the themes as appeared in Figure 2 and 3,

a common technic called counting mentions is justifiable. Consequently, it paves the way to the answer of the two research questions: 1) Why is Taiwan's Competitive Identity weak in Southeast Asia? 2) How should Taiwan present its Competitive Identity in Southeast Asia?

Results

The experts narrate their story about the factors that link them to Taiwan and their motivations in traveling to Taiwan. They also share their experience, opinion, and perceptions of Taiwan's CI in their country. The data can be

categorized into two sets which are the negative and the positive perception of Taiwan's CI in six realms. As shown in Figure 1, the positive perception is greater than the negative one in every realm.

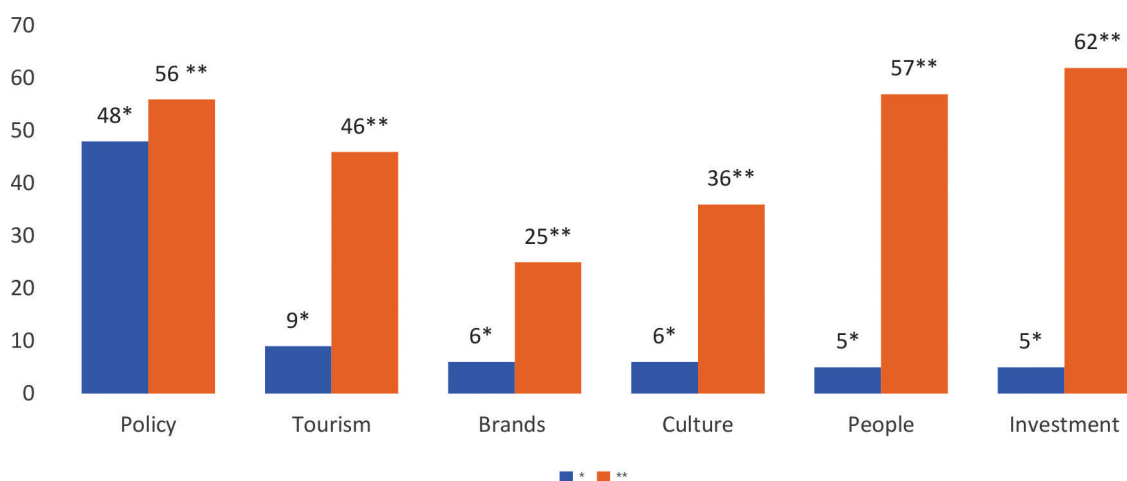


Figure 1 The Negative and Positive Perception of Taiwan's CI by Southeast Asian Experts

Note: The resulting frequency is based on the counting mentions within the framework of the hexagon of Competitive Identity (CI). The more the mentions are, the higher the resulting frequency becomes. The resulting frequency does not present scientific significance, but it presents the precision. * (The experts' negative perception in the realm.) ** (The experts' positive perception in the realm.)

The Negative Perception

As shown in Figure 2, the negative perception in the realm of 'policy' is predominant with the highest frequency at forty-eight while it is less than ten in the other realms. Insufficient promotion gains highest frequency at thirty-two. That is why Taiwan's CI is well-perceived only among Chinese diaspora but not locals who are the majority of the citizens. Second to it, is the political instability with the frequency at seven. The experts view that Taiwan's political instability can damage its CI especially when China tries to promote its One-China policy. Its

unstable domestic politics can cause Taiwan's vulnerable society and may disrupt the success of NSP. The third highest theme is foreign relations with the frequency at six. Taiwan is rather late in developing relations with Southeast Asian countries. Since Taiwan was placed under the governance of the Republic of China (ROC), it has always focused on affirming ties with the western countries especially the U.S. and the European countries but not with the small countries in Southeast Asia. It has just actively tried to affirm its ties with them after the launch of the NSP.

The fourth highest theme is government investment. Its frequency is at three since its urbanization is less competitive than Japan and South Korea. The negative perception of ‘tourism’ is quite low with the frequency at nine. The experts find that Tourism in Taiwan is less spectacular than in Japan and South Korea. However, they view that Taiwan’s medical tourism has enormous potential for penetrating Southeast Asian market but it lacks of promotion. The frequency of ‘brands’ is at eight which is mainly due to the lack of branding. Meanwhile, the frequency of ‘culture’

is at six because of its unpopularity. Cultural prejudice towards Southeast Asian people still exists and it is indecisive in its identity. In terms of ‘people’ its frequency is at five because many Taiwanese people are still insular and some of them have bias with Muslim people. In the realm of investment, it is less attractive than China because it offers less job opportunities, less economic advantage, lower wage-rate, and lacks of creative sector. Taiwan’s Formosa Ha Tinh Steel Corp scandal in Vietnam has caused bad reputation about Taiwan.

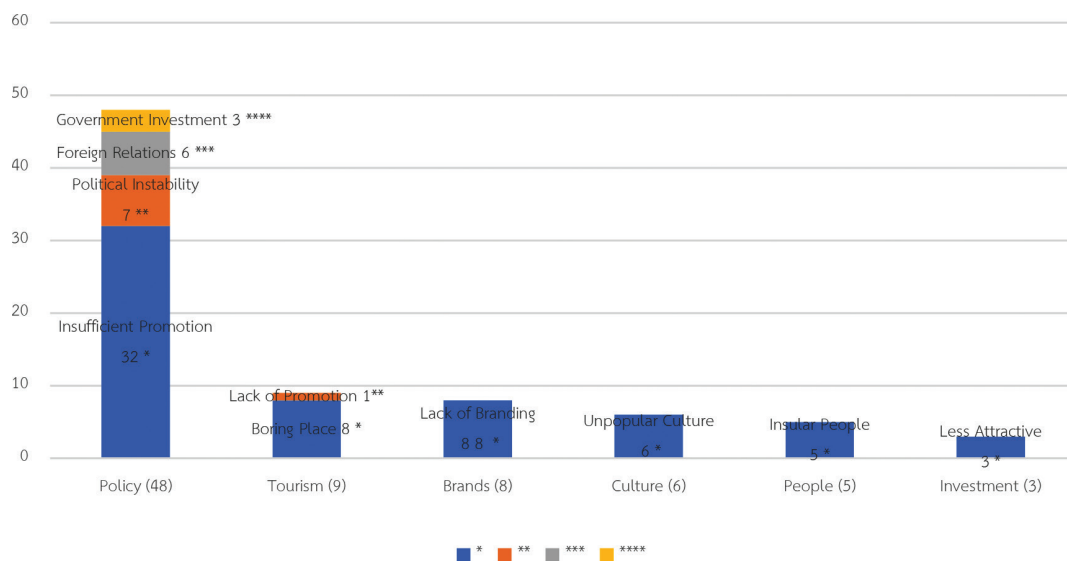


Figure 2 The Negative Perception of Taiwan’s CI by Southeast Asian Experts

Note: In the data set of the negative perception, the codes in each realm are categorized into one theme (except for the realm of policy and tourism) and they are labelled differently based on the mentions. The realm of policy and tourism are categorized into four and two themes consecutively because of the higher in number and the various contexts of the mentions. * (The theme gains the highest resulting frequency.) ** (The theme gains the second highest resulting frequency.) *** (The theme gains the third highest resulting frequency.) **** (The theme gains the lowest resulting frequency.)

The Positive Perception of Taiwan's CI

As shown in Figure 3, the positive perception of 'people' gains highest frequency at fifty-seven. The frequency for Taiwanese people including teenagers is at thirty-three which is highest theme in this realm. The experts find that Taiwanese people are friendly and trust-worthy and the teenagers are lovely, internationalized and open-minded.

Furthermore, Taiwanese celebrities such as F4 (a Taiwanese boy band who also starred in the Meteor Garden), Brigitte Lin Ching-hsia, Teresa Teng, and online-influencer are popular. The former President Chiang Kai-shek, President Tsai Ing-wen, Minister Audrey Tang, and Taipei Mayor Ko Wen Zhe are famous. Thus, the frequency of this theme is at fifteen. The last theme is P2P exchange.

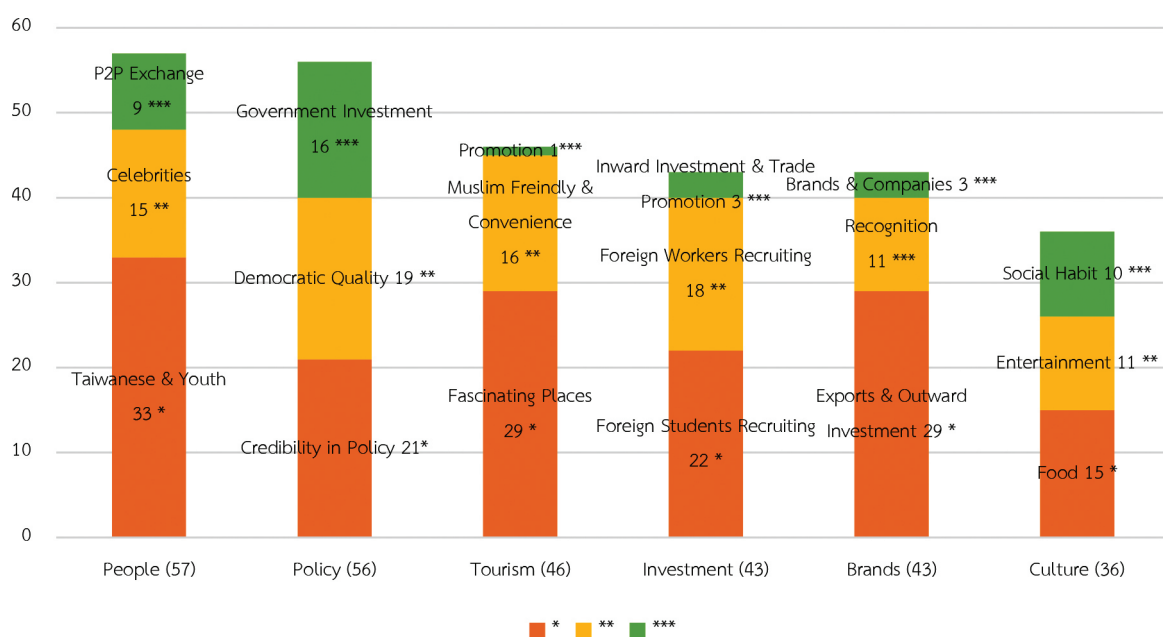


Figure 3 The Positive Perception of Taiwan's CI by Southeast Asian Experts

Note: In the data set of the positive perception, the codes in each realm are categorized into three themes and they are labelled differently based on the mentions. * (The theme gains the highest resulting frequency.) ** (The theme gains the second highest resulting frequency.) *** (The theme gains the lowest resulting frequency.)

Its frequency is at nine because many experts are linked to Taiwan by Taiwanese people, so they realize how useful it is. In the realm of 'policy', the total frequency is at fifty-six which is just one less than the realm of people. Many of its policies such as political asylum for Myanmar people, respecting workers'

right, economic success, environmental friendliness, foreign aids, inclusive healthcare, free-visa program for foreigners, being sincere with ASEAN, knowledge transfer and talent exchange with Southeast Asian countries are perceived as credible. Its frequency is at twenty-one. Second to it is the democratic

quality with the frequency at nineteen. Taiwan's government is perceived as democratic, transparent, and evolving. The frequency for government investment is sixteen mainly due to its good facilities and convenient public transportation. In the realm of *'tourism'*, frequency is at forty-six. It is mainly due to its fascinating tourist places and landmarks such as National Palace Museum, 101 Building, Tamsui beach, Ximending, and night markets. Taiwan's bustling cities namely Taipei, Kaohsiung, Taichung, and Tainan are also interesting for Southeast Asian tourists. Thus, it gains frequency at twenty-nine. In general, Taiwan is a popular travel destination for its Muslim friendliness and convenience. Convenience here means short distance, budget travel, global city, and welcoming atmosphere. The frequency for this theme is sixteen. Promotion is the theme that gains only one frequency. The recent promotion is perceived to promote higher growth in its tourism. The frequency of *'investment'* is at forty-three. Taiwan's Education is admired for its good quality but affordable fee. Thus, the frequency of the foreign students recruiting is at twenty-two. Meanwhile, the employment opportunities are still attractive for Southeast Asian people with the frequency at eighteen. Its inward investment and trade promotion gain the frequency at three. The frequency of *'brands'* is at forty-three. The experts can name the products that Taiwan exports to and industries that Taiwan invests in their countries with the frequency at twenty-nine. Moreover, the good quality of Taiwan's products and the industries that Taiwan is specialized in gain

recognition with the frequency at eleven. However, only two names of the companies which are TSMC and Foxconn and one name of the restaurant which is Ding Tai Fung are mentioned. Thus, the frequency of brands and companies is only at three. The total frequency of *'culture'* is thirty-six. Taiwan's iconic dishes such as Braised Pork Rice Bowl, MiànXiàn (Vermicelli), Taiwanese Iron Egg, Egg Pancake, Oyster Omelet, and Green Tea Jelly receive a lot of praise. As a result, food gains the highest frequency at fifteen. Taiwanese entertainment such as Taiwanese films, TV series, and pop songs receive a lot of praise. The *'Meteor Garden'* (a TV series that was very popular throughout Asia in 2001) is still memorable for many people so its frequency is at eleven. Moreover, the Taiwan's social habits is well perceived and described as well-educated, offensive, sociable, and opened. Its frequency is at ten. The participation in civil society is quite active. Taiwan's history is quite unique, and its culture is fascinating because it is crafted by Japanese.

Discussion

The frequency of the positive perception is significantly higher than the negative one in every realm of the CI. It reflects that the overall CI or brand image of Taiwan is well perceived, but it is limited to among the Chinese diaspora and those who are already linked to Taiwan only. These people are not the majority of Southeast Asian population. Many locals in Southeast Asia are not aware of the presence of Taiwan. They cannot

differentiate Taiwan from China and from Thailand. China is Taiwan's major competitor and has undermined Taiwan's presence in many ways. However, the confusion between Thailand and Taiwan shows that Taiwan has not put enough effort on promoting its CI yet. Moreover, the low resulting frequency of both negative and positive perceptions in the realm of 'culture' and 'brands' are evident that Taiwan is lacking strategic branding and promotion. That's why the experts do not have much to talk about them.

Lack of Branding and Promotion

According to the data, products and investment from Taiwan are welcome in Southeast Asia but most people do not know that they are from Taiwan. Taiwan's good-quality products and its responsible investment fail to create widespread awareness of Taiwan's CI. Many nations have been successful in promoting the nation's branded products such as Washington Apple, Swiss Army knife, and Tokyo Banana. Product of Taiwan such as Alishan tea and Chia Yi Chicken Rice have not been branded yet. KOI Thé, ASUS, HTC, and ACER are praised for their good quality, but these brands are not boldly linked to Taiwan. Taiwanese computer manufacturers have grown rapidly but only a few companies manage to create their own brand. Those that are branded do not boldly promote Taiwan as their origin. It shows that Taiwan has not moved up to the own brand manufacturing (OBM) as planned yet. It may not affect its economy much for now but it is significantly undermining Taiwan's CI. The improvement

of Taiwan's brands will improve its shopping tourism which nowadays still has to rely on some Japanese brands. Interestingly, the experts find Taiwan as a Muslim-friendly destination. There are more halal restaurants in Taipei and more prayer rooms at the tourist places such as Taipei 101 and Taipei Main Station. The Islamic market is very attractive because the majority of the population in Southeast Asia is Muslim. Since Japan and South Korea have not succeeded in promoting themselves as Muslim friendly destination yet, Taiwan has great potential for Islamic tourism. Strategic promotion is necessary at the market penetration stage. To accomplish effective branding and promotion as mentioned above, it requires the co-operation from every sector: public, private, and people. The initiation, large fund, and strategic guidance from the government, the willingness from private sector in creating brands that link itself to Taiwan, the support from people as consumers and influencers are very important.

Enlarge the Scope of P2P and Export Popular Culture

The study shows that Taiwanese people, in general, are admirable and it is evident that the P2P exchange which is one of the four pillars of the NSP is on the right track. However, the P2P exchange, which is like a door-to-door sales, requires a lot of time and effort. To boost it, Taiwan should promote and export its popular culture first. After that, it can export traditional culture or aboriginal culture. Due to the overlapping history of China and Taiwan, it is quite hard for Taiwan to create uniqueness

from its traditional culture at the market penetration stage. On another hand, promoting Taiwan's aboriginal culture does not help much either. Taiwan's aboriginal culture may be interesting but quite difficult to adopt it. Thus, it may not attract many people and may require a lot of time and effort to reach the goal. When South Korea exports its K-pop to Southeast Asia at the initial stage, it begins with TV series like Autumn in My Heart, Winter Sonata, and Full House which portray the modern life and beautiful places in South Korea. Since it is easy to adopt by the viewers, K-pop can penetrate Southeast Asian quite fast. The data shows that Taiwan's popular culture such as food and TV series like Meteor Garden and F4 are still attractive among their long-time fans. Their loyal fanbase can pave the way for the next generation of Taiwan's popular culture. Since popular culture emerged from the democratic system (majority of the people like it so it is popular), it can create a large level of brand awareness and boost its effective but slow P2P exchange. It is time for Taiwan to enlarge the scope of its P2P exchange by including its celebrities and youth to its strategy. Celebrities and are considered as the important resources for creating popular culture because they are the major presenter of popular culture whereas youths are the creators and the initial adopters of popular culture. Since the data shows that Taiwanese youths and celebrities are highly recognized by the experts. It shows that Taiwan has good resources for creating popular culture and consequently has great

potential for exporting it. Moreover, popular culture is a useful mean to promote its CI in Southeast Asia. Its success can create spillover effect on the realm of tourism, brands, and investment as well.

Policy is the Key to Success

'Policy' receives a lot of mentions from the experts both positively and negatively. It highlights the fact that the success of Taiwan's CI relies a lot on the realm of policy. The experts are quite confident with Taiwan in this realm and highly admire President Tsai Ing Wen and her administration for their democratic quality, transparency, and NSP even though they think that the promotion is still insufficient. Nevertheless, political instability is quite a concern. At the international level, whether Taiwan can counter with One-China policy or not is the major challenge. China has made clear that it will not tolerate any Taiwan independence incidents. China's government are always active in strengthening its ties with Southeast Asian countries and undermining Taiwan's presence. It highlights the importance of nation's CI which is the way to promote nation's prosperity and security. Consequently, the success of promoting the nation's CI especially for the case of Taiwan relies heavily on policy. The government as a policy maker plays a crucial role in strategically assigning the role for the nation in the global society such as 'global leader', 'friendly to environment', and 'peace maker'. Since the scale of nation branding is very large, the whole nation needs to co-operate with each other. Normally it takes ages to complete

nation branding. Although the concern about the instability of Taiwan's domestic politics is not much, it should not be overlooked. New leadership normally means new policy. Hence, continuity in President Tsai and her administration guarantees the continuity in the NSP. At the same time, Taiwan's government also needs to balance its relations with Southeast Asian countries well so as to guarantee the success in promoting its CI in this region. The success will attract the continuous support from Taiwanese people.

Conclusion

The unique case of Taiwan is evident that it is almost impossible to draw the boundaries between politics and business. The globalization has driven Taiwan to enthusiastically present its CI in Southeast Asia and beyond so as to gain recognition from the global society and access the limited resources. In this context, the research is conducted based on hexagon of Competitive Identity. The results lead to three major conclusions. Firstly, Taiwan's CI is weak in Southeast Asia because it lacks of strategic branding and promotion. Taiwan's high-quality products, fascinating tourism, and its responsible investment are well perceived only among some of those who are linked to Taiwan either by chance or by plan. This is evident that its P2P exchange is quite effective but rather slow in creating widespread brand awareness. To accomplish effective branding and promotion, it requires the cooperation from every sector: public, private, and people. The initiation, large fund, and strategic guidance

from the government, the willingness from private sector in creating brands that link itself to Taiwan, and the support from people as consumers and influencers are very important. Secondly, Taiwanese celebrities and youths are attractive and popular for Southeast Asian consumers. Thus, Taiwan should enlarge the scope of its P2P exchange by including celebrities and youths to the exchange via the export of its brands and popular culture. Thirdly, the success of Taiwan's nation branding relies heavily on 'policy'. Taiwan's government as a policy maker has to strategically lead the whole nation to promote its CI. Besides One-China Policy, Taiwan's political instability may damage its CI. The change of Taiwan's government may end its NSP. It is crucial for Taiwan's government to strengthen its unofficial relationship with Southeast Asia so as to pave the way for the success in its NSP and gain continuous support from Taiwanese people in the future election. In addition to the above three major conclusions, the research provides two implications for Southeast Asia as the targeted region by Taiwan's NSP. Firstly, Taiwan's outward investment to Southeast Asia will increase since it aims to divert its investment from China to Southeast Asia. It is a good opportunity for Southeast Asia to receive not just only investment but also the transfer of technology and know-how from Taiwan. To embrace such opportunity, Southeast Asian countries should improve its investment environment such as skills strategies for labor market and modernizing public utility. Secondly, there is no such thing as a free lunch.

Countries in Southeast Asia will unavoidably be pressured to choose sides between China who has great influence in Southeast Asia and Taiwan who enjoys unofficial relationship with the U.S. Thus, it is vital for Southeast Asian countries to balance the relations between both sides carefully.

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