

Selling Place Brand by Place Brand Champions

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Cite as:

Min Junhong, Dalman M. Deniz (2025), Selling Place Brand by Place Brand Champions. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 54th, (126061)

Paper from the 54th Annual EMAC Conference, Madrid, Spain, May 25-30, 2025



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Abstract

This research investigated how retailers in an unpopular tourist area leveraged a place brand to market place brand merchandise (e.g., place-logo printed clothing). Such geographically-bounded retailers contain three place brand sales problems. First, these retailers lack direct control over the perception of the place brand and are forced to adapt to the change in the place's brand image. Second, tourists to less popular areas typically generate short-term sales rather than repeat purchases because they are unlikely to return. Last, retailers are forced to share the place brand asset with other stakeholders, including competitors, complicating their ability to maintain a competitive advantage. This implies that the success of geographically-bounded retailers depends on how effectively managing both ex-ante (selection of a place brand) and ex-post problems (adaptation of change in place brand) in selling place brand merchandise.

This research tackled this problem by examining how place brand plays an important role in the relationship between geographically bound retailers and tourists. Drawing on the place brand literature and self-congruity theory, we tested a proposed model using SEM. Results from 301 respondents who had visited a retailer selling place brand merchandise indicate that place brand purchase intention was higher among individuals who internalized the place brand into self-identity and engaged in place citizenship behavior. We refer to these individuals as "place brand champions." The results also indicate that reference group influence is significant, particularly when place brand champions foster emotional attachment to the place brand.

Key Words: *Place Brand, Place Brand Champion, Geographically-bounded Retailers*

Submitted to the Track of Tourism Marketing