

# Research on Role Positioning in Place Brand Internationalization

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**Abstract.** This paper takes the place role as the research object, discusses the influence mechanism of place role positioning on the host consumer acceptance based on the moral legitimacy, and develops the place role positioning strategy. The study finds place role moral legitimacy can be obtained through role behavior follows the regulatory norms of the host country, the role attitude highlights, and the role ability leading strategy. And the role positioning on this moral legitimacy can help the place gain brand trust and ultimately gain acceptance from host consumers and turn into real benefits. This conclusion further enriches the place brand internationalization theory and provides theoretical guidance for place brand internationalization practice.

**Keywords:** place branding; role positioning; moral legitimacy.

## 1. Introduction

In the internationalization of brands, compared with local operations, the operation of multinational corporations in the host country often faces institutional distances brought about by great changes in culture, regulation and cognition and “foreigner disadvantages” [1]. This makes it difficult for consumers to correctly recognize the structural characteristics of the organization and not to make positive expectations of the behavior of the organization, resulting in unacceptable. In fact, the place appears in various roles in the international consumer market, and the positioning of place roles can help the place penetrate space and culture. Regulation and cognitive distance, rooted in the characteristics of foreign consumers, forming a unique competitive advantage. The highly open trade policy, quality service and rich retail brand resources have positioned the role of Hong Kong's shopping paradise. Consumer recognition of Hong Kong's "shopping paradise" role has brought huge traffic to Hong Kong's retail industry. Since the opening of free travel in 2003, Hong Kong's retail sales have quadrupled in ten years. Due to the long history of wine production (600 BC) and the high quality and popularity, the French wine is deeply rooted in the hearts of the people, and even when it comes to wine, France has become synonymous with international high-quality wines, even if foreign consumers do not know much about wine and France. Foreign consumers believe in their quality because of their “stereotype” impression of this role, making French wine popular in the international market, 2017 France The export volume of wine has reached 9.1 billion euros. Therefore, role positioning is very important for place of brand internationalization.

However, most of the previous academic research focused on the influence of role positioning on the attitude, cognition and behavior of the subject, and how to play a specific role in certain specific situations, but the influence of the role of the subject on the recipient has not yet begun. That is to say, how to influence the host country consumer acceptance through place role positioning has not been explored. Only studying on the role of the subject itself can not obtain the consumer's perception of the role, has no direct effect on the study of consumer acceptance. Most of the existing researches only discuss the "formal expectations" that play a certain role from the perspective of regulation, and explore how to occupy a certain social position, while ignoring the acceptance of role positioning at the normative level of values, culture, etc., ignoring the "informal". Expectation. In fact, informal expectations are often necessary, and the sanctions associated with them may be more serious than formal expectations [2]. Regulatory pressures are more about values and codes of conduct, similar to social moral or normative expectations. And the moral legitimacy makes it easier for the audience to accept the resources that the organization needs to look fit and appropriate [3]. Therefore, exploring

place role positioning from the perspective of moral legitimacy can provide a new perspective for solving the problems accepted by consumers in host countries.

Specifically, there are three main research questions in this study: What are the place role positioning strategies? Will place role positioning affect the acceptance of host country consumers? What is the impact mechanism?

## **2. Literature Review on Role Positioning**

The concept of "role" comes from the stage. It refers to a specific person played by the performer. Later, the American sociologist GH Mead and the anthropologist R. Linton introduced social psychology, and gradually formed the sociological term "social role." Sociologists believe that roles are a set of rights and obligations and a system of behavioral norms. In this study, role refers to individuals in a certain social environment, according to the objective expectations of the society, adapting to the behavioral patterns exhibited by the social environment with their own subjective ability. The role is always in a certain environmental context, understanding the expectations of the mechanism, clarifying self-awareness, and integrating the two and adjusting within an acceptable range is the role positioning. From the perspective of social roles, the process of individuals choosing their own suitable roles based on their own conditions and social needs is role positioning .

For the role of role positioning, the existing research mainly considers the influence of role positioning on behavior choice and attitude and cognition. Parker and Sharon K [4] believe that role positioning can affect employee performance, and flexible role positioning will promote performance. William J. Qualls [5] argues that the gender roles of wives and husbands can influence family decisions. From the perspective of the role of government, the role of government is a high-level summary of government behavior and results. Role positioning is the process in which a place selects a role and acquire the role, so that the consumer forms an integrated perception of the role and the place.

These studies have basically determined that role positioning has an impact on the behavior and attitude of the subject, but lacks the influence of role positioning on the behavior, attitudes and cognition of its observers.

Regarding how to position the role, sociology tends to position social roles from several levels: social relations, social norms, social positions, and social identities; social psychology focuses on locating social roles from individual behaviors and behavioral patterns. Starting from the connotation dimension of social roles, social psychologists believe that role positioning can be achieved from five important factors: role-player, social status, social relationship system, social expectation, and behavioral model. Russell Thornton and Peter M. Nardi [2] argue that the role can be achieved by satisfying society's behavioral, attitude, and cognitive expectations of the role, but no specific strategy is proposed, only an abstract theoretical overview. Where may refer to the ways in which an incumbent of a social position should behave, to the particular attitudes and values appropriate to him, or to the knowledge and skills he should have. Combining the above research on the role concept and role positioning, this study may develop role positioning strategies from the three dimensions of behavior, attitude and cognition of the role, and explore the impact mechanism on consumer acceptance in the host country.

## **3. Development of Role Positioning Strategy in Host Country**

Based on the existing research, this study starts from the three aspects of the behavior, attitude and cognition of the role, the three dimensions of role behavior, attitude and ability according to the actual content of the research and the actual content of the dimension, and develops the place role as the content. Combined with the three ways of obtaining moral legitimacy, we think the role positioning can through role behavior follows the regulatory norms of the host country, the role attitude highlights, and the role ability leading to gain moral legitimacy.

For the meaning of brand trust, Delgado-Ballester et al. [6] believe that brand trust is a confident expectation of the brand's reliability and inclination in the face of risk. Further, brand trust is a risk-based situation in which consumers are based on positive expectations of brand quality, behavioral intentions, and ability to perform commitments, thereby generating a willingness to recognize the brand. In other words, the establishment of brand trust requires consumers to establish positive expectations for the behavior of the target audience. Role positioning is providing consumers with evidence of behavioral prejudice. According to our definition of the role concept of the place, the role of the place is in the established brand internationalization norms, the behavior and cognition of the place brand itself, and the behavior of the place brand formed by the host country consumers in the host country consumer interaction. expected. That is to say, after the role is constructed, people can have a clearer behavior expectation for the actors in this role. In addition, we believe that the place role-positioning strategy creates consumer positive associations and enhances brand preferences by making consumers perceive the positive characteristics of place roles, their uniqueness let consumers generate trust.

In the internationalization of brands, it is extremely important to get the trust of consumers in the host country in the face of "inferiority of the outsiders". Some scholars found and confirmed that the perception of the legitimacy of the brand by the host country consumers does enhance their confidence in the product or brand and generate trust. Trust plays a role in reducing social uncertainty in the transaction process and plays a decisive role in consumer behavior such as purchasing. Brand trust is a multidimensional scale including the two dimensions of brand equity and brand [7]. Therefore, we believe that consumers trust place brands, which means that there are enough reasons to believe that the brand is qualified, and intention legitimacy, thus forming a positive willingness to purchase, that is, consumer acceptance.

Based on the above analysis, this part of the study proposes the following propositions:

Proposition1: role behavior follows the regulatory norms of the host country can obtain host country consumers' acceptance.

Proposition2: emphasize that role attitudes are friendly and beneficial to host country consumers can obtain host country consumers' acceptance.

Proposition3: through the role of technology advance can obtain host country consumers' acceptance.

#### **4. Summary**

This study believes that the place can obtain moral legitimacy through the three aspects of the role, attitude and ability of the role played, role behavior should follows the regulatory norms of the host country, highlight the place role attitude on good aspects of the public, and create leading role capabilities to reshape character standards, so that the place role can be morally sensible to the host country consumers, and this moral legitimate role positioning will make the host country consumers trust place brands, and ultimately lead to consumer acceptance. This study innovatively explores the impact of place role positioning on consumer acceptance in host countries from the perspective of moral legitimacy, enriching the theoretical study of brand internationalization. At the same time, the developed place role positioning strategy also has concrete guidance for practical operations, which can help the place achieve the brand internationalization strategy. However, this study also has certain deficiencies: First, only theoretical derivation, late research should conduct further empirical tests; second, from the perspective of moral legitimacy, without considering the impact of cognitive legitimacy and pragmatic legitimacy on role positioning, Later research can explore the role-positioning strategy by developing or integrating the relationship between the three types of legitimacy and role positioning to develop a more comprehensive positioning strategy.

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