

Marketing Innovations for Sustainable Destinations

20 Is the Strategy of Becoming the Las Vegas of Asia Working for Macau? A Co-branding Perspective

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Introduction

I am transforming Macau into an Asian Las Vegas.

Sheldon Adelson ¹

With more money now received in betting revenues annually than Las Vegas, the Special Administrative Region of Macau in China has become the gambling center of the world. The tremendous increase in betting revenues is partly attributable to the innovation introduced by the entry of Las Vegas style casino hotels and resorts into what was then a highly regulated gambling monopoly in the formerly sleepy Portuguese territory. Since being granted their licenses to operate casinos in 2002 and the subsequent opening in late 2004 of the first Las Vegas style gaming property in Macau (with several other projects having been established or currently under development), the new Las Vegas operators have radically transformed the product mix of tourism attractions, combining gambling with novel concepts of entertainment and leisure activities. But is the dramatic increase in tourism and gambling activity attributable to new visitor-gambler markets attracted by the new Las Vegas operators or are they simply bringing in more of the same visitor-gambler mix similar to those that came prior to the liberalization of the gaming industry? In other words, have the new Las Vegas casino-resorts truly made Macau into an Asian Las Vegas? Such a question is vital from the point of view of tourism planners and policy makers in Macau whose aim it is to diversify and transform the once sleepy and sleazy territory of Macau into a dynamic destination for international and regional visitors with a 'world-class gaming industry' (Ho, 2002). The burden of expectation for the new Las Vegas operators is immense given their successful reputation for transforming Las Vegas from a mere gambling destination to a major and highly diverse entertainment and business tourism center in the United States.

¹ Sheldon Adelson is the head of Las Vegas Sands Corporation, one of the sub-concession recipients of three gaming licenses granted by open tender in 2002 to liberalize the industry in Macau. Quoted statement is from Schuman M, Neil G. 2005. The Great Game Macau is in the middle of a building spree that will turn the former colony into Asia's Las Vegas--or maybe something even bigger. *Time International* 165 (5): 30.

Chapter extract

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