SPEECH OF SEC. BERTIE LIM

FOR PREVIEW OF BRAND PHILIPPINES

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen… Good evening.

Thank you for joining us tonight as we give you a preview of the new Philippines

brand that will be the centerpiece of our tourism promotional programs and

advertising campaigns in the years to come.

It is the result of intensive market research and a rigorous branding process

done by one of the large agencies in the country. And I think it is a compelling

brand, both in form and substance. But I must quickly add that it is not complete,

in the sense that we have yet to develop the campaigns. Nor is it final. We still

have to do market testing and FGDs to refine the brand. At best, it is a work in

progress.

We believe that a country brand is so important that before we commit ourselves

to the production and placement of expensive TV commercials, we would like to

share with you, the industry stakeholders, the emerging brand. It is in keeping up

with the President’s philosophy of public‐private partnership. Your inputs will

help in strengthening the brand even more.

In many cases, a rebranding exercise by a nation is met with stiff resistance. In

2007, when Singapore first toyed with the idea of rebranding, an article in the

Singapore Business Times openly criticized the government for even considering

it.

The article declared, “The latest effort by the government to craft and

communicate an allencompassing

message to the world about what Singapore is

all about, what makes it unique and great, etc … is likely to fail.”It went on to argue

that Singapore has firmly established itself as the premiere business destination.

Why repackage Singapore to mean something else? Why fix it when it ain’t

broke?

Similarly, some people are questioning the wisdom of our own rebranding. Why

not just build on the brand equity of Wow Philippines? With our limited budget,

can we really successfully launch and sustain a new brand? I will address those

questions later.

Meanwhile, Singapore launched its new brand early this year. And already, they

have achieved their arrival target for the year as early as October. We can only

conclude that Singapore has successfully repositioned itself from a business

destination to one where you can work and play. Of course, the brand launch was

timed with the opening of a theme park and casinos.

There’s an important lesson here.

Simon Anholt, foremost authority on Nation Branding, tells us that positioning a

country’s brand is about highlighting the attributes that differentiate it from

other nations. But the points of difference must be relevant, distinctive, and

believable.

Without a doubt, Singapore’s old brand was relevant to its primary market –the

business traveler. It was believable. The business and communications

infrastructure were in place. And it was distinctive. Singapore was one of the

few, if not the only one, who can claim to be the business hub in the region.

When they expanded their market to include the leisure traveler, they needed to

project a new Singapore. The idea of a “work and play” destination was certainly

relevant to this new market. The casinos and theme park made it believable. And

once again, Singapore can lay claim to that distinctive brand.

Of course, a brand must also have attractive visuals and a catchy slogan. And

Singapore’s new brand has that too.

As we reveal our own brand tonight, I am confident that you will find the visuals

charming and the slogan catchy. But the more important questions are: Is it

relevant? Is it distinctive? And is it believable?

In the last four months, we have received many brand suggestions from wellintentioned

people. Each proponent is passionately convinced that it is the

brand that will bring in the tourists in flocks. Using the three brand positioning

questions to test the suggested brand will give us an idea of how the brand will

fare.

Let me give you just two examples.

One brand suggestion is “Latin Asia”, highlighting our unique Hispanic heritage

brought about by over 400 years of Spanish rule. It certainly is distinctive. We

are the only one in the region who can claim it, offering a unique experience in

our rich culture and character as a people. It conjures images of Spanish

architectures combined with song, dance, and romance. It is believable. It reflects

both in our looks and in our way of life. But is it relevant? Is it compelling enough

to make tourists prefer us over our neighbors as a leisure destination? Maybe.

Maybe not.

Another suggestion is to highlight our peace‐loving nature as a people, which we

really are, deep inside. The idea is to counter the negative image resulting from

the August 23 incident. It is definitely relevant, especially since we are

addressing a current concern. It is distinctive. I don’t know of any country in the

region claiming to be “peaceful” or “peace‐loving”. But is it believable?

I think it will take a lot of effort and money to convince travelers, especially when

they frequently see in the news stories of crime and violence. Besides, it can

easily be parodied. I can almost imagine the CNN headline the next time a similar

incident like August 23 happens: “Philippines: A Place Where You Can Rest in

Peace.”

The brand you are about to see is relevant, distinctive and believable. It extols

our innermost beauty, and not just of our destinations, but also of our people and

everything else that we do. It is something that we can distinctively claim, and

every foreigner who has visited our shores will attest to it. It is also relevant and

appealing to a market constantly searching for a more beautiful place and

experience.

But when we present it to others, we receive mixed reactions, eliciting either

excitement or disbelief – not so much with the message, but with the means we

chose to convey the message. It is a radical departure from what our neighbors

are doing, and to the faint of heart, a bit risky.

Simon Anholt, in his article “From Nation Branding to Competitive Identity”

rightfully observed that many tourism campaigns are so similar that it leads to

commoditization. When our neighbors are claiming to be amazing, incredible,

charming, inspiring, and truly Asia – what can we really say that will make us

more than just another Asian destination?

We need to be more daring in expressing our brand, if we are to rise above the

clutter.

When presented in the right context, we often end up making our audience fullpledged

supporters of the new brand. This was the case when we presented it to

some of you. This was even more so when we presented to the President. He

even gave his own inputs in terms of colors and other visual elements, which are

now part of the brand you will see tonight.

Going back to the questions – “Why not just build on the Wow Philippines

brand?” and “Can we afford to launch and sustain a new brand?”

The answer is quite simple. At a time when every nation, big or small, is either

creating a new brand or repackaging their current ones, would you rather rehash

an 8‐year old brand? Besides, a new brand always generates a buzz that

translates to more media mileage for the same promotional budget.

Even more importantly, this is a good opportunity for us to express in a fresh

manner the hope and optimism that the Aquino administration represents.

Finally, let me just say that a brand, by itself – no matter how solid the concept is,

no matter how stunning the visuals are and how compelling the slogan is, no

matter how big the budget is – cannot guarantee success.

In 1997, Prime Minister Tony Blair endorsed a new brand for the UK – “Cool

Britannia”. The new brand repositioned Britain as a modern, forward‐thinking

nation and a world leader in creativity and innovation; a sharp contrast to the

snooty and anchored‐in‐past‐glory image of the old brand, “Rule Britannia”.

It made sense. It was distinctive and caught the essence of everything young and

trendy about modern Britain. From BritArt to BritPop, from fashion to business,

it sought to encapsulate the national creative spirit of the times. It was also

relevant to the changing mood of its traditional markets.

Four years later, the brand was declared dead. There was so much debate about

it that in the end, there was no critical mass of support for the new brand from

among its leaders and citizenry. If it was not believed by its own people, how can

you expect people from other nations to believe in it?

In the end, it is the faith and trust in the brand of the various stakeholders that

can make or break a brand.

Some of you came tonight with your own brand idea in mind. I can tell you with

conviction that if you cannot convince 50 other people in this room who brought

along their own brand ideas, that yours is the best brand, it has absolutely no

chance of succeeding.

That’s why I’d like to invite all of you to join hands and rally behind the brand we

are about to reveal. Together, let’s make the brand not only believable, but also

real.

After all, no one can argue that our motherland is beautiful. And it’s the only one

we have.

Thank you and good evening.

Ka Bino Guerrero

where in Cebu Can you find this? "You will also see cliffs that tower above crashing surfs, virgin forests, clear rivers, mossy jungles, and cool mountain ridges.".

Department of Tourism

Ka Bino Guerrero

Nightlife

The central Philippine city of Cebu is a popular destination among tourists because its nightlife is at par if not better than in Metro-Manila. Big development companies have opened up operations in the city as well as major club c...hain operators have set up their presence. Be sure to go to Ayala Mall and the other establishments that abound Osmena Blvd.See More

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