# Branding Strategy for Gamuda Land Real Estate Developer in Ho Chi Minh City Vietnam. Celadon City Project

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Brand building is an important marketing activity for business organizations. As real estate is the most important industry in Vietnam due to being considered as a safe haven for an investment purpose to protect the assets from devaluation over time. It is also important for forein real estate developers in Ho Chi Minh City, the most dynamic and vibrant city in Vietnam where one of the leading real estate developers is Gamuda Land from Malaysia. In this article, we introduce readers to the specific branding strategy of this unique Malaysian real estate developers in Vietnam as a role model for other nations such as South Korea, Japan, Taiwan and Singapore who would rather prefer to invest in industrial zones and industrial properties. This article is also a good example for domestic real estate developers to refer to, to consult and to follow beaten track of development.

#### **Keywords (Times New Roman, bold, 9)**

Brand management; Brand building; Gamuda Land.

#### Introduction

Vietnam is a country in economic transition toward the market economy. In the context of the current trend of globalization and integration, Vietnam's real estate market has gradually shifted from a state monopoly to market-oriented competition with participation of many foreign real estate investors and developers. Vietnam's regional and global integration in the current time has contributed to further increase the intensity of competition. Competition takes place not only between domestic real estate developers but also with foreign developers through foreign direct investment in real estate or related sectors in Vietnam. The intensity of competition is even fiercer as the media have developed a rating system for all developers in largest cities including Ho Chi Minh city and this system is revised annually for improvements (Tien, 2019c).

With the trend of regional and global integration, especially when Vietnam joined the World Trade Organization (WTO), real estate is one of the twelve industries under the scope of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). Along with the development of the economy and society that requires housing for an increasing number of people, especially those moving from rural area to the largest city to make a living,

Vietnam must take appropriate development steps to provide housing and accommodation for them, responding to the needs of the housing market (Do & Huyen, 2009).

Gamuda Land is a professional and trustworthy investor and real estate developer from Malaysia. Established in 1995, it is currently present in Malaysia, Singapore, Australia and Vietnam (in both the capital of Hanoi and the Ho Chi Minh City). Gamuda land has built on the total area of 2500ha with total investment of billions USD. Gamuda Land continues to affirms its position as reputable real estate developer in Asia for creating green living spaces, integrating many utilities for both physical and mental life of the residents. Therefore, enhancing the brand value of Gamuda Land, especially as a large foreign real estate developer operating in Vietnam is necessary to enhance reputation, increase competitiveness and attract more Vietnamese customers into its current and future housing project.

Objectives of the study:

- Clarifying the theoretical basis of the effectiveness of the brand development of real estate industry in general, including foreign investors and developers coming from the large Big4 (Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore).

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- Analyzing and assessing the real situation of brand building and development, identifying strengths and weaknesses of Gamuda Land to propose measures to improve the effectiveness of its brand building and development.

#### **Literature Review**

# Concept of brand and brand of real estate developer

#### Concept of brand

Currently, the term "brand" is widely used in Vietnam. However, there exist many different interpretations around this term. In the legal documents of Vietnam, there is no term "brand" but only other relevant terms including trademark, trade name, name of origin, geographical indication, industrial designs (Thinh, 2003; Thai et al, 2019; Loc & Ha, 2009)

The American Marketing Association defines: "A brand is a name, a word, a sign, a symbol, a drawing or all of the above elements to distinguish the seller's products or services from other sellers' products and services. A brand can identify a single product, a series of products, or all of the seller's items"

According to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO): "A brand is a special (tangible and intangible) sign that identifies a certain product or service that is produced or provided by an individual or an organization. For businesses, brand is the concept related to consumers about products and services with the mark of the enterprise attached to the surface of the product and service to confirm quality and origin. Brand is an important intangible asset especially for large businesses as their brand value accounts for a significant part of the total value of the business".

#### Brand of real estate developer

Like in other business sectors, real estate industry also possess product related brands and organization related brands (institutional brands). Specifically, the product related brand is a trademark of a specific kind of property (for example: apartment, villa, shophouse, penthouse). Institutional brand is the brandname of the whole business organization such as those giant real estate developers in Vietnam (for example: Hung

Thinh Group, Nova Land Group, Vinhomes Group).

Both the product related brand concepts and organizational branding appear in practice. However, in recent times, brand concepts in real estate industry often refer to organization brands (e.g. Temple's concept, Bennett & Ali-Choudhury concept). Tran Tien Khoa (2013) thinks that the concept of organization brand is increasingly being used. According to Hatch & Schultz (2001), an organization brand is increasingly perceived by many to increase an organization's reputation and image in ways that cannot be achieved by product branding. The corporate brand builds an image of the organization not only towards customers, but also towards stakeholders such as: employees, investors, suppliers, business partners, authorities, the community and society at large.

Branding in the real estate industry helps learners distinguish one developer from another and helps potential customers make right long term investment decisions. Thus, the branding of the real estate developer will increase the reputation, image and attract many potential customers.

As a specific production and service mixed brand, the brand of a real estate developer is shown through the business name of the company, associated with its own identity, reputation and image to make a deep impression on customers, collaborative partners, lenders (banks and other institutions), investors and differentiate from other real estate developers in the housing market. In other words, the brand of a real estate developer is perception of customers, collaborative partners, lenders (banks and other institutions), investors, community and the society at large with the image that a real estate represents and what values it can give to them all (Minh et al, 2019; Bien et al, 2019).

# Brand building and development Brand vision building

The process of building brand identity begins with the process of building brand visibility as the first step for all the branding efforts and a guideline for the development direction of the brand. A brand's vision suggests directions for the future development and for a brand's aspirations. This is a brief, clear and thorough message, orienting the organization's activities related with the development of the

brand, showing the brand's goals set out by the business. In other words, brand vision shows the reason d'etre of an organization. Additionally, brand vision is the expression of senior leaders' determination towards the target position in the market that the organization sets out. Finally, brand vision is the message that management staff wants to send to all members of the organization, shareholders, customers, partners, government, press, the public and the rest of stakeholders inside and outside the organization. The important task of the management staff is to convey the brand vision to everyone and everywhere, turning it into a common perception of the brand for the organization in the long run (Vu et al, 2019; Hung et al, 2019).

### **Brand** positioning

As P.Kotler defined, "brand positioning is the set of activities that aim to give the product and product brand a definite position (relative to the competitor) in the mind of customer". According to Marc Filser, "brand positioning is the effort to give products a unique image, easy to enter into the perception of customers. More specifically, this is what businesses want customers to associate with each time they face their brand". In short, just as people need a position in society to be respected and to assert themselves, brands also need to be positioned to assert the brand's products as well as affirm the company's reputation and influence with the brand.

Brand positioning aims to create a brand image to separate from other brands. Regardless of the form, the brand must also have its own distinct characteristics, helping customers distinguish from products silimar or of the same type. Brand positioning should be formed in the process of branding. (Cuong 2003, Dung et al, 2019).

### Brand identity system

A brand identity system is all of the types and ways that a brand can impact and reach customers. Simply, a brand identity system is what consumers see and hear about that brand in their daily life. The goal of a brand identity system is not only to create awareness, differentiation, express the specific personality of the organization, but also aim to influence customer perceptions (Thai, 2007, Thuy et al, 2019).

The brand identity system is formed from a creative combination of visual and language elements. During the creation process, images and words must also exude the hidden aesthetic beauty. A strong brand identity system must have a specific, distinctive, memorable, reliable and flexible idea that must demonstrate an identity that conveys core brand values of the business.

#### **Brand** communication

Brand communication is the first activity that organizations need to do to bring products to customers such as: what is organization's name, what product or service is offering, what is the difference from other organizations in the same industry, why customers should choose products of the organization. Brand communication is a tool for customers to reflect on quality of services and help them constantly improve so that their products are increasingly perfect before they reach consumers. Brand communication has two forms: direct and indirect (Thai, 2007, Thuy et al, 2019).

Direct communication: Face-to-face, using sales staff to introduce new products in crowded places like residential areas, supermarkets. This is the way most FMCG businesses apply when launching a new product. Advantages: easy to grasp the psychology of the majority, easy to persuade and effective quickly. Disadvantages: costly time, money and manpower, unable to spread the information on a large scale.

Indirect communication: Using books, newspapers, movies, advertising, banners. Internet, pictures. This is the brand communication method that is commonly used today. Advantages: great impact in a short time. There are many different ways of expressing such as clips, pictures, words that are easy to attract customers. Disadvantage: not being in direct contact with customers, so it is not possible to feel the customer expression.

### **Brand** assessment

Currently, businesses not only focus on product and service development but also focus on other activities such as research on development trends, customer satisfaction assessment or brand development, marketing activities. Evaluating brand strength or health is an activity that is interested by many customers. Brand not only helps businesses shape products and services in the perception of customers, but also is one of the important factors contributing to maintaining,

expanding, and developing domestic and foreign markets. Not only improving commercial activities of businesses, brands also contribute to competition combating unfair practices. Especially, businesses are faced with fierce competition when joining global value chains and e-commerce is booming in the international integration context (Khanh, 2004; Anh & Tien, 2017).

Therefore, it is very essential for businesses to build brands for their goods and services. At the same time, businesses need to evaluate brand strength to position where they are in the global trade and economic picture as well as compared to their competitors in the current market. A strong brand is one of the metrics of business success. Strong brand name helps businesses sell better, thereby increasing revenue and profit. In addition, the assessment of brand strength helps businesses visualize whether they are on the right track or not to implement timely adjustment measures (Anh & Tien, 2017).

### Brand Building and Development for Gamuda Land Real Estate Developer

#### **Introduction to Gamuda Land**

Established in 1995, Gamuda Land is the property development arm of Gamuda Berhad, the leading engineering, construction and infrastructure group in Malaysia and one of Asia's leading companies. For more than two decades, Gamuda Land has consistently built on success in delivering innovative developments and creating sustainable communities. This is evident in many award-winning development events that score the landscape of Malaysia, as well as Australia, Singapore and Vietnam.

After more than 20 years of development, the project of 500ha Gamuda City Urban Area (Gamuda Gardens, Gamuda Lakes, Gamuda Plaza, Gamuda Hotel) and Celadon City 80ha have become a model functional city, pioneering in setting green real estate trends, honored with many prestigious domestic and international awards in Malaysia as well as Australia, Singapore and Vietnam.

Celadon City project is attracting a lot of attention from customers because the project is located in the central road, intersecting with many important areas in Ho Chi Minh City such as Tan Son Nhat airport, Metro line, national highway 1A combined with 16.4 ha ecological park, school, hospital, shoping center, resort club. All that have created the most outstanding living and working space in the western part of the city.

The apartments in Celadon City are divided into 6 suitable for diverse customers in terms of area and design: Ruby Area, Emerald Area, Diamond - Alnata Area, Diamond - Brilliant Area, Diamond - Alnata Plus Area, Diamond Centery Area.

Gamuda Land's official name is Gamuda Land Joint Stock Company - HCMC. This is a company operating in real estate sector, belonging to Gamuda Berhad Malaysia (founded on October 6, 1976) - one of the leading infrastructure and top real estate development groups in Malaysia. With more than 40 years of working, construction and development, the company now has more than 2,400 hectares of large and small land funds. Besides, the projects of this group are present everywhere not only domestically but also internationally such as: South Asia, Middle East, Southeast Asia, Indochina and Far East. Currently, this investor has built and managed two large projects, Celadon City in Ho Chi Minh City and Gamuda City in Hanoi.

Not only focusing on real estate market, Gamuda Land also develops in many other fields such as:

- + Railway
- + Sea works, harbors
- + Construction of highways, tunnels, national roads
  - + Public transportation system
- + Hydroelectric, hydraulic and water treatment engineering works

Up to now, Gamuda Land has also provided clean water for two million people. At the same time, deploying more than 3 billion USD for infrastructure to maintain 230km of highways serving people traveling every day and building more than 1,300 apartments in other development projects.

# Building and developing brand name for Gamuda Land

# Building vision and brand mission of Gamuda Land

Strategic vision: Gamuda Land affirmed its ability to grasp new urban development trends. At the same time, it shows a continuous effort to

become a pioneer urban builder, providing a sustainable civilized living space with full amenities, becoming a trend for Vietnam's real estate market. It affirms the pioneering position by meeting the needs of high-class customers and enhancing the existing value experience for residents.

Mission: Being the leading developer of projects to create new lifestyles is the mission of Gamuda Land. To guarantee high quality of life by building perfect apartments to serve the housing needs of customers. Focusing on the development of infrastructure, green space systems to bring residents an urban area with modern apartments and a life in harmony with nature.

Core values: Friendly and open to everyone - Teamwork spirit - Developing people. Brand positioning: Gamuda Land wishes to bring an authentic living space, a dear home where all generations accompany, stick together and experience life's milestones.

#### Brand positioning for Gamuda Land

The main goal of positioning is to give the Gamuda Land brand a separate image in relation to other real estate developers in Vietnam.

The target customers of Gamuda Land are people frommiddle class and wealthy families in Ho Chi Minh City and neighboring south provinces such as Dong Nai, Binh Duong, Long An, Ba Ria Vung Tau.

Competitors that Gamuda Land is interested in are the largest real estate developers in the same segment in Ho Chi Minh City such as: Nova Land, Hung Thinh, Vinhomes, Thanh Do. These are all prestigious real estate developers with their own strengths.

In the current context, real estate developers face competition in all segments of the market, so each developer has to build its own image. Gamuda Land is no exception. To attract potential customers, Gamuda Land aims to position its image in their minds as follows:

- Building image of Gamuda Land as a green living space developer, in which its strengths are high end luxury appartments and villas.
- Positioning based on the quality of living: Gamuda Land constantly improves its products and services to meet the practical requirements of

the society; Output products and services are highly appreciated by customers and investors.

- Positioning on the differences: Gamuda Land is a real estate developer belonging to the Malaysian business giant, so there is a system of different product offers responding to the needs of rising and increasingly wealthy middle class of customers with desire to experience a modern life in a green city, the Celadon City.

### **Evaluating the brand building and developing process of Gamuda Land**

The Gamuda Land branding work has achieved certain successes, as follows:

- Identify the vision and mission in line with the own potentials and the development trend of the society, especially with the trend of green living in a bustling big city.
- Gamuda Land has chosen a branding model that matches the size and scale of its development activities in Vietnam (both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City).
- The Gamuda Land product offers and related facilities are spacious and modern, creating favorable conditions for family living, recreational activities and, to some extent, also business activities.
- 95% of Celadon project's customers are satisfied with amenities, facilities and living standards and professional services offered by Gamuda Land.

#### Limitations:

- Gamuda Land has not carried out a methodical brand positioning. The image of Gamuda Land is still a little fuzzy in the minds of customers in comparision to the big domestic real estate developers.
- Gamuda Land has not invested strongly in brand advertising activities, so many customers in Ho Chi Minh City and neighboring provinces still do not know exactly about Gamuda Land and its projects across Vietnam. There are 2 main reasons leading to this situation: Firstly, the Marketing department is not specializing in advertising and brand development. Second, the funding source for brand advertising activities is still limited (the proportion of spending money on marketing activities is less than 2% of the total annual revenue).
- The official website system of Gamuda Land has attracted the public. However, the informal media channels such as fanpage has not

been highly effective, has not attracted a large number of customers, investors and other stakeholders to to participate. In general, the brand advertising of Gamuda Land is still too concentrated and not not creating an overall pervasive effect to many parties across Vietnam.

### Solutions for Gamuda Land Brand Development

### Forecasting real estate industry development in the current socio-economic context

# Trend of global foreign direct real estate investment and development

Globalization of the real estate industry is a common development trend in the world and Vietnam. This is an inevitable development trend, reflected in the Party and Government documents on fundamental change toward market oriented system. Globalization of all possible industries including real estate sector will contribute to improving the quality of the global business experience, promoting integration of Vietnamese market in the region and the world, thereby bringing back development for domestic firms. Globalization is understood to be the highest stage in international relations markets. industries between nations. corporations.

Along with the process of international integration and cooperation, Vietnamese real estate market also imports living patterns and styles in highly developed countries; exploring modern marketing and management methods of advanced economies in the world, meeting housing development international quality standards. In line with the import of newest technologies in housing development and building management it is possible to combat and overcome 5 weaknesses of the current Vietnam real estate market: the backwardness of training programs and methods regarding property management; the lack of professional qualified human resources; the lack of support services for the industry.

# Trend in real estate industry in the context of the Industrial Revolution 4.0

The world today is undergoing great unprecedented changes. Industrial revolution 4.0 has been and will continue to create strong

changes, affecting all aspects of human life in the 21st century. This revolution will have a profound effect on the global economy and society, including all markets and industries, including Vietnamese housing market. If possessing an own house is considered as a necessary step towards life stability and future economic prosperity as perceived by young people, the housing market will certainly go through significant change, also under impact of the industrial revolution 4.0 to serve the basic needs of ordinary people and further needs of investment for the better future.

For real estate developers, industrial revolution 4.0 requires the training of human resources with adequate skills to adapt to the new market demands. Thus, it can be seen that the impact of industrial revolution 4.0 on real estate industry is great, creating both opportunities and challenges for real estate developers and investors.

The protracted COVID-19 pandemic, from a positive perspective, is a lever for real estate developers to promote online sales and digital transformation, saving operational costs. During the pandemic, many companies regardless of sectors and industries were closed down, and mamy transactions were delayed or cancelled. This sudden change has put a lot of pressure on real estate developers and brokers, showing unprecedented situations in the past as well as opportunities to explore new shifts in real estate business.

# Solutions to improve brand development of Gamuda Land

### Implementing brand positioning of Gamuda Land

Gamuda Land needs to affirm its position in a very large and dynamically changing market, offering housing offers to people of many walks of life and different level of affordability meet generally the increasing demands of the society.

Gamuda Land aims to build a distinctive, unique and meaningful image. Compared to other real estate developers in the same segment, Gamuda Land is one of not many to offer the best living amenities and facilities in Ho Chi Minh City. This factor needs to be broadly amplified. The system of multiple customer segments with different prices and common standard of infrastructure quality is a strength of Gamuda Land and emphasizes the promotion of its image in the local and national market.

Gamuda Land needs to position its products and services offer with core values, different from competitors, in order to build in the public's mind a sustainable image of a truly professional real estate developer.

Besides specialized housing offer for middle and high income class customers, Gamuda Land offer luxury apartments and resort villas for VIP customers as special high end, great value investment products. Quality of these products and associated professional services are the core value that Gamuda Land provide for their customers. Customers gain economic values through the investment in these products and related guaranteed professional services delivered by reputable foreign real estate developer such as Gamuda Land. As consequences, Gamuda Land need to build core values based on professional knowledge and services, because this is a testament to its own quality and professionalism of developed products and delivered services for the demands of the market and the needs of the society.

### Completing the brand identity system of Gamuda Land

In the coming time, Gamuda Land needs to continue strengthening and perfecting its brand identity system to increase awareness, affirm its position in the market and society, developing its brands in a sustainable way.

Firstly, Gamuda Land should shape its own personality for its brand. Providing customers with a good investment products and opportunities is not enough, Gamuda Land needs to create for its own personalities, make a difference with other real estate developers, increase investment for opportunities customers. Due to the characteristics of Gamuda Land consisted in importing and delivering global values to Vietnamese people, it should aim to build a passionate and creative brand personality. Because in a competitive economy, only truly excellent real estate developers are able to grow and prosper. To do that, Gamuda Land needs a clear direction to adjust perceptions and actions of its people, mamagement staff sales teams and everyone else within.

Secondly, to increase the creation and development of typical values offered by Gamuda Land. Gamuda Land should aim to build a culture of harmony between the traditional elements of

Vietnam, Malaysia and Asia and the modern elements of the world. Besides the application of specialized values acress the world, Gamuda Land expresses its own cultural values through friendly and sustainable relationships with parties within and outside the Vietnam society (media, businesses, educational institutions both Vietnam, Malaysia and the third countries).

Thirdly, Gamuda Land continues to build and consolidate a set of brand identity products. Gamuda Land may keep its name and logo intact, but the slogan should be changed to create a strong public attraction. Gamuda Land slogan design must ensure the following factors: short, easy to understand, meaningful and attractive. Gamuda Land has built a relatively complete set of brand identity products, including: name, logo, slogan, publications, trade promotion system. The brand identity products are printed with Gamuda Land name and logo, thus achieving high consistency. Potential customers easily recognize the Gamuda Land brand through these logos. To complete a set of brand identity products, to make a good impression on customers, Gamuda Land needs to be consulted and supported by prestigious design agencies.

### The conditions for implementing the solutions

Leadership, office, sales and brokers staff working for Gamuda Land need to increase brand awareness, flexibly and creatively apply business principles in the field of real estate business to support the construction and brand development of the company.

Gamuda Land needs to improve the policies and regulations to be consistent at all levels, and at the same time reach the consensus of all people. This is the foundation to develop the brand name that will be increasingly strong. Gamuda Land need strong financial resources to implement branding solutions. Financial resources play important roles in implementing new housing designs, attracting and retaining talented people, and reinforcing and developing the brand's core values.

Gamuda Land needs to invest strongly in the sales staff and brokers staff, because this is the deciding factor for the reputation and brand of the company. Gamuda Land can only brand itself when all people and staff understand the values of the brand. Gamuda Land needs to expand its relationships with all parties, including training institutions, socio-economic organizations and businesses to enlist their help and support to position own image in the minds of customers, thereby perfecting the building and development of the own corporate brand.

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