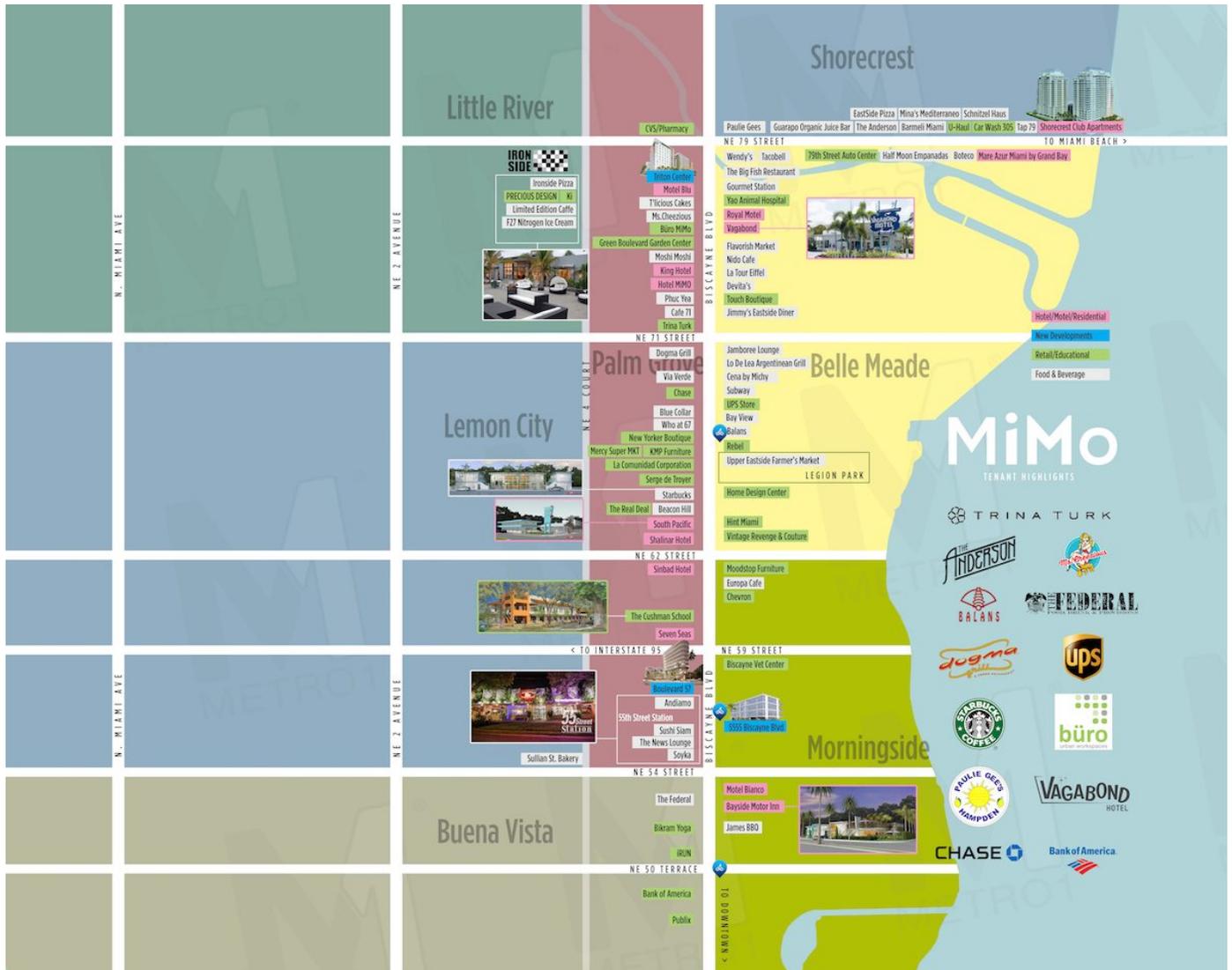


Stay Positive! A Case of Place Marketing

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What is required to successfully change the existing negative image and promote a location? MiMo District as a destination that people want to visit and is located on Biscayne Boulevard in Miami between 54th and 77th street. MiMo is an architectural style that started in South Florida after the Second World War in 1945. The area was known for its prominent style, Art Deco. Indeed, most of the buildings in that area emphasized geometrical shapes (MiMo Boulevard 2016). However, after being a celebrity destination, MiMo became an area deserted by locals and tourists. Indeed, the area had a negative reputation and was known as an area with high crime rate. In addition, there was a high volume of traffic on US 1 which was the main artery on the Boulevard. Some restrictions were also imposed by the city where buildings could not be taller than 35 feet. Therefore, revitalizing the boulevard has been a priority by the MiMo association so that the area who used to be one of the top destinations of celebrities such as Franck Sinatra can once again become the destination of locals and tourists and attract more real estate investments.

Therefore, first and foremost, as researchers we studied and analyzed MiMo's current situation. We also assessed and evaluated several other competing destinations to find out what they have done to promote their areas, and how they stayed successful. We suggested changes ranging from streets to buildings, prices to accommodations, businesses to people, funding to community service, and promotions to entertainment. All aimed at enhancing the image of MiMo and attracting more people, and eventually putting it at par with destinations such as Clematis Street, Brickell Avenue, Coconut Grove, and maybe one day, South Beach.

One of the strengths in MiMo's marketing efforts is the support and connections it has within the local media, one of the local stakeholders. Local newspapers and blogs (such as Sun Sentinel, Biscayne Times, Miami Herald, and Miami New Times) have shown support for MiMo's events and are promoting the area's projects, restaurants, and events. More recently, publications such as the Miami Herald have realized the efforts being put forward to revitalize the district and have been placing a more positive spin on the area in terms of being a dining and cultural destination. However, one of the weaknesses is related to the inconsistent media image of the area and a lack of coordination of stakeholders when dealing with the media. In the past, the media's attention towards the destination has always been negative in terms of the location's crime and neglected facilities. The new attempts of publicity continue to conflict with the negative image that MiMo still receives from other media outlets. Establishing a stronger movement to create a positive image of the area and communicating it to the media in Miami, through a strong public relations campaign, is necessary to eliminate this weakness.

In addition, a weakness in the marketing and communications tools is the lack of consistency in the promotional efforts. Efforts such as events and banners do not seem to be related with the image that MiMo wants to project as a historic district. MiMo has great opportunities being re-branded as a prosperous and vivacious 1950's historic district. However, the efforts have to be consistent with that concept, otherwise the public will find it difficult to understand the historical value the area truly has, and will not be able to identify how MiMo is different from the competition.

Also, there are no signs indicating arrival to the MiMo district and there is nothing being done to promote the brand in this manner. Thus, the logo, tagline, web page, banners, advertisements, and events have to be related to each other and to the 1950's theme in order to bring the whole historic concept together; there must be a strategic direction and coordination. The prices of restaurants and retailers can be considered a strength since it is relatively similar in comparison to other areas. High-end places like the fashion designer Julian Chang or the restaurants Soyka, Michy's and Casa Toscana are considered strengths because they bring variety to the area, where locals and tourists can find all kinds of prices and qualities.

MiMo BIC and MiMo Association's website has a lot of interesting content about past events, restaurant, and motel listings. However, it could be used much more efficiently by collaborating with all affected stakeholders in the process of brand promotion. MiMo is finding difficulties in getting the public to assist at these events, a result of no community cooperation, no competitive advantage, lack of positioning, the area's public perception, and lack of stakeholder involvement.

Analyzing MiMo's current situation gave us insights on what paths we ought to take. We were able to develop a survey that was administered to locals in order to find out the main priorities within the area. Promoting the name and image is of the utmost priority, since most people do not know what MiMo is, or where it is located. Changing the name to MiMo Avenue on the stretch between 50th and 79th street, and installing signs that tell drivers they are in MiMo. Launching new

events, along with public relations campaigns can prove to be very effective when trying to promote a brand name and image. Keeping close ties with the media is very important, especially during the re-branding phase of MiMo. Being an up-and-coming area will help feed the positive image to that curious segment of the population who's looking for new things to try and adventures to experience. As the MiMo District looks to build stronger and positive brand awareness, it is essential that local associations are included in its target market; associations of arts and history along with educational organizations. Consumer motivation to visit the area could become high as the MiMo District presents a new territory for these associations to voice their culture, art, and history at reasonable expenditures. By pushing the MiMo District's historic value, organizations looking for a destination with strong benefits in this sense will provide a good target market. Their need to market their culture, art, and history in a location that exemplifies these elements is essential. In addition to local arts and history associations, MiMo should also target travel agencies to voice the new messaging associated with the district.

Based on the survey, the marketing objectives for the MiMo District should be directed towards building a new, positive brand image for the area with the goal of maximizing safety and cleanliness, while increasing awareness of the historical location. By positioning the MiMo District as the "up and coming", businesses can become attracted to the potential traffic and revenue associated with it.

In the process of all this, some of the important steps are: capitalizing on the positive aspects, scheduling mega-events, launching familiarization tours, and using selective promotions. But ultimately the most important advice for those working on repairing a negative image is to always remain positive.

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Selima Ben Mrad, Ph.D., is an *Associate Professor of Marketing* in the H. Wayne Huizenga College of Business and Entrepreneurship, Nova Southeastern University. She can be reached at sbenmrad@nova.edu

Kathleen O'Leary, Ph.D., is *Chair and Associate Professor of Marketing* in the H. Wayne Huizenga College of Business and Entrepreneurship, Nova Southeastern University. She can be reached at koleary@nova.edu

Maria Petrescu, Ph.D., is an *Assistant Professor of Marketing* in the H. Wayne Huizenga College of Business and Entrepreneurship, Nova Southeastern University. She can be reached at mpetresc@nova.edu