

7TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE
**INTERNATIONAL
PLACE BRANDING
ASSOCIATION (IPBA)**

**PLACE BRANDING IN TIMES OF CRISIS
AND UNCERTAINTY**

OCTOBER 18-20, 2023

LUND UNIVERSITY, CAMPUS HELSINGBORG, SWEDEN



BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



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HELSINGBORG

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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Sincerely,

Cecilia Cassinger, Olga Rauhut Kompaniets, Lisa Källström, and Ola Thufvesson

2023 IPBA Conference Organising Committee

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Welcome to the 7th IPBA Conference

Welcome from the Chairman

Dear #IPBA2023 delegates,

The seventh conference! It's a nice milestone and great moment to be in Helsingborg Sweden. Our academic colleagues from Sweden have always been very supportive of IPBA, the journal for *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* and the discipline in general. The same is true for the practice of place branding where organisations like the Swedish Institute, the Council for the Promotion of Sweden and its members have been at the forefront of the development of the discipline outside and within academia. Quite a few Swedish practitioners will also participate in the conference this year. In other words, it was about time this happened and we're very grateful to the local organising committee, Lund University Helsingborg Campus, the City of Helsingborg, and the coalition of universities that have made this edition of the conference possible. Because of this broad coalition, the organisational competencies of the Swedes, and the international connectedness within the field of the players involved, this #IPBA2023 has geared up to be one of the biggest and best IPBA conferences so far.

Hence, IPBA also saw this as the right place to launch the IPBA BARCELONA COPENHAGEN-REGION PLACE BRANDING MANIFESTO, which was signed by several administrators at Helsingborg town hall just ahead of the welcome reception. In the manifesto we set out what we believe should be standard place branding principles. These are:

1. Based on identity and purpose,
2. Through collaboration between all public, private and civil society stakeholders,
3. Create a long-term positioning strategy (beyond the logo),
4. That is robust and capable of absorbing change and responding to crises,
5. That is implemented through meaningful action (policy-, project-, investment-, infrastructure-, campaign-initiatives) contributing to society, humanity and a sustainable planet,
6. Using the power of imagination to create original, creative, innovative, captivating and inspiring initiatives that catch the imagination of internal and external audiences,
7. Thereby building a distinctive, relevant, authentic, consistent, meaningful image,
8. Seeing reputation monitoring and management as an integral part of governance,
9. Committing adequate resources and processes to it, and,
10. Therefore, requiring constructive collaborative leadership to co-create the future.

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Endorse this manifesto at bit.ly/IPBA-manifesto or use the QR code. Thank you in advance and – on behalf of the IPBA board – we wish you a wonderful conference and great read ahead.

Yours,

Founding Chairman IPBA



Robert Govers



Welcome from the conference committee

Dear colleagues, delegates and friends,

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the 7th Conference of the International Place Branding Association in Helsingborg, Sweden. The conference is hosted by the Department of Strategic Communication, Lund University, in cooperation with the Department of Service Studies, Lund University, Faculty of Business, Kristianstad University, and School of Business, Innovation and Sustainability, Halmstad University.

This is the first time that the IPBA conference has been held in the Nordic region – home to many remarkable place brands. However, the brand image of the Nordic countries, and Sweden in particular, is currently in a state of flux and is the subject of controversy. These challenges make the conference and a deeper understanding of place branding discourse and practice even more urgent. This is why the theme of the conference – “Place Branding in Times of Crisis and Uncertainty” – is even more relevant today than when it was first formulated a year ago. There is a growing sense that we live in a time of constant crisis and uncertainty, from the catastrophes of climate change to the fractured security architecture in Europe after the war in Ukraine, to the damage to the global economy, to the spread of authoritarianism around the world.

To examine place branding discourse and practice in relation to today’s global crises and uncertainty, we are excited to bring together some of the world’s most prominent researchers and a large number of place brand communication practitioners. Over Swedish ‘fika’ and vegan local food, we hope to discuss questions such as: What do crisis and uncertainty mean for research and practice on place communication and place brands? How can research on place branding contribute to the strengthening of dialogue and co-operation around places? How can places be recreated in a world of crisis and uncertainty?

We hope that you will enjoy your stay in the historic city of Helsingborg and its surroundings. With a bit of luck, we might even get to see the sun rise over Kronborg castle.

Helsingborg, October 2023

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Abstracts

Routes and roots: (hidden) place identities and portable place brand elements

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The 'return to normal' following the pandemic, more or less known crises (e.g. conflicts, natural catastrophes) and the pursue of a different life(style), are factors influencing people flows. People leave their homes for leisure or business, for lifestyle preferences as digital nomads, for financial and employment reasons as immigrants, and under pressure from more dramatic circumstances as refugees. In their suitcase (assuming they get the chance to pack one), people "pack" their own characteristics, skills, knowledge and stereotypes, along with intangible cultural elements reflecting their home culture. Other fields of study, such as cross-cultural and migration theory-related literature, identify a plethora of intangible cultural elements, some of which this study considers 'portable' elements of the place brand which people carry when leaving home.

This study investigates the role that place brands and place branding play in the ways in which peoples' homelands influence their new life in terms of acceptance in their host countries. The first question we aim to address is: what are the portable elements of the place brand? The portability of place brand elements regarding heritage/memory (e.g., gastronomy) is related to national identity and culture and is, therefore, a topic of great significance for individuals and societies alike. It is also a contested topic precisely because of their cultural significance and sensitivity. Are these portable elements hidden from their new society under the fear of negative bias or are they considered 'ethnic', 'exotic', interesting and appealing? Which of these intangible elements will find a new home once the journey is complete, is a second question that we aim to address.

The relationship between these processes and place branding can be two-fold: on the one hand, the place brand of the home country/community provides and reinforces these portable elements, while, on the other hand, the place brand of the host country initiates or interrupts, helps or hinders integration. At the same time, this depends on the cross-cultural framework shaped between the home and host country and the role of place branding strategies can be important. Despite the number of studies stressing the importance of inclusive strategies to achieve resilience and sustainability for the place brand, animosity and relationships among the home and host country quite often interfere and emerge as critical factors facilitating or hindering the expression of "newcomers'" intangible cultural elements in their new life. Therefore, the third question we aim to address is: what is the role of place branding in these processes?

This conceptual paper reviews the literature and international examples in order to identify and explore the relationship between home and host place brand within integration processes, focusing on the intangible cultural elements that can be considered as portable reflections of the home place brand. Such insights are used to inform a framework that portrays (1) 'old home' place intangible cultural elements more or less likely to be intervened in the 'new home' place branding strategy and (2) the factors that influence the inclusion or not of the aforementioned elements in place branding strategies.

Keywords: place identity, portable place brand elements, intangible culture, inclusion

The impact of identity-based place branding on user perception: The case of Atatürk urban forest in Istanbul

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The primary aim of this study is to examine the impact of identity-based place branding interventions on the perception of Atatürk Urban Forest, an urban green space in Istanbul that has remained largely unknown to a significant portion of the population. Specifically, this research seeks to shed light on how individuals perceive public green spaces and how place branding can contribute to enhancing their recognition and sense of ownership.

To achieve this aim, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality has implemented several place branding initiatives since 2019 to increase the utilization of green spaces and foster stronger bonds between people and these areas. In the Atatürk Urban Forest, which was selected as one of the top 5 parks of the World Urban Parks and Awarded by International Visual Identity Awards (IVIA) in 2020, signage systems were used to learn about the ecosystem of the forest. At the same time, an interface that can be accessed via QR code has been designed to increase their experience, so that visitors can identify bird sounds. In particular, the branding efforts have enabled Istanbulites to discover Atatürk Urban Forest, thereby leading to a heightened sense of ownership of the space. The present study employed ten in-depth face-to-face interviews and 100 surveys to gather data on the effects of identity-based place branding efforts in Atatürk Urban Forest.

The findings of the study suggest that identity-based place branding interventions in Atatürk Urban Forest have been successful and have positively impacted its users. The preservation of the natural attributes of the forest, combined with branding elements that enhance its identity, has heightened users' sense of belonging and awareness of the space. These results highlight the effectiveness of place branding policies in enhancing the recognition and ownership of public green spaces.

Overall, this study makes a significant contribution to the understanding of how individuals perceive urban green spaces and underscores the importance of further research on place branding for public green spaces. The study's results can serve as a blueprint for implementing similar policies in other cities while emphasizing the critical role of the place's identity in place branding efforts.

Keywords: identity-based place branding, urban green spaces, user perception, Istanbul

Trust in governments and travel intentions during the COVID-19 pandemic

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The global COVID-19 pandemic has shown how politically contested decisions of national administrations (i.e., health policies and regulatory frameworks) and people's trust in governments affect mobility and travel. This paper tests the importance of trust in governments for travel decisions in the empirical context of the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

While the concept of trust is a frequently researched aspect, we mostly look at trust relationships between companies and customers, or government towards residents. In this paper, we investigate the trust relationship between governments and visitors.

In two large empirical online studies (US, N=2,180; Denmark, N=2,062), we investigate how prospective travelers' trust in destination governments affects their visit intentions, using structural equation modeling approach.

We show that individuals' willingness to travel depends on their trust in the respective destinations' government. We also demonstrate that the destinations' actual policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e., having an economic focus vs. a health focus) affects this trust in the government.

Travel decisions are conditioned by a certain level of trust in the destination country's political decisions. Health policies and restrictions during the recent pandemic shed light on to the significance of making travel possible, attractive, and safe again for traveler trust.

Our findings demonstrated that health policies have an impact on travel decisions, which has interesting implications for future debates around re-opening faster (economy focus) or maintaining restrictions (health focus). Our results suggest that consumers perceive a stronger economy focus as less morally responsible (incentivizing consumption instead of protecting lives), which would likely do the tourism industry a disservice.

Keywords: Trust in government, Crisis, COVID-19, Economy vs Health policies, Health risk, Travel intentions, Destinations

Enhancing destination competitiveness through innovation: A conceptual framework for attracting high-spending tourists in Thailand

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Thailand is one of the leading tourist destinations and tourism is an important source of revenue for the country's economy. The country received 39 million tourist arrivals in 2019, generating a tourism receipt of approximately USD 62 Billion. However, factors such as changes in tourist behavior following COVID-19, international agreements on carbon neutrality, and the need to prevent overtourism have prompted Thailand to shift its focus to attract tourists who have high spending power. Bank of Thailand (BOT) suggest that if the country could generate the tourist spending of THB 60,000 per head per trip instead of THB 48,000, it would only need 32 million instead of 39.8 million tourist arrivals to generate a similar amount of tourism revenue as in 2019.

To encourage tourist spending, Thailand has planned to adjust trip characteristics and offer more potential tourism products, such as medical-health tourism and MICE for business tourists. Medical tourism can generate approximately THB 80,000-120,000 per head per trip, while MICE can generate approximately THB 75,000 per head per trip due to the longer stay nature. However, creating new tourism products or launching numerous tourism campaigns may not guarantee desirable outcomes as other countries in the region with similar tourism resources, such as Indonesia, Vietnam, and Malaysia, could replicate similar offers, particularly when they improved their T&T Development Index (TTDI), as measured by the World Economic Forum in 2021, and increase tourism capabilities and competitive level. Thailand must have a strong brand position that aligns with the image perceived by visitors and proposed by DMOs to attract high-spending tourists, and maintain its high level of competitiveness. An attractive brand position is crucial in a competitive environment where many destinations are vying for high-quality and high-spending tourists, enabling the relay of high-quality tourism products that cater to tourists' interests.

Innovation is crucial for enhancing tourism values, creating attractiveness, strengthening brand position, and promoting a long-term competitive advantage. To enhance the attractiveness and strong brand position, different dimensions of innovative can be applied to a destination. In this research, the authors propose an innovative destination conceptual framework that focuses on strengthening brand position, and enhancing destination competitiveness, particularly in attracting high-spending tourists and reinforcing a high-quality destination image. The study conducts an integrative literature review to incorporate key fundamental concepts to frame the proposed ideas. The concepts, such as "Business Innovation theory", the "Destination Innovation Framework", and the "TTDI Framework" will be used to underpin the study.

The research will begin with a comprehensive review of literature on the concepts of "tourist spending," "innovation theory," "destination development," and "destination competitiveness." For academic articles, researchers will use specific "keywords" related to the selected concepts to search for articles from tourism journals listed in Scopus and Web of Science databases. For industry reports, the focus is on those produced by recognized tourism organizations, for instance the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), UNWTO, WEF, and TAT, published between 2019-2022. The conceptual framework derived from the conceptual analyses will be presented at the IPBA conference.

Keywords: Innovative framework, Destination, Brand Positioning, High-spending tourists

Inclusion branding in cities: A review and typology of inclusive-city branding

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A growing number of cities around the world are adopting images of inclusion in their branding. In literature, the motivation for these practices is based on financial and social capital competition while aligning the brand with existing policies and political discourses. However, conflicts between the competitive and selective attributes of city branding and the shared and common attributes of inclusive cities make inclusive city branding look like an oxymoron and one that is vulnerable to criticism. Therefore, under the context of city branding theory, we proposed a typology that the dynamics between city inclusiveness and branding efforts are influenced by two underlying motivations, urban entrepreneurialism and shared humanitarianism. We examined the inclusive city branding statements on the municipal websites of 21 major cities and came up with four clusters: “inclusion ambassador”, “innate champions”, “façade marketers”, and “silent segregators”. This was complemented by further analyzing the connection between city branding strategies and motivations.

This article emphasizes that not all cities are supposed to engage in inclusion branding strategies to the same extent to achieve their goals. Inclusive city branding is a strategy adopted by cities based on internal resources and external competition needs. This study further confirms and enriches the correlation between the motivation of urban entrepreneurialism and branding as competition tools, such as media-generated image, narrative and storytelling, and eye-catching events; and the correlation between the motivation of shared humanitarianism and branding as policy agenda, such as iconic architecture building, flagship project, and long-term policies, and the two may intersect. ICB is important to promote urban equity and inclusivity, which can not only promote policy dissemination and communication but also facilitate public participation and co-creation. However, cities pick different aspects of an inclusive city to brand, with gender and sexual orientation inclusive branding showing the most obvious economic motivation, reflecting the logic of local adaptation of universal concepts.

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Keywords: Inclusive city, City branding, Inclusion branding, Diversity, Typology

Exploring smart and creative city brand associations: Evidence from ten European cities at the time of the Covid-19 crisis

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This study investigates the creative spheres and smart city brand associations of ten European cities. Our research is inspired by extensive datasets from a multidisciplinary research project related to creative economies. The study's results illustrate that the creative spheres of the European cities in question are crucial assets to city branding alongside smart city dimensions, such as sustainability, social inclusion, and digitalization. The study presents four smart and creative city branding associations that contribute to the differentiation and competitiveness of cities in the post-pandemic era.

Keywords: city brand, brand associations, creative city, smart city, competitiveness

How to communicate during an improper influence campaign?

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In the beginning of 2022 an improper information influence campaign in relation to the Swedish social services and the Act with Special Provisions on Care of Young People (LVU) gained traction. The campaign has attracted broad attention, and The Swedish Defence University (SDU) highlights need for stakeholders to act as positive counterforce and communicate to target groups abroad in a report.

Different recommendations exist on when and how to act while being targeted by an improper information influence campaign. Some stakeholders promote a debunking approach, and some point out that the most efficient strategy is often to do nothing, as debunking doesn't work.

The overall focus of this panel will be on when and how to communicate when being targeted by an improper information influence campaign. According to SI the campaign has highlighted the importance of upholding communication and dialogue with international target groups through Sweden's official channels. At the same time there are no simple answers: it is highly complex to decide when and how to communicate, even with established networks.

During the panel SI will explain its regular communication strategy for the Arabic channels, how it has been adjusted during the information influence campaign and what this meant in practice. SI will also highlight how data has been used as a basis for adjustments of Sweden's communication in Arabic, and comment how the image of Sweden has been affected by the information influence campaign.

What approach to be taken, including the one taken by SI during the improper information campaign against the Swedish social services, will be discussed and commented by participants in the panel. Examples of questions to be discussed:

- How can an improper information influence campaign be analysed, and how can data be used as a basis for decisions on whether and how to communicate?
- How to know when it is the right time to communicate? Are there criteria to be followed?
- What should be the overall approach in the communication during an improper information influence campaign? With established networks, and others.
- To what extent – if any – should dialogue be part of the communication?
- How to manage the balance between promotional communication, which is SI's main task, and broader communication about Sweden, in a situation when Swedish stakeholders and ultimately Swedish society is under attack?
- How has the image of Sweden been affected as consequence of the campaign?

Keywords: Disinformation, Nation branding, Public diplomacy, Image, Sweden

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Brand associations and dimensions of nation brand: Czech Republic and Mexico

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Nation branding and nation brand have become important elements for the creation of awareness, differentiation, and positioning of countries among local and foreign stakeholders. Scholars have an increasing interest in the conceptualization of nation brand from the lenses of different academic disciplines including marketing, communications, tourism, and public diplomacy (Rodner and Kerrigan 2018; Yalkin, 2018; Skinner, 2017; Rojas-Méndez, Papadopoulos and Murphy, 2013). The academic literature mainly focuses on theoretical and cases studies (Steenkamp, 2021; Gertner, 2011) while practitioners are mainly interested in the design and strategic implementation of nation brand campaigns (Lee and Lee 2021; Fetscherin and Marmier 2010; Gudjonsson, 2005).

The growing interest in the nation brand concept is generated by the intense competition among countries to appeal, engage, and attract foreign tourists (Skinner, 2017; Beverland and Lindgreen, 2002), international students (Martens and Starke, 2008), high-skill workers and scientific talent (Aronczyk, 2008), and foreign direct investment (Lee and Lee, 2021; Papadopoulos, 2004). However, the study of the dimensions of a nation brand and their positive and negative associations has been disregarded.

This study aims to explore and identify the dimensions of nation brand and the set of brand associations from the perspective of foreign stakeholders. A deep understanding of a brand from the potential stakeholders' point of view is essential for successful brand management (Schaumann, 2021). The stakeholder-based brand equity approach focuses on the meaning of the brand and the creation of value through the development of relationships between the brand and different stakeholders such as consumers, executives, employees, suppliers, and investors (Jones, 2005). For this research, an exploratory study with an inductive approach is conducted to identify the nation brand associations from the perspective of a relevant segment of stakeholders: foreign students.

A total of 120 students from different countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Middle East, Latin American, and Asia freely reported the ideas they associate with two countries: Mexico and Czech Republic. Then, the construction of a nation brand model for each country was developed in three stages: Generation of the set of associations from the participants for each nation brand, identification of brand dimensions for each nation brand, and categorization of the brand association among the dimensions.

A national brand model was developed for Czech Republic and Mexico respectively. With the inductive approach, eight dimensions and their respective set of positive and negative associations were identified: culture, economy, education, geography, government, science and technology, society, and tourism. These nation brand dimensions consist of a set of associations generating a network of ideas, opinions, perceptions, and emotions. The national brand models of both countries have similarities in the dimensions of culture, economy, education, and society, and differences in the other dimensions.

This study has some limitations. The respondents are international students from Central and Eastern Europe, Middle East, Latin American, and Asia. Future nation brand studies may consider the perspective from different stakeholders, for example, foreign tourists, high-skill workers, and investors. Also, future research may involve participants from other regions such as North America and Oceania.

Keywords: Nation brand, Nation brand model, Nation brand dimensions, Nation brand associations, Stakeholders

Music events and venues as place branding – The ABBA case

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This paper aims at exploring the creation of places that reinforce fandom and functions as a grounding place for fans – and at the same time build local and national brands. The Swedish music group Abba is in focus. 40 years after they stopped playing, the new ABBA Voyage endeavors (an arena with state of the art motion-capture technology to show how they looked in 1979), becomes a place for global fandom that also strengthen the images of both London and Sweden.

The paper contributes to understanding of place making in creative industries, drawing on the idea that cities, regions, countries and events can be promoted and branded (Kemp, et al., 2012). To attract target groups, place brands should stimulate creative and innovative “on-brand” ideas and inspire life style choices among brand publics (Arvidsson, 2006; Dinnie, et al., 2010). Here popular music is a good example of an “on-brand” idea that meets people on an everyday level (Anholt, 2003). The paper also expand on the music venue, not only as a physical, social and digital place, but also as groundedness that relates to both social connectedness and locality (c.f. Eichinger et al., 2022) by its audiences.

One empirical case study were conducted: the creation of ABBA Voyage in 2021 (ongoing study). Empirical data consists of multiple participatory observations at the ABBA arena in London and on-line, as well as 26 interviews with fans and production people (so far).

The making of a place for fandom of long gone but still actual artists, lead to positive implications to both for the fan communities, the place of the venue (in London) and for the nation of the artists (Sweden), as the Abba Voyage show itself reinforces the Nordic connection and heritage. The paper also argues that although physical locality of cultural production can imply a higher level of authenticity and uniqueness (Eichinger et al., 2022), this paper argues that other types of place-making and place branding (for example a fan community or -event that is partly digital) can lead to authenticity, uniqueness, as well as the creation of social identity and connectedness among audiences and fans.

The paper shows examples of how artists and fans created and engaged in new (both physical and digital) forms of media events – the “ABBA Voyage” experience, a new physical live event in London where fans “meet” the reunited Abba as digital Abbatars. The new place venue is built sustainably, to be able to change location, which makes this case interesting, as it both represents a new place brand (in expanding Pudding Mill in London), but also brings value to the place brand of London as a whole, as well as the brand of Sweden, and in the future other cities as the area is planned to be moved.

Keywords: Place making, Creative industries, Music events, ABBA

“A journey to the source” – A proposal of a cultural route in Ano Syros

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By the term "place physiognomy", we mean all its characteristics, morphological, architectural, historical, cultural, social; emotional that makes it a unique entity. These should be the key to promoting the place, which will make it stand out.

According to the “Charta of Cultural Tourism” (ICOMOS, 1999), the unique identity of a place is a palimpsest of spatial and social phenomena as they evolve and transform over time. It is composed of a set of characteristics that have, material substance, structure, shape, properties of natural and man-made landscape, as well as mental components that are shaped by the cultural character and spiritual content of the place.

The protection, preservation, interpretation and promotion of the cultural heritage and cultural diversity of the place is an important challenge for the world and access to the cultural heritage, tangible and / or intangible, of a place, is at the same time a right and a privilege.

In order to highlight the physiognomy of the traditional settlement of Ano Syros, we propose the creation of a cultural route focusing on water, a natural element intertwined with human life and with multiple symbolic dimensions. In this way, we try to update the human relationship with this place.

Research has been conducted by the authors for the 9th Inter-University Seminar on Sustainable Development, Culture and Tradition, of the Syros Institute, entitled "Landscape: Physical and Cultural Recruitment".

For the above purpose, first, we try to interpret what are the characteristics- human and natural, tangible and intangible- of a space that make it a place. In our study, in addition to the simple recording of the special architectural and morphological elements and the landmarks of the historic settlement of Ano Syros, we had to draw our attention to social and cultural parameters of the place in relation to the water element. The tangible elements of the cultural heritage that are recorded are human creations, such as: the houses, the streets, the bridge, the churches, the entrance gates and the "stegadia"(arcs), but also minor tangible elements, such as: the fountains, the sculptures, the furnaces, the "akoumbistrakia" etc. Also, a number of intangible elements of cultural heritage in relation to water are recorded, such as: memories, stories, traditions, customs, myths and fairy tales, music, rituals, human relationships, etc. “Stopovers - points of interest” of the cultural route are described through a "narration" starring the researchers themselves and the route is diagrammatically depicted on maps.

Place marketing comprises a strategically designed process, which depends on the image of the place and of an in-depth knowledge of the place’s identity (Deffner, 2012). In this context, the creation of an original electronic application, with which, in a pleasant way, the visitor will be able to follow the proposed cultural route, “A Journey to the Source”, and at the same time receive information about its "stopovers" and “points of interest” or read stories, myths, traditions etc., even by creating their own unique rout they could play a significant role in the place marketing themselves.

Keywords: Water, Ano Syros, Landscape, Cultural route, Place Physiognomy

Capital and community: The role of news media in shaping the place image of national capitals – A case study of Canberra, Australia

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News media representations actively shape the discursive construction of a place's image, influencing public perceptions of both physical environments and those who inhabit them. They also play a key role in creating and perpetuating place stereotypes, which can overpower efforts made towards place branding (Anholt, 2009; Avraham and Ketter, 2008; Gertner and Kotler, 2004). National capitals are one type of city that receives high media exposure. Though coverage tends to focus on politics and government, this news framing can overshadow any media coverage of the city itself and can be incongruent with the desired place image. Political capital cities, in particular, often lack the cultural and commercial functions of more established cities (Hall, 2006), which makes them more vulnerable to being defined predominately by their political nature in the media.

My doctoral thesis explores the significance of news media representations in shaping the place image of political capital cities by bringing together the fields of place branding, media studies, and public relations. The context for examining this phenomenon is the Australian national capital, Canberra, which suffers from unfavourable stereotypes despite having well-developed infrastructure and services, outstanding measures of well-being, and active communications campaigns promoting its advantages. Drawing on a thematic analysis of 335 news reports and 969 headlines across 12 Australian news media publications (sampling periods between 2006-2018), this paper explores how Canberra is constructed as a place to live, work and visit by the Australian media and the news frames and techniques they use to underpin these constructions. The case of Canberra illustrates how the media discourses of the national capital as both a quasi-political actor and a place people live, work and visit are inextricably intertwined. It demonstrates that these media legacies have been established and consolidated over a long history, constructing an accepted mythology about the place, its governance and the people who live and work there.

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This study contributes to our understanding of how different social actors shape place image. The research sheds light on how news media representations can create and perpetuate stereotypes that affect the ability of political capital cities to maintain a favourable place reputation as a place to live, work, and visit beyond their role as the seat of government. These insights have important implications for those responsible for attracting talent, tourism, and investment to national capitals and the place image communications they develop. Moreover, this study contributes to the theoretical understanding of the longer-term implications of media framing on place image.

Keywords: place image, media representation, Canberra, national capitals, political capitals

Lucky cat: Place branding in vulnerable areas

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This art short film seeks to problematize clichéd images of vulnerable urban places in Sweden by juxtaposing stereotypes of marginalization, safety, commerce, and everyday life. The research aim is to use kitsch art and playful elements to challenge the conventional thinking of these places as problems in the margins of society. The focus is on ordinary lives of ordinary people in the shadow of violent crime, poverty, and social exclusion. Vulnerable areas are signified by high crime rates, social exclusion, and cultures of silence. Most of the areas were constructed in late 1960s and planned as separate modernistic enclaves cut off from other parts of the city. Today, they struggle with territorially stigmatisation (Wacquant, 2007) and being positioned in the capitalist semi-periphery.

The art project examines marginalised places through the lucky cat figure and a naïve children's poetic rhyme. Kitsch is an art form that is instantly recognized (Linstead, 2002). It gives us that the world at face value, as we want or fear it to be, and does not challenge us to think further. Instead, it closes off inquiry and lacks visions. The waving lucky cat helps us to think about vulnerable places in a kitsch way. Lucky cats are familiar figures in vulnerable areas; they are typically placed in shopwindows and near restaurant entrances. We may understand their constant waving as a sign of normality and reassurance in an otherwise uncertain and violent environment. The cat reminds us that marginalized territories are not merely problems or 'sacrificial zones' (de Souza, 2021), but places full of life.

The medium of the short film enables us to bring to life the empirical material collected during a two-year long study in vulnerable areas. The short film is composed by photographs, audio-recordings, and film clips from various field trips, which makes possible a collective multisensory experience of lived places.

Place branding devotes scarce attention to marginal places that do not matter (Gyimóthy, 2019). Rebranding projects in vulnerable places are typically carried out by economic and political elites in the name of financial investment, and marketization. Such initiatives tend to ignore local voices, and egalitarian and democratic values (Meade, 2019). Yet, a major challenge for vulnerable places concerns ways to break their isolation and increase purchasing power and attractiveness. This project proposes a kitsch outlook to branding efforts carried out in the margins. Kitsch is a useful window through which to reimagine relations between fake and authentic; truth and lie; copy and original that are central to marginalized place brands.

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Keywords: Place branding, Territorial marginalisation, Stereotyping, Kitsch art, Urban areas

The significance and impact of local food and cultural branding on cultural diplomacy – A Comparative Study on the Case of Korea and China

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Branding local food and culture has become an important aspect of destination branding, attracting food lovers from around the world. Geographical indications and gastronomy have been particularly effective in promoting local food products and their authenticity, while culinary and cultural diplomacy based on this is now more than just a gastronomic experience; it is become about branding itself for a specific place, city, and even country.

Recently, the trend of Asian culture has been gaining more recognition and appreciation across the world, particularly in the realm of culinary tourism. With the rise of social media and online travel platforms, travelers are becoming increasingly interested in exploring the unique flavors and culinary traditions of Asia. In this circumstance, culinary and cultural diplomacy have become important tools in promoting cross-cultural understanding and cooperation. It has become an increasingly important aspect of international relations, as countries seek to promote their cultural heritage through food and cuisine. Culinary and cultural diplomacy can be a powerful tool in promoting cross-cultural understanding and cooperation, as food is often seen as a universal language that can transcend cultural and linguistic barriers.

This paper explores the case of Jeon-ju Han-ok village, Chicken Road in Daegu, and Beef village in Gangwon province in Korea, examining how these destinations have used local food and culture to promote their heritage and attract tourists. The paper will also briefly touch upon the situation in China. And it aims to study the significance and impact of local food and cultural branding on cultural diplomacy through the case or of Korea and China.

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Keywords: destination branding, place branding, geographical indications, gastronomy, cultural diplomacy

Measuring place branding strategy implementation

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Place branding caught significant attention both among researchers and practitioners in the last decades, moving from corporate branding and marketing concept to a more multidisciplinary approach. Being an influential part of new public management, urban planning, and governance place branding concept became more complex and broader.

Place branding is considered as a way for places to differentiate themselves addressing concrete actions highlighting identity and communicating values to beneficiaries and targets. Even if the literature and practitioners share frameworks and processes to design place branding strategy, problems emerge with the implementation of plans. The question on how to measure place branding strategy implementation remains. A paradox occurs when measurement models and indicators are fragmented or too broad and complicated. Moreover, these models are mostly focused on measuring results and outcomes of events and campaigns, confusing tactical with strategic results. It is necessary to search for measurement systems and indicators focusing on the day-by-day communication and implementation of place branding values and identity coming from the concrete activities, approaches and decisions of place brand primary stakeholders.

This study aims to discuss the nature and possibilities of identifying a measurement model of place branding strategy implementation and to propose a framework for collecting qualitative and quantitative data among the primary stakeholders of a place. The study's conceptual framework adopts place branding and identity concepts to identify measurement indicators of place branding strategy implementation. In particular, the role of primary stakeholders is recognized in their strategy implementation and place identity diffusion.

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Economic and not economic activities, organizations, and citizens that everyday work and live the place can communicate and implement the place branding strategy. For this reason, this work presents a selection of indicators, mainly based on secondary data, helpful to identify if primary stakeholders of a place are on the right track in communicating and implementing the place branding strategy.

Different from the actual existing models about place branding assessment, this study focuses on the primary stakeholders and their interpretation, communication, and implementation of the place branding strategy. Because place branding is a strategy to highlight place identity and values to beneficiaries and targets, the work selects indicators to measure the compatibility between the place identity and values and the effective communication, investments, and actions on the ground coming from the primary stakeholders.

The research makes it possible to measure the alignment between the place branding strategy and place stakeholders' practices, aiding desired positioning and amplifying brand value dissemination. Researchers and practitioners can obtain valuable elements to understand if strategy implementation, stakeholders' involvement and even the communication is going toward the right direction identified by the place branding. It is a process useful at the end of the place branding process but even in progress.

Keywords: place branding, measurement, target groups, primary stakeholders

How an embassy can use social media to foster an image of a relatable nation: The case of Swedish embassy in Romania

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Social media is increasingly becoming commonplace in nation branding and public diplomacy. Using the Embassy of Sweden in Bucharest as a case, the study investigates if and how the institution created opportunities for dialogic engagement on Facebook with its followers from 2018 to 2021. The case study is qualitative and uses two types of data - Facebook posts and in-depth interviews with Embassy's communication officers. Findings indicate that the Embassy created dialogic engagement opportunities and had an overall dialogic-oriented behavior. Key findings highlight the value of research, listening, networking, and content strategies such as strategic humor, self-irony, and personalization, in facilitating dialogue on social media. Results are discussed in the context of the socio-political environment of the Embassy.

Keywords: strategic communication, digital technology, social media, dialogic engagement, creativity, humor

BIA evolution amidst real estate crisis

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In Canada, we often hear about the real estate crisis. Real estate prices have increased so significantly that it limits affordability for a significant percentage of the population. This increase in real estate costs, affects both residential (citizens with homes and citizens without homes) and commercial real estate (landlords and tenants) not only in purchase price but also rental costs. Property taxes are complementary to property values, as the price of real estate goes up so do property taxes. For renters these increased costs typically get passed on to tenants. In Canada, residential tenant rent increases are protected by government policy (i.e only 2% increase per year), this same protection is not afforded to commercial tenants. Therefore, commercial rents have increased beyond what many independent businesses can afford. This has resulted in “high streets” businesses shifting from independent businesses to chains. Independent businesses created a unique neighbourhood culture, visiting different neighbourhoods could result in fresh experiences. The chains can afford the high rent however, they create a sense of sameness and many of them are from countries other than Canada.

Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) are “...districts managed by non-profit groups of property owners and business tenants whose goal is to promote and improve their business district” (Vancouver, 2023). Their role is to decide how their specific district is going to address tourism, business, safety and street beautification (Vancouver, 2023). BIAs are creating the place brand of a neighbourhood, if the members of that BIA are changing from independent business, who are members of the community, to chains how does this impact the unique culture of the local neighbourhood?

This research will draw from the field of identity and stakeholder creation as it relates to place branding. Kavaratzis & Hatch (2013) root place branding in identity, specifically the evolution of identity and the culture being driven from the concept of “local”. They also continue the conversation of stakeholders who through participation and co-creation contribute to the evolution of a place brand. Taking the context that this research uses, the question becomes how we attribute evolution born out of crisis as it relates to place identity.

The methodology would be a comparative case study using the BIAs in Vancouver (there are 22). Each BIA would be surveyed to understand membership make-up (independent vs. chain membership). After that a case study approach, using interviews, would be used to compare those BIAs with a blended membership vs. those who are predominantly independent. Other factors could be considered such as why certain BIAs have remained largely independent vs. those that have blended; those who are part of a blended BIA, what have they witnessed during the transition; how have chains glocalized when their success is in standardization.

Keywords: Business Improvement Areas, Real estate crisis, Place identity, Independent business vs chains

Music as a key cultural element of place identity and branding

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This paper analyzes the role played by music in artistic value co-creation processes and its implications in city making and branding. It explores insights from the cultural and creative industries concerning economic outcomes, and implications for sound-sensorial place branding of cities and countries around the world. A critical cultural review is adopted to expand the fragmented conceptual and geographical perspectives of the cultural-economic systems in which music plays a key role in contributing to place making and branding to form complex networks of value co-creation in cities, across regions, and at the national and international levels.

This study provides evidence of how musical creations contribute to build place identities and branding. Artistic and cultural activities have socio-economic outcomes, thus artistic, political and financial management policymakers should consider the multi-actor value co-creation processes involved in these activities as forming part of a holistic multistakeholder systems. This opens up lines of research into micro value co-creation networks at a number of territorial levels. A number of key research hypotheses are put forward so as to provide a theoretical conceptual corpus.

Keywords: Music value co-creation, music based place branding, cultural economic networks

Exploring the importance of internal stakeholders in the place branding process

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Co-creation concepts have recently dominated the place branding literature, partly in response to present a more inclusive approach to branding process. This paper discusses the importance of involving a wider range of internal stakeholders in the place branding process. By drawing from branding theory and co-creation concepts we explore the value of adopting a participatory approach. Through this discussion we highlight how the existing classification of stakeholders, particularly when used in place branding practice, places greater emphasis on individuals with power and influence, and less on lower-level stakeholders. Typically, lower-level internal stakeholders – citizens of the place-brand – hold roles that situate them in delivering unofficially the place-brand experience, such as in the hospitality sector. By involving these representative stakeholders more centrally in the place-brand process, there is a greater level of ownership and engagement, and a more authentic brand experience for external visitors. Alongside highlighting the benefits of a participatory approach, we acknowledge the apparent practical challenges. We follow this with a consideration of how subsequent research might attempt to resolve the intrinsic challenges.

Keywords: Stakeholders, place-branding, participatory branding, co-creation

Place branding & UFZs: How to attract new business in a taxation free area

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This paper is characterized by a comparative study of the different ways the communication is used to promote a territory that has implemented the Urban Free Zones (UFZ). During the research work, articles from the academic literature were consulted to investigate the definitions provided relating to place branding and the different tools used to promote different places, including also practical examples. There have been no studies dealing with the specific case of promoting the territory of a Urban Free Zone or any other tax-free areas. Therefore, this work, which aims to answer the research question how to promote a place where there is a tax-free area called Zona Franca Urbana, fills this gap in the literature. Therefore, the importance of this research, both in literature and in practice, is that it researches the increasingly widespread circumstance of the communication of a place that implements an UFZ. The practical cases in which the cities that have implemented an Urban Free Zone have promoted their territory will be observed. These are the UFZs of France and Italy. Through this work, it will be possible to understand what are the ways in which places communicate to promote themselves and, in this particular case, to promote a UFZ. Based on the results obtained from the research in the academic literature on strategies for promoting a place and in practical cases, i.e. from the tools used by the municipalities to promote these areas, it is possible to establish which elements are used the most and in what way. From this result, it can be established what are the common parts, which are the best practices that a city that wants to create and promote these tax-free areas can implement.

Keywords: Place Branding, Place Marketing, Taxation Free Areas

District branding: Content analysis towards identifying brand dimensions at the district scale

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Place branding studies and practices have gained much attention in the last decades. Specifically in the overly globalized world we are witnessing; nations, countries and regions usually compete to attract more people to boost their economy. Similarly, districts within a city are also in intense competition with each other. However, this intimate scale has not met much attention from scholars. There seems to be a recognizable gap in the literature addressing the district scale in place branding theories. The objective of this literature review paper is to shed the light on the importance of district branding, and extract dimensions for guidance for future studies and empirical applications on this scale of branding. The research aims to answer the following questions: Why is place branding important on the district level? How is district branding addressed in literature? What are the branding dimensions related to the district level? Possible answers to these questions are given throughout the paper through a content analysis of place branding literature. Content analysis was used to elicit distinct scale place brand approaches within various articles, dissertations, books, and conference proceedings published in different disciplines. Findings confirms the significant effect of district branding on both the individual and the city, The paper also proposes dimensions for district branding that involves social and functional aspects. Future studies should aim to integrate this theoretical approach to the practice of place branding.

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Keywords: Place Branding, District Branding, Brand Dimensions

Place branding strategies as catalysts for achieving Sustainable Development Goals in mountain areas: A comparative study of Vall d'Aran (Spain), Valle d'Aosta (Italy) and Jämtland (Sweden)

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Place branding is a strategic process for creating and managing the reputation and identity of a given place based on defining characteristics and unique assets. As a governance strategy, place branding can stimulate sustainable social, economic and environmental conditions. Therefore, place branding plays an important role in sustainable development. Mountain areas present distinctive natural and cultural heritage that can be conserved and enhanced through sustainable place branding strategies that promote tourism while preserving the environment and enhancing prosperity for its residents. Additionally, place branding strategies can minimise undesired impacts generated by mountain tourism. However, research linking place branding and sustainable development is limited. Consequently, the aim of this thesis is to address this gap by conducting a comparative analysis of three mountain areas in Europe: Vall d'Aran (Pyrenees), Valle d'Aosta (Alps) and Jämtland (Scandinavian Alps). The study will examine branding strategies in these regions in relation to the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; a sustainability policy that includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets aimed at ending poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring prosperity for all. The study will also investigate the positive and negative impacts of mountain tourism and its role in sustainable development. The research will use a qualitative approach based on five methods. First, two scoping reviews will be conducted; one on place branding and sustainable development and another on mountain tourism and sustainable development, to depict the current state of the art of the intersection between these three domains. Second, interviews to policy-makers of the selected regions to investigate how they address SDGs. Third, content analysis of official destination websites to determine how these mountain regions are communicated, especially in terms of sustainable development. Fourth, focus groups with local stakeholders will be conducted to analyse their perspective on the destinations' place branding strategies and their alignment with SDGs. Fifth, a comparative analysis of the three regions will be carried out to identify similarities and differences. It is expected that the findings from this thesis will provide recommendations that give practical guidance on how to promote sustainable mountain tourism by striking a balance between enhancing natural and cultural heritage and ensuring prosperity of local residents and preservation of the environment. In addition, suggested measures will be linked to SDGs and indicators. The results of this study will contribute to enriching existing literature on place and destination branding and sustainable development within the context of the 2030 Agenda.

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Keywords: Place branding, Sustainable development, Sustainability, Mountain tourism, Natural and cultural heritage

Rethinking cultural entrepreneurship in place branding

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This paper aims to advance the theoretical understanding of the significance of cultural entrepreneurship in place branding drawing on recent work in strategic management and organizational theory. Following Gehman and Soubliere (2017) we trace how the concept of cultural entrepreneurship has developed in three streams of research with different understandings of culture and entrepreneurship as well as perspectives on key actors and mechanisms. We find that work on cultural entrepreneurship in place branding mainly falls within the first of these three varieties, focusing on the role of entrepreneurs in creative and cultural fields as actors in place branding (Go et al. 2014, Lange 2011). While acknowledging the importance of entrepreneurship in the arts and other creative fields in general as well as for the socio-economic development of cities, regions, and nations, we explore inquiry into cultural entrepreneurship beyond the creative and cultural industries and assess its value for scholarship in place branding. These research streams represent cultural approaches to entrepreneurship, which regard meaning-making, particularly storytelling, as a critical element in the identity formation, resource acquisition, and legitimization processes that are vital in all entrepreneurial initiatives. We briefly outline the different approaches and review examples of current studies in cultural entrepreneurship which move into place branding territory. We then apply the Expanded Theoretical Model of Cultural Entrepreneurship and apply it to an analysis of the entrepreneurial journey of a Nordic-themed skincare and fragrance brand. The case details the founder's efforts to make a business of his personal journey and growing appreciation of Scandinavia by extolling its nature and lifestyle to the broader world and later 'inventing' a Nordic scent identity and confronting deceptive and cynical, and unsustainable practices in the global cosmetics industry. The analysis focuses storytelling in entrepreneurial processes, particularly how national and regional narratives are mobilized and reworked to legitimate market and category innovation. In doing so the study draws on and contributes to recent explorations of Nordic branding (Cassinger et al. 2019) as well as cultural entrepreneurship in theory and practice.

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Keywords: Cultural Entrepreneurship, Place Branding, Nordics

“When koala meets panda”: How can digital animal diplomacy mediate geopolitical conflicts and rebuild national images of China and Australia?

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This study aims to explore how the digitalization of animal diplomacy between China and Australia can contribute to the frame and construction of the national image in the process of bilateral public diplomacy, especially in the context of tensions arising from diplomatic relations between the two countries. Diplomatic relations between China and Australia hit rock bottom in 2020 as Australia followed U.S. sanctions on Huawei 5G and Australia called for an investigation into the origins of the COVID-19 virus. Although China and Australia have adopted an uncompromising attitude through official channels, on social media, the two sides have tacitly deployed their mediated animal diplomacy to mitigate the conflict.

When Koala Meets Panda is an online public diplomacy initiative jointly launched in 2017 by the Chinese and Australian governments. It aims to facilitate exchanges between civil societies on both sides, to “deepen our understanding, seek common ground while reserving differences, encourage and support each other when encountering difficulties” (Consulate-General of The People’s Republic of China In Brisbane, n.d., para. 4). Despite the geopolitical conflict between the two sides, the initiative sustained as a short video contest.

Successful animal diplomacy relies on the uniqueness of the animal’s geographical distribution and its cute visual identity, which conform to a childlike characteristic schema of human being (Lorenz, 1943). In that case, the clumsy images of both pandas and koalas can effectively disarm adults’ emotions while stimulating their desire for protection (Schaller, 1994). Their digitization will also facilitate the mediation of the foreign policies of the two countries they represent while promoting their respective international images.

Previous literature on panda diplomacy in China and koala diplomacy in Australia has mentioned the role of cute animals in mediated public diplomacy practices. Nevertheless, they do not examine how parties involved in a conflict use digital animal diplomacy to reshape their national attractiveness in the context of geopolitical conflict. This involves the communication strategy setting of the government’s geopolitics about participating in the game and how to deploy animal visual imagery for online narrative deployment to strengthen online engagement. To this end, this study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of the digital animal diplomacy practiced between Chinese and Australian diplomats from January 2020 to December 2022 to understand the two sides’ public diplomacy and national branding strategies.

In terms of methodology, we attempt to combine historical-discursive analytical analysis, network analysis, and critical discourse analysis to deconstruct China and Australia’s foreign policies related to animal diplomacy in the context of the China-Australia conflict. Meanwhile, a social network analysis will be conducted to explore the interactive network (e.g., network structure, network dynamics) built by diplomatic actors (MFA, Consulates, and diplomats) of China and Australia on Twitter in framing their national animals (panda and koala) online. Then, we aim to read, code, and analyze the collected content in order to compare each country’s online communication strategies in restoring their reputation damaged in the geopolitical conflicts vis-à-vis their target audiences.

Keywords: Public diplomacy, online engagement, China-Australia, Animal, Nation image

Memory planning methods for inclusive and unique places

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The purpose of our contribution is to present Memory Planning Methods, a digital toolbox based on a research and collaboration project conducted 2019-2022. The project was founded by the Swedish research institute Formas, and resulted in methods for using place related memory in future planning, architecture, design and branding. The method focuses on the everyday experiences and stories of a place and challenges the norms of traditional top-down city planning and branding,

A place can be described as something very material, but also from an immaterial perspective that is created by people's uses, ideas and personal experiences (de Certeau 1984:117). Doreen Massey has described the cities as time and movement patterns (Massey 2005). de Certeau claimed that memorized places are the only places humans can actually live in, and that places become an inevitable part of our life story and our identity. Kevin Lynch pointed out mapping as personal views, movement and interest (Lynch 1972). A place identity can therefore be described as something that arises between all people's individual ideas and stories.

Local conditions coming from people's everyday life has given places distinct characters. However, research stresses that genuine local design possibilities are threatened by progressive politicians, calculating developers and modern architects (Kortelainen & Moritz, 2021). Spectacular modern architecture with the aim to brand places, has been criticized for making places look the same (Omholt, 2019). Memory Planning Methods stresses that the absence of unique design is a crisis that can be solved.

Memory Planning Methods was developed by co-creation together with the municipalities of Helsingborg in Scania and Järfälla in Stockholm. By doing workshops we developed ideas of mutual interest, and we created "test-arenas" where we examined methods to use everyday memory and history in city planning and branding. The findings have created a method on how to collect memories connected to places and transform them into planning, architecture, design and marketing in three steps. It is formed as a digital toolbox that will be presented during the presentation.

Some of the results has also contributed to a change of future planning strategies, for instance the method is now present in Helsingborg's overview plan 2021 and in Järfällas development of the suburb Jakobsberg. It has been used to design public places. We are now forming a new collaboration with Helsingborg, Järfälla, White Architecture and the Regional Museum of Stockholm to further develop ideas and solutions. The presentation will highlight how collaboration between researchers and practitioners can contribute to new knowledge and practical solutions.

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Keywords: City development, City branding, Unique design, Inclusive planning, Method development, Collaboration

Touristified places and its branding. The case of Barcelona

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The increase of tourism flows in a destination has some negative effects on the daily life of citizens. Specifically, it means the spread of tourist houses to the detriment of residential dwellings in the city centre and the nearest neighbourhoods and the rise of commercial establishments addressed to tourists being prejudicial to traditional businesses. It also involves the reaction of local administration for institutional actions and public strategies. In this sense, this research aims to analyse the volume and growth of tourist houses in the central touristic neighbourhoods of Barcelona (this is Ciutat Vella) and its effects related to gentrification, immigration density, social movement protests, heritage attractiveness and community atmosphere. The main objective is to delve into the place branding, this is the interest of keeping the centre for all the potential users (local neighbours, immigrants, and tourists), preserving the sense of belonging and attachment to these neighbourhoods. Secondary data used in this research comes from official registered tourist houses (Catalunya Government), Open Data (Barcelona municipality), from the AirBnb tourist platform, and from the Incasol Data and Municipal Register of Inhabitants. These data have been processed and debugged in GIS programs, for this case Arcgis (Esri). Primary data are collected through 20 in-depth interviews to neighbours, social movement managers and political representatives from Turisme de Barcelona (local DMO, Destination Management Organization), using the content analysis, including codification and categorization into thematic topics, to further discussion. Results show which the opportunities and priorities are for key actors to design responsible governance policies to find a balance between all different interests.

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Keywords: touristification, tourist houses, governance, public policies, tourismophobia

From meme brand to storyline warfare: The “Russian warship” and Ukraine’s weaponized nation branding

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Research on nation branding during wartime is scarce, as is the practical experience of it. It is seen as a practice suitable for times of peace and stability rather than chaotic developments when a nation's existence as such is threatened. And yet Ukraine has mobilized nation branding as a powerful diplomacy and mobilization tool after the Russian full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022.

This study aims to investigate the role of narratives and storytelling in nation branding during war and identify principal storytelling tools used by Ukraine to create strategic narratives for its brand during the Russian invasion. Specifically, it focuses on the case of “the Russian warship” - a viral story about the Ukrainian coastal guards who even under the threat of death had refused to surrender to the captain of the Russian flagship, the Moskva cruiser, which was later sunk by the Ukrainian army.

While applying narrative analysis for the media artefacts collected during social media monitoring, the paper traces how the Russian warship meme has evolved into a storyline within the strategic narrative of Ukrainian resistance and transformed into a semiformal nation brand. It argues that Ukraine has employed branding based on narratives and memes, and furthermore weaponized its nation brand in its fight against the invasion. The key techniques used by Ukraine are the open-endedness of the narrative, making them available to a plurality of actors, even the enemy, the broad use of transmedia, and the deep integration of storytelling with warfare, to the point the two are impossible to distinguish clearly from one another. Much effort has been put into negative branding of Russia as well. Based on these, a proposal is advanced to study storytelling, specifically storylines and memes (interpreted as viral narremes), in wartime public diplomacy and nation branding.

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Keywords: Nation branding, meme, narrative, Russo-Ukrainian war, public diplomacy

Unfolding the art city – using public art in place branding

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The research aim in this paper is to unfold the concept of the art city by examining how it emerges in local processes and sites. In particular, we are interested in how city brand narratives are artfied to legitimise, authenticate and spatially organize an urban place as an art attraction for consumption and spectatorship. The paper introduces the concept of artification as a novel way of understanding how a city brand becomes associated with the arts and earns a place in the art world.

The study adopts a qualitative approach to capture the artification process. The empirical material was collected by means of semi-structured interviews with managers of art initiatives and in art organizations in Borås during autumn 2019 and spring 2020. Moreover, the empirical material was collected via a document study of Borås city branding strategy, news articles about art-works in the city, and promotional materials of the ‘City as an Art Gallery’ produced by the local DMO.

Findings show the specificities of local artification processes behind the label of the art city. The findings consist of three strategies through which the art city is awarded legitimacy, authenticity, and attractiveness.

The contributions of the paper include going behind the veneer of the so-called art city by showing the process whereby a city brand is artfied. While the city as an art gallery approach was viewed as successful by participants in our study, there are drawbacks of such art-based strategies. An obvious drawback concerns the lack of diversity and inclusion in the selection of the artworks and artists and making of art and attraction spaces, which leads to a one-dimensional public space. Artification of a city brand is a top-down process, which limits the possibilities of initiating social change responsive to the needs of the local community. Place branding practitioners should therefore encourage bottom-up spontaneous art initiatives and a diversified repertoire of public artworks.

Keywords: City Branding, Artification, Public Art, Brand Identity

The impact of tourism motivation on contents tourism: Contrasts and commonalities among generations

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Placed within the theoretical framework of cultural tourism, the concept of contents tourism emphasizes the use of narratives, characters, and other creative elements over media formats (Seaton and Yamamura, 2014; Yamamura, 2011). In recent years, contents tourism has garnered significant attention and created a massive international fan base for some popular tourism destinations, including Japan, China, and Korea (Graburn and Yamamura, 2020). While much attention has been devoted to the “host” side, encompassing content, creativity, media structure, and the impact of technological advancements, there remains a dearth of studies examining the “guest” side, such as the travel influences (push factors) of tourists and the impact of those diverse factors on different tourist segments.

This study endeavors to bridge those research gaps by investigating the impact of travel motivation on content tourism among different generations. To achieve this, the authors conducted a large-scale national survey with the support of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) using a sample size of 6,150. The study reveals 10 key push travel motivation factors, including excitement and impression, local attachment, recharging, self-understanding, self-esteem, value accomplishment, faith and religion, dream fulfilment, novelty, and family and friends. This study analyses the impact of these travel motivations on two pivotal content tourism, namely popularity and heritage. The moderating effect of generation factor is also considered in the analysis.

The result found that each push travel motivation has a different impact on popularity and heritage content tourism. While local attachment and value accomplishment both exhibit a substantial effect size on both “popularity” and “heritage” aspect of content tourism. The moderating effects of different generations on the impact of travel motivation on contents tourism are found. Specifically, for faith and religion, different generations possess different travel motivations. It is observed that older generations are inclined towards popularity, whereas younger generations find heritage more appealing. When it comes to dream achievement, older generations tend to gravitate towards heritage, while younger generations are more drawn to popularity. Interestingly, this study revealed more commonalities than conflicts among generations.

The implications of these findings provide destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and other tourism entities with the opportunity to refine their brand and marketing campaigns for contents tourism, ultimately enhancing their effectiveness.

Keywords: Tourism Motivation, Contents Tourism, Generation Gaps, Tourism Marketing

City branding strategies linked to “comprehensive plans for municipalities” in Japan

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This study aims to examine the City Branding Strategy in Japanese municipalities. The effectiveness of developing and promoting brand images linked to the “Future Vision” listed in The Comprehensive Plan is found through empirical research and case study.

‘City branding is the application of the philosophy and methods of the development of cities’ (Kavaratzis 2019). Over the last two decades, a variety of studies (Kavaratzis 2004, 2009, 2019, Kavaratzis and Ashworth 2006, Hankinson 2004, 2007, 2010, Hanna and Rowley 2011, 2015, Dinnie 2016) analysing different city branding and management have emerged. The study focused on the City Brand Components framework, which consists of eight elements integrated by Kavaratzis in 2009. This is because the Comprehensive Plans prepared by Japanese local municipalities are structured to encompass the elements that Kavaratzis (2009) indicated. Simultaneously, place identity (Florek 2021) is discussed.

Literature reviews have been conducted on the changes in the significance and positioning of Future Vision. To test the potential of Future Vision’s function as a brand identity, an online survey on images related to well-known cities will be conducted and the results evaluated. In addition, a case study of the Comprehensive Planning processes of Shiojiri City including interviews with city officers, which have pioneered the brand strategy, will be conducted to clarify the importance of the linkage between Future Vision and the brand identity.

In Japan, almost all municipalities formulate long-term Comprehensive Plans for their administrative operations (Otsuka 2021). Most of them consist of a multi-layered structure—The Basic Concept is at the top of it. The Ministry of Home Affairs instructed municipalities to draw up a Basic Concept, which had been required by the Local Autonomy Act from 1969 to 2011, and to present it in simple languages, such as a Future Vision and an outline of the measures needed to achieve it. A study revealed that most municipalities had developed a similar Future Vision, which should reflect more of a place identity (Ministry of Home Affairs 1985). However, there are no studies on Future Vision from the perspective of identity (Yamashita and Toyokawa 2022).

Since 2011, Comprehensive Plans became more flexible (Tamamura 2014). The research on the structure and content of them has therefore intensified (Ito 2019). Future Vision is similar to the process of creating a City brand vision. Focusing on Future Vision and finding the way to integrate City Brand strategies into Comprehensive Plans is practical and significant.

Some Comprehensive Plans are designed to identify local attractions and issues, and to promote their improvement and enhancement with the involvement of local actors. In Shiojiri City, the Future Vision will be linked and integrated with the City Branding Strategy. The empirical survey confirms that there is a Future Vision that is perceived as a place value and an identity. City Branding Strategies in Japan should be linked and integrated with Comprehensive Plans.

Keywords: City branding strategy, Place identity, Future visions, Comprehensive Plans for municipalities, Japanese municipality

How inclusive are smart city discourses?

Inclusion and diversity narratives to address the digital divide

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Digital urban futures are increasingly shaped by AI, IoT, big data and analytics with a promise of a more sustainable, efficient, and inclusive urban logic. While cities on a global scale embrace smartness and smart city discourses as a road map for an efficient urban governance, concerns of scholars and practitioners about the widening digital divide and digital barriers facing over 30 percent of urban populations should not be neglected (Kolotouchkina et al. 2022). Inequalities in digital accessibility and digital literacy, ageism and ableism are still embedded in most digital experiences. In this paper, we argue that the neglect of marginalised and vulnerable communities in smart city narratives and related policies poses important challenges for policymakers committed to narrowing the digital divide and thus making their cities more inclusive and liveable for all (Anttiroiko, 2014; Kavatzis et al. 2017). Although inclusion in urban discourses have been empirically observed in the context of migration and diversity context (Belabas et al. 2020; Belabas & George, 2023; Hassen & Giovanardi, 2018; Paganoni, 2012) research on the inclusive (or lack thereof) character of government communication around smart and digital cities is scarce.

This exploratory study aims to fill this gap by observing inclusion and diversity in institutional communication and smart city discourses by municipalities in the context of the digital transition at the urban level. We engage in a comparative review of smart city discourses in 6 urban areas across Spain and The Netherlands to explore:

1. What are the different discourses around smart cities and urban digital transition?
2. Are there any specific areas/ divisions aimed to enable digital inclusion of the most vulnerable citizens?
3. Do different municipal departments collaborate in the development and communication of inclusive and smart city narratives and if so, how?
4. Which actors are included (or excluded) in official (public) city branding and urban governance strategies related to the digital transition?

We then reflect on inclusion/exclusion of different vulnerable population in digital and smart city discourses and on the implications with regards to the digital divide.

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Keywords: smart cities, digital divide, city branding, urban governance, elderly, people with disabilities, migrants

Proposing “sustainable meetings”: convention bureaus marketing of destinations as ethical

Malin Andersson, Lund University, Sweden

In the wake of a crisis and restrictions on physical interactions, the importance of meetings is emphasized more than ever. The meetings industry has gone from unprecedented down-sizing to higher booking rates than ever, and attracting meetings is an important part of municipalities place branding strategies. AMEX (2022) describe the industry to be “firing on all cylinders” (ibid: 8), while sustainability is stated as its renewed focus (ibid.). This is evident in convention bureaus’ offering of “sustainable meetings”, in the literature referred to as green meetings (cf Mykletun et al. 2014). Considering the climate effects of over-tourism (Nilsson 2020; Saarinen 2006), the current escalation of bookings and new digital options for travel-free meetings (Lekgau and Tichaawa 2021) questions arise of how green meetings are communicated. Studies of green meetings have focused on perceptions depending on roles (Mykletun et al. 2014), marketing as process (Demaziere, 2020) and visitor awareness (Orthodoxou et al. 2021). Knowledge about communicative aspects can be more developed, and the aim is to understand how sustainability is communicated by professional meetings organizations. Taking a case study approach, online material from seven Swedish convention bureaus was collected between June-November 2022 and the analysis draws on discourse theory (Wetherell et al. 2001) identifying valuations and moral terminologies.

Two common themes are certifications and expert lists on how meetings bookers can work with sustainability. Ecological concern is expressed in connection on-sites materials like tap water and food. Transportations are moderately addressed, as are digital meetings. A social theme concerns work inclusion. “Sustainable meetings” are visualized in nature photographs, place specific and generic. In conclusion the communication morally values activities on-site, while activities to- and from-sites are less explicit. A practical implication is that convention bureaus get a better understanding of how the communication creates ambiguous messages.

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Keywords: sustainable meetings, place marketing, convention bureaus, communication, discourse theory

Coworking spaces as city storytellers: How coworking spaces create and employ the imaginary of the city in their own strategic communication?

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Coworking spaces are collaborative work environments in which the concept of community is highly valued. The managers of these spaces also try to make them ambiances for socializing and building social ties among their members (Bouncken, 2023; Bouncken et al., 2021; Butcher, 2016). The flexibility and versatility of coworking spaces allow them to be a good setting for digital nomads and remote workers (Orel, 2019; Orel et al., 2022) and a means of contact for them with the city. This allows workers to integrate into the coworking space community and the local context, minimizing isolation and enhancing the sense of living (Bouncken & Görmar, 2023; Merrell et al., 2021).

This article explores how coworking spaces' management and marketing teams act as a gateway to the city and its different practices and culture, especially for digital nomads. We selected 12 offices located in Barcelona, because it is one of the most developed European cities in the coworking industry (Coworking Resources, 2022; Statista, 2022). To learn about organizational strategies used to promote and present the city as a work and leisure destination (Barcelona Expat Life, 2023; Startup Guide World, 2020), in-depth interviews were conducted with community managers and space operators, and participant observation in the workplaces was carried out.

Our findings reveal that coworking spaces communicate different place narratives as part of their strategic communication. For example, coworking offices create and employ the imaginary of the city of Barcelona by presenting it as a startup city with many business opportunities, strengthening the reputation of an open and diverse city for expats. The positioning of Barcelona as a competitive global brand and a stage for innovation and technology also benefits this storytelling (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2019; Compte-Pujol et al., 2018). Both brands, the corporate brand of coworking spaces and the place brand of Barcelona, feed and reinforce each other to attract digital nomads first to the city and then to coworking offices. Also, corporate events in coworking spaces add to this imaginary, incorporating local celebrations and traditions into the offices' daily routine and life (e.g., Sant Jordi, La Castanyada, community parties, etc.). Furthermore, these events help nomads to co-construct their own perceptions about place (Govers & Go, 2009; Lichrou et al., 2017). Our research shows that meanings communicated from the coworking space promote the image of Barcelona as an ideal place to live and work, socialize, and achieve a good quality of life.

On the other hand, characteristics such as privileged geographical location, advanced digital infrastructure, and international prestige are considered to build an organizational strategy to communicate the city's identity. We conclude that management, marketing and sales units are important actors in shaping place narratives and establish points of attraction with coworking users. Coworking brands use these created meanings to foster social and spatial bonds and consolidate entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Keywords: Coworking space, Place branding, Coworking management, Business strategies, Barcelona

Do place attributes influence company names? An empirical study in three cities in Colombia, Latin America

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Catalina Orjuela Martinez, Independent scholar and researcher, Colombia

In recent years, processes related to the commodification of place names have been critically studied by a growing number of scholars. Understanding how place names are used by the local companies or authorities helps in appraising the value of toponyms and their acceptance by the local politicians and businesspeople, two key groups of local stakeholders.

Company names have been found to mirror attributes related to the place, to the industry sector to which they belong, being self-referent or not using any strategy at all. Our research studies the company names in three destinations in Colombia, Latin America, to find out how far the local companies incorporate in their names references to the local features. As we study company names from the tourism sector, the attributes these may incorporate into their strategies may reflect the destination's features. These features are of course selected and promoted by the local tourist boards, organizations devoted to promoting the place and their attributes to targeted audiences. Therefore, it is hypothesized that, whenever a naming strategy is aligned with the features put forth by the local authorities, we are in front of a "buy-in" by the tourist companies.

The results confirm previous research in the sense that naming is an under-utilized strategy. However, when tourist companies use it, it generally reflects the much more the inherent place features rather than those put forth by the local destination management organizations. Additionally, we uncovered that, in case companies may choose among different names (at national, regional or local level) they will choose the name that brings them more added value.

This work is a call for companies to engage with the naming strategy as a means of distinction. It is also a call to local authorities to convene businesses and other stakeholders to align place features with business goals.

Keywords: place features, business strategy, naming, destination management, place promotion, Colombia

The Global Ireland Initiative: Redefining the Irish brand by expanding its footprint

Phillip Arceneaux, Miami University, USA

In 2018, Ireland launched a €300 million strategic initiative to expand its international presence and influence by 2025. The “Global Ireland Initiative” aims to rebrand the small island-nation as an influential actor on an upward trajectory. This proposal looks to understand this initiative through a public diplomacy lens, namely how it redefines Ireland’s national brand and quantifies its impact for both domestic and foreign publics.

First, I propose using a narrative lens to explore the discursive means through which the Taoiseach’s Office and Department of Foreign Affairs have articulated a new vision of the Irish brand. This involves determining the issue, system, and identity narratives giving form to Ireland’s strategic narratives. Using primary government texts allows me to understand how the Irish government conceives of the campaign through its goals, objectives, and brand platform. Additionally, this allows for a better understanding of the value creation process Ireland adopted to influence key stakeholders in the expansion of its brand awareness and brand impact.

Second, the Global Ireland Initiative is a comprehensive whole-of-government campaign spanning political, economic, and cultural sectors. For such a massive undertaking, success is vague. To grow the “scope and impact of Ireland’s global footprint,” the metrics used to evaluate the campaign are unclear. This proposal looks to identify markers Ireland intends to use to measure the effectiveness of its campaign. This offers a quantifiable context to understand the impact of a policy-oriented branding campaign.

Third, literature acknowledges public diplomacy’s duality, informing and influencing both foreign and domestic policy. Thus, this proposal looks to consider the intermestic capacity the Global Ireland Initiative plays in rebranding Ireland’s value and impact to foreign countries, corporations, and publics, but also to Ireland’s domestic industries and public. This component will be guided by Putnam’s two-level game theory.

The method involves a Fairclough critical discourse analysis following a three-pronged process. First, a content analysis will be employed to analyze the manifest messaging inherent in Irish policy documents. Second, a discursive analysis will expand on the content analysis by investigating the latent meaning embedded with the text of the campaign policy documents. Lastly, insights from the first two analyses will be contextualized with a sociocultural analysis that relates the messaging and meaning of the policy documents to the history of Irish politics, society, and culture.

The practical implications of this study are threefold. First, it offers insights on content strategy for effective storytelling within policy-writing as part of the branding and marketing process. Second, it offers a measurement and evaluation analysis on an in-progress nation-branding effort to determine the return-on-investment capacity of a €300 million public diplomacy campaign. And third, it articulates the dual role nation-branding policy can play to promote both domestic and foreign policy interests across the political, economic, social, and cultural sectors. In all, this proposal will be of interest to marketing and public relations scholars and practitioners, primarily with interests or experience in European nation-branding and identity politics.

Keywords: public diplomacy, strategic narratives, value creation, measurement and evaluation, critical discourse analysis

A creative meta sphere rap

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Tuomas Pohjola, University of Turku, Finland

Arja Lemmetyinen, University of Turku, Finland

The purpose of this artwork is to deliver research results in a novel way to appeal to new audiences. The theme of the presentation is city branding. We present a rap based on the conclusions of our recent study "Exploring smart and creative city brand associations – evidence from ten European cities at the time of the crisis/Covid19".

Research on the creative meta sphere of a place/city will be visible and experimental by showing the potential of the driving forces of research: creativity, inspiration, and thinking. The multidisciplinary approach to research has also been applied through the contribution of the researchers representing a variety of research fields.

The use of artificial intelligence to serve human-centred ideas represents a new frontier in distributing research results. First, AI online service was used to generate the lyrics of an urban rap and then another to generate a music track with several instruments and a virtual singer. The presentation will be in a video format.

Keywords: Creative, Smart, City brand, Rap, Video

Augmented reality and virtual reality applications in tourism and place branding: Opportunities and challenges

Ilkin Mehrabov, Lund University, Sweden

This presentation explores the potential benefits of Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) applications for promoting tourism and place branding.

The presentation is framed within the context of place branding – which refers to the process of creating and managing a place’s image to attract tourists, investors, and residents (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009) – and also draws upon experiential marketing concepts (Batat, 2021) – which emphasize the creation of immersive and memorable experiences for consumers, and the use of digital technologies, including, but not limited to smartphones, to enhance these experiences (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2013).

The presentation revolves around a literature review of academic articles, books, reports, and case studies related to AR, VR, tourism, and place branding. It also draws upon successful examples of AR and VR projects and initiatives used to promote tourism and place branding around the world.

The presentation argues that AR and VR technologies can provide unique opportunities for promoting tourism and place branding (Linaza et al., 2012). By creating immersive and interactive experiences, these technologies can enhance the attractiveness and competitiveness of a destination, differentiate it from competitors, and provide visitors with enjoyable and engaging activities – e.g., AR and VR applications can be used to showcase historical or cultural landmarks; explore local attractions; offer personalized recommendations and information to visitors; and even simulate a seamless travel experience itself.

At the same time, the presentation also acknowledges that there are challenges and limitations associated with these technologies – including, but not limited to, issues related to accessibility, affordability, and user interface/user experience (UI/UX). The examples of successful AR/VR projects clearly demonstrate that in order to overcome the shortcomings and drawbacks associated with these apps, destinations should closely collaborate with technology companies to develop user-centered applications that are inclusive and economical – and use data analytics to measure the impact and effectiveness of the initiatives (Neuhofet al., 2014).

As such, the presentation highlights the need for a strategic, and holistic, approach – that takes into account the needs and preferences of different stakeholders (including visitors, residents, and local businesses) – to the use of AR and VR in place branding.

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Keywords: Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality, Tourism Applications, Place Branding, Mobile Apps

Representation of city and place branding in TV

Alex Deffner, University of Thessaly, Greece

It has been established that the audio-visual dimension is essential in city and place marketing and branding. However, the emphasis has been on films, USA TV series and serials. As part of a broader personal research, this presentation aims to analyse the importance of non-USA TV works in the place branding effect.

It is based on a combination of the analysis of the representation of city and place in cinema and TV with the literature on film tourism, with a personal focus on the place marketing and branding. One crucial issue is the distinction between the intentional or unintentional promotion of a particular location as a place to live, work or visit.

The primary method is the case study analysis of selected recent (i.e. last ten years) non-USA TV series and serials. The places and, not always consequently, works are mainly from the Mediterranean, Nordic countries, Germany, Netherlands, Middle East, South Korea, Australia and Canada. Most of the works can be available through various platforms.

Various chosen places and TV works are not always well-known, existing or 'accurate'. The findings relate to a variety of issues: geographical attributes (Mediterranean and Nordic areas), types of branding (cross-border), types of landscape (seas, mountains, forests, deserts), types of works (music), attributes of places (dangerous, idyllic, divided cities, cities with social problems, countryside), distinctive places (aboriginal lands), power of place to affect behaviour.

Regarding the spatial level, the most popular and studied levels have been the local and the urban ones, but also the region and the nation have been represented and studied. Regarding art products, TV works have gained increasing attention in recent years mainly due to their themes rather than their quality. The effect of place branding is more challenging to be discovered in TV works (also due to their length, i.e. the number of episodes). Thus, the unintentional dimension of this effect ends up to be more significant in many examples.

The role of place branding could be more critical, in the practical sense, if this approach is incorporated into place branding plans or promotional texts, i.e. if the intentional dimension of the place branding effect is accentuated.

Keywords: city and place marketing and branding, city and place in cinema and TV, TV series and serials, music films, film tourism

Place brands as strategic atmospheres

Monica Porzionato, Lund University, Sweden

The aim of this study is to unravel the potential of atmospheric thinking for place brand communication research. As such, it explores how place branding can be understood as a process of communicatively crafting 'strategic atmospheres', namely as a process of constituting specific affective and sensory relations to urban space.

The theoretical argument is informed by both communication theory and spatial theory, paying particular attention to the potentiality of combining an affective communication perspective (Ashcraft 2021) with atmospheric theorizing (Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos 2016; Sumartojo and Pink 2019; Bille and Simonsen 2021).

The study relies on qualitative empirical materials collected in the Italian city of Venice in order to advance its theoretical proposition. Specifically, it takes into account how place branding strategies in the city have adjusted in relation to sea level rise as an exponential threat to Venice's brand as a safe and alluring touristic destination.

Preliminary findings reveal how the strategic depiction of sea level rise in Venice fosters the enactment of particular affective practices aimed at maintaining an authentic atmosphere of the city, alongside the rejection and regulation of alternative modes of feeling and experiencing rising waters.

This study concludes place brand communication could be seen as the mean through which specific ideas of how climate vulnerable cities should look and feel like are formed, maintained and continuously being contested in the everyday experience of these wounded places.

This study enriches current understandings of the ways branding strategies can be deployed to communicate environmental phenomena in climate vulnerable urban areas.

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Keywords: Affective Practices, Urban Atmospheres, Strategic Communication, Place Branding, Venice

Shaping shopping aires: an original podcast intro

Massimo Giovanardi, University of Bologna, Italy

Shopping Aires is the title of the podcast intro theme music that I composed for a project named “F for Fashion”. The podcast was identified by fellow researchers of the Culture Fashion Communication group (University of Bologna) as a compelling way to stage and promote a series of guest lectures. These lectures, which were held virtually between 2020 and 2021, elaborated on the subject of fake in fashion and featured a number of renowned national and international speakers. My intervention was supposed to create a distinctive identity for the podcast by recalling the soundscape of a Latin American metropolis. During the proposed Art Gallery session, I intend to offer a live execution of the music theme, aided by a master keyboard and a music software. Furthermore, I am planning to illustrate the creative process behind this music theme, as well as some of the production practices that I deployed during the making of Shopping Aires. It is possible to argue that the sonic staging of an urban context is an effective manner to perform an exercise of sound branding. Sound branding has become an established approach for developing strategic identity formats by relying on sounds and music (e.g. Gustafsson, 2015). In this context, arts-based techniques are mobilised opportunistically and tactically, rather than heuristically, in order to strengthen a corporate or a product image. At the same time, envisioning a place sonically can be a fruitful method to generate meaningful identity systems for cultural and educational projects. The opportunities and the challenges are discussed.

Keywords: sound branding, sonic branding, soundscape, arts-based methodologies, music

Authenticity in place branding in times of crisis

Alia El Banna, Universidad Francisco de Vitoria, Spain

Nicolas Papadopoulos, Sprott School of Business of Carleton University, Canada

As aptly signalled by the focus of the IPBA 2023 conference, a multitude of global “calamities” has brought about a “growing sense of living in an age of everlasting crisis and uncertainty”. In times like these, people look for elements of stability in their lives by drawing on their history, heritage, traditions, and culture (Lambert and Rockwell, 2011), which form part of their identity and are seen as bedrocks of their existence. This leads to a search for elements they can believe in, and thence, among others, to the growing importance of authenticity: Napoli et al. (2014) note that, in the context of place branding, authenticity provides a sense of legitimacy that is acquired through a symbolic connection with exactly those bedrock elements that serve people so well in times of crisis: Culture, traditions, history, and heritage. Similarly, the same study suggests that for consumer brands authenticity is established by drawing on heritage, quality commitment, sincerity, design consistency, and/or craftsmanship, and has been linked to a “sincere story” referring to “place, tradition, and non-commercial values” (p. 1091).

While the role and impact of place authenticity have been key in tourism research (e.g., Castéran and Roederer, 2013; Kolar and Zabkar, 2010), research on the authentic meaning of places and people’s perceptions of their ‘originality’ has been rather limited. In many cases place branding narratives forge an image that can incorporate cultural, historical, environmental, and/or architectural representations, but in many others the narrative follows a ‘globalized’, generic approach. In the latter case, the unique aura of a place is not actually reflected nor promoted.

Whether this globalized image is portrayed by place managers or already is a formed generic perception, both projections often are incongruent with the real identity of a place (“Emily in Paris” is not what one would experience in that city). This raises several dilemmas: What does a place do about this misrepresentation of reality? Do places need to project what they ‘genuinely’ stand for? Does standing for everything lead to a repeated globalized place image which ultimately leads to ‘placelessness’? Does the importance of authenticity vary between ‘normal’ and ‘crisis’ times, and under what conditions might authenticity be more or less important than other place characteristics?

Hence, the main goal of this study is to advance the theoretical understanding of “authenticity” in place branding. It will do so by (i) examining the existing cross disciplinary knowledge on “authenticity”; and, (ii) conducting a content analysis of secondary sources namely “ads on social media” comparing what “authenticity” means in place branding, commercial product branding, place-associated commercial product branding and commercial product-associated place branding.

Overall, this study will advance the theoretical and practical understanding of place authenticity highlighting the differences between globalized and authentic approaches in times of crisis and uncertainty. Furthermore, in-depth understanding of authenticity will be useful in building an “authenticity barometer” that will guide place managers to reconcile common stereotypical projections of various places which are often incongruent with their real identity.

Keywords: Place branding, Place identity, Product branding, Authenticity, Globalized image, Placelessness

Artwork: “Greater Copenhagen Region” – Impressions of a place

Per Siljeklint, Kristianstad University, Sweden

The interest for participatory place branding and inclusive place branding practices is growing and place branding is increasingly seen as a collective. The current artwork is connected to the place of this year's conference: the Greater Copenhagen Region! At IPBA, scholars and practitioners gather for a few days to discuss current issues in place branding, but at the same time we get to experience new places. This artwork is about our impressions of the place of IPBA 2023. What is our collective impression of Greater Copenhagen? Let's co-create and visualize the perceived place brand identity!

The current artwork will be crafted during the conference. A conceptual map over Greater Copenhagen Region, illustrated by the contributor, is used as a starting point. Together we develop the map, adding our own impressions and thoughts of the place of the conference. We use crayons, markers, and pencils.

Keywords: co-creation, visualization, place stakeholders, brand identity

Collaboration between research and practice to advance place branding knowledge

Maria Månsson, Lund University, Sweden

Jörgen Eksell, Lund University, Sweden

Emma Björner, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

In recent years it has become more common for research collaborations between academics and practitioners. The aim of this panel is therefore to develop a discussion regarding learnings, possibilities, and challenges with research collaborations between academia and practice. The increased interest for this type of collaboration is also visible in research calls where a confirmed collaboration is requested to apply for funding. It is argued that the aim for these collaborations is to address complex issues that cannot be tackled by a single partner on their own (Vangen & Huxham, 2005). These collaborations may take place at any time during the research process and the outcomes are seen as beneficial to both society and research (Bender, 2022). What is important to note is that the collaboration requires active partners where both practitioners and researchers are involved in the research process. Hoekstra et al. (2020) detect a shift in the research paradigm, from one in which the researcher was the sole expert, to researchers and practitioners co-leading research activities and collectively applying their expertise, knowledge, and skills to the research process. A key question is what do we all gain from these collaborations and how does it contribute to advance knowledge in the field of place branding?

In this panel we aim to discuss:

- What is the value for practitioners to collaborate with academia?
- What is the value for academia to collaborate with practitioners?
- What are the possibilities in collaborations?
- What are the challenges?

The discussion is based on the panel's own experiences from participating in collaborative research. The participants represent academia and place branding practitioners on national, regional, and local level in a Swedish context.

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Keywords: Collaborative research, Experiences, Place branding practitioners, Academics, Challenges

Innovative approach to place marketing – Case of Waterloo, Canada

Marica Mazurek, University of Zilina, Slovakia

Innovation processes have an enormous impact on the competitiveness globally and only the innovative countries could be successful in this process of competitiveness. Process innovations are becoming increasingly significant in a changing digital society, and a goal of this study would be to focus on the dominating service industry, particularly how this sector has lately been influenced by the need for sustainable development and digitalization. The cohabitation of these three aspects (innovation, digitization, and sustainability) will be declared as a fact in the competitive landscape. The purpose of this case study is to discuss a successful case of the city of Waterloo, Canada, which belongs to the Waterloo-Kitchener Region. This case study will concentrate on educational institution and the partnerships of the city of Waterloo with the private and public sector.

Keywords: Innovation, Process Innovation, Knowledge theory, Sustainable Development, Digitalization, Service Sector

Overcoming policy platitudes and political paralysis to catalyse climate action in city branding: A comparative study of UK and Canada

Giannina Warren, Middlesex University London, UK

Evan Cleave, Toronto Metropolitan University, Canada

Chad Walker, Dalhousie University, Canada

This research intends to uncover specific cities' climate change mitigation strategies, published policy commitments and communicative action, in an effort to understand how climate-focused city branding efforts might catalyse residential engagement and behavioural change among stakeholder groups. Specifically, it asks: what are the policy commitments that have been made, and what are the biggest challenges in communicating those policies to local residents and businesses?

This research draws on Cultural Intermediation Theory (Bourdieu, 1984) to position place marketers and communications professionals at the heart of policy and planning processes. Through their unique confluence of cultural and social capital, they act as 'boundary spanners' who operate in the zone between politicians and decision-makers, stakeholders and residents. This research helps to better understand the drive to meet Net Zero targets in order to fulfil political and economic commitments, and leverage that to build a strong, positive reputation as a sustainable city (Rinaldi et al., 2021)

A 'Decision Theatre' approach was employed in a series of five focus groups with environmental policy, climate action, place marketing, tourism and city branding professionals working for cities that have declared a climate emergency in Canada and the UK (n=27 participants across 19 cities). Participants were tasked with sharing both best practices and challenges experienced in their climate action and city branding efforts, and determining optimal routes to both meet the climate action targets and communicate them effectively with key stakeholders.

This research demonstrated that the communication challenges facing place branding professionals are both internal (within government) and external (stakeholders and target audiences). Whilst cities are quick to make policy announcements regarding Net Zero targets, often adequate funding, strategic planning and resources allocated to properly communicate these policies are not forthcoming. Further, professionals are met with audience resistance to reception due to socio-economic disparities, competing priorities, and message fatigue.

By utilising an international and interdisciplinary approach to the research that includes both sides of the issue – environmental/climate action, along with city marketing/place branding, this research might offer a better understanding of how cities can overcome sustainability communication challenges and catalyse behavioural change that will have a lasting local and global impact.

There are some unique and innovative ways of bridging the gap between local government policy on climate action and city branding efforts that are both internal (unofficial and non-systemic ways of working within the bureaucracy) and external (creative message strategies, campaigns and citizen engagement initiatives). Some best practices gathered from a variety of localities in both the UK and Canada might empower and inspire city marketing professionals in other jurisdictions to do the same with positive effects.

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Keywords: city branding, climate action, resident engagement, climate communications, sustainability

From perception to strategy: A research on the branding process of green spaces in Istanbul

Ece Yurtaçan, Istanbul Technical University, Turkey

Yasin Çağatay Seçkin, Istanbul Technical University, Turkey

The aim of this research is to examine the management strategies implemented for the branding of public green spaces in Istanbul and to evaluate their effectiveness. As result of the evaluation, it is to feed and renew the management strategy.

From this point of view, one of the public policies that has been implemented by Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) since 2019 is place branding, which aims to increase the perception of residents about green areas and encourage them to be more aware of and protect the ecosystem. Therefore, since 2019, the IMM Department of Parks and Recreation is not only responsible for the management and maintenance of green areas but also focuses on branding, promoting and developing strategies for the green areas of Istanbul. First of all, the Urban Ecosystems Directorate was established in 2020 to provide a more comprehensive approach to the management of the city's green spaces and to train staff on ecological aspects. Then in order to remind and make users aware of Istanbul's green existence and green potential, the brand "Green Istanbul" with the slogan "A greener Istanbul is possible together" was introduced as a corporate identity and has provided the opportunity to bring together many volunteers with the sub-brands Wild İstanbul and Play İstanbul. This corporate identity, it is aimed to make Istanbul's green spaces more visible. For this purpose, many trainings and activities inside and outside the institution have been also organized.

Besides the fact that its services provide an experience, it has also been used as a strategy to provide a brand experience environment by organizing activities such as bird watching and dolphin watching that are aligned with the brands' goals and image. Creating a strong brand and brand experience in public spaces can strengthen visitors' sense of belonging and encourage them to create lasting memories. This includes a range of activities such as organizing special events, installing signs and information boards, and conducting educational campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of place branding, green spaces, and their role in maintaining a healthy and sustainable urban environment. Another designated strategy for place branding is to create a unique identity for each green space. Especially in the historic groves, dating back 17th and 18th centuries, the maintenance program and chart were reorganized in accordance with their identity, and it was ensured that the groves have their own identity with works such as grove management with permanent.

The research focuses on green spaces that are supervised by the IMM. The research methodology includes conducting local and international literature reviews, making observations, administering surveys, and conducting in-depth personal interviews. The research will interview the managers who establish the strategic vision, the staff who execute the brand promise, and the visitors who experience the green spaces.

In conclusion, this research will provide a comprehensive assessment of the branding process for public green spaces in Istanbul and recommendations on how municipalities can develop branding strategies for public spaces.

Keywords: place branding, green spaces, perception, strategy, Istanbul

Exploring place experiences and AI-generated logos for Nordic city branding

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This research consists of two core aspects aimed at enriching the effectiveness of place branding strategies. The first segment highlights the significance of place experiences in shaping compelling place brands. It introduces an innovative methodology that employs social media data analytics to comprehend these influential yet transient moments. The study revolves around 20 notable Nordic cities, analyzing both shared and distinctive facets of their place experiences. Additionally, it investigates the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on these experiences. Drawing from a dataset of 1,943,772 tweets related to these cities spanning 2017 to 2022, the research utilizes techniques such as topic modeling, word analysis, and principal component analysis to extract meaningful insights and visually portray these place experiences.

The second part of the research is devoted to the pragmatic utilization of generative AI in the realm of place branding. While logos, branding campaigns, and slogans have been criticized for their superficiality, they possess the potential to establish robust place brands and convey narratives. To integrate distinctive experiences into branding, this study harnesses generative AI tools like Midjourney and ChatGPT to craft logos, branding campaign names, and slogans for city branding. This section primarily centers around Midjourney, exploring six distinct approaches:

1. Direct Prompt: This involves minimal human intervention.
2. Stylistic Prompt: In this approach, the prompt is structured to include stylistic elements.
3. AI-Augmented Prompt: This uses ChatGPT to generate words for logo creation.
4. AI-Interpreted Prompt: ChatGPT generates logo ideas before being used in Midjourney.
5. Research-Augmented Prompt: Insights from research enhance the prompt.
6. Research-Interpreted Prompt: Research inputs guide the interpretative process for logo creation.

Leveraging generative AI for the production of logos, campaign names, and slogans offers several potential benefits. Firstly, it facilitates cost-effective, rapid generation of diverse branding materials in various styles, presenting a substantial advantage compared to investing heavily in consultants. Secondly, the low skill threshold required for generative AI enables various stakeholders to engage in collaborative branding material creation. Thirdly, the ability to tailor inputs, such as place experiences, ensures the production of distinctive materials that accurately encapsulate a city's unique attributes. Furthermore, the research suggests future applications of generative AI in place branding, encompassing other related brand aspects like image, identity, and positioning.

However, the application of generative AI in place branding is accompanied by specific limitations. Firstly, the opacity of the algorithmic and generative AI process may result in selective generation of certain terms, potentially deviating from the authentic experiences or attributes of a city. Secondly, concerns related to copyright and ethical considerations persist when employing generative AI for crafting branding materials. Thirdly, the proliferation of AI-assisted branding materials could raise queries about their intrinsic value, potentially diluting the overall efficacy of branding efforts. Lastly, human intervention remains essential to ensure the appropriateness and effectiveness of materials, as AI-generated content may not consistently align with intended purposes.

Keywords: place branding, place analytics, tweets, generative AI, ChatGPT, Midjourney

Time and temporality in multi-stakeholder brand co-creation. A time-based conceptualisation of place branding

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This paper aims to deepen understanding of place brand co-creation dynamics by integrating time as a central dimension of place branding and brand management.

The paper contributes to the debate on the dynamics of co-creating brands (e.g. Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013; Vallaster Wallpach and Zenker, 2018) and to the debate on the temporality of branding processes (Balmer, 2011; Schultz, 2022). Brand co-creation frames stakeholders' interactions as pivotal to creating value, meanings and experiences (Klijn et al., 2012). Through place brands appropriation and the consequent symbolic knowledge absorption, interpretation and recombination, place stakeholders produce and circulate novel place meanings and images (Pasquinelli et al., 2023). The temporal dimension is intrinsic to co-creative mechanisms but has been largely neglected in branding theory. Time is a social construction, and stakeholders "shape, influence, produce and reproduce temporal relations" (Burghausen, 2022: 345). The perception of time, stakeholders' different timeframes and the management of time help explain the nature and outcomes of managerial processes (Eshuis and van Buuren, 2014).

This conceptual paper adopts an integrative literature review. This research method enables uncovering links between different research streams and theoretical frameworks towards a holistic and integrative conceptual model (Kastanakis et al., 2022; Cronin and George, 2020)

A conceptual exploration and discussion of the temporality of the co-creation of (place) brands are presented. The paper reflects on multiple stakeholders' perceptions of time influencing intensity, modality, verse and timing of their participation in place brand building. Drawing on Mintzberg and Waters' (1985) concepts of deliberate and emergent strategies, the paper develops a time-based conceptualization of place brand co-creation and time-sensitive management of brands.

The findings open research routes on the temporal perspective of branding and brand management. Tensions in multi-stakeholder branding emerge for the co-existence and mutual influence of short-term and long-term perspectives, strategic and tactical views, temporariness and long-term structural visions.

This conceptual paper opens to future research that contributes to bridging the gap between the academic debate modelling place branding and the branding practice since it frames and explains the plural shapes of place branding and place brand management practices. These highly depend upon the stakeholders' understanding of time and how these enact time in co-creative mechanisms. The paper adds insights into the management of temporality, which is still lacking in the branding literature.

Keywords: place brand co-creation, temporality, time-sensitive brand management, deliberate branding, emergent branding

The contested value of place branding: Critique and justifications of a city's place branding practices

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Place branding has been viewed as a valuable tool for cities to attract residents, skilled workers, visitors, and business investments - with the aim to generate economic development for places or cities (Ashworth & Kavaratzis, 2009; Braun, Kavaratzis, and Zenker 2013; Kavaratzis, 2004). Doubt has though been voiced regarding the societal value of place branding (Kaneva, 2018; Riza 2015), warning that it may cause separation between the empirical conditions of a city and its branded representation, which may detract attention away from a city's core problems (Bertilsson, Rennstam & Sullivan 2020) - potentially leading to gentrification (Kaneva, 2011), and a marginalization of vulnerable citizens (Eisenshitz, 2010). In contrast, a third literature stream has suggested that place branding may create societal value if it explicitly addresses social inequality and injustice (Kavaratzis, Giovenardi & Lichrou, 2017), by including several stakeholders in place branding processes (Gonzales & Gale, 2020; Rebelo, Mehmood & Marsden, 2020).

Although extant place branding research testifies to a lively scholarly debate regarding the value of place branding, previous literature has been surprisingly silent on the degree to which it is judged as a valuable practice in the public eye. The aim of the paper is to remedy this shortage by analyzing the public debate of a Swedish city's place branding practices, seeking to shed light on the public's view of the value of place branding.

Our analysis was guided by Boltanski & Thévenout's (2006) theory of justification - conceptualizing how agreements may be reached by justifying one's actions and judgements in relation to a higher general principle of value. Our research approach involved a combination of a document study and a discourse analysis of 120 articles, collected between 2014-2022 from the local newspaper "Helsingborgs Dagblad", reflecting the public debate over the city of Helsingborg's place branding activities.

The findings showed that proponents of place branding, and its critics, could not agree on the social value of place branding. Critics could not understand how prioritizing investments in "superficial" branding before investments in social welfare (schools, healthcare, and elderly care) would be in society's best interest. City representatives' "circle of growth justification" for place branding; that it increases city revenues, which then are invested in welfare, was not accepted by the critics – and hence no agreement on the value of place branding was reached. We conclude that critics and proponents did not reach an agreement because they were not able to associate their critique and justifications with a higher general yet shared principle of value that could accomplish equivalence and thereby agreement between them.

Our conclusions inform place branding practitioners that they cannot simply assume that their practices are accepted and thought legitimate by society. Rather they need to engage in explicit justification work that involves relating their place branding practices to a higher principle of value, in a way that makes it intelligible as valuable and acceptable in the eyes of the public.

Keywords: Place branding, Social value, Citizens, Public debate, Critique, Justification, Discourse analysis

Top-of-mind awareness analysis in 5 Danish cities – Cognitive image forming factors, development over time and age and gender dependance

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Rune Thorbjørn Jason Clausen, VIA University College, Denmark

The aim of this study is to get a better understanding of the cognitive city image forming factors among people living outside the actual cities, their development over time and their age and gender dependance.

Konecnik and Gartner (2007) found that the image plays a vital role for the tourist's evaluation of a destination, and they propose to incorporate additional measures of awareness such as top-of-mind and unaided recall, particularly in relation to more popular and recognized destinations.

Top-of-Mind (TOM) memory is believed to occupy a most easily retrieved position in a person's network of memories. In a branding perspective image is considered a critical part of a brands, since it may represent a set of brand associations. Research on consumer brands recognizes TOM as the most stringent measure.

Still there are very few studies of TOM in the city brand literature. Stepchenkova and Li (2014) surveyed how past and potential Chinese outbound tourists viewed the U.S. as a destination based using TOM. The results indicate that TOM brand association information may effectively capture a substantial portion of overall brand knowledge. Jørgensen (2015, 2019) used data from TOM to show how the cognitive and affective image of the Danish city Horsens developed over a 17- year period. The TOM perspective has been further discussed by Zenker (2021) as part of his critical discussion of the current state of the field of place branding.

The authors have had access to TOM-data from 5 Danish cities including two cities with longer time-series of data. The data will be analyzed in an explorative study to find, describe, and generalize cognitive image forming factors, age and gender dependance, as well as development over time.

The results will lead to a better alignment between what Zenker (2018) describe as different schools of thought (image and identity focus) and to realize that the existing image of a city in the minds of people living elsewhere represent key information that should be added to and balanced with information from local stakeholders. This will reduce the risk for overlooking less convenient image elements or ignore or exclude less-appealing aspects of the city (Kavaratzis et al. 2017).

Keywords: place and city branding, top of mind awareness, cognitive city image factors, top of mind awareness serial data, age and gender dependance

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The built campus as place branding

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The aim of this paper is to explore the instrumental use of architectural interventions in public policy initiatives predicated upon the university campus as catalyst in place (re)making and branding.

The interdependence of place and university brands is well understood by practitioners and has attracted some scholarly attention. Meanwhile, higher education campuses have become a tool of public policy in promoting urban and regional revitalisation. There remains much to explore, conceptually, empirically, and for practice, in how the built environment of higher education - its status much less certain after the recent pandemic - may function today in place branding.

The contemporary practice of architecture is striking in the cosmopolitan and transnational character of its professional elites, despite the boundedness to a site, and local patterning, of the built forms that are its stock-in-trade. Leading architects (so-called 'starchitects'), their proteges and aspirants, build locally for global reputation. Completed projects, and the locales that host them, in turn gain profile. Subsequent reimagining as destinations, host sites, may be imbued with the reputational capital and ethos of the architect, and perceptions of the built forms they bequeath. Architecture functions as statement, beyond its quotidian practicalities, and not by accident. A signature building or precinct increasingly is anticipated by policy-makers to function as a core place branding resource. Architecture as drawcard is not happenstance, but literally by design.

Most policy visions of the campus as catalyst presume its functioning as a drawcard to sojourning students and researchers, talented human capital as migrants, and investments. The latter include endowments, research co-funding, and commercial presence in adjacent research parks. The case of the campus then is a promising prism through which to explore issues around the varied fields of application in place branding; an identified key theme for IPBA 2023. It is timely too given the profound challenges all in the academic profession experienced during the recent pandemic, with the sudden virtualisation of practice and border closures. In the midst of historically unprecedented conversations about the status of the campus in a digital age, it seems imperative to explore the now-established policy embrace of campus architecture in place-making and branding.

The paper first briefly reviews the aforementioned developments, referencing key analytics and literature; particularly on the higher education/ place branding nexus, and diverse policymakers' resort to campus projects as drivers of economic and social revitalisation. An industry analysis framework informs the former, and public policy theory and approach for the latter. The paper then explores, conceptually and descriptively, the internationalisation of professional architectural practice in parallel with the growing professional practice of place branding. The second half of the paper then draws the analysis together through reflections on several case studies: the Bezalel Academy campus project in central Jerusalem in particular, and Nordic and Australian examples.

Keywords: campus, architecture, place-making, branding, policy

Reimagining sustainable cities: An analysis of city branding, social media, and strategic communication in uncertain times

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Today's society is a risk society (Beck, 1992), which is dealing with global complex problems like climate change. Cities are getting increasingly global attention, by serving as training grounds and role models for dealing with these global sustainability issues (Fischer et al, 2021; Lara, 2020). Thanks to digital technologies and their participatory affordances, cities worldwide are discussing solutions online, and thereby getting international recognition and shaping the discourse about sustainability solutions. Managing risks and crises can represent an important means to achieve organizational objectives like image or brand improvement (Zerfass et al., 2018). However, there has been little research on which cities are dominating the digital discourse on sustainability and on how they are reimagining their strategic communication about sustainability solutions.

The study analyzes (i) which cities are prominently branded as sustainable cities online (ii) and about which communicated sustainability solutions cities achieve visibility. Based on the visibility and framing of city solutions on sustainable issues, it is further investigated (iii) whether the understanding of sustainability, the proposed solutions, and the prominence of sustainable cities have changed in recent years.

The study is based on framing theory (Entman, 1993) and literature addressing city branding, crisis and risk communication, strategic communication, and urban systemic change in uncertain times.

With semantic network analyses, communication on Twitter using the keywords "sustainable cities" is analyzed to detect the evolution of dominant cities and of solution frames. Solutions for sustainability are grouped in categories extracted from the literature, including the Brundtland Report (1987). Sample tweets are collected in two periods: in 2016 (i.e., after the Paris Agreement) and in 2022 (n = 409,696). After that, all hashtags related to sustainability solutions were extracted from the top 250 hashtags of the corpus.

Results reveal not only which cities are strongly associated with sustainability online and their characteristics as role models but also a dynamic, changing understanding of sustainable cities. Although technology-based solutions are still dominant, we can observe that more nature-based and human-based solutions have recently appeared in the digital communication of cities.

Insights contribute to the literature on city branding and sustainability by highlighting a changing understanding of sustainability. Practitioners get indications about which sustainable solutions are increasing cities' visibility.

Keywords: City branding, Sustainability, Social Media, Uncertainty, Semantic network analyses, Framing

In between place of origin effect and place brand: analysing the branding governance mechanism of the Acqua dell'Elba and Isola d'Elba collaboration

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Laura Minestroni, Sapienza Università di Roma, Italy

The paper analyzes the governance mechanism between a perfume company and its product brand Acqua dell'Elba and the local brand of the Elba Island to revisit the relationship between a place brands and a place-based company/product

By performing an extended case method (Burawoy 1998) which consists of material collected based on interviews with company managers and local authorities as well as strategic and policy documents produced by the company Acqua dell'Elba, the DMO of the island and seven municipalities located in the Elba island.

The analysis shows a synergetic coordination between different local place brand stakeholders (specifically the company and the local authorities) in attempting to create an innovative brand strategy, based on the theme of sustainability, for the entire Elba Island.

Keywords: place origin effect, place branding, governance, strategy

Cultural cognition, practice and bias: Reflection on Chinese city branding from 2020 to 2022

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Dian Wang, University of Greenwich, UK

City branding practices are in full swing in China, yet a Chinese-style theoretical construct of city branding has yet to take shape. In reviewing the development of city branding research in China, one view that has emerged (Wu et al., 2020) is that the pragmatist-oriented research path has left city managers and city branding practitioners without a deep understanding of the nature of city branding, while the overemphasis on effect studies has to some extent limited the scope of city branding theory construction in China. What is undisputed is that for the pragmatist-oriented concept of 'city branding', the theoretical construction of city branding in China cannot be separated from the observation and reflection on the practice of city branding in China.

Throughout previous research, most scholars have argued that the development of city branding practices is closely related to the process of urbanisation in China and has been characterised by a phased development (Wen, 2005). Placing city branding in the context of sociology, especially social development, the current practice of city branding in China has begun to take a cultural turn, with more and more city branding practitioners viewing culture as a resource for urban diversity. The cultural characteristics of cities have become a core element of attractiveness beyond spatial features, and cities have become, in a sense, products that must be 'culturally distinctive' for people to taste and consume, and urban policies have begun to revolve around how to create and maintain the cultural characteristics of cities.

This study attempts to observe the practice of Chinese city branding in the three years from 2020 to 2022 through the lens of the culturalisation of city branding, with the aim of building a more direct bridge between practical activities and rational reflection, and promoting a dialogue between theoretical and practical discourses of Chinese city branding. Specifically, this study uses the Farseeer News database to extract media reports on Chinese city branding from 2020-2022. Contents of 'city culture' were extracted and we adopted a thematic modelling approach to analyse data. The analysis is carried out to observe, analyse and summarise the perceptions, practices and biases of culture in Chinese city branding practices.

The study found that in the practice of city branding in China, there are four main interpretations of culture: first, city culture is a constituent element of city branding, i.e. city branding is composed of different facets, culture is both the core and the quality of city branding; second, city culture is the communication content of city branding, i.e. city branding is recognisable, culture is the most direct and symbolic expression of city branding. Third, city culture is a dimension of city brand assessment, i.e. city brand is a controllable and manageable tool that can be defined and measured, and culture as an interpretable and operational indicator has become a common dimension in many city brand assessment systems. Fourth, urban culture is a tool for urban governance, introducing the ideological attributes of culture into the practice of city branding.

Keywords: Chinese city branding, culture, thematic modelling, media presentation, city branding theory

Branding a small state as an innovation business partner

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Approximately fifty small countries depend on international cooperation for their survival as sovereign nations. This case study contributes to the discussion of cosmopolitanism vs internationalism in public diplomacy and place branding. It indicates that limited bilateral partnerships with universities and businesses based on government-to-government agreements and shared interest, is a safer strategy for small countries seeking reputational security than outspoken support for cosmopolitan values. It is therefore a very useful form of place branding, especially in times of crisis and uncertainty. The case is Innovation Centre Denmark.

Keywords: Triple helix, Entrepreneurship, Government-private partnerships, Innovation Centre Denmark, Bilateral, Branding, Public Diplomacy

“BeIT: Italian nation branding campaign after the uncertainties of the COVID-19”

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The COVID-19 pandemic strongly affected many nations: travels and mobility were restricted during the lockdown and national priorities moved toward public health.

Lee (2020, 2021) explored South Korean and Chinese nation branding during the pandemic and found that China (2021), damaged by the initial handling of the pandemic in Wuhan, tried to improve its international public health reputation. China first sent medical supplies and personnel abroad, then donated or exported vaccines, especially in developing countries. As to South Korea (2020), its government successfully adopted a containment approach and was praised and imitated by other Western countries.

Other authors conducted studies in different countries to examine their place branding during the COVID-19 from sociolinguistic and linguistic anthropological perspectives (Tovar, 2022).

Some countries have even held sport mega events. The Olympic Games in Japan were postponed to 2021, moreover, the audience absence and the restrictions limited the participation, but also the promotion of the nation branding on that occasion (Dubinsky, 2023; Rookwood and Adeosun, 2021).

During the pandemic, social media became a central tool to portray countries and to attract potential tourists to visit these touristic destinations, once COVID-19 was over. Wijaya et al. (2023) explored how Indonesia promoted nation branding during the pandemic, and investigated its pattern and narratives found on social media.

Some nations, like Italy, launched nation branding campaigns to recover from the negative impact and uncertainties caused by the COVID-19. In an increasingly competitive world, nation branding is crucial to promote a country and to attract international stakeholders from different sectors (Dinnie, 2016).

Anholt (2010) explored the Italian current situation and found certain weaknesses in environmental reputation, high technology sector, and personal advancement. According to him, Italy is a good place where you “can retreat from the troubles of the modern world”, but it is not an attractive place to live and work.

The aim of the present paper is to investigate Italy’s nation branding campaign to support the Made in Italy across the world. This campaign was organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, in collaboration with the Italian Trade Agency, from November 2021 to August 2022, and promoted in 26 nations. Based on previous studies on nation branding, the paper intends to explore how Italy’s campaign is structured from a communicative perspective, to understand its main themes and values, as well as its main narratives and patterns to promote this nation across the world.

The research adopts two approaches:

- A quantitative content analysis of photos and videos posted on the Instagram official account (@officialbe.it) to understand the type of content, sectors, and general values promoted in the overall campaign.
- A thematic analysis of some samples of posts to provide the most significant narrative strategies adopted, but also some innovative ways to promote a nation branding, for example through users’ interactivity and participation in the campaign.

The study will contribute to the exploration of new methods to promote nation branding through social media and interactive elements to increase the user’s direct participation.

Keywords: nation branding, Italy, Made in Italy, BeIT, uncertainty

Lessons learned from co-creating a place brand with young people: a practitioner case study from Australia

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The COVID-19 pandemic strongly affected many nations: travels and mobility were restricted during the lockdown and national priorities moved toward public health.

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The study will contribute to the exploration of new methods to promote nation branding through social media and interactive elements to increase the user's direct participation.

Keywords: Place branding, Young people, Tasmania, Australia, Co-creating

Place branding through building styles; expressing regional identity in four French border regions

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Place branding in general and city branding more in particular is commonly examined through written texts in printed brochures, online documents or municipal websites. What is more rarely observed is that artifacts in public space are taken as representations of the identity governmental authorities wish to provide of themselves to the outside world. And yet as examples of primary communication local governments give about themselves, they reveal essential features of their identity. This contribution will study the use of architecture styles in public infrastructures and buildings as symbolic reflections of their identity.

In border regions of which territorial occupation has been historically contested, displays of regional identity acquire particular importance. Such border regions exist in many countries, but not all national states that have eventually come to occupy them have handled regional diversity in the same manner. Given that the French national state has traditionally equaled its nation to the presence of only one language and one cultural identity, pressure for harmonization to match the Parisian benchmark has been particularly strong. In this study, four historical border regions inside France, in the North-West (Flandres, Hainaut, Artesia), North-East (Lorraine, Alsace), South-West (Pays Basque, Catalogne) and South-East (Savoie, Ligurie) have been studied in terms of the architecture styles visible in their prominent public buildings (town halls, museums, stations, theatres, statues, industrial heritage). Even if these regions as such no longer officially exist and have been replaced by new 'functional territorial boundaries', their historical borders can still be found in maps. We ask ourselves to what extent these buildings and their styles are promoted on the official municipal websites as representing what the city values about itself. If key buildings have been made and preserved in typical 'regional' styles (neo-Flemish renaissance style, Mediterranean Riviera-style) or if classical French classicist styles prevail, we can take this as significant of their brand identity.

We mapped for all municipalities above 20,000 inhabitants in these historical regions what their prominent public buildings are, in which architecture style they are built, how their official municipal websites refer to them and what this says about their explicit and/or implicit valuation of their regional and national identity.

Keywords: City branding, Regional identity, Municipal infrastructure and architecture, Building style

From teleology to magic: towards a spiritual place branding?

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Richard Ek, Karlstad University, Sweden

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Place branding, as branding in general, is a discursive practice inherently modernistic. This implies that its very approach to the world is based on the Enlightenment, including a rationalistic, instrumental, secularized and de-encharned ontological stance. Places have been depicted according to a Cartesian secular understanding of space, focusing on its absolute and relative characteristics. The exceptions often fall into out-of-the-ordinary norms, as for instance ghost tourism (but still within an enlightened modernistic logic). A teleological relation to places has dominated the discursive practice of place branding.

However, in dire times and the resurfacing of eschatological and apocalyptic imaginations (particularly in relation to the global environmental situation of the Antropocene) it is clear that the very virtues of the Enlightenment (rationalism, instrumentalism) do not have the attraction it used to have any longer. People are looking for other existential approaches to the situation of being in the world (Ashley, Kaye, & Tin, 2013; Mathisen, 2010) – returning to, for instance, indigenous ontologies and epistemologies of the Global South for guidance (Scherrer & Doohan, 2013). Against this backdrop, a transformation of place identity, and reconfiguration of place brand, becomes possible (Cassinger & Eksell, 2017; Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013).

In this presentation the aim is to argue that people in a post-secular manner increasingly seek to re-enchant places (Ashley et al., 2013; Pyyry & Aiava, 2020) and that it is only a matter of time before the discursive practice of place branding follows suit. Again, this is as most visible in the place branding of indigenous touristic places (Mathisen, 2010) and we illustrate this trajectory through examples of the branding of touristic places in Australia. Consequently, place branding as a discursive practice needs to address and reflect on the shifts in its very ontological approaches to places branded (Scherrer & Doohan, 2013).

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Keywords: enchantment, place identity, place brand, spirituality, transformation

#Visit Portugal during COVID-19: using crisis communications to respond to a low-responsibility crisis

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Crisis communication is vital to helping tourism destinations limit the impact of a crisis and drive recovery while preserving the destination's image and reputation (Avraham, 2015). With the aim of understanding how national tourism offices (NTO'S) use social media to promote image restoration during a low-responsibility crisis, this study investigates the social media communication strategies used by the Portugal's National Tourism Authority to respond to crisis and recover the destination's positive destination image during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For this purpose, the research is framed by the image repair theory and the situational crisis communications theory. A netnography method was applied based on social media content analysis of Visit Portugal's Facebook official webpage. All posts shared through the period of March 2020 to December 2022 were manually collected and categorized in terms of: (a) the content of the message; (b) was the message related to COVID-19; (c) typology of crisis communication strategy used; (d) audience engagement with the message. A complementary interview to the communications and digital marketing manager of the Portugal's National Tourism Authority was also carried out.

The study uncovered how the communication strategies of Visit Portugal were redefined and adapted in times of COVID-19 to recover the destination's positive image, placing the stage for a more sustainable destination's image in the future. Furthermore, the study revealed which situational crisis response strategies were used by Visit Portugal during COVID-19 and how the public responded to these strategies.

This research provides valuable insights into the ways NTO's are using social media to maintain communications, preserve its brand identity and reinforce place marketing during prolonged low-responsibility crisis. As the netnography data was collected from Facebook, further complementary studies may extract data from other social media platforms (i.e. Instagram, Twitter). Future studies may also include the perspective of travel businesses and tourism influencers in crisis communications and destination image restoration.

Keywords: crisis communications, social media, destination, low-responsibility crisis, COVID-19

Post-crisis destination marketing and travel intention: The intervening role of the place brand and the moderating effect of interventions

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This study explored the influence of South Africa's destination marketing on the travel intentions of international tourists in the period immediately preceded by the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study was underpinned by Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model which suggests that extrinsic factors act as stimuli (S) to influence the internal state of the individual as an organism (O), resulting in corresponding responsive (R) behaviour by the individual. Within the scope of the study, we explore destination marketing (S), how it influences tourist (O) place brand perception and its subsequent intervening effect in the relationship between destination marketing and travel intention (R). We further explore the moderating effect of crisis interventions in the place brand-travel intention nexus, as a confounding variable in the traditional SOR model.

Designed as a cross-sectional deductive study, data were collected from a panel sample of n=500 Americans via a self-administered online survey on the QuestionPro global consumer panel. The measurement and structural models of the mediated destination marketing-travel intention nexus, and the moderated relationship between the place brand and travel intention were assessed using Partial Least-Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS 4 software.

The contemporary post-COVID-19 pandemic era has been rife with uncertainty buoyed by global financial instability, negative economic growth pressures, the ongoing armed conflict in Ukraine, the energy crises in various European countries, and paradigm shifts in tourist behaviour towards long-haul travel due to emerging subjective norms such as 'flygskam' (flight shame). As it emerged South Africa's place brand partially mediates the relationship between destination marketing and the travel intentions of potential American tourists to South Africa. Additionally, the perceived effectiveness of interventions in protecting tourists travelling to South Africa positively moderates the relationship between South Africa's place brand and the travel intention of tourists.

The study concludes that while destination marketing directly influences the travel intentions of tourists, the place brand has a positive intervening effect on this influence. Furthermore, a country's post-crisis efforts to protect tourists do impact the place brand's effect on the conative behaviour of tourists.

The findings imply that in an uncertain post-crisis global tourism market, destination marketers must be cognisant of the nuances of the place brand and effectively communicate their crisis mitigation efforts to tourists to positively influence tourist behaviour. The findings of the study are significant for tourism practitioners in emerging markets such as South Africa who may better understand tourist behaviour in uncertain times within the context of the place brand and crisis interventions.

References:

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Keywords: Crisis marketing, destination marketing, interventions, place branding, travel intention

The delicate nexus between branding and social cohesion in creative cities: Insights from Bologna UNESCO City of Music

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Social cohesion is normally considered as a key dimension of those creative cities that adopt branding in order to succeed in global inter-urban competition. In particular, enhanced social cohesion among city brand stakeholders, such as cultural producers, is often expected and postulated in the literature. The present paper problematises this issue by reporting empirical findings from a study on the Italian city of Bologna, which became a UNESCO city of music in 2006. Over the decades, this city has deployed branding-infused policies to support its cultural and creative sector and harness the vitality of the local music industry, aiming to stimulate economic development. A mix-method approach is adopted to analyse the evolution of social cohesion among musicians across decades. First, formal Social Network Analysis (SNA) is applied to map out the professional collaboration dynamics happening among musicians along a 40-year timeframe (1978-2019), identifying the structural configuration of these collaborations as a relevant proxy. Then, the findings of in-depth interviews held with 10 musicians occupying meaningful positions in the network are presented. Overall, the two-step investigation reveals that an augmented emphasis on city branding and the increased attention on consumption-oriented cultural policies did not translate into enhanced social cohesion among cultural producers. These findings cast doubts on the effectiveness of market-led, consumption-oriented urban development instruments that are mobilised to promote a narrow, boosteristic view of the creative and cultural sector as a city product for external audiences. The paper explores alternative perspectives for nurturing cultural work within creative cities, and catering to the needs of specific cultural producers that may have been overlook by official cultural branding policies.

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Keywords: cultural industries, neoliberal city, urban cultural policies, social network analysis, music, social cohesion

Place Branding Model for cultural and administrative centralised systems

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Place branding literature advocates that the planning and implementation of a place branding strategy should be participatory with stakeholders. The participatory approach in formulating and implementing the place brand reduces the tensions that may arise in the future and affect the performance of the place branding in addition to other advantages such as increasing loyalty, reducing costs to governments and achieving inclusive development goals. On the other hand, in other countries, the branding processes originate at the top and then move down; cities meet multi-level governance, and they need to consider national input. That is because the national government is driving local branding as they see place branding strategy as a developmental tool. Countries that are culturally and administratively centralised, such as Arab and The Gulf countries, not democratic in the Western sense, attempt to copy the place branding models and advice that originated from different geographical contexts.

Saudi Arabia and its cities with large populations represent significant cases of culturally and administratively centralised systems. Hence, it is a suitable case for investigating the study subject, in which the role of the central government significantly influences the brand performance of the region and the city. Saudi cities follow five newly formed types of multi-level governance models, where diverse access to the central government, resources, and interactions between the actors in each model. In addition, due to a lack of experience, these five different models import the mechanisms and methodologies of developing place branding from place branding literature that emerged from political and cultural differences. Tensions and conflicts that may arise due to mechanism transplantation without examining its applicability may affect its performance and hinder it from achieving its desired goals. In particular, how the participatory mechanisms of the place branding approach and the inclusivity of different stakeholders in the development and the implementation process will land in light of non-democracy and centralised systems. This paper will examine how place branding approaches apply to a centralised system in a different cultural context. A qualitative approach will be selected as the study methodology. Primary data will be collected by conducting 24 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders and experts from various sectors in three Saudi cities. In other words, this research seeks to build a model for developing and implementing place branding strategies in line with the cultural and political determinants of centralised administrative systems and to know what advice from place branding literature can be adopted and what advice should be avoided.

- The article is currently still under construction but will be finished before the conference is held.
- We prefer to be included in the special panel in co-creation curated by Lisa Kallstrom and Laura Ripoll.
- We would, in due course, like to submit the entire article to the journal Place Branding and Public Diplomacy.

Keywords: Place branding, Place branding Management, Stakeholder participation, Participatory place branding

Managing Country-of-Origin Effect as public policy. The role of public-private partnerships

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With this paper we aim to examine the concept of Country-of-Origin Effect (COO) by applying the perspective of public policy and government strategy to building and sustaining a positive image of country's broadly understood products.

Country's export brands and products have been considered vital carriers of country image and reputation (Kim and Chung 1997, Papadopoulos and Cleveland 2022, Anholt 2006). The analysis of diverse country brand models demonstrates this by identifying export/brand export and tourism as core areas in which the country brand manifests itself. Country images can be very powerful in affecting the behavior of entities in all types of markets (consumers, enterprises, investors) (Hong and Wyer 1989, Papadopoulos and Heslop 2002, Anholt 2006).

We posit that building a positive COO should be treated as an integral part of the country branding process, and as such can be managed systemically by the government while pursuing the country's economic and political goals. The understanding of country branding should therefore shift from perceiving it as a promotion/marketing communication exercise and progress towards recognizing it as one of the public policies of the modern state.

This view is shared in place branding scholars. Lucarelli (2018) posits that branding of places is a specific type of activity, transcending the typical division into "private" and "public", commercial and non-commercial and continues to say that the success of place branding is entirely dependent on the ability to create and maintain a public-private system of connections between the stakeholders of the place's brand. Furthermore place branding strategy is treated as an important instrument of public policy, having a real impact on many other areas of the state's functioning, e.g. education, tourism, social issues, investment policy etc. (Lucarelli, 2018; Eshuis, Braun, & Klijn, 2014; Eshuis & Edwards, 2012; Pasquinelli, 2010).

Notwithstanding these developments, contextualizing COO as public policy is a theme insufficiently represented in academic research. The majority of academic publications are focused on either country of origin labelling (Lusk et.al., 2006) or on the effects of 'Buy National' campaigns (Fenwick, Wright, 2000; Wang 2005), that constitute just a part of COO management. On the other hand, the analysis of activities of governmental institutions demonstrates a vivid interest in exercising public-private cooperation schemes to highlight country's brands and products abroad. Through the analysis of examples and best practice case studies, we aim to provide systemic recommendations for developing effective public-private frameworks for COO management.

In policy terms, building a positive COO means designing and developing public policies that create favorable environment for cooperation between the governmental institutions and the private sector, allowing both to address their interest. When the image of a country lags behind the its reality, it prevents domestic products from being sufficiently represented on the international market. Even reducing positive COO to countries' stereotypical product categories limits countries' ability to benefit from the brand premium in other sectors. These processes adversely affect countries' economic development in the long run.

Keywords: Country-of-origin effect, public policy, country branding, public-private partnership

Placemaking in green infrastructure, implications for urban tourism branding

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Urban tourism depends on the place specific qualities of destinations. In many cities, climate change poses a threat to these qualities, through increasing risk of excessive heat, draught and flooding. Cities need to adapt to reduce these risks. One way of doing this is to improve their green infrastructure with the help of ecosystem-based solutions. Urban forests, parks, rivers, and wetlands may help reduce the effects of climate change in cities. In the literature, relations between ecosystem services and tourism have in been recognized in rural contexts but seldom in urban.

Green infrastructure provides a variety of ecosystem services to the community; cultural ecosystem services such as recreation, and esthetical values take place in urban green infrastructure, benefitting both locals and visitors, and providing value in the form of improved experiences. Alan Lew (2017) discusses how placemaking processes are influenced by different types of tools. He differentiates between tangible (physical design in architecture, parks, and public art), mixed (practices in street life, food, and entertainment) and intangible tools (mental images in branding, social media, and history). Green infrastructure is a highly tangible, physically place-bound, aspect of placemaking. Adding to that, I argue that the development of green infrastructure not only has interesting implications for creating arenas for mixed placemaking, but also in forming green narratives in and of cities. The empirical findings behind this presentation are primarily built on document analyses and field studies in Northern Europe, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands.

It is suggested that the need for climate change adaptation in a city may be used as a means to improve its place specific qualities as a tourist destination. By developing green infrastructure in innovative and environmentally friendly ways, the quality of ecosystem services improves, including those relevant for both visitors and residents. Protecting and building green infrastructure, thereby enhancing a city's visible qualities and its reputation as a sustainable destination, may also be valuable in branding the city.

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Keywords: Ecosystem services, Green infrastructure, Ecosystem-based solutions in branding, Placemaking, Tourist geography

Towards a Continuum of Audience Engagement with User-Generated Nation Branding

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Existing literature on nation branding tends to mainly focus on how a nation brand is devised and promoted by governmental agencies, economic institutions, and branding experts (e.g., Aronczyk, 2013; Jansen, 2008; Valaskivi, 2016). This has led to a lack of focus on more bottom-up perspectives of nation branding generated by ordinary people (e.g., vlogs), and to what extent ordinary people contribute to creating more diverse representations of the nation. In addition, much of the existing attention in the field of nation branding is paid on production studies (e.g., Jiménez-Martínez, 2017; Volcic and Andrejevic, 2011) and media texts (e.g., Kaneva and Popescu, 2011; Tamppuu and Masso, 2018; Volcic, 2008). However, the reception within the communication circuit of nation branding is still poorly understood.

To address these gaps, this study first introduces the concept of user-generated nation branding (UGNB) to capture the bottom-up dynamics in this field. It refers to the practices of promoting a nation initiated by online users in their everyday lives. Empirically, this study focuses on two countries, Japan and China, due to their differences in terms of the history of UGNB (with the phenomenon being pioneering in Japan and more recent in China), the platform ecosystems (with Western social media in Japan and national social media in China), and the political systems (with liberal democracy in Japan and communist rule in China). Within these two countries, two popular user-generated accounts from each country were selected: 'Abroad in Japan', which films the everyday life of a British man living in Japan, and 'Liziqi', which records a Chinese woman's daily activities in rural China. These two accounts provided comparative insight into how a nation promoted from an outsider perspective is engaged comparing to that from an insider perspective. A total of thirty-seven semi-structured interviews were conducted online with their audiences (seventeen for 'Abroad in Japan' and twenty for 'Liziqi'), including both domestic and foreign audience members. All interviews were fully transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis.

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The preliminary findings generated from the audience interviews suggest a continuum from light to deep and virtual to actual engagement, highlighting the different levels of engagement in the reception of UGNB. This includes activities ranging from watching a UGNB video/image and gazing at the external/internal Other, to sharing the post and reproducing an Orientalist/internal-Orientalist gaze, and to experiencing the 'authentic' nation in one's everyday life. These findings point to the issues of the reinforcement of unequal power relations in the reception of UGNB, and the exploitation of audience members as free labour in helping spread the 'authentic' nation. It is worth noting that the positionality of both the audience and the brander is crucial in understanding different activities of audience engagement. In addition, this study has the potential to provide insight into the practical implications for promotional industries related to nation branding, particularly regarding the role of social media influencers, digital technologies, and both domestic and foreign audiences.

Keywords: nation branding, social media, user-generated content, audience engagement

Facing Climate Change Challenges through Sustainable City Co-creation

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To alleviate problems generated by climate change, cities cannot act alone but need to collaborate with multiple stakeholders including industry, non-profit sector, academia and, not the least, citizens whose behavior can make an impact on the territory. The aim of this paper is to enlighten how the city can engage stakeholders – especially citizens – in decision making processes of sustainable urban development.

While organizations can have financial or other interests to engage with sustainable urban development which entails (re)building processes able to affect the mobility and livability of cities, citizens might not see an immediate need to participate in the making and re-making of the city, neglecting their potential contribution to intergenerational equity.

While rebuilding cities, it becomes paramount to think of how it can become an attractive place where people want to live, work and visit. City managers and decision makers seek ways to enable citizens' attachment to the sustainable development plans at stake. Pursuing sustainable development requires the management of financial constraints as well as considerations of environmental and social issues.

By adopting a case study approach with empirical focus on the Näsby district of Kristianstad City (Scania Region, South of Sweden), we investigate how a mid-sized city experiments with citizen engagement initiatives in the spirit of co-creation. The results show that simultaneously pursuing attractiveness and attachment, what we call attra-chment, requires both regulated and spontaneous initiatives to foster continued co-creation.

Keywords: Attra-chment, city, co-creation, participation, place (re)making, sustainability, urban development

Dimensions of place brand co-creation with residents

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A major area of interest within the field of place branding is represented by stakeholders' participation in the branding process and the co-creation of place brands. Although multiple recent studies have tackled these concepts, participation and co-creation are causing confusion and they are often used interchangeably. It is partly the purpose of this study to provide more clarity around the two concepts and discuss the distinction between co-creation and participation, and if the processes of participation and co-creation are mutually dependent or not.

A multi-method, qualitative study comprising of interviews, netnography and participant observations was undertaken to reveal how the processes of place brand co-creation between the local municipality and residents happened in Luton, a UK town struggling with reputational problems. The participation and co-creation processes were investigated through the interactions between the municipality and residents in three branding campaigns that aimed at creating new and more inclusive place images. In these campaigns, residents undertook a variety of roles and participated through a wide range of methods which formed part of the investigation.

A framework proposing four dimensions of co-creation is developed to bridge co-creation research and resident participation. The dimensions proposed are based on direct and indirect co-creation of place brand meaning combined with active and passive roles played by residents in this process. The framework is then discussed in connection to resident participation in branding activities and their implications for the place and its brand. The findings contribute to further understanding of the complexities of co-creation, participatory branding, and residents' involvement in rebranding places with negative reputation. A distinction between co-creation and participation is made in the theoretical framework, which can aid places in involving residents in co-creating brand meaning.

Keywords: place brand co-creation dimensions, resident participation, co-creation framework, co-creation theory

Public diplomacy of Vietnam in the 21st Century: An approach of a socialist non-major power

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Contemporary public diplomacy (PD hereafter) was introduced in the Cold War and gained popularity in American hegemonic period, yet fundamental changes in the 21st century have brought the US-centric crisis-driven and policy-oriented PD under scrutiny, including the need to bring more voices with their own peculiarities to compensate the domination of the US experience. In the “Asian century”, it is compelling for public diplomacy literature to expand empirical settings to examine how Asian states, whose historical and cultural development paths are greatly diverse, interpret and implement. Against this backdrop, this thesis provides an in-depth research into Vietnam’s public diplomacy between 2011 and 2021 to explore its characteristics and examine potential accounts for its public diplomacy strategy formation. Using constructivism as the theoretical framework, the research seeks to find out how the complex confluence of Vietnam’s national identities, being socialist, post-colonial, emerging power, authoritarian regime, shapes Vietnam’s public diplomacy. Within the scope of this research and based on the official typology of Vietnam’s Party-State, four constitutes of PD are selected to study, including cultural diplomacy, people-to-people diplomacy, mediated diplomacy, and digital diplomacy. The research data is drawn from policy papers, elite discourses, social media content, and interviews with public diplomacy practitioners, which is congruent by thematic analysis to meet the research objectives. The prospective findings of this research hope to empirically fill the paucity of non-Western cases in public diplomacy scholarship, and conceptually explore a potential systemic interpretation of public diplomacy from socialist states’ perspectives as an alternative to the US-dominated one.

Keywords: public diplomacy, Vietnam, national identity, socialist state, de-Westernisation

A Western Star in The Middle East – A semiotic analysis of a female celebrity endorsement in a United Arab Emirates Nation branding campaign

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This paper explores how a middle eastern city uses western celebrity women in their tourism advertising videos to communicate progressiveness and female empowerment through nation branding. Nation branding is a growing field of study, yet little focus has been put on the critical aspect of gender in relation to nation branding. A more critical way of viewing and studying this phenomenon has emerged over recent years (Cassinger, 2019; Kaneva, 2011). Cassinger (2019) argues for a more diversified look on the intersection between feminism and nation branding.

Having popular destinations for tourism can be something that aids the development of a strong nation brand. Additionally, celebrity endorsement may be used as a nation branding strategy in order to tackle negative stereotypes and enhance a nation's image (Avraham, 2020). The United Arab Emirates has faced critique by the west for their conservative laws on women's rights. Although conditions have been improved over recent years (Tohme Adame, 2019), girls and women are deprived of the right of freedom from psychological, physical and sexual violence (Regeringskansliet, 2019). Allagui & Al-Najjar (2018) argue that the United Arab Emirates are now creating a new public narrative through their nation branding with the use of female empowerment and progressivity – meeting the critique and public opinion towards the middle east world by the west.

The aim of this study is to explore and develop knowledge of how nation branding uses western celebrity women to constitute an empowered and progressive image. With a critical feminist approach, the study investigates how empowerment and progressivity is communicated through an advertisement video for Visit Dubai. The theoretical framework thus incorporates theories such as femvertising, nation branding, celebrity endorsement and branded feminism, with a certain emphasis on western feminism in nation branding.

Visual semiotic analysis was applied to examine the tourism campaign video “A story takes flight” produced by Visit Dubai. The empirical material was published by Visit Dubai in 2019. This study argues that the usage of a semiotic visual analysis adds a new angle of methodological contribution.

Through the analysis it is possible to conclude what female empowerment is presented like in tourism advertising and how it is used to portray Dubai as progressive. The study finds the use of clothing, encounters, movements, and actions as indicators of empowerment and progressiveness. It also finds the advertisement presented in such a manner that the western view of female empowerment and progressivity has been translated to a middle eastern environment, without regard to the legal and cultural context of the country. Instead, it is exoticized and romanticized in a simplified manner through a western gaze. The study finds that Visit Dubai makes use of western feminism to attract western tourists and other place consumers to strengthen their nation brand. It can also be concluded that femvertising and nation branding strategies such as branded feminism may be used to deconstruct negative stereotypes of places and women.

Keywords: Nation branding, Female celebrity endorsement, Female empowerment, Progressiveness, Western feminism, Femvertising, Middle east, Branded feminism, Tourism advertising

The St. Pauli Code - Stakeholder engagement and roles in maintaining cultural uniqueness in city branding

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Aims - This paper aims to understand diverse stakeholder engagement in regards to their specific activities and roles in maintaining cultural uniqueness of a place brand.

Theoretical Framework – Cities trying to compete on a global scale as tourist destinations and places attractive for economic activity and international investments face a dilemma: on the one hand, bound to and influenced by the global economy cities are in need to draw attention through modernization, the offering of opportunities for investors, and appeal to popular taste. On the other hand, homogenisation is a danger to a city brand's value proposition and makes its uniqueness, its irreplaceable cultural character more crucial for city branding (Riza 2015; Hudson et al. 2017).

The maintaining of a unique cultural character and hence, a city brand's value, is part of a continuous negotiation process between interdependent stakeholder groups (Klijn et al. 2012; Insch 2021). Scholars argue that successful place branding cannot be achieved without stakeholder involvement (Eshuis et al. 2014; Kavaratzis 2012; Kavaratzis and Kalandides 2015). However, stakeholders differ in regards to their vision of the city brand's development and the meaning they associate with it (Zenker and Beckmann 2013; Zenker and Braun 2017). The challenge resides within fostering stakeholder engagement to support cultural authenticity and therewith competitive advantage and beneficial outcomes for city brands (Lin et al. 2017; Hudson et al. 2017). Yet, due to stakeholders' diverging interests, their engagement and specific contributions (activities and roles) are likely to differ as well.

Research Approach – We conducted a qualitative case study of the city district of St. Pauli in Hamburg, Germany. We carried out 10 semi-structured interviews with politicians (national and local), members of civil society (artists, NGOs etc.), small business owners and large investing companies, with more interviews to be conducted during 2023. Furthermore, we gather comprehensive secondary material such as newspaper articles, webpages and social media posts by different stakeholders, and TV documentaries.

Findings & Conclusions – Political stakeholders take on a moderating role between investors and residents through soothing, fostering dialogue, and giving slack to locals by stretching the borders of the law to allow autonomy, ease the acceptance of city development, and maintaining the cultural character of St. Pauli. Residents demand involvement in city development, therewith supporting the uniqueness of St. Pauli, while offering alternative experiences through 'backstage' tours through the district. Investors show a willingness to forego immediate revenue benefits (e.g., through the conscious limiting of event scales) to maintain cultural uniqueness of St. Pauli.

Practical implications – A first analysis supports those benefits of stakeholder involvement and the importance of local politicians taking on a moderating role in the co-creation process through fostering stakeholder dialogue and activities.

Keywords: stakeholder engagement, stakeholder roles, cultural uniqueness, brand co-creation, city brand

Sport at the World Expo. Analysis of sports diplomacy at the non-sporting event

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The research considers the use of sport in the country pavilions during Expo 2020 in Dubai. Many states have increasingly used sport to improve their international reputation. Through hosting a sporting event or achieving a high level of sport, governments can attempt to affect how the foreign public perceives their country. Such undertakings have traditionally taken place at sporting environments. However, sport, considered a soft power asset, can also be used to promote states during a non-sporting event. The research aimed to study if and how states use sport to promote themselves during such non-sporting events, by the example of Expo 2020 in Dubai.

From a theoretical perspective, the research builds upon the concept of soft power, the term coined by Joseph Nye Jr. As Nye (2008) observed in the context of public diplomacy, it is a tool of using soft power assets by governments to communicate particular content to the public in other countries to attract it. Sport is also considered a soft power asset (Grix and Houlihan 2014; Woodward 2020), which creates the basic theoretical foundation of the research.

The study was carried out through direct observation during field research at the Expo 2020 in Dubai. Each of the 192 national pavilions was visited in search of references to sport and physical activity. The research aimed to respond to the research question about how sport may be used to promote countries during Expo, with the goal to identify the main themes through which sport-related activities and assets were used and whether they had an overriding or a minor role in promoting a state. The main argument was that the use of sport in shaping the international image of a state can also take the form of showcasing sport-related assets at a non-sporting event.

Even though sport and sport-related issues did not constitute the dominant component in most of Expo 2020 pavilions, they have been present, and in several pavilions, they even gained a dominant position. The key sport themes included highlighting the high level of elite sport, hosting sporting events, local sports and festivals, and active societies, accompanied by the promotion of tourism and presenting the possibilities of practising sport. Interestingly, reference to sport in country pavilions did not always correspond with their general sports diplomacy strategies. It was also observed that different states were building on different sports assets - there were countries with a high level of sport that did not refer to it at all, while others attempted to build on even the most modest sports assets.

The research allowed distinguishing a method of sports diplomacy focused on shaping international image of states that has not yet attracted attention of scholars. Its results may provide guidelines on how to use sporting assets for nation branding outside sporting events.

Keywords: Expo 2020, Dubai, sport, sports diplomacy, public diplomacy, nation branding

City brand strategy in times of crisis and uncertainty

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Aims: This presentation will identify city brand perception drivers across 7 different application fields (as a place to live, work, work remotely, invest, study, retire, and visit) based on a new global survey, and provide recommendations how to leverage that information to set priorities for a city brand strategy in times of crisis and uncertainty.

Theoretical framework and research approach: The presentation will rely on regression analysis of respondent-level data gathered for a new public study exploring perceptions of 100 cities, with KPIs of reputation and consideration as dependent variables and 45 underlying attributes as independent variables. The fieldwork for this study was conducted among representative samples of at least 600 members of the general public in each of 20 selected markets worldwide over the course of April 2023. The framework for this study, including the list of dependent and independent variables, was set up following a comprehensive review process which included gathering feedback from more than 20 practitioners and researchers of place branding as well as running a pilot survey in 3 selected markets.

Key arguments/conclusions/practical implications: Understanding the perspectives of different target audiences is central to a successful strategy – it enables city brand managers to focus on what really matters to get improved results. This is especially true in times of crisis and uncertainty, when budgets are scarce and mounting challenges require prioritisation. This presentation will offer practical recommendations by identifying city brand perception drivers across 7 different application fields and uncovering how they differ across generations, geographies, and respondent profiles.

Keywords: city branding, place brand strategy, perceptions research, crisis and uncertainty, general public survey, regression analysis, application fields

Can digitalization of city boost city branding? Evidence based on panel data from 111 Chinese cities

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Today, cities are increasingly focusing on digitalisation. This was thought to be an initiative that could promote the city in various ways. But there is no clear answer as to whether the extent of digitisation of cities can contribute to city branding. This paper explores the impact of city digitisation on city branding by constructing a multi-dimensional panel fixed-effects model, fixed for city clusters (Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, Yangtze River Delta, Pearl River Delta, Middle Yangtze River and Chengdu-Chongqing region) as well as years. We select data from the China City Brand Development Index and China City Digital Economy Index for 2017-2020 for 111 prefecture-level cities in 30 Chinese provinces.

The results of the study show that the digitalisation of cities can effectively enhance the city's livability brand, city investment brand and city tourism brand. Overall, city digitisation is an important tool for cities to interact with their citizens and promote their city brand. In addition, a strong city culture can contribute to the success of city digitisation efforts and promote a positive city brand image, as corroborated by the results of the moderating effect test in this paper. Among the mechanisms underlying the impact of digitalisation on city branding, this paper selects city governance as internal factor and city communication external factor. In this context, city governance usually refers to the coordination, supervision or direction of affairs among actors in a particular sector or city. As described in urban governance theory, urban governance is an activity underpinned by common goals, and the subject of these management activities can be the government or other public institutions. The city communication index can effectively reflect the efficiency of the external communication of a city's brand, and consists of four aspects: city awareness, city attention, media marketing communication and new media communication of government affairs. China Urban Governance Index in this paper is constructed to include 18 secondary indicators at five levels: economic, social, cultural, ecological and administrative, and the entropy method of the multi-indicator comprehensive evaluation method is used to assign indicator weights. The results of the intermediary effect test also further confirm that city digitalisation can have an impact on city branding through city governance and city communication.

To avoid endogeneity problems associated with sample selection, this paper performs an endogeneity test through the instrumental variables method (2SLS). In addition, to further strengthen the reliability of the findings, this paper performs robustness tests by reducing the sample size and lagging the city digitisation index by one period. The results of this paper still hold after the robustness test. Further, in view of the uneven economic development characteristics of cities in different regions, this paper subdivides the sample cities into core cities (including municipalities directly under the central government, sub-provincial cities and the remaining provincial capitals) and non-core cities based on city rank. The findings of this paper suggest that the digitalisation of different cities can be incentivised in a more targeted manner to achieve a competitive city brand.

Keywords: city digitalisation, city brand, Chinese city, modelling, panel data

Inclusive place branding – a study of domestic tourists with a foreign background in a Swedish context

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The tourism industry is facing many new challenges in a globalized world for example demographic changes that impact cultural, political, and economic processes (Giddens, 2010). These changes impact most westernised countries, for example Sweden where 25 percent of its population have a foreign background, i.e. people who were born abroad or have a parent/parents with a foreign background. The demographic changes call for an increased awareness about the heterogeneity and multiculturalism of our society.

Few studies in place branding have addressed the issue of inclusiveness (cf. Jernsand, 2016; Kavaratzis, Giovanardi & Lichrou, 2018) but the actual tourists are seldom addressed from inclusive perspectives. Research shows that the represented people in tourism communication are dominantly white (cf. Caton & Santos, 2009; Walters & Cassel, 2016), which raises question of whom is allowed to be represented. However, inclusion is not just a matter of visual inclusion, it entails the incorporation of people's experiences and needs. Yet, limited research has been done on this pressing matter. There are only a few studies that have explored people with foreign backgrounds in a domestic tourism context (Eksell, Månsson & Kaldéren, 2022; Irimiás, 2013).

Thus, inclusive perspectives in place branding are under researched. Multicultural aspects of place branding need to be addressed since a more diversified target group creates greater complexity in brand communication. The purpose of this article is therefore to advance the knowledge of inclusive place branding in multicultural societies by focusing on domestic tourists with a foreign background's experiences.

This study is built on empirical data that was collected through six focus group interviews and an online survey that was distributed in Facebook groups for immigrant groups in Sweden. In total participated 30 people in the interviews, 12 men and 18 women. The participants were recruited by Right Option Media, a consultancy agency specialised in immigrant group relations. 417 people responded to the online survey, 141 men and 270 women, and 5 non-gender specific.

Foreign background is not the main determining factor for Swedes with a foreign background while being a tourist. There are many factors that have an impact. The analysis shows several thresholds such e.g. Sweden as a destination, personal habits and expectations from others, and a lack of knowledge. The conclusions suggest that the group is very diverse and have varying interest and needs for travel.

The study contributes both to theory development and practice within inclusive place branding. Few previous studies have explored domestic tourism from the perspective of people who have immigrated and started to experience the new country as a tourist. The study contributes with knowledge of inclusive place branding that incorporate needs and experiences from this diverse group. Companies and DMOs should communicate more on foundational aspects on rules and regulations and travel reasons that many in the broader domestic target groups usually take for granted. Communication in more languages could also be considered since access and understanding is hindered by language skills.

Keywords: Inclusive place branding, domestic tourism, globalisation, people with foreign background

Are You Crazy Traveling During a Pandemic?

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Aims: Between 2019 and 2022, international travel was highly restricted. While legally it was often not even possible to travel, also many tourists did not want to travel, either for moral or for health reasons. Nevertheless, some tourists still took that risk and travelled. This paper aims at establishing the psychological profile of such a risk-taking traveler.

Theoretical Framework: While tourism literature frequently looks at risk aversion and risk-taking as influencing factors for travel decisions during crises, this paper wants to dive deeper into other enduring psychological constructs, namely the so-called dark triad. The dark triad identified three negative (antisocial) personality traits; narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy, each of which may have different impacts on travel decisions during a pandemic.

Main Research Approach: In three large empirical online studies (UK, N=1,101; Germany, N=1,105; France, N=1,108), we investigate impact of the dark triad on travel intentions, using a structural equation modeling approach.

Findings: We show that it is mainly narcissism, that drives such risk-taking decisions of traveling during a pandemic, while psychopaths are rather risk-averse, and Machiavellianism shows no impact on travel intentions.

Conclusion: Good news: if you were traveling during the pandemic, you are probably not a psychopath. However, especially narcissists seemed to still take vacation. For them, the social pressure (“stay at home”) seemed to have little impact and the individual pleasure of traveling was probably more important.

Practical Implications: Our research contribute to our understanding of more crisis-resistant traveler – looking also into negative personality traits. This might be helpful for targeting such customers during crises – but also for de-marketing purposes preventing such behavior.

Keywords: Tourism, Crises, Pandemic, Dark Triad, Consumer Psychology

Representatives of Finland's wellness tourism – can an urban environment be a wellness destination?

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We are living in a period of transition, where the ecological crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic are two of the most revolutionary events in recent times for humanity. Health tourism is a rapidly emerging segment of tourism, where wellness tourism is playing an active role. The Global Wellness Institute (2017) defines wellness as the active pursuit of activities, choices and lifestyles that lead to a holistic state of health. The wellness sectors, in turn, cover those areas that enable consumers to integrate well-being activities and lifestyles into their daily lives these sectors include wellness tourism. During the pandemic, tourism in Finland was very limited, even non-existent. The wellness tourism sector also suffered from this squeeze. Although Covid-19 has severely affected different sectors, it can be a catalyst for sustainable tourism change, both for nature-based wellness tourism and for urban-based wellness tourism. People need to recharge their batteries and find their 'favourite haunt' of well-being, even in cities. Ritchie and Crouch (2011) argue a competitive destination is able to increase tourism expenditure, attract more visitors while providing them with satisfying and memorable experiences, and to do this profitably, while enhancing the well-being of the destination's residents and preserving the destination's natural capital for future generations. However, research on urban wellness tourism is still very scarce (Lee et al., 2020). Wellness tourism can also be enabled in urban environments (Saari, 2022).

This research is part of an article-based dissertation (in progress) with the ultimate aim of answering the question of what creates well-being in urban environments for both tourists and local residents. The aim of the survey in question was to examine Finnish wellness travellers' willingness to travel, expectations of wellness travel and destination preferences in Finland. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected from Finnish wellness travellers through a survey (n = 520) in 2021.

The results highlight that Finnish well-being is very much a reflection of everyday things; safety, cleanliness and getting active in nature being the top priorities. As anticipated, expectations for a wellness trip included relaxation, peace and quiet, but also culture and activities in good company. In the selection of preferred wellness locations, new and health-safe sites emerged as favourites. Numerous Finnish regions, spas and holiday resorts as well as cities around Finland were named as wellness destinations.

The study complements previous research on wellness tourism by providing the industry with new information on Finnish wellness travellers. It highlights what is expected from wellness tourism and the types of destinations where people want to experience wellness tourism. Tourism and hospitality entrepreneurs, destination management organisations (DMOs) and other service providers can use the results of the study on travellers' expectations and destination preferences in areas such as service product development, tourism marketing and place branding.

Keywords: wellness, tourism, destination, urban, preferences

The impact of the effective management of the biosphere programme on the Isle of Man brand. A stakeholders' perspective

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The effective management of the biosphere programme plays a very important role in the Isle of Man (IoM) retaining the UNESCO Biosphere status, for both the IoM's sustainable future and the IoM place brand. This study explores the stakeholders' perceptions on how the biosphere programme management in the IoM impacts the IoM brand, focusing on key factors that influence their behaviours and attitudes towards the programme. Employing a case study design, the analysis of the interviews identified two significant influencing factors: a) the education of the stakeholders about the biosphere and b) the clarity in the governance and the management process of the biosphere. The education of the stakeholders would influence their understanding and their perceptions, consequently positively shaping their attitudes and behaviours towards the programme and concomitantly reflecting the biosphere IoM brand values. On the other hand the clarity in the governance and management processes was identified as critical in influencing their level of engagement and contribution to the programme. However underlying both factors is the fundamental understanding of the stakeholders' interests and priorities. This understanding was found to be crucial in influencing their engagement in the programme and managing conflict. The analysis of these factors contribute to a better understanding of the stakeholder dynamics within a biosphere programme. The findings highlight the importance of education, clarity of governance and understanding of stakeholders' priorities and interests for successful management of the biosphere programme and consequently the IoM brand.

Keywords: biosphere, place brand, stakeholder management, stakeholder education, stakeholder conflict

Place branding of Goričko Nature Park (Slovenia) between opportunities and challenges

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Goričko Nature Park was established in 2003 due its' exceptional landscape diversity and high biodiversity. It is located in the northeastern, sub-panonian part of Slovenia, known because of hilly landscape with unspoiled nature, vineyards and absence of industry and urban settlements as well. Goričko Nature park is home of 17.000 inhabitants in 90 rural settlements. Place branding process was launched in 2010 by the managing board of Goričko Nature Park due its' peripheral geographical position, underdeveloped local economy and unrecognizability. Aim of the process was to develop a strong place brand to promote attractions for tourists, stimulate the local economy and improve the territorial governance of Goričko Nature Park.

The developmental opportunities and challenges of place branding are identified by analysis of 12 semi-structured interviews with stakeholders and a focus group as well. This presentation is about case study how place branding was applied and critically evaluate its' outcomes as well. Results show how place branding of Goričko Nature Park has contributed to empowerment of socio-economic situation of local stakeholders and developed the stronger and more positive image of the park. Outcome of place branding is strengthened area-based cooperation and network of stakeholders too. Common tourist shop-spot and web page are established. Festivals, organised in park, help to improve the image of area.

On other hand, current challenges of brand development are exposed. 13 years of brands' history is constantly marked by lack of engagement of local stakeholders. Participatory bottom-up process to co-create place branding process are thus weak. Strategy of place branding process is unclear. Particularly challenging task is to find sufficient and stable financial source to support the process. Many stakeholders in park are not aware of brand effects and often consider it as redundant and even useless. Due those challenges several initiatives emerged to stop the place branding in regional media. Three future scenarios of brand development will thus be presented. Theoretical grounds and practical issues for development of place branding in such way will be finally discussed.

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Keywords: place branding, nature park, tourism, territorial development, governance, geography

Encyclopedia roundtable: Current state and future contributions of city and place branding

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Efe Sevin, Towson University, USA

Eduardo da Silva Oliveira, Thomas More University of Applied Sciences, Belgium

Earlier this year, Edward Elgar Publishing commissioned an Encyclopedia of City and Place Branding – the first of its kind for our field. By the time the 7th Annual Conference of the International Place Branding Association (IPBA) comes around, the editors will have received over 80 draft entries. Together, these entries capture previous place branding research and enable an overall picture and a synthesis of the place branding field today.

The Encyclopedia Editors are inviting conference participants to an Encyclopedia Roundtable to discuss not only the current state of city and place branding but also its future development and the Encyclopedia's contribution to the field. The Roundtable will gather a dozen contributors to the Encyclopedia, reflecting different topics, approaches and empirical contexts, and paving the way for dynamic discussions.

Some of the questions we plan to tackle in this Roundtable are:

- How did you approach researching and writing your entry for the Encyclopedia of City and Place Branding, and what insights did you gain in the process?
- How do you see the field of city and place branding evolving in the coming years, and what new trends or developments do you anticipate?
- How can city and place branding contribute to promoting sustainable and responsible tourism and places, and what steps can be taken to ensure that branding efforts are aligned with broader environmental and social goals?
- How do you envision that the Encyclopedia can be used by practitioners, scholars, and other stakeholders in the future?
- What are the potential benefits of creating a centralised source of information on city and place branding, such as an Encyclopedia?
- How might the Encyclopedia impact the broader public's perception of city and place branding?
- How can the Encyclopedia be leveraged to increase interest in the field?

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Keywords: Roundtable, Encyclopedia, Place branding, City branding

Twenty thousand leagues under the nation branding seas: A multidisciplinary dive into a systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis

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In recent years, nation branding has emerged as an important concept for policymakers and researchers to significantly impact a country's reputation and competitiveness in the global marketplace. We aim to provide a more in-depth perspective on this concept by conducting a multidisciplinary systematic literature review, followed by bibliometric analyses. The Systematic Literature Review (SLR) focused on publications on nation branding between 1997 and 2021 in the Web of Science database across various scholarly disciplines, including public policy, communication, marketing, and tourism. An initial set of 887 articles were identified, of which, after screening, 344 were eligible for further analysis. This was followed-up with several bibliometric analyses, including bibliometric coupling and co-word analysis. The literature shows a consistent growth in nation branding research, with a concentration of research in a few countries and in an increasing number of journals. Bibliometric coupling identifies three main clusters that approach nation branding from either government, place branding, or marketing perspectives. The government perspective focuses on identifying and promoting unique country characteristics and articulates them to both domestic and international audiences. In the place branding perspective, the notion prevails that the perceived image can be influenced by multiple stakeholders, influencing tourism, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), talent attraction, and ultimately impacting the perceived image of places. Within the marketing perspective, nation branding is represented as an inferred image associated with existing knowledge, suggesting it as an important factor in consumer behavior and purchase intentions. The co-word analysis reveals growing and diverse topics in nation branding research, with both affective and cognitive components, affecting country image, dynamics, and culture. Finally, we propose a framework integrating the three identified perspectives and topics, to guide future research into nation branding for policy makers, managers, and academics.

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Keywords: Nation branding, Systematic literature review, Bibliometric coupling, Co-word analysis, Multidisciplinary studies

The branding of Puerto Rico: From municipalities to an island brand

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The goal of this paper is to examine how Puerto Rico has transitioned from branding efforts by municipal governments to attract investments during the 1990's, to an island wide branding effort led by the Puerto Rican government. Municipalities embraced a particular use of identity surnames (cognomentos) that in the 1990's became full-fledged efforts at creating a brand. The 1991 Ley de Municipios Autónomos (Law of Autonomous Municipalities) allowed for municipalities to administer their own finances. Municipalities now have an incentive to use branding as a mechanism to attract resources to their jurisdictions. The 1990s also saw branding efforts of Puerto Rico for tourists under the campaign "Puerto Rico does it better". The campaign was headed by the Puerto Rico Tourism company under the direction of future Puerto Rican governor Luis Fortuño. During the 2012-2016 the Alejandro García Padilla administration launched "Puerto Rico star island campaign." I will argue that this was a pivotal moment for island wide branding as the highly contentious debate that emerged around the new brand led to the creation of a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) under the following governor, Ricardo Rosselló. The idea of a depolitized body that would manage Puerto Rico's image and create a brand, led to the creation of a DMO by the name of Discover Puerto Rico. The impact of Hurricane María in 2017 placed the government in a position where branding emphasized resiliency and recovery as a response to the hurricane. Those efforts of branding Puerto Rico post hurricane María were led precisely by the newly installed DMO. The use of the English language is also a very prominent element of many of the branding campaigns. Puerto Rico, a colony of the United States in the Caribbean has had a deep political debate surrounding language and place branding is enveloped in that reality. The paper will conclude by documenting how neoliberalism and colonialism have paved the way for the current installment of place branding in Puerto Rico.

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Keywords: place branding, Puerto Rico, municipal reform, disaster politics, colonialism

Public engagement in place brand communication through social media: A study of branding communication of five Chinese cities on the Douyin platform

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This paper discusses the intersection between social media and city branding, specifically examining short video content released by the official accounts of five Chinese city governments on Douyin (Chinese version of TikTok). The study analyzes the themes disseminated and their correlation with the city brands, as well as the level of public participation and interaction on these videos, with the goal of proposing effective social media communication strategies for city branding.

The concept of city branding has evolved from traditional city marketing to a process shaped by multiple stakeholders through non-consultation and cooperation (Sevin, 2013). Social media has significantly impacted this process, making public participation in city branding more prominent (Bonakdar and Audirac, 2020). This shift means that the city brand is no longer simply a symbol of communication in traditional media, but is now jointly formed and realized through public participation, resulting in what Bonakdar and Audirac refer to as 'urban imaginaries'. The advent of social media has facilitated participatory city branding (Ramadhani and Indradjati, 2023), which enables city governments to use the strong interaction and timely feedback mechanism of social media. This not only allows for more stakeholders to participate in creating city content and enhance brand communication credibility and reputation through real experience sharing, but also permits the adjustment of city communication strategies through social media feedback (Herezniak, 2017).

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To evaluate the communication strategies of Chongqing, Chengdu, Guangzhou, Hangzhou, and Xi'an, this study analyzed all the videos posted on their official Douyin accounts during the first three months in 2023. The analysis included the examination of communication intention, content, and audience engagement of selected videos. The purpose of this analysis was to evaluate the effectiveness of the government's official Douyin account and the level of audience participation and interaction.

The study revealed that three types of short video content are most effective in promoting audience engagement on Douyin social media: stories of ordinary people in the city, authentic scenes, and celebrity/influencer endorsements. Ordinary people have emerged as key ambassadors for the city's image communication, and videos featuring everyday citizens received particularly high numbers of likes and comments. Authenticity scenes showcasing real-life experiences were also highly popular and shared, boosting the city's credibility and attractiveness. Meanwhile, the use of celebrities and local influencers to endorse a city can greatly expand its reach and influence.

Based on the analysis, it can be observed that these cities are increasingly promoting the characteristics of their respective city brands through their official accounts. To effectively engage in participatory brand communication, city governments need to highlight the stories of ordinary people, showcase the most remarkable aspects of their cities, and involve celebrities and influencers when necessary. This study recommends that government communication departments follow the characteristics of Douyin communication, enhance public interaction, and improve the storytelling, emotions, and experience of their narratives. Furthermore, by effectively using important time nodes and local activities, city governments can seize the opportunity for city rebranding and promotion and enhance the attractiveness of the city.

Keywords: city branding, participatory branding, Douyin platform, user engagement, Chinese cities

Redefining place branding: Towards a new definition of place brands as multisensory embodied experiences

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This conceptual paper reflects on two main existing conceptualizations and definitions of place brands. It builds on recent branding and marketing literatures to distinguish a third conceptualization and provide a new definition of place brands. The new definition acknowledges the full multisensory experience of place brands, and approaches place brands as multisensory and embodied experiences.

Existing literature has firstly conceptualized place brands as symbolic constructs that identify and differentiate places from others (e.g., Eshuis & Klijn, 2012). Building on the classic American Marketing Association definition of a brand as a name, term, design, symbol, or a combination of those that identifies a good or service as distinct from other ones, this view puts brand signs and brand symbols central. It assumes that both brand meaning and identity reside in signs and symbols. A second main conceptualization approaches place brands as images and associations in the mind of target groups. Following Keller's (1993) seminal work, according to this approach place brands do not reside in the brand symbols but in individuals' minds. The first approach neglects that brand meaning is socially constructed by perceivers of brands. The second approach limits brand perception to something cognitive. Despite a recognition of multiple limitations of the abovementioned main approaches by many scholars (for instance, their selective nature, see Boisen et al. 2011; and failure to fully acknowledge the multi-faceted nature of place, see Kavaratzis 2008), the place branding field lacks a definition that considers the full complexity of place brands and how they are experienced by human beings.

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This paper views place brands as multisensory experiential constructs. Brands do not only exist as mental representations in people's minds, but rather as multi-layered, multi-sensory embodied experiences (Zha et al., 2022), based on what people have "consciously and unconsciously sensed, touched, felt, smelled, tasted, moved, viewed, talked and heard" (Von Wallpach and Kreuzer, 2013: 1326). We define place brands as multisensory and embodied experiences of a place by a myriad of stakeholders and target groups. The paper additionally discusses how brand management is viewed within the three abovementioned approaches.

Academic contribution: the paper contributes to much needed conceptual clarity necessary for the field of place branding to reach maturity (Boisen et al. 2018).

Practical implications: the paper clarifies what is managed, with whom and for whom in three different approaches to place branding thus informing brand management strategies.

Keywords: place brand definition, place marketing, multisensory brand experience, brand identity, brand management

The global image of Sweden in times of crisis

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Robert Govers, International Place Branding Association, Belgium

The global image of Sweden has been solid and positive for decades. According to surveys and media analyses from the Swedish Institute, Sweden is associated with social governance, environmental protection, quality of life, equality and justice. Sweden also has a strong reputation when it comes to innovation, export and education. Sweden is still mainly positively associated, but there are signs of change. The deviant management of the Covid-19 pandemic may be one part of a new grand narrative about Sweden's societal development. "Sweden has in some aspects become a negative international projection surface for many countries (not infrequently with clear political purposes), where the handling of the pandemic is only seen as another example of lax control of society". The Swedish Institute also concludes that Sweden has become a part of the geopolitical turmoil related to the Russian invasion and war in Ukraine since early 2022. The resistance from Turkey and Hungary to ratify Sweden as a member of NATO is still a debated topic, that has also highlighted the high level of secularization and liberal freedom of speech that applies in Sweden. This has led to a deterioration of the Swedish brand in countries such as Hungary and Turkey but not in so many other countries, according to Ipsos Nations Brand Index 2022. Even so, this may lead to a new narrative also in other countries. The development may also be connected to the massive disinformation campaign that took off in 2022 (partly with origin at Salafist platforms abroad) against the Swedish social welfare system, accusing social authorities for kidnapping Muslim children from their parents, which has led to an extremely negative media image in the Middle East and Arabic nations.

In this panel the participants discuss the effects of societal crisis in national brands in general, also focusing Sweden as a contemporary case.

Keywords: Nation Branding, Crisis Management, Sweden

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The many voices within: A tale of brand citizenship behaviour

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Laura Ripoll Gonzalez, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Netherlands

The last 30 years, place branding literature and practice have both realized that place brands are indeed the sum of many voices or identities, and that top-down approaches to develop place brands fail to be effective if they do not have the buy-in from the place's stakeholders (e.g. Zenker & Erfgen, 2014; Kavartzis & Kalandides, 2015). Hence, scholars and practitioners are shifting their approach from 'branding places' to 'co-creating place brands' in collaboration with the local community. In this sense, place brands are not only conceived and used as symbols that evoke positive mental associations in the minds of place consumers, but also as governance tools to evoke brand citizenship behaviour (BCB) and to bind local actors together and towards a common goal for the place.

How co-creation of meaning occurs in practice, through everyday exchanges and experiences of place, however, deserves further investigation. Stakeholder participation in place branding initiatives has been shown to be important for the success of the place brand and for enhancing BCB, here understood as a series of voluntary behaviours aimed at supporting the brand process, from design to implementation. However, even if the importance of citizenship behaviour has been recognized for a long time in governance processes (see e.g. Vigoda & Golembiewski, 2001), many aspects related the concept of BCB remain underexplored in the context of place branding.

This exploratory study builds on and expands on Braun et al's (2013) distinction of three citizens roles in the formation and communication of place brand (namely as an integral part of the place brand, as ambassadors for their place brand, and as citizens and voters) as well as previous studies on BCB (i.e. Taecharungroj, 2016) to develop a typology of stakeholder roles associated to different citizenship behaviours in place branding processes. We are particularly interested in observing a range of supporting and non-supportive behaviours and explore associated roles in the branding process. The study seeks to answer the following research question: What are the different types of citizenship behaviours and how do they manifest in the roles place stakeholders play in developing and promoting a place brand? We first provide a review of the literature and a working definition of BCB. We then draw on two regional branding cases engaged in participatory place branding, one in Sweden and one in Spain, to explore further how stakeholders perceive their roles in the branding process and the active behaviours they engage in to support/oppose the branding project.

The study is ongoing; however, the preliminary findings indicate that place stakeholders engage in a variety of behaviours and adopt a multitude of non-exclusive roles during a place branding process. The study advances understanding on stakeholder behaviours in support for place brands beyond active enactment of the brand promise and contributes to scarce research on the more negative aspects of participatory place branding. The study also provides a practical analytical framework for practitioners to reflect on the potential to address citizens' roles to increase citizenship behaviour (support for the brand).

Keywords: Brand citizenship behaviour, Co-creation, Place stakeholders, Participatory place branding

Undoing gendered state identity? The case of Sweden's feminist foreign policy

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In times of (perceived) unprecedented uncertainty and crisis, the global voice of small countries is increasingly at risk of being overheard. This is a challenge that creates tensions between how countries see themselves and how they want to be seen by others, which is reinforced even more so by increased domestic political polarization. In other words, in times of uncertainty, promotional communication aimed at engagement with publics outside the national borders, such as nation branding, might be at risk to not reflect the nation's "true" identity how it is perceived and lived at home.

Sweden, as an example of a small country, relies more on soft power strategies than its larger counterparts, as image-building can "compensate" for potential shortcomings in terms of for example trade power or military strength. Sweden was also able to pursue an agenda of progressiveness and norm entrepreneurship through (public) diplomacy efforts but has in recent times faced increasing challenges and to some extent even contestation by the changing environment domestically, but also internationally in relations with other countries.

Drawing on the growing body of research on public diplomacy and nation branding, this study aims to advance the understanding of how state identity is discursively constructed through strategic communication practices targeting foreign audiences, especially in times of change. Exploring gendered state identity and feminist foreign policy, this study is particularly interested in the unfolding and dynamic enactment of the concept of (state) feminism in public diplomacy.

Working with the theoretical concept of subject positions, the empirical material consists of interviews with Swedish public diplomacy practitioners, combined with nation branding and public diplomacy strategy documents. In addition, policy documents and public speeches will be considered as empirical material. This allows for a deeper understanding of how experts in the field construct Sweden's identity for different publics.

Preliminary findings suggest that geopolitical changes and domestic political developments, such as the NATO application and a new conservative government, are leading to a changing Swedish self-image that also needs to be mirrored in promotional activities, such as public diplomacy and nation branding. A shift away from the gendered values that have traditionally formed the core of the country's (political) identity may indicate that the country is susceptible to identity change – which public diplomacy practitioners must (re)negotiate as they work to position Sweden internationally.

Keywords: public diplomacy, feminist foreign policy, nation branding, discourse, Sweden, state identity

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Role of cities in soft power debates

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I explore why and how cities are engaging in international activities, mainly through public diplomacy, city diplomacy, and place branding projects.

I present a soft power-based reading.

The manuscript gathers public diplomacy, place branding, city diplomacy together through soft power and logics of soft power understanding to present a complete theoretical framework.

I first make the case for changing the level of analysis for soft power. While originally intended for nation-states, soft power can be used to explore and explain the presence of cities in the international arena. I then present three different domains of soft power activities for cities: representation, reputation, and resources. Positing that these domains have different assumptions of international affairs and soft power, I unpack the assemblage of reasoning beyond them individually.

I conclude the manuscript by discussing the contributions of a soft power approach to studying cities in the foreign policy arena as well as of studying cities to soft power.

Albeit theoretical in their nature, the findings of this manuscript encourage practitioners of place branding and public diplomacy scholars at city-levels to work with each other and other relevant bodies at their national level by showing the link among their activities.

Keywords: City diplomacy, soft power, scope, outcome, mechanism

Can place branding save the world? Exploring constructions of sustainable places

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This paper explores place branders' speech and interactions at a place branding conference that brings attracting investments and sustainability together by asking, "How can sustainability become the competitive advantage for the Nordics as a whole?" (NIPC 21, 2021)? In line with calls to explore the meanings and narratives behind sustainable developments (Kaika & Swyngedouw, 2011; Zavattaro, 2014), we pose the research question, how do place branders communicatively construct norms for what constitutes successful sustainable place branding. Specifically, we analyze how the Investment Promotion Association (IPA) as a community of practice constructs an everyday or common-sense view of what constitutes sustainable investment promotion. We do not explore outcomes or efficacies around sustainability initiatives, but rather we seek to understand how place branders' constructions enable and/or constrain their ability to contend with the global crisis of climate change alongside promotion and brand development, which allows for better understanding of how ecological and market priorities intersect. Our findings suggest that the dominant construction of sustainability is green growth, a debated theory that asserts that economics and sustainability can sit side-by-side given the right technological interventions. Like Hickel and Kallis (2021), our study complicates an idealized picture of green growth by bringing forth three themes from our data: First, crisis is reframed as an "exclusive" business and brand-building opportunity, silencing other, more collaborative sustainability solutions. Next, seeking to attract investments creates power relationships where the public sector caters to industry. Finally, investment-focused branders identify tensions between attracting sustainable investments and continuing to pursue and support non-sustainable investments to grow economically.

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Keywords: Place Branding, Sustainability, Green Growth

“TASTE: like CHIOS”: Gastronomy tourism / destination branding project for the Greek island of Chios

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Gastronomy Tourism / Destination Branding project for the greek island of Chios

Formulate Chios Gastronomic Identity and position the place as a competitive international Gastronomy destination.

Invite foodies from around the world to live and eat “like a true Chiot”, enjoy Chios’ unique cuisine and meet the people behind it.

Empower island’s overall competitiveness, with meaningful experiences and everlasting memories.

Link local Gastronomy and products with history, tradition, locals and their personal stories and culture.

Promote the connection of traditional flavors and Chiot everyday lifestyle.

Contribute to Chios’ evolution towards sustainability, by familiarizing stakeholders to sustainability principles and practices.

Contribute to Chios’ growth and revenue, and encourage exports, entrepreneurship and startups by exploring the Gastronomy Tourism Trend.

Chios, the 5th largest greek island located in the North Aegean, has a fascinating traditional cuisine, deriving from centuries of history, the uniqueness of its terrain and the inventiveness of its people. The mastic “tears”, produced only here, and its famous citrus, gifted Chios with the nickname “Mirovolos” (full of divine aromas).

Chios microclimates and the diversity of local culture, led to a multilayered cuisine, an amalgam of four distinct culinary approaches: the people on the stony north and the green south, the fishermen on the coast and the farmers and breeders in the semi-mountainous villages, used locally available ingredients to create a wealth of different recipes!

Modern culinary challenges like vegan, “farm-to-table”, “zero-mille”, “slow” or even “raw” food are easily addressed. A sufficient local production / cultivation base provides these ingredients and an impressive product portfolio. Chiot healthy, delicious traditional cuisine is very much alive even today, in its cities and villages, in the tavernas and restaurants all over the island, waiting for the taste explorers to discover and enjoy.

The Gastronomy / Destination Branding project “TASTE: like CHIOS” presents the glory of the local, traditional cuisine, the charm and culture of the people behind it and describes what visitors will experience with all their senses. Co-created “from the bottom up” with full involvement of all stakeholders, is founded in the findings of extensive, desk and field, research and analysis revealing the true strengths of Chios. These conclusions, formed a clear, straightforward Strategy and inspired an Identity design, based on emblematic gastronomy elements, and consistently implemented in all communication material (site, social media, B2B presentations, exhibitions etc). Brand Architecture includes also a system of sub-brands (mastiha, cultivation, products, seafood, dinning), apportioning the experience.

Mission/Vision, Positioning, storytelling, “reason-why”, tone of voice and a “Stakeholders Manifesto”, among others, explained to the stakeholders body, now in charge of the implementation / management of the project.

With more than 60 local businesses already certified, the Project produces results and added value, and is in its implementation phase. Well accepted by all key audiences, is considered a ground breaking, innovative Gastronomy Destination project in Greece and received the Golden Award in recent “TOURISM AWARDS 2023”.

Chios Gastronomy just started its exciting journey in the international Gastronomy Tourism market!

Keywords: Destination Branding, Gastronomy Tourism, Culinary Diplomacy, Locality, Food Culture, Storytelling, Co-creation, Authentic Experience

Building a park city: The green brand concept for the city of Chengdu

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Chengdu, a dynamic and eco-friendly city in China, has undergone significant changes in its urban branding strategy in recent years. In 2009, the city aimed to build a "world modern garden city," which set an example for China's urbanization path and improved its international competitiveness. In 2018, the city repositioned itself as a "park city" to achieve a harmonious coexistence between nature, people, and the city. This shift has led to a rapid rise in international rankings, with Chengdu being listed in the Beta+ category in the 2019 Globalization and World Cities (GaWC) study.

The benefits of green spaces are increasingly being recognized for their ability to enhance the quality of life for citizens (Szulczewska et al., 2014). These benefits are not limited to just physical and mental health benefits (Coley et al., 1997, Wan et al., 2021), but also extend to social benefits such as supporting social interaction and integration (Kabisch et al., 2015). Furthermore, it has been suggested that green resources can be integrated into the concept of city branding (Chan and Marafa, 2013).

This article explores the concept of Chengdu as a "park city." As consultants for the Chengdu municipal government, we argue that a park city should showcase the integration of parks and greenery into the city, with a focus on people's needs and the synergies between ecological, living, and production elements. Through urban research, including historical and cultural resources studies, discussions with city government officials, and surveys of residents and tourists, we emphasize the importance of cultural service spaces, creative production spaces, and cultural exchange spaces in a park city.

By understanding the benefits of green spaces, urban planners can prioritize resident well-being and achieve more equitable and sustainable urban developments. Ultimately, a park city aims to achieve optimal allocation of urban resources and environmental updates while stimulating cultural productivity, improving lifestyles, and promoting the healthy development and growth of the city's inherent culture. Through this approach, a park city can create an organic and unified urban life community where the park environment and cultural space grow together.

Keywords: Chengdu, Park City, green brand, the quality of life

Media representation of place branding messages: UNESCO creative cities in China

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The study aims to illustrate how five cities in China leverage their membership in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) to brand their places in support of local development through an analysis of media representation of place branding messages. The data employed in this study was drawn from place branding messages in connection with UCCN designation from media, which was classified into the three types of official, public, and social media channels. By the criteria of representativeness of each of the five categories of UCCN designation and substantial amount of place branding messages across the three types of media channels, five creative cities were selected as data sources, which are Chengdu (City of Gastronomy), Wuhan (City of Design)), Nanjing (City of Literature), Changsha (City of Media Art), and Suzhou (City of Crafts & Folk Arts) .

The study identified the elements of place branding and key stakeholders involved in the branding process through the examination of branding messages communicated by and through traditional mass media, social media, and government websites on the five cities with UCCN designation. The study found that the UCCN designation was broadly leveraged as a place branding platform and narrowly used as a badge of honor by the five creative cities. Prominent elements of place branding consisted of city vision and events and festivals. Provincialism characterized the coverage of place branding messages in the media representation. Pluralism was evident in the participation of stakeholders, but the relationship among stakeholders was unilateral, with the government being the dominant agent in the UCCN-related media and discourse. Commercial organizations and local residents were willing participants, supporting the role of government at the core. The UCCN designation brings developmental opportunities for member cities in China through place branding, which, however, may deviate from the mission and original objectives of the designation.

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Keywords: Place branding, Creative Cities, Media representation

Food and storytelling in destination branding

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The aim of this research is to enhance the understanding of the relationship between food and storytelling in destination branding. Accordingly, the objective is to identify which products and culinary values that are brought forward in destination food offerings, and, further to this, how these are employed in destination storytelling strategies.

In today's growing competition, destinations need to work actively to be attractive to visitors as well as residents and investors. This research adapts the concept of "place making" (Lew, 2017) as a way to understand the processual and dynamic nature of making destinations attractive. Further to this, the concept of storytelling is used in order to understand how local food and food related experiences contribute to destination attractiveness. In terms of food and food-related experiences, storytelling can be a way to emphasise unique attributes of a destination, and build relations between e.g. food providers and guests (c.f. Tellström et al. 2005; Mossberg, 2008; Pico Larsen, 2010; Mossberg and Eide, 2017).

A qualitative approach is taken, using the Swedish city of Helsingborg as an empirical example. In order to understand how storytelling through food is made part of the city's branding efforts, focus lies on three types of 'storytelling agents': small-scale food providers in and around Helsingborg; food traders (such as restaurants, hotels and various food shops) in the city who in different ways interact with the small-scale food providers; and municipality actors who provide opportunities for putting forward local food and related values (e.g. through various events, food markets, and other food related activities). Data is collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis, and analysed through thematization and categorization.

Helsingborg has a relatively large number and a diverse variety of restaurants and food shops, and the area around the city boasts many small-scale producers and providers of, e.g., locally grown fruits and vegetables, local meat and poultry. In addition, the city provides arenas for putting forward the local food of the area, through both permanent and temporary events, food related projects (e.g. urban food cultivation), and other food business opportunities. A preliminary key finding is that, while local food and food related values – such as traditions, recipes and preparation methods – are actively used in the branding of the destination, the stories that are put forward mediate a rather homogenous image of Helsingborg. The cultural diversity that is represented within the city's food offerings does thus not seem to be reflected in the storytelling efforts.

The results from this research can be of value to destination developers and marketers, as it highlights how food culture is mediated and employed to enhance destination attractiveness. By putting forward locally attached food and food related stories, social and cultural values unique to the destination are emphasized, while, simultaneously, they can point at aspects that might not be well covered. This knowledge can contribute to identifying new development and innovation areas, which can be of value to strengthen destinations' competitiveness.

Keywords: Local food, food related experiences, storytelling, destination branding

A place I can call home: A short animation about “sense of place” and “place belonging”

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“Where do you come from?” is a question people tend to ask whenever they feel someone does not belong somewhere. The problem, in many cases, is that there is no short answer to this question. Nowadays people often relate to a number of places, where they - were born, grew up, met their partner, had kids, lived most of their lives, and so on and so forth. And to express their sense of belonging to an exclusive place has therefore become very difficult.

Ask me this question and my short answer would be I was born in Cairo, grew up in the UK, immigrated to and had my kids in Canada, moved back to the UK, own two British cats, a German Shepherd and currently live in Spain! No wonder, place identity has always been a dilemma for me and for others who crossroads with me. My favourite game with strangers would be: Guess my place affiliation!

My friends used to call me a nomad. Going back to my Middle Eastern roots, they would sometimes refer to me as a true Bedouin! I moved a lot! Literally every year, as a student, I would change my living space and switch neighbourhoods. Then I started moving from one town to the other for different work and family reasons. From one province to the other. From one country to the other. From one continent to the other. It seems like I have it in my DNA! No wonder when I decided to do my PHD, I decided to study place and its affiliations.

Every time I moved to a new place, I carried one common thing with me (besides my sofa, books, my husband, kids, cats, and German Shepherd!), my yearning soul for belonging to a place, a place I can call home.

In each place I searched for this sense of belonging, sense of attachment, a place identity I can relate to, be part of. Regardless of how long I would stay, I wanted to feel home. As a researcher who attempts to answer research questions I had to find a way to make this happen. My life question became: how can a world citizen like me feel home, develop a sense of belonging, place identity that has no place limits?

As noted by Brown (2005, p. 18), “... place is a social construction formed by human-environment interactions”. I plan to develop this piece into a script, followed by a shooting script which will be the backbone for an animation. In this animation, I will present a few “human-place” activities that helped me socially construct belonging and engagement in places I call home. This animation will allow me to take you on a journey to explore this further.

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Keywords: Place Identity, Sense of Place, Mobility, Place Belonging, Engagement

The customer perspectives of the tourism destination brand attributes, image, and loyalty: Profile analysis

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This study employed a quantitative research method in the form of a structured questionnaire survey of four hundred and forty-six (446) respondents to measure the relationships between tourists' profile and tourism destination brand constructs, using Gauteng Province of South Africa as a case. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) generated four empirical brand constructs namely, 'destination attributes', 'emotional bond & affection', 'place accessibility & loyalty' and 'place values'. Comparative data analyses revealed that there were no clear positive or negative relationships regarding tourists' age, gender, or origin and the four empirical brand constructs. However, leisure tourists, those on repeat visits, international tourists and those who traveled in groups had more positive judgement of various Gauteng brand constructs than their counterparts. Based on these results, theoretical and practical implications were developed for the body of literature regarding a destination brand and this tourism destination respectively.

Keywords: Branding, Brand attributes, Brand image, Brand loyalty, Place value

Crafting Sweden as a sustainable destination: Place branding, destination governance and social learning

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A critical issue for destination management organisations (DMOs) today is the mobilising of actions and the steering of management and planning processes essential for the development of sustainable destinations. A key element of destination governance is social learning, meaning how stakeholders share ideas, knowledge and aspirations, co-construct visions and plans, and learn and adapt from evolving experience. However, studies on social learning and related concepts are scarce in destination governance. The purpose of the study is to explore destination governance that emphasises sustainability, through the lens of social learning. As such, this study aims to conceptualise a flexible and adaptive approach to destination governance. The study includes an analysis of national destination governance in Sweden in recent years, which has developed to involve more stakeholders and various aspects of sustainability. The authors used an action-oriented approach, with observations in and on action, while being involved in a sustainability initiative by the Swedish national DMO. Furthermore, they analysed documents and online material related to public Swedish destination authorities' engagement in social learning. The findings contribute to previous research by unpacking how social learning plays out in a Swedish destination governance context. National policies and directives have contributed to a more comprehensive and robust structure in recent years. To some extent it is a top-down approach led by authorities' decisions that are supposed to 'trickle down' to other authorities, and on to the tourism industry and civic society. Yet, in our findings, we see a will to develop polycentric governance through social learning. New constellations and collaborations have emerged, which can lay the foundation for a developed cooperation and learning between tourism actors.

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Keywords: Destination management, Governance, Social learning, DMO, Sustainable tourism

Public diplomacy and nation branding in action: Swiss embassy's participation in the Night of Museums event in Warsaw

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Proposed research explores the public diplomacy (PD) and nation branding (NB) implications of the Swiss embassy in Warsaw opening its premises to visitors during the Night of Museum celebrations in 2021. PD has developed a diversified set of tools that allows reaching foreign policy goals (Huijgh 2016). These include using sport as a platform for diplomatic conduct, engaging celebrities, and using health-related aspects to shape perceptions, just to name a few (see Constantinou, Kerr, and Sharp 2016). Major events can be perceived as one of such tools that contribute to image creation of states or cities as well (Richards and Wilson 2004). They are also often used for promoting tourism (Rivera, Hara, and Kock 2008), corresponding with the concept of NB, with the aim of increasing the number of foreign visitors to a country (Dinnie 2016). NB, when compared to PD, can be distinguished based on its goals. While PD is focused on promoting foreign policy interests through winning hearts and minds, NB is more about promoting economic interests with the political dimension fading into the background. Thus, the methods and tools of both differ. While PD focuses on tools requiring interaction and contributing to relationship-building, NB uses more informative tools, such as visual materials, commercials, touristic campaigns, or press tours (Szondi 2008). However, some tools can be assigned to both PD and NB efforts. This strongly refers to a wide range of events, which can contribute to image creation, attracting tourists, and at the same time provide space for relationship-building and thus fall under the umbrella of both PD and NB (see Kobierecki 2023).

The research attempted to answer two research questions. The first one concerned the communications that were to be presented to visitors during the event (R1); the second focused on the Swiss embassy's motivation to engage in the Night of Museum event (R2). Answering these questions required employing various data collection tools, including field visits and interviews. The data acquired in this way was analyzed in connection to Swiss PD and NB strategies, as well as general PD tools.

Analysis of the Swiss embassy's participation in the Night of Museums in Warsaw contributes to PD scholarship in several ways. Firstly, diplomatic missions very rarely make use of the popularity of the Night of Museums and partner with such events. Secondly, even though several diplomatic missions participated in this annual cultural event in more or less direct ways, the issue has not attracted the attention of PD scholars.

The main argument presented in the article is that participation in the Night of Museums offers diplomatic missions a convenient way of attracting and engaging the public of the host country. It may serve as a tool for communicating the main narratives included within states' public diplomacy and nation branding strategies. Thus, the Night of Museums can serve as a platform for PD and NB at a relatively low cost.

Keywords: Public diplomacy, Nation branding, Night of Museums, Switzerland

New urban tourism and responsible tourism as game changers in city branding: Reflections on the latest branding efforts of European cities

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As crisis and uncertainty become the new normal in local policies, especially for cities that attract tourists the need for different approaches has become crucial. The presentation focuses on the ways many cities are changing not only their strategy but also the main narrative regarding their function as places that attract visitors and tourists the last few years (Boom et al 2021).

The presentation draws on the notion of new urban tourism and how this emerges as a new norm, expanding urban tourism both in terms of space and content (Spirou, 2011). The new urban tourism trend is connected with allowing visitors and locals to co-exist and co-create the experience e.g. many cities embrace the so-called placemaking practices which are very much based on community and co-creation (Mordue, 2017). At the same time responsible tourism practices are also entering the city agendas and NGOs, collectives, etc (e.g. FairBnB, Plastic Whale in Amsterdam, etc.) become key stakeholders. Livability, spontaneity and well-being of the local community become key messages in strategies and city branding campaigns.

City tourism strategies and city branding of the last 5 years in European cities are cross-examined in terms of goals, missions, main messages, slogans and content in order to examine the hypothesis that new urban tourism and responsible tourism are changing the agenda. The sample of cities is based on an initial choice of cities that have been adopting these practices, including larger cities such as Helsinki, Copenhagen, Vienna, etc) but also smaller cities (e.g. Pontevedra) have been approaching tourism in a different way.

By cross-comparing recent strategies it occurs that most cities have partially or in a more holistic way changed their strategic approach during or after the pandemic. Some cities stand out e.g. Copenhagen followed an early adaption of this approach and the cities such as Ghent and Vienna use tourism to improve their neighbourhoods. Cities such as Pontevedra and Valencia in Spain become popular because of their urban transformation into sustainable cities.

A city that mostly serves its visitors becomes a city less attractive to both inhabitants and tourists, therefore the need of adopting a different approach seems to be evident from all stakeholders of the cities examined. The fact that new collaborative and responsible approaches are being promoted is a first sign of change. As access to housing, services, urban free spaces, etc. leads to tensions, new approaches are expected to be further developed.

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Keywords: new urban tourism, city branding, responsible tourism, placemaking, destination management, mission statements

Co-creating an inclusive story for Amsterdam

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Currently, the City of Amsterdam is working on renewing the story of Amsterdam. The goal of this process is to better ground the city's brand identity, which can then be used as a tool for city policies and campaigns aimed at enhancing the city's image. Like many other cities, Amsterdam is facing the risks of overtourism and has developed plans to revitalize its inner city.

To achieve this, the city has embarked on a process of creating a story that is connecting, inspiring, and activating. The story aims to make residents proud of their city again, showcase the "new" Amsterdam to visitors, and attract businesses that contribute to a future-proof city. This was achieved through a broad co-creational process involving a wide variety of Amsterdammers.

A main benefit of the co-creational process was its participatory nature, which resulted in a shared characteristic of Amsterdammers: in Amsterdam, we disagree on everything; on which we agree enormously. So there is always a dialogue, and room to belong to the city and also to be your authentic self.

This continuous dialogue is inclusive of nature: it gives possibilities to take in all perspectives, and to seek connections. In this way we rediscover a second important characteristic, that of the city of freedom: to be who you are, and to discover who you are.

Two main challenges had to be met. First, an enormous effort was put into getting the right people on the table and listening to their perspectives. A broad variety of 150 people were invited to workshops.

Second, the development of the new story was under political pressure: would there be genuine co-creation, or would it end in a political decision?

In the co-creation itself, a brand laddering technique (Reynolds and Gutman, 1988) was used to make people think of attributes (what are the characteristics of the city?), to functional (what has the city to offer?), to emotional (how does it feel to be part of the city?), to transformational (how does the city influence me?) to social (how does the city influence society?).

Finally, the transformational level was chosen. Challenge your view: look from different perspectives and renew your view. The story moves from protest and freedom to cooperation and responsibility.

This is an inclusive story that gives room to all perspectives of a superdiverse city. The tagline for the campaign is "You change the city; the city changes you."

Keywords: inclusive city branding, co-creation, superdiversity, city branding, brand story

Place branding, destination branding and sustainable development: A scoping review

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Place branding, including destination branding, is a multidisciplinary field of research and practice that plays an important role in sustainable development by stimulating economic growth, social prosperity, and environmental sustainability. Despite the importance of this intersection, research on place branding and sustainable development is limited. The aim of this article is to contribute to fill this gap by examining the main characteristics of this domain. Additionally, this study analyses the relationship between place branding and sustainable development literature and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A scoping review of research published in the last ten years of papers indexed in Scopus and Web of Science is undertaken. The results of the review find literature on place branding and sustainable development is scattered across several journals and focused on single place case-studies located in Europe. While there is a growing interest in the topic of place branding and sustainable development, articles tend to address sustainable development in an abstract or generic way without explicitly incorporating the 2030 Agenda in their methodology or result outcomes. There is also a lack of studies focusing on how place branding can enhance social equity by addressing poverty (SDG 1) and discrimination against women (SDG 5) and promoting availability and sustainable management of water (SDG 6) and clean energy (SDG 7). This scoping review contributes to existing literature on place branding by highlighting its linkages with sustainable development in the framework of the 2030 Agenda. Moreover, it also underscores the need for further research on this topic and the importance of incorporating the SDGs in discussion on place branding and sustainable development.

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Keywords: Place branding, Destination branding, Sustainable development, Sustainability, Scoping review

American spaces as a tool for nation branding: Stories from a war zone

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“American Spaces” refer to physical or virtual locations established by the U.S. Department of State to promote cultural exchange and provide information about the United States. These spaces are designed to foster dialogue, collaboration, and understanding between people from different countries and cultures and offer resources such as libraries, technology, and programming related to American culture, education, and society. American Spaces can be found in various countries around the world, including embassies, consulates, libraries, and community centers. As such, American Spaces serve as platforms for U.S. public diplomacy by providing opportunities for cultural exchange, dialogue, and information sharing between the U.S. government and people around the world. Because American Spaces contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the United States, they play an important role in shaping America’s place brand.

This study examines the function and effectiveness of the American Spaces in general and specifically in Ukraine leading up to and during the war with Russia. Data for the study were collected from face-to-face interviews with U.S. embassy staff who were working in Ukraine when the war began, including locally employed Ukrainians who were charged with maintaining and caring for the American Spaces by their U.S. government employers. Findings from the study shed light on the power of U.S. public diplomacy and the strengths and weaknesses of Brand America during crises through first-hand stories told by American Spaces personnel in Kyiv.

Keywords: U.S. Public Diplomacy, American Spaces, Ukraine War, Nation Branding, Crisis Communication

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Public diplomacy through socialist lens: The influence of socialist collective identity on Vietnam's public diplomacy

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In a world shaped by interlinked historical contexts and dominated by the US foreign policy in the 1960s, the study of public diplomacy (PD) has primarily been centered on Western perspectives, prompting a need to diversify viewpoints and recognize nuances in approaches. Against this backdrop, this paper aims to explore how Vietnam's socialist collective identity, evolving over time, has shaped its PD understanding and practices. Since Vietnam's socialist identity rooted in its Cold War association with the Soviet Union and China, the research will explore whether Vietnam has learned its PD conceptualization from these two socialist states. For this study seeks to uncover the underlying reasons that drive the diversity in public diplomacy approaches across states, it adopts a theoretical framework grounded in constructivism, recognizing the centrality of identity in shaping states' perceptions and actions. The analysis relies on government documents and secondary sources to trace changes in Vietnam's identity, foreign policy, and PD practices of Vietnam and the influence from Soviet Union/ Russia and China.

The paper outlines the historical development of Vietnam's PD from the 1960s to the 2020s, categorizing this evolution into four chronological stages according to the key events shaping the course of solidarity in the socialist bloc.

Stage 1: Cold War-style propaganda and strong collective identity within the socialist bloc (Prior to the 1980s)

Stage 2: The collapse of USSR bloc, reform, and identity crisis (the 1980s – the end of the 1990s)

Stage 3: Re-engagement with focus on economic growth and peaceful mutual co-existence with former rivals (early 2000s to mid-2010s)

Stage 4: Divergence among socialist states seeking for different status in international arena (mid-2010 till 2020)

The main findings of the study reveal the intricate interplay between Vietnam's identity formation, external influences from the Soviet Union and China, and its PD strategies. Vietnam's understanding of PD has experienced drastic changes along with how much well-established Vietnam's collective identity as a socialist state is. There have been significant resemblances in PD understanding of Vietnam to that of the USSR and China prior to the socialist bloc's demolition with the influence directed from the USSR and China, but not much alignment can be found since the beginning of the 2000s. In fact, Vietnam's PD in modern days is much less a result of socialist result of strategic calculations of international relations the country establishes. By juxtaposing the alterations in Vietnam's socialist identity with changes in its PD conceptualization and practices, the study contributes to not only a more nuanced understanding of public diplomacy but also the broader discourse on the role of identity in shaping international relations.

Keywords: public diplomacy, collective identity, socialist states, Vietnam, constructivism

Social media city image perception changes in China during the outbreak of COVID-19: The example of Wuhan

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Social media is gradually breaking through urban spatial boundaries to offer new opportunities to study city image perceptions (Huang et al., 2021; Iranmanesh et al., 2022). On social media platforms, individual expression has become a part of the city's image, and has affected perceptions of city image (Xie et al., 2017). City image perception is not static on social media, as public participation and expression constantly generate the city image as part of a dynamic and open process. On 30 January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that COVID-19 was a "major public health emergency". Wuhan, as the 'birthplace' of the virus, was increasingly criticized, and the image of its people and government was increasingly at stake. On January 23, 2020, the Wuhan authorities imposed a lockdown to stop the virus spreading. However, when the lockdown was lifted after two months (on 25 March 2020), social media increasingly presented the people and city of Wuhan as heroes. In just two months, Wuhan's city image had fundamentally changed. This study combines text and content analysis with Framework Theory to investigate specific changes in perceptions of Wuhan's city image before, during and after the epidemic, and examine how the public expression of Wuhan's city image on social media changed after the initial COVID-19 outbreak.

It seeks to answer two questions:

1. How has public expression on social media contributed to changing Wuhan's city image?
2. What impact have these changes had on the collective perception of Wuhan's city image?

Based on the LDA theme model, social network and sentiment analysis were adopted in this study. The data collection takes "Wuhan" as a keyword and applies web crawler technology to obtain the content data from Weibo, one of China's largest social media platforms from September 1, 2019, to August 31, 2020. This will help the reader to understand changes in Wuhan's city image perception across different stages and will also give insight into the four months before and after the lockdown.

This study finds that the outbreak caused many city image crises, including the failure of the top-down positive city image communication mode; the categorization of Wuhan residents as "another race", who suffered exclusion and discrimination; a crisis of trust in the Wuhan government in the early stages of the outbreak; and the city's name becoming synonymous with COVID-19. The virus also provided a number of urban image communication opportunities, including increased attention, the accumulation of urban cultural resources (e.g., new urban symbols) and stronger emotional interaction between residents and their city.

In building on these insights and perspectives, this study proposes that the main body of city image construction should, during public health emergencies, pay more attention to the accurate extraction of urban spiritual values and the expression of feelings; grasp the key window period of city image communication; and establish the support strategy for both the city image communication concept and crisis normalization.

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