

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PLACE BRANDING AND DESTINATION BRANDING FOR LOCAL BRAND STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: *To highlight the principles used in the design and development of a regional brand strategy we need to identify the disciplinary and the theoretical referential that would best fit the branding approach. This paper will address the main forms of branding: place branding, location branding and destination branding, as a specialized form of destination marketing. From the theoretical point of view, by identifying the fundamental and the management brand model, the regional tourism brand concept is regarded by positioning it in the category (the most general one) of place branding.*

Key words: *place brand, destination brand, local strategy development.*

1. Introduction

The term "place" refers to a much more holistic concept, rather than "destination". "Place" includes or signifies all economic activities and feelings that are related to it. The term "place" can also refer to a nation (or a country), a city or a region. Is not strictly related to tourism activities. Place marketing and place branding are concerned with attracting people who can choose they live, work, study or visit, to choose to do so in a particular place. They are talented, mobile people who bring wealth and investment with them. [1, pp.15-6].

The same perspective is also found at other authors: "Where branding using the term 'destination' implies a tourism perspective, place branding provides an even wider perspective that would include

all interactions of a place with its environment, including political, outside investment, trade, immigration and media issues. Both destination branding and place branding could include country, region or city branding." [4, p.14].

Starting with the justification related to the need for disambiguity of the term "destination" and by trying to provide a pertinent and theoretical explanation for the choice of place branding model, rather than the destination branding framework, in positioning the regional brand concept, it is necessary to define also the destination as "a geographical space in which a cluster of tourism resources exist, rather than a political boundary" [8, p.24] and " A destination brand is probably best described as the essence of the destination from the perspective of potential visitors. But it should also be recognizable to

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residents. Ideally these two perspectives should gel and thereby reinforce each other." [1, p.8].

S. Pike provides a further explanation of the cluster, as "[...] an accumulation of tourist resources and attractions, infrastructures, equipments, service providers, other support sectors and administrative organisms whose integrated and coordinated activities provide customers with the experiences they expected from the destination they chose to visit." Rubies, 2001 apud [8, p.24].

Also from the destination branding perspective, the study coordinated by the World Tourism Organization & European Travel Commission: Handbook on Tourism Destinations Branding states that terms such as the "place branding", "nation-branding" and "country-branding" are becoming increasingly important.

They refer to the global or holistic branding process of a country, nation or place (where "place" covers any recognisable geographical entity. It is used as a generic term and can refer to a country, a region or a city). It refers to how a place (city, region or country) self-presents on the national or international stage in different area such as business, diplomacy, culture or tourism. This underpins its efforts to attract investors, businesses, tourists and students, as well as to enhance its reputation as a good place to live, to trust in international relations, and to do business and trade with. [1, p.7]

2. Branding perspectives on products, organizational environment and places

M. Kavaratzis [6, p.59] provides a plausible explanation regarding the implementation of the marketing philosophy, or at least the marketing techniques that that were easy to adapt and use in the practice of local or regional governance, has been mirrored by the

increasing interest of academics from various fields, who believe that the principles of marketing are, with the necessary modifications, applicable to regions and their operational environment.

Therefore, quoting Ashworth and Voogd (1994), we can identify the theoretical emergence of place marketing, through developments and transfer of marketing knowledge that emanated from the industrial products and services techniques: "These are the development of marketing in non-profit organisations, of social marketing and of image marketing." apud M. Kavaratzis [6, p.59] We find a similar explanation at Gert-Jan Hospers, which states that the strategy of creating a positive image is known as the "place marketing" or "branding". This is a popular instrument which it is hoped, will contribute to making areas known and to improving their reputation.

However, not everyone is convinced of the merits of this strategy. Some analysts have criticized the use of marketing as a instrument for regional policy, as they fear a process of manipulation and selling out to the business community. The selling of areas in the market, they argue, brings about a "commodification of places". Considering regions as products, authorities run the risk of neglecting the human aspect of areas, which may conflict with the public responsibilities of government. In practice, however, the regions make extensive use of headline-grabbing slogans and promotion campaigns to put themselves on the map. Though the effect of this place marketing strategy is difficult to measure, it would seem that some places really have succeeded in developing a strong brand. [5, p.273].

There are many examples of this kind in North America and Western Europe, such as "Austin – The Music Capital of the USA", "Toronto - A City which Works",

"Sardinia - Proud to Be Different" and "There is Nothing Beyond Groningen". The evolution of these concrete expressions of place marketing show that the image people have developed of the regions in question has become more realistic and has positively influenced over the years. Some people have said that if there had not been such promotional campaigns, would not consider these locations as areas for business, residence or leisure and entertainment. [5 p.273-4].

There was a strong exchange of best practices between commercial marketing and "destination marketing" for decades, and indeed the term "destination branding" is been in use for more than ten years (although it is also the cause of considerable confusion, it is often wrongly conflated with "place branding" or "nation branding"). [3, p.3].

The difference between a destination product and a destination brand is that the first is a neutral description that has no emotional value invested in it. A destination brand, on the other hand, is a description of the core essence of the place in terms of its values as perceived by consumers, is about the emotional relationship between the place and its visitors - how they perceive the enduring nature of the destination in relation to other places. In short, it is about the personality of the place and how it makes people feel about it. [1, p.11].

M. Kavaratzis [7, p.3] introduces the synonymy of two concepts: "place branding / city" (e.g. as far as the city is synonymous with a concrete and specific form of a place, a region, then Brasov can be considered a form, a variety of place branding), considering them as the final trends in the literature, and they can be found in a significant number of scientific articles discussing the possibility of using branding as an approach to integration, guidance and focus of place management.

Borrowing from the techniques and ideas developed from the general theory of branding and, in particular, by increasingly accepting the rising importance of the concept of corporate branding, these articles discuss the similarity between the general concepts of branding with place branding and the attempt to propose a general framework for developing and managing place brands (Hankinson, 2001; Hankinson, 2004; Kavaratzis, 2004), or examining the suitability of specific branding instruments for the case of city branding (Trueman et al., 2004). This latter model is characterized by the attempt of implementing corporate branding concepts and specific methodologies developed in this field to place branding theory.

As M. Kavaratzis also states [6, p.60]: "One concept that has emerged in recent years and has a clear and direct relevance to marketing implementation in cities is the concept of corporate branding and corporate-level marketing, which is a theoretical and practical development of the earlier concepts of corporate image and corporate identity (eg Balmer, 1998; Balmer and Greyser, 2003)."

In the past, the concept of strategic place marketing, idea developed by Kotler et al. (1993), was among the first to adopt a clear position that places must organize as business and promote themselves, if they are to respond adequately to the threats of global competition, technological change and urban decay. [3, p.2].

The concept of place image (described above as a specific concept for the corporate environment) is brought into question and its importance recognized by Kotler's early work, but place marketing is still seen as a tool to sell products, services and attractions a space in a more efficient way, and not for tackling the

overall image or reputation of the place in any direct way.

The implication seems to be that marketing – through development, promotion, distribution and sale of products and services - is a legitimate, tangible and measurable activity, with direct economic benefits, "a real job" someone might say, while the brand or the branding activity is an academic construct, a psychological process, a phenomenon for observation and not a discipline that can be practiced.

In a sense, the dictionary does a disservice for marketing by suggesting that changing the attitude and image are foreign concepts: the distinction is whether talking about attitude and image directly represents a peripheral or is a function of marketing. There is no doubt that changes in attitude and image may appear as a result of successful marketing applied to products or services: in other words as an indirect consequence of marketing. [3, p.2].

R. Govers & F. Go, [4, p.13] consider in the work *Place Branding - Glocal, Virtual and Physical Identities, Constructed, Imagined and Experienced* that there are significant differences between product branding, the branding of corporations and place branding, the latter concept being defined as:

"the marketing activities (1) that support the creation of a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates a destination; (2) that convey the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; and (3) that serve to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience, all with the intent purpose of creating an image that influences consumers' decisions to visit the destination in question, as opposed to an alternative one." Blain et al., 2005 apud [4, p. 13-4].

3. Conclusions. What can we do to make our region noticed?

Place marketing can be a powerful strategy, complementing the efforts of the authorities to promote the natural attractions of a region. Ideally, the brand a place communicates should be the shortest translation of those particular things an area is proud of or wants to stand for. "Ideally, place marketing closes the gap between what an area really is ("identity"), what outsiders think about it ("image") and how the location wants to be known in the outside world (its "brand" or desired reputation). To achieve this, it is necessary to communicate and promote the attractions and advantages of private. To close this gap, it is necessary to communicate and promote the area's particular attraction and distinctive advantages." [5, p.274].

At the same time, in practice, the regions do not make much effort to highlight themselves from their rivals. For example, the American urban areas of Sikeston (Missouri), Webb City (Missouri) and Davison (Michigan) have all adopted the profile of the "City of Flags". Similar copycat behaviour can be observed in Europe, where many authorities are dazzled by Silicon high-tech dreams and hope to copy the alleged success of Silicon Valley. Inspired by this area of California more and more regions are presenting themselves using the terms "Silicon" or "Valley" - without expressing exactly what differentiates them from each other. Such examples include Silicon Glen (Scotland), Dommel Valley (a southern region of the Netherlands), Silicon Saxony (an eastern zone of Germany) and Language Valley (Flanders). Promoting such a profile, none of these regions articulate clearly what differentiates them from each other nor do they give any idea of what they have to offer to people looking for a place to work

and live. In this way, the regions undermine their own competitiveness: the real competitive advantages can be achieved by creating or emphasizing local conditions - or in other words "trend through tradition". [5, p.274].

There would be an elementary question about the image of a region or location which has often been addressed in the literature, and which further remained largely unresolved: the regions benefit more if they have a clear and simple image or is more preferable that they have a rich one, complex or even contradictory?

Simon Anholt [2, p.91-6] proposes an explanation to this question, assuming that branding is definitely seen as a process of reduction, simplification. Clarity, determined by a distinct or unique positioning, is often invoked as a product only opportunity to change the consumer's indifference of many competitive choices, to stand up in the "the chaos of the marketplace and the clutter of the media." [2, p.91].

But, as the authors arguments continue, regions or locations express exactly the opposite of the above explanation, and it is one of the main reasons why the practice of commercial branding does not apply directly to their management or promotion: common sense suggests and research tends to confirm that the richness and complexity are valuable attributes for the image of a location (be it country, city, state, region, etc.).

Even from the destination branding perspective, we can distinguish a similar view: "Destinations therefore need to identify their most potent appeals, seek the essence that makes them different and attractive to visitors, and consistently promote this essence through all marketing communications and behaviour. Over time this will help the destination gain a consistent reputation, based on these brand values." [1, p.10].

The entities involved in the process of branding should not ask themselves "What can we say or do to become famous?" But "What can we do to make the region noticed?" The relevance of a particular region to an audience, to its publics involves a limited number of concepts which, very often, are removed from the discourse of branding. The first concept, which accidentally is also one of the basic rules of a marketing action strategy, involves grounding a very clear analysis of the perceptions, needs, habits and aspirations of the target audience of the brand.

S. Anholt [2, p.94] performs a critic to governmental teams dealing with place branding, as they rarely managed to discover and value other plans than the internal one, ending in simply describing that location, repeating lists of achievements and attributes, carefully set out previously. This shows a serious marketing mistake by not providing any reason for purchase, failing to demonstrate any ways to understand the target audience of the brand, the lack of empathy or sympathy for the brand, not allowing any dialogue. Another error regarding place branding strategy is incapacity to offer any reward to target publics in opposition to their attention attached to the brand; again, this is a marketing mistake by assuming that the audience is as much interested in the brand as those who manage it.

From the place marketing's perspective, the location must find a balance between identity, image and reputation desired, the brand. If these items are found, the brand of a specific region may be the common denominator between the various elements (economy, infrastructure, education and culture) and participants (residents, entrepreneurs, governments) that sum up the region.

In fact, the promotion of the elements that a region has to offer is not only the

problem of the authorities. The effort for a positive reputation requires the development of an "organizational capacity" in the region. Forming strategic networks between public and private sectors, consulting residents and local groups and a unitary development vision can be beneficial to capture the interest of the region; in particular local businessmen, who have extensive experience in marketing, are valuable partners for authorities who want to create a successful brand. A final observation that represents a disadvantage of place marketing is that the process remains intangible. Because of this and the inherent blur it is useful to connect the marketing to the start of a concrete project in the public domain. Figurehead projects, such as the building of a prestigious monument or a public attraction, can make the abstractness of an "imagined area" more visible and support it. [5, p.274-5].

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