

Integrated Approach for Place Management

Swati Yadav

Teerthanker Mahaveer Institute of Management and Technology, Teerthanker Mahaveer University, Moradabad,
Uttar pradesh

ABSTRACT: *In the last decade, the number of cities claiming to make use of branding has grown considerably. Competition is one of the main drivers for cities to develop their position as a brand and promote tourists, investors, businesses and residents to that area. Unfortunately, location marketers also assume that the location brand is a communication instrument that is controllable and entirely manageable. However, by definition, a brand is a network of associations in the minds of customers and is thus focused on the preferences of the various target groups, making branding a multi-faceted topic. In addition, given the diverse perspectives and interests of the different target groups, the perception of a location (brand) can differ significantly. Therefore, the theory of place branding as well as practice should concentrate more on the perception of the location brand of its various target audiences and develop strategies for how locations can build advantageous place-brand architecture.*

KEYWORDS: *Place Branding, Place Brand Management, Place Marketing, Place Management, Urban Planning, Customer-orientated Marketing.*

INTRODUCTION

Competition between towns has increased for tourists, investors, businesses, new citizens and, most of all, skilled workers. As a result, marketers are interested in establishing the place as a brand and promoting that location to its various target groups. Unfortunately, location marketers often believe that the location brand is a communication instrument that is controllable and fully manageable [1]. However, by definition, a brand is a network of associations in the minds of consumers and is thus based on the perceptions of the various target groups, making branding a multi-faceted subject. In addition, given the different target groups' different perspectives and interests, the perception of a location (brand) can differ significantly [2]. Therefore, place branding should focus more on the perception of the location brand of its different target audiences and develop strategies for how locations can build advantageous place-brand architecture.

In this respect, the current academic debate shows considerable deficiencies because it focuses primarily on the exploratory description of a certain city brand without properly distinguishing between target groups and lacks a convincing theoretical basis [3]. The aim of this paper is therefore to translate a conceptual framework from the literature of brand architecture to the context of place brand management, taking into account the discrepancies between the perceptions of the place brand in the mental representation of the various target groups.

PLACE MARKETING AND BRANDING

Initially, under the influence of Kotler & Levy (1969), the extension of the idea of marketing in the late 1960s and early 1970s did not involve placement on the marketing academy agenda. O'Leary and Iredal were the first to identify place marketing as a challenging field for the future

in 1976, describing place marketing as activities "designed to establish desirable geographical location arrangements and actions [4].

Regional economists, geographers, and other social scientists were the first publications genuinely devoted to place marketing, with one of the first examples being an essay by Burgess challenging the advantages of place ads. Unfortunately, most of the publications were confined to advertising elements of locations in the 1980s and early 1990s. The scope of contributions expanded in the early 1990s, and many attempts were made to establish a strategic planning system for location marketing [5]. It is important to note that, in the broader sense of structural change in cities and regions, place marketing was addressed from the early 1990s onwards, arguing that marketing has become more important because of economic transformation and competition in the area. In addition, the attempts to reimagine towns gained significant support from location-related academics. Paddison (1993) noted that places have embraced "targeted forms of marketing that are essentially different from the previous (planning) practise in cities to directly support the process of image reconstruction."

Thanks to a series of books on Marketing Locations, position marketing has received another major push on the marketing academy agenda. These books were essential for location marketing identification, but the effect should not be overstated. Even now, on the fringe of the marketing academy, place marketing is a focus [6]. The essence of place marketing itself may be a potential reason for this merely moderate interest from marketing scholars. Place marketing, after all, deals with several diverging target groups, diverse and related goods, as well as multiple political settings in which marketing choices are made. For instance, other family members of the place marketing family have gained far more attention from marketing researchers, e.g. those with a single emphasis on tourism marketing.

At this point, we argue that translating contemporary branding insights and strategies to the sense of places is a great challenge for marketing researchers; and a successful translation is not literal, but in the spirit of the text. The first claim in favour of this declaration deals with the range of consumers in the region and their different needs and desires. The key and broadly identified target groups in place marketing and place branding from a theoretical point of view are: (1) visitors; (2) residents and workers; and (3) business and industry. However, the groups actually targeted are much more nuanced and complex in recent marketing practise. Tourists, for example, could be divided into business and leisure time visitors. Even more complex is the group of residents: a first distinction is the internal residents and the external potential new residents. Within these groups specific target audience segments could be found, like students, talents or the so-called creative class [7].

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As already mentioned, these target groups vary not only in their expectations of a location, but above all in their needs and criteria for their place. For example, leisure time visitors are looking for leisure time activities such as shopping malls or cultural offerings; investors are more

interested in business subjects, however. So as residents search for an attractive living environment, and businesses look for a suitable business environment, the same reasoning applies to visitors as well. It is inevitable that there are potential conflicts and synergies between the needs and wants of different target groups. Therefore, brand communication for the city's target groups should be developed with these factors in mind [8].

A second related statement states that places are products which are complex. The location of one cannot be seen separately from other useful sites, so the offering of a place is not a single location, but a package of places. Consequently, for example, the product for London visitors overlaps to some degree with the product for the inhabitants of the area. A place provides a large variety for everyone, similar to a shopping mall, as an illustrative metaphor, and each customer fills his or her shopping bag individually.

Finally, a translation of a marketing concept has to deal with the political and administrative environment in which these decisions are taken. Place branding is a subject of political decision-making and therefore has to do with municipal administrative organization(s) and policy-making procedures. This setting cannot be compared to regular business practice and thus sets the margins for place brand management. All these arguments indicate that some approaches to branding are more suitable than others [9].

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLACE BRAND CENTRE

A corporate brand is the visual, verbal and behavioral representation of the particular business concept of an organization, which takes place through the mission of the organization, core values, and communication of principles, culture and overall design. Adapting this concept of a corporate brand to the sense of place branding and the perception of the brand as a network of customer associations, we can describe a place brand as: a network of consumer associations focused on the visual, verbal and behavioral representation of a place expressed by goals, communication, values and general culture. Essential to this concept is that a brand is not in reality the conveyed language or place physics, but in the mind of the target group(s) the interpretation of those expressions. These perceptions contribute to brand effects such as recognition, satisfaction) or other effects such as information-seeking bias, dedication and intent to remain.

CONCLUSION

In our view, all the conditions for a successful translation of a marketing concept into the context of places are fulfilled by the Place Brand Centre approach. For location brand managers interacting with the varied target audience, the model would be beneficial and it is bound to enhance the precise contact of the target market. Sub-brand managers at Place may focus more on their target audience's unique requirements and identify their rivals more easily. In addition, the positive brand effects, such as brand recognition by the target consumer, are likely to increase with a target group-specific sub-brand, since the customer would associate more with a matching particular brand than with a generic one-fits-all location brand. In addition, we agree that public protests regarding location brand management and the exclusive emphasis on a single

target group may also be avoided with this approach as an example of the recent "not in our name" campaign for the city of Hamburg.

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