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PLACE BRANDING AND THE 'LIVERPOOL '08' BRAND CAMPAIGN IN 'CITY OF LIVERPOOL'

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1. Introduction

Place branding brings together a range of existing specialisms, in particular those of brand management and development policy, to create a new discipline with equal emphasis on visionary strategy and hands-on implementation.[1] Furthermore, Place branding ensures that the place gets due credit for its real strengths and positive behaviour, and that the place brand gains appropriate equity from the recognition, which that behaviour deserves.

1.1. Background

Arguably, the debate relating to place branding and its inception is extremely active and intriguing. Brands have been used as marks of identification at some time in almost all countries and civilisations. McNeill and McNeill (2003) believe that branding was developed as a result of "humans [being] drawn together in patterns of interaction and exchange, cooperation and competition since earliest times."[2] Destination and place branding is considered to be a relatively new field of study.[3] Blain et al (2005) believe that branding within the context of tourism destinations started to gain visibility in 1998 "with destination branding [as] the focal topic at that year's Travel and Tourism Research Association's Annual Conference."[4]

Places using events such as arts or sports led initiatives to regenerate and rebrand themselves has been well documented[5], and include for example, the Football World Cup, Olympic Games, European Capital of Culture and American Capital of Culture. Mooney believes that "*culture* has become central to urban regeneration programmes throughout Europe"[6], whilst Garcia states that "the principle of 'arts-led' regeneration was explored in US cities in the 1970s and consequently developed with a wider cultural remit, in European cities."[7]

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[1] Placebrands, 2006.
[2] McNeill and McNeill 2003:23.
[3] Hankinson 2001; Kavaratzis, 2004.
[4] Blain et al 2005:334.
[5] Rowe and McGuirk 1999; Garcia 2004.
[6] Mooney 2004:329.
[7] Garcia 2004:314.

However, whilst destination event branding has been well documented, Caldwell and Freire (2004) believe that there is a lack of empirical research in the field of place branding, and Anholt (2004) notes that there is little clarity or agreement about terminology or definitions in this discipline.

2. Place as 'Brands'

There are numerous definitions of brands in the literature[8] and the consensus of opinion suggests that a brand is associated with a consistent group of characteristics, images, or emotions that consumers recall or experience when they think of a specific symbol, product, service, organization or location. A Brand does not suddenly emerge, but evolves through a developmental process that has a number of distinct phases[9] from an unbranded commodity to a cultural brand icon. The process starts with brand recognition[10] and occurs when consumers generally know brand qualities. If a brand has accumulated widespread positive sentiment among consumers, marketeers say that its owner has acquired brand equity - the ability to retain current customers and attract new ones.[11] Consequently, over time, brands can create significant value for their holder.[12]

A place brand strategy should determine the most realistic, most competitive and most compelling strategic vision for the city, region, or country, and ensures that this vision is supported, reinforced and enriched by every act of investment and communication between that place and the rest of the world.[13] However, 'Place branding' is not the same as product or service branding, and whilst it is grounded in both corporate branding and general marketing theories, these have had to be adapted to suit the purpose.[14] This is largely because place brands are multi-dimensional constructs. They lack a single ownership but instead have a multiplicity of stakeholder groups and influencers. These include, for instance: local residents, local authorities, businesses and commercial entities, Chambers of Commerce, public bodies, the media – and so on. At the same time the place brand has multiple consumers: this largely comprises the groups above, but in addition, there are business tourists, leisure tourists, commuters, inward investors, and

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[8] Kotler and Keller 2006:274; Brassington and Pettitt 2006:301; de Chernatony 2006:13.
[9] de Chernatony 1993; Goodyear 1993.
[10] Keller 2003.
[11] NetMBA 2006.
[12] Kotler and Gertner 2002.
[13] Placebrands, 2006.
[14] Kavaratzis 2004.

event organisers[15] as well as the through traffic (that takes with it, a particular brand perception).

Without a single ownership to direct the brand, and with the disparate user groups who impose contrary demands, then there is no consistent message to underpin and unify a place brand. Nevertheless, according to Ward (1998), place branding, as a strategic marketing activity, has increased significantly over the last quarter century. Its application now extends beyond the traditional areas of inward investment and leisure tourism to include a wider role in attracting new residents, new employees and business tourists to a location. Place branding includes both short-term campaigns such as those associated with bids to host specific events – for example, Sidney's successful bid to host the Olympic Games – as well as longer-term repositioning strategies as exemplified in the recent nomination of Liverpool as the 'European Capital of Culture' for 2008.

Place branding not only applies to cities, regions and countries, but also applies lower down the spatial scale[16], to places such as shopping destinations and leisure parks. It thus covers a wide area of activities and locations and involves a wide range of stakeholders from both the public and private sectors. As a consequence, the study of place branding also extends across a wide area of academic interest.[17]

2.1. Difficulties in place branding campaigns

There have been uncertainties and complexities observed in carrying out place branding programmes due to the limited public sector budgets, influencing raising awareness or creating differentiation through propagation of logos, symbols and strap-lines.[18] Cities with larger budgets have however, succeeded in developing positive brand images linked, for example, to attributes such as heritage and history, the character of the local people, associations with famous people, 'capital' city status and international city status. In particular, the development of positive brand images such as these has led to the successful transformation of several post-industrial cities, such as New York and Glasgow, into vibrant leisure and business tourism destinations.[19]

2.2. Liverpool's approach to re-branding

Liverpool'08 is a longitudinal brand campaign carried out over a five-year period, in order to regenerate and re-brand the 'City of Liverpool'

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[15] Aaker 1996.
[16] Ashworth and Voogt 1994.
[17] Hankinson 2001.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ward 1998.

and create a lively and vibrant city for the future, long after 2008, its designated year of 'European Capital of Culture'.[20] According to the North-West Development Agency[21] and the North England Inward Investment Agency[22], Liverpool is a fast developing city. They suggest that Liverpool is one of Britain's most vibrant, energetic and innovative cities and has been enjoying a remarkable economic renaissance in recent years as one of the nation's fastest growing sub-regional economies. Moreover, policy makers have recognized the benefits of place branding that can attract inward investments for the destination economical progress in terms not only of job creation, but also capital, technology, production and management techniques.[23]

However, the link between place and its impact on the local and regional economy has received little attention. Indeed, as noted by Jevons "the bottom line question that is often unasked is whether our understanding of what brands are, and what branding does, is much clearer as a result of all the research that has been published."[24] In the case of place brands, and particularly from other cities who have gained 'European Capital of Culture' status, there is a dearth of research and very little evidence that the place brand drives inward investment or promotes the local (or regional) economy.[25]

3. Analysing Place Brands

A wide range of analytical methods have been applied to place branding, for example, the use of case studies[26], convergent interviewing techniques[27], focus groups[28], open-ended questions and Likert scale questionnaires[29] as well as the Brands Box method of de Chernatony and McWilliam (1989).[30] However, the real issue is what is actually being measured and how this reflects that holistic nature and complexity of a place brand.

The authors propose to survey the various place brand creators and influencers, together with the different brand user groups which will be set against both current and historic indicators of economic performance. Focus groups and interviews with the various stakeholders will provide information relating to perceptions of the Liverpool Brand

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[20] Liverpool08 2006.
[21] NWDA 2006.
[22] North England 2006.
[23] Audrey et. al 2003.
[24] Jevons 2005:35.
[25] The Mersey Economic Review 2006.
[26] Prideaux and Cooper 2002.
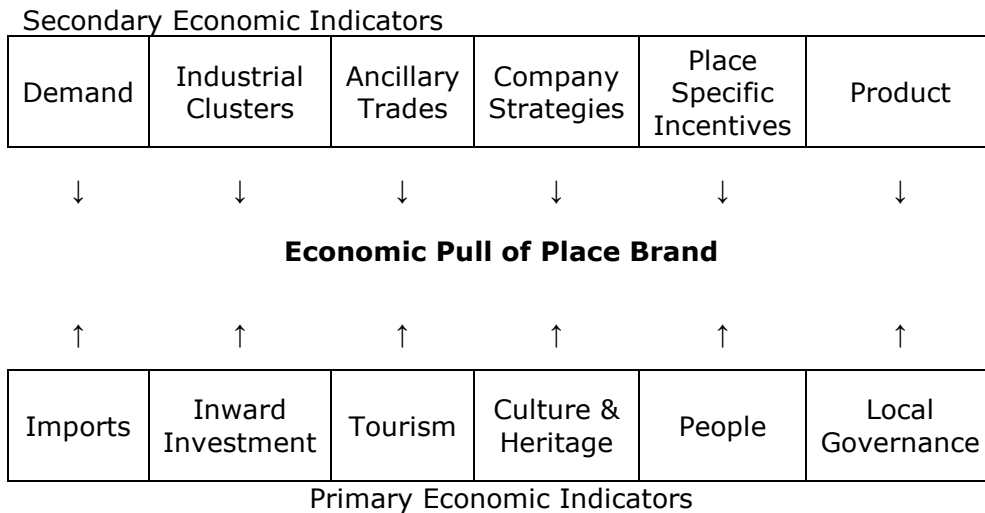[27] Hanlan and Kelly 2005.
[28] Curtis 2000.
[29] O'Leary and Deegan 2002.
[30] See for instance Clarke 2000; Hankinson 2001, 2004; Caldwell and Freire 2004.

and how this might influence and impact on the economy over time. Questions will focus on company strategy, production factors, ancillary trades and industrial clusters, place-specific incentives as well as local and regional product/service demand. Other components such as those proposed by Anholt (2005) and modified by de Chernatony (2006), for instance, tourism, culture & heritage, people, exports and immigration and governance may also be influencing factors and will be accounted for within this research.

The research will be categorized into primary and secondary influencing economic indicators as shown in figure 1 below:

Secondary Economic Indicators

Demand	Industrial Clusters	Ancillary Trades	Company Strategies	Place Specific Incentives	Product

| ↓ | ↓ | ↓ | ↓ | ↓ | ↓ |

Economic Pull of Place Brand

| ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ |

Imports	Inward Investment	Tourism	Culture & Heritage	People	Local Governance

Primary Economic Indicators

4. Anticipated Outcomes

This research will fill a gap in our current understanding of the influence of place branding on the economic performance of that city and its region. It will attempt to identify those particular elements within the cocktail of factors that are critical for enhancing the strength of the place. This might would be useful to the brand developers for creating strong and reliable brands which would have a long-term future.

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