
Guest editorial

Introduction to the special issue

Beyond country and brand “Origin”: product/brand place associations and the role of place image in behaviour and strategy

The objective of this Special Issue (SI) was to “go beyond” country and/or brand “origin”. As we noted in the Call for Papers, the traditional “Country of origin” (COO) construct is old, tired, much debated and much maligned, while both it and its more recent cousin, “brand origin”, along with the growing interest in “place” studies in tourism and other cogent fields, show that geography may be even more relevant today than ever before – globalisation notwithstanding. In terms of going beyond “Country” origin, country is but one of several possible geographic loci, and in terms of going beyond “Brand” origin, brands can be administered from one place, owned by a parent company headquartered in a different place, designed in another, assembled in still another, from components designed and sourced in numerous locales, promoted by a spokesperson associated with a particular place, sold by retailers located in one or several places and purchased by consumers living in many places, some of whom may have multiple ethnic origins or nationalities – and named in relation to an origin different from their own (e.g. the Japanese-origin Subaru “Outback” or California’s “Gabbiano Chianti Classico” wines). In a nutshell, what matters today is *the place with which a product or a brand is associated* by its marketer and in the eyes of its buyers.

The authors who submitted manuscripts and the reviewers who helped to select papers for inclusion understood the need to “go beyond” well and made it possible to meet the SI’s objective in spades. The magnitude of the task of developing this issue, and the exhilarating feeling we as Guest Editors had as we saw the process unfold in the right direction, are best reflected in the numbers involved: In total, 131 authors and reviewers, located at 95 institutions in 32 countries and six continents, engaged with us to bring about the collection of papers that have been included. Accounting for the original manuscripts and R&Rs this amounted to 115 papers and 116 reviews, and since each of the three of us as Guest Editors assessed each paper and each review carefully, on our part these figures meant evaluating 345 paper and 348 review iterations, or a total of 693 document assessments. Among other things, this helps to better understand the work of Editors-in-Chief who have to deal with hundreds of submissions each year; we are grateful to *JPBM*’s co-editors, Dr Cleopatra Veloutsou (who had primary responsibility for this SI) and Dr Francisco Guzmán, for “being always there” for us throughout.

The papers comprising this SI clearly get away from the narrow conceptualizations of “COO” and related terms and consider, instead, the bigger picture of product and brand place associations (PBPA) and the role that place image plays

in consumer behaviour and brand strategy. The issue begins and ends with two papers that deal with broad overviews of the field. The first, by the Guest Editors and Attila Yaprak, presents a holistic view of the PBPA area focussed on an inventory of 32 place-related consumer dispositions toward domestic and foreign goods. The last, by Andéhn and L’Espoir DeCosta, closes the issue with a detailed overview of problems that characterise the COO research stream. The ten papers in-between focus on a variety of specific place-related subjects that take us “beyond” traditional foci in place research.

In the first of these papers, the second of the SI, Bauer, Johnson and Singh examine the role of consistency between place and the place-related brand stereotyping, while the third, by Kucharska, Flisikowski, and Confente reverses the usual place-to-brand direction of association by looking at the effects of global brands on their countries of origin. The next three papers move from the global to the subnational level: Sloan, Aiken and Mikkelsen look at the congruency between brands and regions within the USA, Donner and Fort study place-brand building from the stakeholder perspective in France, and Martin and Capelli elaborate on terminal versus instrumental values in the context of place brand communities, also in France. Next, three papers study “places” in contexts where traditional research does not go often: Aruan, Crouch and Quester take us to the realm of services, Meshreki, Ennew and Murad to industrial buyers, and Schade, Piehler, Müller and Burmann to the role of city-level place images in attracting skilled workers. Last but not least, in the subject-specific studies, two papers deal with an issue of current and growing importance, namely, cross-border mergers and acquisitions, and their effects on place associations: Matarazzo, Lanzilli and Resciniti focus on country image and corporate reputation in cross-border acquisitions, and Johansson, Koch, Varga and Zhao on change-of-ownership effects on the image of premium brands.

Taken individually and together, the papers deal with a wide scope of issues, were written by scholars representing a variety of cultural and academic perspectives, and use a broad range of methodological approaches, from conceptual to empirical and from structural equation modelling and econometrics to qualitative netnography. We cannot thank our authors and reviewers enough and we owe them a debt of gratitude. We trust that their combined efforts will help to spawn new place-related research that, along the lines of the papers in this issue, goes “beyond” the ordinary.

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 George Chrysochoidis, University of Kent, UK.
 Christina Chung, Ramapo College of New Jersey, USA.
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 Simona D'Antone, Kedge Business School, France.
 Valentina Della Corte, Università degli Studi di Napoli, Italy.
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 Elena Fernandez Blanco, Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, Spain.
 Gary Gregory, University of New South Wales, Australia.
 John Hadjimarcou, University of Texas at El Paso, USA.
 Leila Hamzaoui, University of Ottawa, Canada.
 Marc Herz, University of Vienna, Austria.
 Jonas Holmqvist, Kedge Business School, France.
 Andrea Insch, University of Otago, New Zealand.
 Pramod Iyer, University of North Texas, USA.
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Flora Kokkinaki, Athens University of Economics and Business, Greece.
 Pascal Kottemann, Universität Bielefeld, Germany.
 Patrick L'Espoir DeCosta, Australian National University, Australia.
 Timo Mandler, University of Hamburg, Germany.
 John Nadeau, Nipissing University, Canada.
 Erik Nes, BI Norwegian Business School, Norway.
 Ravi Pappu, University of Queensland, Australia.
 Pascale Quester, University of Adelaide, Australia.
 Petra Riefler, University of Vienna, Austria.
 Saeed Samiee, University of Tulsa, USA.
 Olivier Sibai, Birkbeck University of London, UK.
 Nitish Singh, Saint Louis University, USA.
 Ana Sousa, Universidade do Minho, Portugal.
 Nathalie Spielmann, NEOMA Business School, France.
 Davvetas Vasileios, University of Vienna, Austria.
 Peeter Verlegh, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Holland.
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