Guest editorial

Place brand management: strategic marketing of cities, regions and nations 4th International Colloquium on place brand management

The *3rd International Colloquium on Place Management, Marketing and Nation Branding* drew attention to the global interest in research into the underlying dimensions of nation or place brand and image (Melewar and Dennis, 2014 Early Cite). Papers presented at the *4th International Colloquium on Place Brand Management* held on 5th and 6th September 2013 at Università della Valle d'Aosta (University of Aosta Valley, Aosta (Italy)), move forward research in this area. The papers in this special issue have been developed from the best contributions to that colloquium.

Effective place branding usually requires co-operation and commitment from multiple stakeholders (Currie *et al.*, 2009; Dinnie, 2016; Della Corte and Aria, 2014; Teller and Elms, 2012). The first three papers share a common theme of the role of stakeholder networks and engage in the branding and strategic marketing of places. These papers explore how individual brands of network members, including hotels, restaurants and visitor attractions, relate to the overall brand of the (contractual or non-contractual) network. The first paper by Selena Aureli and Fabio Forlani demonstrates the importance of the mission and core values of the alliance in creating a brand identity. There is a strong connection between the network brand and the place, confirming that tourism businesses are intertwined on a local context and cannot avoid citing the place where they operate. The finding that brand management within the examined networks lacks effectiveness suggests that network place branding could be more effective if network brand managers had more decision-making power.

In the second paper, Chiara Rinaldi and Alessio Cavicchi aim to understand the motivations driving cooperative behaviour between heterogeneous stakeholders in place branding activities, focusing on contract-based and relation-based cooperation constructs. The longitudinal case study illustrates how a network evolved over four years from an attempt to build a regional umbrella brand to a network contract between 13 enterprises. The findings suggest that personal relationships, trust and esteem between members and network promoters are essential for fostering cooperation, and also that contract-based governance complements relation-based governance, enhancing the performance of the alliance. The findings are consistent with those of the first paper in emphasising the essential role of stakeholders in building a place brand upon common shared values and vision of the network.

The third paper by Ilenia Bregoli, Martin Hingley, Giacomo Del Chiappa and Valeria Sodano aims to analyse how wine and tourism operators understand the concept of a wine route to determine the impact that definition can have on the extent to which stakeholders working within distinct but related sectors (namely wine production, tourism, food and hospitality) collaborate with each other and share knowledge. The paper adopts the theoretical lens of "boundary objects" (tangible or intangible entities that allow the sharing of meaning to different groups and facilitate collaboration) to wine routes in Italy. The results highlight the similarities and differences between the wine and tourism (and associated service) industries. Wine routes can be considered as boundary objects that, if clearly defined by local stakeholders, can facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration. Although the first two papers illustrate the effectiveness of

stakeholder networks based on consistent core values, this paper draws attention to problems in collaboration that can result from an initial mis-definition by stakeholders of the aims of a network. Managers of wine routes may be well-advised to involve all stakeholders in discussions to achieve a common understanding on what a wine route is and its role in the promotion of "place" (geographical context of the wine route). Only if this is done successfully, it is possible to achieve effective stakeholder collaboration.

Wine routes are an example of informally networking, individually small enterprises to link to a place brand. On a larger scale, as was demonstrated by the London 2012 Olympics, a mega event can have a huge positive effect on country image and visitor numbers (Dinnie, 2016; Melewar and Dennis, 2013). The fourth paper considers the links of a place brand to a mega event, EXPO2015. Laura Gavinelli, Maria Cristina Morra and Angelo Di Gregorio continue the focus on shared vision, people and partnerships to examine if and how such an event can be an opportunity for a territory to be developed as a marketing product. They find that a mega event can enhance development and repositioning. The findings should help public and private organisers of mega events, especially in the pre-mega event phase.

The final two papers seek to advance place branding theory. Linda Deigh, Jillian Farquhar, Maria Palazzo and Alfonso Siano explore the role of corporate social responsibility (CSR) theory in place branding by exploring how firms engage with community. In line with the theme of the earlier papers, the study finds that CSR projects are often implemented through networks with other stakeholders, such as NGOs, charities and community organisations. Notwithstanding that the community is frequently recognised as a stakeholder of the firm, there is but little prior research on the role of the community in networks. Drawing for the foundation of the study on community theory and Carroll's pyramid, the authors undertake an empirical investigation to advance knowledge in CSR engagement with a particular stakeholder group. The study adopts a multiple case study approach taking, as the context, retail banks in a developing country, Ghana. The study finds that community engagement consists of four spheres of activity: donations, employee voluntarism, projects and partnerships. Philanthropy forms part of largely *ad hoc* CSR actions by firms, which could deliver greater benefits if they were strategically planned. The study also finds that philanthropy is not merely a desired function of the CSR pyramid but an essential one.

Finally, Pantea Foroudi, Suraksha Gupta, Philip Kitchen, Mohammad Mahdi Foroudi and Bang Nguyen pull together diverse threads to develop a framework linking the concepts of place branding, place image and place reputation. The authors find that the key indicators of identifying a place brand come under two headings, namely, national culture and infrastructure. National culture concerns attributes such as social changes, geography, environment, people, culture (history, language, etc.), country name, brand and attributes. On the other hand, infrastructure encompasses security, economic condition, technological advancement, tourism development goals, place marketing and promotional strategy. In addition, there are five main moderators of the outcomes of place branding: political perception, social media and news, place awareness, place association and tourism experience. The context is interesting because it comprises a country on the cusp of emerging as an accepted destination for European tourists, namely, Iran.

In conclusion, this special issue makes a consistent, coherent contribution to research into antecedents of the underlying dimensions of nation or place brand image, responding to our earlier call for further research (Melewar and Dennis, 2014 Early Cite) with empirical studies across a wide range of contexts. Finally, the guest editors thank all of the authors who submitted papers to the colloquium and this special issue, regardless of whether their papers were accepted. We also thank the reviewers for the detailed, constructive comments that have contributed to the development of this special issue.

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