

Chapter 10

Urban Design and the Entrepreneurial City: Place Branding Theory and Methods

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ABSTRACT

This chapter reviews and synthesizes literature from the many disciplines that have contributed to the creation of knowledge in the domain of place branding, moving away from the conventional literature on place marketing and looking at the fields of environmental psychology, architecture and urban planning. The chapter is structured in two main parts. Part One situates branding in theories of place identity, city image, and city design. Part Two reviews three different approaches to place branding methodology that are all centered on the study of image, reputation or perception. The chapter argues that studies of place branding to date have not given the ‘place’ component the attention it deserves and the question of how place branding influences urban form has not been sufficiently addressed. Only by bringing urban design analytical methods to bear on the question of how branding manifests itself in social and physical environments will a better ‘fit’ be achieved in the city, between the images projected and the reality on the ground.

INTRODUCTION

Owing to the global transformation processes of the contemporary capitalist and experience economy, cities are engaged in a myriad of activities to attract attention, capital, upper-class residents and tourists. Place branding is one of these activities, such that cities worldwide are increasingly involved in constructing images and representations of their locations in order to keep up with (or stay ahead of) new trends in culture, experience and design (Florida, 2002; Jensen, 2007). They are branding their businesses, culture, society and heritage to gain prominence on the global map, a practice that has grown exponentially in the last decade (Haider, 2008; Dinnie, 2008; Bani Hashim, Irazábal & Byrum, 2010).

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The rising popularity of place branding as a strategy to enhance cities' competitiveness has in turn increasingly involved planners and designers, whether intentionally or not. Because of this, it behooves planners and designers to understand how place branding manifests itself in physical and social environments. If we are to work within the context and processes of place branding, how can we best steer it to guide the city's development in a sustainable manner and therefore create a sustainable place brand? How can we best achieve 'fit' in the city, between the images projected and the reality on the ground? Questions like these compel the urgency to understand the present role of place branding and place-making.

The aim of this chapter is to advance a scholarly perspective on place branding, seeking specifically to understand how place branding is situated in theory and what methods have been used to analyze it. These questions form the premise and the structure of this chapter.

Part One undertakes a thorough review of the literature from the many disciplines that have contributed to the creation of knowledge in the domain of place branding, attempting to move beyond the conventional literature on branding (within marketing and brand management), and specifically privileging the themes and perspectives concerned with the role of and influence on city design, image and identity.

Following the above, this chapter suggests that studies of place branding to date have not given the 'place' component the attention it deserves. Questions such as "How can one examine the ways in which place branding shapes urban form?" or "How does place branding influence 'sense of place'?" have not been sufficiently addressed. The necessity to anchor studies of 'place' within investigations in place branding cannot be over-emphasized, because in order to engage in a discussion of branding places, one ought to understand 'place'. Therefore, Part Two aims to make a humble contribution to the literature by bringing urban design analytical methods to bear on the questions of how branding manifests itself in physical and social environments.

THE RISE OF [PLACE] BRANDING

Place branding has been defined in several ways. It is frequently described in comparison with the branding of products or companies. Wally Olins explains that place-branding is "the process of applying the branding process – as applied to commercial products – to geographical locations and is a burgeoning activity within advertising and marketing" (Olins, 1999). Similarly, Simon Anholt (2007) claims that the reputations of places function like the brand images of companies and that they are equally critical to the progress and prosperity of those places.¹ The scope of branding has thus increased incrementally from its original application to simple products through to services, companies and organizations, and now places. Other authors discuss place branding in relation to image; that is, place branding is seen as the "management of place image" (Moilanen & Rantisi, 2009) or "the marketing of activities...with the intent purpose of creating an *image* that influences consumers' decisions to visit the destination in question..." (Blain et al., 2005, as quoted in Govers & Go, 2009; emphasis in original). Another group of scholars refer to place branding with regards to 'brand value' or 'brand equity'. For example, Govers and Go (2009) write that place branding "refers to branding and building brand equity in relation to national, regional and/or local (or city) identity" (Govers & Go, 2009). Furthermore, in her book *No Logo*, Naomi Klein (2000) details the important role of branding in the corporate world since the 1990s, where "marketing adds 'brand value' to companies. Brand value is the symbolic 'trust' of a company, the result of its symbolic associations with lifestyles, feelings, events, and environments, produced by marketing"

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