Branding the City through Culture and Entertainment

Kavaratzis Mihalis
Urban and Regional Studies Institute
University of Groningen, *m.kavaratzis@rug.nl*
Phone: +31-50-3636602 Fax: +31-50-3633901

Keywords: City Marketing, City Branding, Culture/Entertainment Branding

Abstract

Place marketing has been established as a philosophy of place management and a function complementary to planning. Within the context of place marketing and in pursuit of wider place management goals, places throughout the world are shifting the focus towards place branding and are increasingly importing the concept and techniques of product and corporate branding. This is a trend that has been accelerated in recent years, especially within the new conditions created by the increasing role of image-based strategies and the growing importance of the cultural, leisure and entertainment industries within the contemporary economy, as much for tourists and other visitors, as for the local population.

Both evidence from the practice, interest in the press and theoretical contributions on the topic suggest that Culture and Entertainment have a major role to play in local economic development. This is exemplified, for instance, in the intense competition between cities to become the cultural capital of Europe, which demands an increased investment. Also the transformation of derelict industrial areas into culture and entertainment districts has been seen all over Europe as a major "method" of regeneration and the means to revitalize local economy. Culture and Entertainment, therefore, have a major role to play in place and city branding as well. A role, that is apparent in the highlight in city promotional material of these new cultural districts, the promise of "exciting" entertainment opportunities, the emphasis on cultural events and festivals and cultural "flagship" projects. Especially the organization of small or bigger scale art, sport and other types of events and festivals are seen as instrumental in establishing and reinforcing the place's brand. So far, the literature of place and city branding has dealt mostly with the appropriateness and possibility to transfer knowledge from the original field of marketing products to the peculiar operational environment of places and there is a clear focus on branding the place as a tourism destination.

This paper first identifies distinct trends in the discussion, understanding and implementation of city branding, in order to assist in clarifying the concepts involved. The paper goes on to provide a description of the conceptual development of the trend of Cultural/entertainment branding, highlighting the important factors that lead cities to adopt such strategies. Finally it discusses elements that are necessary for cities to successfully undertake this kind of city branding by stressing the importance of cultural production, entertainment and the sign value of a city's attributes.

Introduction

Cities, regions and countries all over the world are faced with the effects that economic and cultural globalization and other major trends pose to the environment that these places operate in, and are challenged by changes in their economic, cultural and social mosaic. One of these effects is increased competition among places, which is apparent in various levels and fields of activity. Fierce competition for resources, for business relocation, for foreign investment, for visitors, even residents is evident in today's world (Kotler et al 1999). As people, capital and companies have become more footloose, it is vital for places, in all scales, to provide in all these areas an environment capable not only to attract new activity and place-users but also, and perhaps more importantly, to keep existing ones satisfied with their place. In the effort to respond to the demands of competition and attract the desired target groups, place administrators have recognised in marketing theory and practice a valuable ally. Places are following ideas and employing practices developed by marketing, transferring knowledge to their own, peculiar environment and translating concepts according to their needs and characteristics (Rainisto 2003; Barke 1999).

The application of marketing techniques to places stems from two distinct trends. The first is theoretical and has to do with the development of new marketing approaches, specifically concerned with non-business or non-profit organisations (Barke 1999). Ashworth and Voogd (1990) attribute the theoretical emergence of place marketing

to the development of Marketing in Non-Profit Organisations, of Social Marketing and of Image Marketing, all of which contributed to the liberation of traditional marketing thought from goals and practices attached to this initial field of application. Especially the notion of Image Marketing, which stems from the realization that images can be effectively marketed while the products to which they relate remain vaguely delineated (Ashworth and Voogd 1994), was warm-heartedly accepted by city administrators.
The second trend stems from the practice of city administrators, who found themselves in onset of an 'urban crisis', which was widely perceived as leading to the potential terminal decline of traditional urban economies, with a consequent imperative for economic restructuring and which "stimulated the search for new roles for cities and new ways of managing their problems" (Barke 1999:486). As Hannigan (2003) describes, "in the late 1980s and early 1990s, a fiscal crisis in cities across Europe and North America caused by the triple problems of de-industrialisation, a falling tax base and declining public expenditure had some serious implications for cities. Not only were factories closing and jobs disappearing but the mass industrial culture that had prevailed since the end of the Second World War was steadily weakening. During this same era, we witnessed the re-emergence of political structures and ideologies based around the notions of privatisation and de-regulation; and the rise of a new urban lifestyle in which visual images and myths were relentlessly packaged and presented (Goodwin 1993:147-8). In combination, these forces provoked the emergence of a new 'entrepreneurial' (Harvey 1989) style of local economic development in which image promotion was privileged as being central by planners and politicians" (Hannigan 2003:353). Entrepreneurialism captures the sense in which cities are being run in a more businesslike manner, and the practices that have seen local government imbued with characteristics once distinctive to businesses – risk-taking, inventiveness, promotion and profit motivation (Hubbard and Hall 1998). A natural consequence of these trends was a more focused, integrated and strategic oriented implementation of place marketing.

Trends of Place Branding

Recently there is an apparent shift towards branding, which has been recognized widely in the literature (Hauben et al 2002; Rainisto 2003; Trueman et al 2004) and is evident in the practice of place marketing (for a detailed description of this shift see Kavaratzis 2004). The popularity and success of product branding and mostly the advent of corporate branding and other corporate-level marketing concepts, which in reality frees the application of marketing from the dependence on the physical product, are the main generators of interest on place branding.

In the literature, distinct trends of discussion have emerged. The subject of place branding is indeed a complex subject and those trends represent the various aspects that bring about this complexity.

Place of Origin Branding (e.g. Kotler and Gertner 2002; Papadopoulos and Heslop 2002): this trend has developed within the marketing discipline and has grown to a large body of publications. It concerns the usage of the place of origin in branding a product. Using the qualities, images and, in most cases, stereotypes of the place and the people living in that place to brand a product that is produced in that place is considered an effective strategy. In essence though, it has little to do with the concept of place branding. Interesting as it may be (and useful for product marketing), this practice does not constitute a place branding strategy, in the sense that it can not be considered a place management strategy.

Nations Branding (e.g. Anholt 2002b; Ham 2001; Gilmore 2001): this trend has also developed within the marketing discipline and especially within the circles of marketing consultants, who act as advisors to national governments, that have realized the potential advantages of branding their country but do not have the knowledge and skills necessary to design and implement branding campaigns and strategies. The interest lies usually in the positive effects of branding the nation for the benefit of tourism development and the attraction of foreign investment. The topic has grown considerably, so that some commentators propose that the whole foreign affairs policy of the country should be thought of as a branding exercise. A growing number of researchers are examining the potential and suitability of branding nations (e.g. O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy 2000) or specific methods and cases (e.g. Endzina and Luneva 2004; Gilmore 2001).

Destination Branding (e.g. Morgan et al 2002; Brent-Ritchie and Ritchie 1998): perhaps the most developed in theory and most used in practice trend within place branding has been the investigation of the role of branding in the marketing of tourism destinations. Starting, arguably, from the realization that destinations are visited because of their prior images, and they are consumed based on a first-hand comparison of those images with the reality faced in the destination itself, this trend has offered a lot in the theory of place branding. The largest part, at least of the theoretical development in this field comes from Hankinson (2001 and 2004). Starting from his belief that "as yet no general theoretical framework exists to underpin the development of place brands apart from classical, product-based branding theory (Hankinson 2004:110), he provides a refined framework for

understanding cities as brands even if focusing on cities as tourism destinations. Brent Ritchie and Ritchie (1998) recognise that a destination brand has the potential to play a coordinating role "for a broad range of community development efforts" (p. 19), and stress the need for other agencies to align with branding the destination brand, in this way realising that destination branding is only part of the whole branding effort of any place.

Culture/Entertainment Branding (e.g. Evans 2003; Greenberg 2003; Hannigan 2004): another interesting and steadily growing trend has been the examination of the effects of cultural and entertainment branding on the physical, economic and (sometimes) social environment of cities. Widely applied in cities all over the world, this cultural branding owes its development to the growing importance of the cultural, leisure and entertainment industries within the contemporary economy, as much for tourists and other visitors, as for the local population. At the same time, attempts to incorporate this trend in planning the city (Evans 2001) and the increased importance of image-based industries and the people these employ (Florida 2002) is reinforcing the processes involved in this kind of place branding. Connected with this trend, one can identify a more recent discussion, especially among urban designers, on the effects of high-profile buildings on the city's image the use of such buildings and other 'landmarks' in general in the city's promotion. Especially after the events of September 11, 2001 in New York City, the discussion has accumulated and has started to examine possible negative effects as well. In the later part of this paper this trend is discussed in more detail.

Place/City Branding: a final trend in the literature can be found in a number of articles that try to discuss the possibilities of using branding as an approach to integrate, guide and focus place management. Borrowing from the techniques and ideas developed within general branding, and especially the advent of the increasingly popular concept of corporate branding, these articles discuss the appropriateness of central branding concepts for place branding (Kavaratzis and Ashworth forthcoming) and attempt to either provide a general framework for developing and managing place brands (Hankinson 2001; Hankinson 2004; Kavaratzis 2004;) or examine the suitability of specific branding tools for city branding (Trueman et al 2004).This last trend is characterized by the attempt to implement the concept of corporate branding and specific methodologies developed in this field in place branding (Kavaratzis 2004; Rainisto 2003; Trueman et al 2004).

Place branding methods are also evident in the practice of place management. According to Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2005), there are at least three different sorts of place branding which are often confused in the literature but which are really quite different operations conducted by different types of producers for widely different objectives. The first is geographical nomenclature, the second product-place co-branding and the third branding as place management. Geographical nomenclature is merely where a physical product is named for a geographical location, without a conscious attempt to link any supposed attributes of the place to the product, which gains nothing from the association. Co-branding of product and place, attempts to market a physical product by associating it with a place that is assumed to have attributes beneficial to the image of the product. Place branding can also be treated as a form of place management. At its simplest level much place management depends heavily upon changing the way places are perceived by specified user groups. For instance, "…urban renewal includes the creation of an identity with its own experiential value, which is profoundly original and uncopiable. This touches upon such points as structure, programming, functions, the sort of actions and activities that characterize the image of the city, events and in the last resort the chemistry of the people who operate there" (Florian 2002: 24). It involves the creation of a recognisable place identity and the subsequent use of that identity to further other desirable processes, whether financial investment, changes in user behaviour or generating political capital. It is clear that this is more than the creation and promotion of place images as part of place management, forwarding a wider approach and better understanding of the application of branding in places.

Branding the City through Culture and Entertainment

Culture/entertainment branding is a result of a merge between three distinct trends. On the one side is the aspect of place management. Due to the significant success and effectiveness of product branding in the commercial sector and especially due to the advent and increasing application of corporate branding (which is conceptually similar to city branding), branding is adopted increasingly in cities. Particularly destination branding is a common endeavour all over the world with theoretical and practical suggestions that have been accumulated into a significant body of knowledge. Crucial for city branding are two elements that connect it to culture. The first is the importance of the image of the city for city branding and its power to influence even the shaping of the city itself. The second is the heavy dependence of the city's brand on the city's identity. On the other side is the influence of tourism; particularly its broad effects on economic development. The trend of cultural tourism is

steadily growing. In most cases cultural destinations are urban destinations or at least most cities have possibilities and opportunities to emphasise their cultural offering in order to promote themselves. Also of high value are the trends of tourism connected to leisure and entertainment and the visitors connected to business or conventions; for both of these sectors urban centres demonstrate strong advantages. A further aspect is touched upon in Lloyd and Clark (2001), who support the idea that in our times, there are sections of the city's population who act as tourists in their own city and make explicit demands for leisure. The third trend is explained thoroughly in Kunzmann (2004), and stresses the strong relationship of culture to planning and to the city itself. Culture has a very important role to play because it sharpens the city's image and is indeed extensively used in place promotion. Culture in the form of urban history, architecture, cultural facilities and events is the main ingredient of city promotion campaigns (Kunzmann, 2004). Culture also strengthens the city's identity or as Kunzmann (2004) puts it, "…in times of globalisation local identity has become a key concern and the arts are, apart from landscape features, the only local asset to display such difference… the cultural content remains the last bastion of local identity" (2004:387).

The three trends mentioned above merge together in the notion of using culture and entertainment in the branding effort of cities. Indeed as Zukin (2004) discusses, many city authorities and urban development agencies all over the world are increasingly using culture-related activities for redevelopment or revitalisaiton. This strategy has been used to promote the civic identities of cities, to market cities internationally and, in particular, to boost the economic fortunes of cities experiencing industrial decline. Zukin goes on to asses that culture will play an increasingly important role in the future of cities, as demonstrated by current trends and particularly "culture-based redevelopments of urban space and global branding of cities" (2004:7). As Richards and Wilson (forthcoming) suggest, culture has become a basic resource from which the themes and narratives essential to "placemaking" can be derived often seen as tying the physical assets and the living culture together. Many declining cities for example, have had to create new narratives of regeneration based on urban culture and heritage, as well as making a transition towards an economy of signs and symbols.

More particularly the creation of such narratives (or the creation of associations with the city's brand) has been extensively used in marketing cities as tourism destinations. Richards and Wilson (forthcoming) categorise the strategies adopted by cities and regions in developing distinction in tourism under a few major headings: Iconic Structures - creating architectural icons to attract visitors, Megaevents - staging large events such as the Olympic games, Capital of Culture etc, Thematisation - creating a theme as the basis for narrative, Heritage Mining - using the resources of the past to develop tourism. The widely recognised success story of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, which has positioned the city strongly on the European cultural map or the regeneration of Barcelona after the 1992 Olympic Games held in the city demonstrate the positive effects that cities expect and hope for when implementing such strategies based on cultural branding. In the above list one should add the transformation of derelict industrial districts into cultural/entertainment districts (by now evident in all former industrial cities) and the organisation and staging of literally all types of cultural events and festivals (from the Edinburgh Festival to one-day events).

The above strategies and activities do not serve solely the goal of attracting a certain number of visitors for the time of the event or to the site of the facility. The main aim behind them is to create in the minds of actual and potential visitors and the public in general, associations with the wealth of their cultural heritage and the variety of their entertainment/leisure offering. In other words to create a brand of the city based on culture and entertainment. The power of branding lies in the fact that it can indeed create powerful such associations, attributing to almost everything that takes place in the city a symbolic value, next to its functional value. Branding captures the energy of the symbolic economy – especially the media, fashion and financial industries – that has grown so rapidly in our times. As Zukin (2002) suggest, branding is a cultural strategy of an entrepreneurial city. Like most cultural strategies, branding tries to re-imagine a collective identity that has been fractured by the structural changes of the late twentieth century. Or as Lloyd and Clark (2001) describe in their notion of the city as an Entertainment Machine, "…it is characterised by more than the quantitative increase in restaurants, shops and other cultural offerings. Increasingly elements of the city whose functions were considered instrumental (use value) are being valorised through aesthetic concerns (sign value) (2001:371).

Attempting to bring the issue of city branding through the use of culture on a more practical level, it is useful to asses the significant elements of such branding. Branding is a notion developed and used in marketing, so its main and vital element is customer or user orientation. It is also vital, then, to understand what the city users appreciate in a city and particularly in a city that is branded as a center of culture and entertainment. Arguably treating the city as a brand that provokes an association with culture/entertainment means that we are choosing as targets a group of people that value highly this kind of associations. Florida (2002) discusses one type of such people, what he terms creative people and what they value in a city. He suggests that the physical attractions that most cities focus on building – sport stadiums, freeways, urban malls and tourism-and-entertainment districts that resemble theme parks – are irrelevant, insufficient or actually unattractive to many creative class people. What they look for in communities are abundant high-quality amenities and experiences, an openness to diversity of all kinds, and above all else the opportunity to validate their identities as creative people (2002:218).

In order for cities to be able to take advantage of their cultural offering and attract and keep creative people in their settings, they need to work on building the necessary infrastructure. Evans (2001) provides a valuable and insightful analysis of what he terms the cultural production chain. As he explains, in order to translate the definitions of cultural industry activity and production, and to provide a conceptual framework for arts and cultural planning and the determination of an arts infrastructure, a production chain analysis has been applied to culture. This attempts to divide cultural economic activities between five interrelated stages and requires an assessment of a city or location's capacity to sustain and distribute cultural activity and products through its infrastructure. The chain is as follows:

1. Beginnings – idea generation, copyright, creativity, training. This examines the capacity of a city as a site for ideas generation, for the patents, copyrights, trademarks it holds, and for the city's generic creativity. (Infrastructure: education, training, research and development resources)
2. Production – from ideas to products, locations of. This assesses the capacity to turn this 'creativity' into production. Are the people, resources and productive capacities available to aid the transformation of ideas into marketable products? The assessment records the level and quality of impresarios, managers, producers, editors, engineers, as well as suppliers and makers of equipment in film, publishing, design; in-studio capacity; with regard to framemakers, scenery makers and so on. (Infrastructure: entrepreneurs, 'makers' technology, premises.)
3. Circulation – distribution, wholesale, marketing, information, circulation. This concerns the quality of agents and agencies, marketing agencies and promoters, distributors and wholesalers (say in film or publishing) or intermediaries/brokers, packagers and assemblers of product. It also includes assessing the quality of support materials such as catalogues, directories, archives, stock inventories and other mechanisms which aid the sale and circulation of artistic products. (Infrastructure: intermediaries, agents, promoters, publishers distributors, transport.)
4. Delivering – venues, television, cinema, shops. These are mechanisms that allow cultural product and services to be consumed and enjoyed; it is about the places in which they are seen, experienced and bought. It means assessing the availability of theatres, cinemas, magazines, museums, record shops and outlets of distribution. Increasingly online and e-commerce forms of access and consumption will add and in part replace traditional modes of distributing cultural products, developing its own, more seamless production chain. (Infrastructure: venues, shops, media channels, magazines, museums and galleries.)
5. Audiences – watching, listening, viewing. This concerns the public and critical environment within which art works and cultural products are received, and involves the assessment of issues such as markets and audiences, as well as questions of pricing and targets (social market) targeting (including people, gender and diversity). Tests might include how far an area's cultural activities reach a wide spectrum of social and demographic groups, overseas markets and in creating a lively cultural life. (Infrastructure: marketing, pricing, 'access', transport, safety) (Evans 2001:155-156).

Creating and managing this chain, will help cities to create the necessary infrastructure on which to base their effort to be branded as cultural/entertainment centres.

Of course leisure and entertainment are the other side of the coin in the branding described in this paper. The city has become a city of entertainment with cultural facilities, a plethora of cultural events and public spaces in a culturally mature environment (Judd and Fainstein 1999, quoted in Kunzmann 2004). Public spaces in cities are urban entertainment spaces in the wider sense and that is what tourists and local residents alike appreciate and what the new urban class of knowledge and e-workers value (Kunzmann 2004). As Lloyd and Clark (2001) describe, even in a former industrial power like Chicago, the number one industry has become entertainment, which city officials define as including tourism, conventions, restaurants, hotels and related economic activities. New urban growth sectors like information technology and FIRE (Finance, Insurance and Real Estate) change the occupational structure of cities with crucial consequences for our thesis. Workers in the elite sectors of the postindustrial city make "quality of life" demands and in their consumption practices can experience their own urban location as if tourists (2001:357). These practices impact considerations about the proper nature of amenities to provide in contemporary cities. The city becomes an economic machine leveraging culture to enhance its economic well being. The entertainment components of cities are actively and strategically produced through political and economic activity (2001:358).

As already mentioned above, apart from arts and culture, the other element that can provide local distinction in the globalised world is the landscape (Kunzmann, 2004). As Hubbard (1998) describes, "although the entrepreneurial city is perhaps best considered a 'virtual' city, one constituted through a quixotic range of images and representations (so much that it no longer makes sense to distinguish between the myth and reality of the city), it is probably the urban landscape itself that sends out the most important messages about the nature of place. As such, the physical spaces of the city can be considered as belonging to the same set of cultural forms as brochures, videos, guidebooks or advertisements (1998:200).

A final but very important consideration is the effect of culture/entertainment branding and generally branding on the social mosaic of cities. As Mommas suggests, "…economic functionality alone does not explain the attraction and popularity of city branding. Its socio-cultural effect is also important. Brands derive their

attraction largely from the fact that they introduce a certain order or coherence to the multiform reality around us. Brands enable us to more easily 'read' each other and our environment of places and products. In this respect branding is not simply an economic activity, inspired by market considerations. In a deeper, cultural sociology sense, it is above all a manner of introducing order and certainty into what is in principle a chaotic reality" (2002:34). For exactly this reason it is necessary to involve in the city branding process the local population and make an effort to really support local creativity and not only 'force' on the city and its residents culture imported from the outside.

Branding is a strategic response to the problem of defining particularity in an increasing standardised and even trivialised world (Zukin 2002). As Kunzmann (2004) concludes, certainly regional and city marketing and branding has to promote cultural development. And, at the same time, cultural development and the management of the leisure and entertainment offering of cities has to reinforce the city's brand in a coordinated and harmonious manner.

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