Chapter 8
Rethinking Place Branding from a Practice Perspective: Working with Stakeholders

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Abstract This chapter considers the role of stakeholders in the development of place branding, arguing that understanding who they are and the nature of their opinions about the place in question should be key determinants of any place branding strategy. After briefly considering the issue of who 'owns' the place brand, the chapter discusses the concept of stakeholding more generally. Using case examples from the first author's place branding practice over many years, the range of potential place stakeholders that may exist are identified (including residents, politicians, governmental organisations, promotional agencies, infrastructure and transport providers, cultural and sports organisations, business, academic organisations and schools, and religious organisations). The chapter then discusses key issues relating to the process(es) involved in getting stakeholder commitment to place branding activities, including issues such as stakeholder workshops, shared vision and positioning, developing close relationships and having an internal brand engagement plan.

Introduction: Ownership and the Place Brand?

One of the most important distinctions between a consumer brand and a place brand relates to ownership of the brand itself. As Clegg and Kornberger state: 'Legally speaking, commercial brands are owned by organizations that hold the copyright over them, but who owns a city?' (2010, p. 9). In the usual fast-moving consumer goods context of much marketing activity, ownership of the brand is clear and,

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despite occasionally having issues to contend with regarding specific external factors that may negatively influence consumer perceptions (as in crisis management situations, e.g. product contamination scares etc.), the brand owner has autonomy with regard to how the brand is managed in the marketplace. Ultimately the brand owner controls all elements of the branding, marketing, selling and distribution, having full control, and full responsibility.

However, place brands are very different and much more complex. Indeed, this has been suggested as a key factor that distinguishes the marketing and branding of places from more stereotypical marketing contexts (Warnaby 2009). This difference is manifested in various ways. First, whilst all brands are made to be sold, places fulfill a variety of important functions beyond merely being sold or marketed. Places are arguably first and foremost about the people who live there, and the social relations that exist therein. Thus, places constitute the locations of jobs, education, and social care through health and welfare systems. They are where we live, work and learn. They also provide the important cultural and infrastructure needs of communities (i.e. recreation and sports facilities, cultural facilities such as museums and galleries, restaurants, shops, transport systems etc.). Various conceptualisations of what constitutes the place 'product' (e.g. Jansen-Verbeke 1986; Getz 1993) are explicit in acknowledging this complex and kaleidoscopic blend of place elements. The second area of complexity and difference is the wide range of people, groups and organisations who have a vested interest in the place's success, and crucially, a point of view in terms of how this success will be achieved (see for example, Clegg and Kornberger 2010; Houghton and Stevens 2011; Kotler et al. 1999). Moreover, the mechanisms through which place marketing activities may be planned and implemented are often characterised by complexity (Van den Berg and Braun 1999; Warnaby et al. 2002), manifested in the existence of numerous organisations, often with different specific (and potentially conflicting) remits, methods of operation, and criteria by which success is judged.

Consequently, the place marketer will most likely be working in conjunction with a large number of disparate groups and individuals, with varying levels of interest in the place brand. The identification of these various *stakeholder groups* is, therefore, one of the most critical tasks facing those responsible for place marketing and branding. Identifying who will need to be partnered with to be successful, and how to get everyone working together, will be vital. At some stage it is important to get as wide a consensus as possible on some form of vision for the place. Notwithstanding the fact that airports have been viewed as the epitome of *non*-places (see Augé 1995), in 2002 for example, the first author was involved in the re-positioning and branding of Stockholm's main international airport: Stockholm-Arlanda, which at that time was operated by *Luftfartsverket* (LFV)—The Civil Aviation Authority in Sweden.

Here, the key to developing a new brand strategy was first to identify which groups had the major stake in the success of the airport and its operations. The stakeholders were not only LFV, and its various departments, but also the airlines, the airport retailers, airport tenants, the local municipality, the city of Stockholm, the national government, as well as users and residents of the adjacent area. Taking this

wider perspective of who actually has a major interest in the place or destination, it becomes apparent that no single entity has total control over the success of a place brand. Once the main stakeholders are identified, building strong relationships with (and between) each of these partners is critical in developing the right branding and marketing approach. This can be a long process. In the case of Stockholm-Arlanda, it took over a year before a strategy and new identity were developed that were felt to be appropriate for the airport, and would fit with the input and feedback received from all key stakeholder partners. So asking who *owns* the place brand is the wrong question. The right question perhaps is who has *a stake* in the place brand (and it could be argued that ultimately everyone involved with the place has a stake in its branding), and consequent to this, how do place marketers accommodate the views of what may be a very disparate set of stakeholders into the development of place brands? This chapter addresses these issues.

We begin by discussing the concept of stakeholding more generally. Using case examples from the first author's place branding practice over many years, we then identify the range of potential place stakeholders that may exist, and discuss key issues relating to the process(es) involved in getting stakeholder commitment to place branding activities. We conclude by analysing the implications for place branding practice into the future.

The Stakeholding Concept

In an early seminal work, Freeman defined a stakeholder as 'any group or individual who can affect, or is affected by, the achievement of the organization's objectives' (1984, p. 46), and suggested that the degree to which a stakeholder feels affected by the achievement (or non-achievement) of organisational objectives, will typically be related to the perceived resource stake (in terms of time, money etc.) that has been invested.

Various ways by which stakeholders can be classified and understood have been promulgated (Mitchell et al. 1997). From the specific perspective of business organisations, classifying different types of stakeholder can arise from their perceived *characteristics*—Clarkson (1995), for example, distinguishes between *primary* and *secondary* stakeholders (with primary stakeholders being those individuals or groups who are essential to the wellbeing of the organisation, and secondary stakeholders defined as those with whom the organisation interacts but are not essential to its survival), and also between *voluntary* and *involuntary* stakeholders (with the main distinction being that involuntary stakeholders do not choose to enter into a relationship, nor can they easily withdraw their stake). Savage et al. (1991) advance a stakeholder classification system based on two key criteria, namely the potential to either *threaten* or *cooperate with* the organisation. From this, they identify four key stakeholder types: (1) The supportive stakeholder (who supports the organisation's goals and actions—i.e. the 'ideal' stakeholder); (2) the marginal stakeholder (neither highly threatening nor especially cooperative—although they

have a stake in the organisation and its decisions, they are generally not concerned about most issues); (3) the non-supportive stakeholder (high on potential threat, but low on potential cooperation); and (4) the mixed blessing stakeholder (who has an equal potential to threaten and to cooperate).

The management literature also attempts to understand and classify stakeholders through their *interactions*. Podnar and Jancic (2006), for example, identify three main levels of interaction between stakeholders and an organisation: (1) *Inevitable* interactions are the most powerful and occur with stakeholders considered essential to an organisation's existence; (2) *Necessary* interactions are important and occur with stakeholders which have less power, but retain influential associations with the organisation; and (3) *Desirable* interactions, which occur with stakeholders who have the power to influence an organisation, but with whom interaction is not a necessary component of organisational survival. Thus, organisations must tailor activities with stakeholders according to these different levels of interaction.

Clarkson (1995) argues that organisations have responsibilities and obligations towards all stakeholder groups, notwithstanding their potentially differing interests, which indeed, may be diverse (Anheier 2000; Clarkson 1995; Freeman 1984; Macedo and Pinho 2006) and contradictory (Bruce 1995; Dartington 1996). There has, consequently, been debate as to whether organisational managers can satisfy all stakeholders, or whether the satisfaction of one group inevitably comes at the expense of another (Strong et al. 2001). Given the nature of place branding outlined above, with the potential for inputs into brand development from a multiplicity of interested parties, such debates are particularly apposite. Another issue arising from the particular nature of place marketing/branding also has the potential to impact on the way(s) in which stakeholder management occurs. Central to stakeholder theory in the management literature is the notion of the 'firm'—an apparent shorthand term for the organisation which lies at the centre of a given network of stakeholder relationships. Where place branding is concerned, the potential complexity of the organisational mechanisms for planning and implementing activities makes such notions of centrality somewhat problematic. Van den Berg and Braun (1999) use the term 'strategic network' to describe those parties involved in developing and implementing city marketing/branding activities (in other words, stakeholders?). We now move to consider who the major place branding stakeholders are.

Identifying Place Branding Stakeholders

Place brand stakeholders will come in many different shapes and sizes and will constitute a variety of governmental and non-governmental organisations. All will have their views about the place and all, to a greater or lesser extent, have a legitimate reason to be listened to. Thus, working with these stakeholder groups on an on-going basis is important and needs to be treated not as a one-off activity, but a long-term commitment. However at some point, decisions inevitably need to be made as to what needs to be done. In such circumstances, trying to please everyone in this respect is

normally not always feasible. Indeed, the inherent difficulties have been highlighted by previous research in the context of urban regeneration partnerships—for example, Peck (1995) argues that, despite variations in size, number and organisation, such partnerships usually represent a narrow range of local interests, often favouring a specific market-oriented agenda. Membership of partnership agencies can reflect 'continuing representation of the 'old' power bases' (Sadler 1993, p. 187). This potential tension and inequality in stakeholder relationships can lead to possible conflict which can cast doubts on the longevity of many such partnership agencies (Peck 1995; Peck and Tickell 1994), or alternatively, the situation whereby partnerships are built on a fragile consensus and continue to exist primarily by avoiding hard choices that may prove divisive (Bassett 1996).

However, if stakeholders have had sufficient input and feel they understand the reasons why the branding strategies have been developed in the way they have (notwithstanding the fact that it might not be totally compatible with their own specific goals), then they can still be reasonably engaged and involved. One way to facilitate this is to develop a common vision. This will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter, but the remainder of this section identifies some of the different stakeholder groups in relation to place branding, and their typical perspectives.

Residents

Residents are often neglected in place branding activities (Braun and Zenker 2012; Kavaratzis 2012), and the first author has experience of being invited to work with some place branding and marketing projects where the local residents are not even included in the initial briefing. Taking into account the views and feelings of the people who live in a place is vital—as Braun et al. (2013) note, residents can play various roles in relation to place branding: (1) as an integrated part of the place brand, through their characteristics and behaviour; (2) as ambassadors, granting credibility to communicated messages; and, (3) as citizens and voters, who are instrumental in the political legitimisation of place branding.

Experience from the first author's place branding practice, indicate that the importance of having local people, not just passively supporting, but positively engaged with, any city or place promotion or marketing efforts, cannot be overstated. Many places are under-funded when it comes to marketing (Warnaby et al. 2002), and in such circumstances the main carrier of the brand is the people who actually come from the place itself—not advertising, even when manifest in viral marketing —which, according to Baines et al. (2011, p. 746), is 'the unpaid peer-to-peer communication of … content (i.e. relating to a place in this context) originating form an identified sponsor using the internet to persuade or influence an audience to pass along the content to another'. Thus, having local people promote their own city, both at home and abroad, as ambassadors, is a huge asset.

Of course, in some cases residents can be indifferent, or at worst, even sceptical and obstructive to the marketing (and perceived consequent commodification) of

their *home*. A fundamental point that should not be ignored is that cities, munici-palities and most other places exist for many more important reasons than simply to be marketed in some form, and that feelings of place attachment (see Hildago and Hernandez 2001) will run deep for many residents (see Hernandez et al. 2007). This could potentially result in antagonism among residents to place marketing/branding activities, especially if such activities are perceived as inadequate in terms of representing their perceptions of the place in question. Taking this into account, and having a genuine sympathy with this issue, is important for the place marketer—fully understanding the local residents' point of views is crucial when developing a place branding programme.

When conducting research with the local people of Stockholm, the first author found that locals were seemingly a little too unconcerned about their home city and their passion for talking about it. In contrast, people from Sweden's second city of Gothenburg would not only answer any questions place marketers had, but would happily continue the conversation for much longer. The majority were enthused and engaged when it came to talking about their home town. Further investigation as to why this lack of engagement apparently existed in Stockholm revealed that of its two million population, around half were not originally from the city itself, or in many cases even from Sweden. Finding some way to enthuse the inhabitants about their city therefore became an important element in Stockholm's promotion. One result was the *Stockholm Hall of Fame*. Portraits of many of the famous people who have been associated with the city are displayed as people walk through the arrivals area of the airport. The pictures not only include the obvious (e.g. ABBA and Björn Borg), but also individuals with meaning to the local populace—sporting stars such as golfer Annika Sörenstam, actresses Greta Garbo and Britt Ekland, dynamite inventor Alfred Nobel, astronaut Christer Fuglesang, and nearly a hundred more. This Hall of Fame has been in place for over 10 years and keeps developing. It has proved to be a clever and relatively low cost promotion, capitalising on the place's residents, which is also done in many other airports.

Politicians

Whether national, city or municipal, politicians are in many ways the key com-ponent in deciding the fate of a place—and its branding and promotion—for good or ill. One of the biggest issues that place marketers will have to deal with is developing a *long-term* brand strategy. Many of the best-known consumer brands have existed for decades, and arguably place *brands* should be no exception—10, 15 or 20 year perspectives should be the goal. However, political change tends to happen every 4 or 5 years in most countries and this can lead to changes in both strategies and funding regimes as far as place marketing/branding is concerned—particularly if politicians want to signal a 'change' from the previous incumbents in office. This can work against the brand's need consistency and persistence, although it is acknowledged that perceptions of many places—and the resulting positioning

in the minds of the place user—can be enduring (and indeed, the need to change existing (often negative) perceptions of a place through 'reimaging' activities is an important theme in the place marketing literature—see for example, Ward 1998).

Lessons from the first author's practice indicate that a key task should be to get both sides of the political divide in agreement with the long-term brand or marketing plans for the city or place—getting their input as key stakeholders and their agreement to focus on the long-term and stick with a long-term brand and plan. Agreeing long-term visions and goals is important, and something that has to be tackled early on. Often it is more productive for the organisation or group charged with marketing the place to drive this process with the politicians and to get agreement amongst them. Sometimes in developing place branding activities the first author has had to deal with the different political groups in separate sessions, in order to prevent them becoming locked into potentially unconstructive political debate by hosting a joint meeting.

An additional issue to be considered when working with politicians (and also some non-politically appointed civil servants), is their tendency to adopt promotion messages and activities that are unlikely to alienate any groups (possibly linked to the fact that the first stakeholder group mentioned above, the place's residents, have the ultimate sanction of not returning them to office at some point in the future if they do not agree with policies enacted in their name). Consequently, many politicians would prefer to use generalities and go for the lowest common denominator, rather than be specific or use hard-edged branding statements or positions, which may work against the development of a distinctive positioning for the place. Indeed, a major theme in the place marketing literature is the homogeneity of marketing and promotional activities (see for example, Barke and Harrop 1994; Burgess 1982; Clegg and Kornberger 2010; Eisenschitz 2010; Harvey 1987, Holcomb 1994; Young and Lever 1997). Kavaratzis and Ashworth note that a crucial element of place branding should be 'discovering or creating uniqueness in order to improve the competitive position of the place marketed' (2008, p. 154). However, politicians' inclinations towards not offending important constituencies may work against this.

Governmental Organisations

Another key stakeholder group will be the local city/governmental organisations that will use or work with the place brand in some way. In many respects, the services they deliver will either support the brand or potentially damage it, in that they will often be responsible for constituent elements of the place product (e.g. schools and other educational establishments, waste and energy facilities, parks, leisure facilities and cultural events, transportation and employment agencies etc.). Gaining the insights and active support of the groups who manage such activities is an important and constant process. As an example, claiming that a city is 'green' as part of a branding strategy will be quickly undermined if, in reality, services such as

energy or waste administration do not truly support that particular claim, and the city does not have the capability to deliver. When it comes to attracting new residents or even inward investment, a key issue could be education and schools for children. Again, if the city or municipality does not do things that support any claims that are made, the offering of the place will be undermined. Working with local governmental agencies, getting a realistic picture of why the agency can deliver and then ascertaining what is realistically achievable is extremely important.

Promotion Agencies

As noted above, one of the characteristics of place marketing/branding may be the plethora of promotion agencies within an individual place, who are actually responsible for managing (at the least, some specific aspects of, if not all) the branding/promotional activities undertaken on behalf of the city. Often in such agencies, especially if public sector-oriented, many marketing roles can be filled by people who do not necessarily have marketing skills or experience. Similarly, many general promotional consultancies have been quick to spot the opportunities of working with place marketing. These consultants and external agencies might have strong experience in other areas, but frequently underestimate the challenges and long-term nature of successful *place* branding and marketing. This raises challenges and in some instances leads to a patchy appreciation of the complexity of the issues involved. Typically the area that is most underestimated is understanding the importance of stakeholders, and working with them in more than a superficial way. Working with stakeholders is hard and demanding. However, experience suggests that it is far less work and far less demanding than launching an initiative that fails to gain their support, or fails because it has not addressed the key issues. The first author's practice suggests that developing an open and collaborative relationship between the responsible governmental department, the key stakeholder groups and any external consultants will be key in developing a successful place branding and marketing programme.

Infrastructure and Transport Providers

Many place marketing messages emphasise *location*, even when the basis for claims as to, for example, centrality and accessibility may be dubious (Burgess 1982; Holcomb 1994; Ward 1998). Kotler et al. (1999) coin the phrase 'infrastructure marketing' to describe an emphasis on those elements needed to sustain quality of life and support economic productivity (see also Short and Kim 1999; Short 1999). This is especially the case when it comes to airports, roads and rail links, which are the lifeblood of many places. If a place does not have good and easy connections, all the place marketing on earth is going to be a waste of money,

as transport infrastructure is recognised by many as an important place product element (Kotler et al. 1999). In the case of one municipality in the middle of Sweden that the first author was asked to advise about place branding, after a 6 h journey from Stockholm, in a meeting with the heads of the promotion department responsible, they wanted to know the most important thing they could do that would have an impact on their destination. They were advised to either lobby strongly to get a direct rail route from Stockholm or build an additional motorway exit from the E4 motorway, a local highway some 5 km away, and erect large signs along the whole stretch of motorway telling people about the place. Assessing the place brand's infrastructure and logistical assets and leveraging them, or even changing them if possible, are vital.

Cultural and Sports Organisations

Another stakeholder group who can have a powerful effect and impact on a place brand are cultural and sports organisations. For example, a 'brand' such as Liverpool Football Club is an asset for the city of Liverpool itself, especially for football enthusiasts. Globally, Liverpool as a place is far better known than comparable cities of its size because of such assets. Making these stakeholders part of the brand building efforts, and gaining their support and insights is critical. On a smaller scale, one of the first author's municipality clients has a wide network of local sports organisations, covering a multitude of activities. When working with this brand, considerable time was spent listening to these grass-roots organisations to understand their opinions and to see how the perceived value they brought to the place could be capitalised upon.

Cultural organisations, such as museums, art galleries and music venues etc., provide a high value to residents and a potential magnet for bringing in visitors—the impact of the Guggenhiem Museum on the fortunes of the Spanish city of Bilbao is well-attested in the literature (although the use of such 'iconic' architecture is not without critical comment—for more detail, see for example, Jones 2011). Too many place brands leave these assets to fend for themselves instead of using their full potential. When conducting a place audit in one particular location, the first author found that it had a large number of cultural events happening, but the various organisations responsible for these events were working in isolation. By bringing them together to market the cultural attributes of the destination in a joint effort, a far greater impact was created. Indeed, the place marketing literature abounds with studies of the impact of cultural facilities, from development of place-specific associations (see for example, Ashworth 2009), to the spectacular event, such as the Olympic Games (see for example, Ward 2010; Waitt 1999) and *European Capital of Culture* designations (Garcia 2004a, b; Richards and Wilson 2004; Sjøholt 1999).

Businesses

Local business is obviously an important stakeholder for any place. In his place branding practice, the first author generally divides local businesses into two distinct groups: those who have a direct relevance or involvement in a place brand (e.g. hotels or restaurants etc.); and those who are directly involved or dependant on the success of the place brand perhaps to a lesser extent, but who nevertheless have an interest in the health and prosperity of a place, as they probably employ many local people (e.g. larger manufacturing companies etc.). The relevance for the first group to the success of the place brand and why they should be so interested in its development, is clear, and their input provides valuable insight on the destination. The second group however, those not directly involved, are sometimes more difficult to engage. Understanding their motivation for becoming involved with a place branding initiative is important. They are often key employers in the local area and their investment can be crucial. Experience suggests that these groups have to be considered on a case-by-case basis, and a true understanding of their own objectives examined and understood to be able to fully engage them in the stakeholder process. The ideal scenario is that they become 'ambassadors' for the place in that they proudly promote the fact that their success as an organisation is in some way related to the area within which they are based (consistent with notions of economic clusters—see Porter 1998). In addition, the first author's place branding experience suggests that one of the most important of the business sectors who will have a direct interest in the success of the place banding initiative will be the local real estate companies. The success of the place marketer will have a very direct impact on their business, and their viewpoint and input can be extremely valuable as they deal with the very real and measurable value of the place (although, of course, the aim of place branding goes far beyond increasing real estate values and yields).

Academic Organisations and Schools

Educational establishments, such as universities and schools, can be very important place brand stakeholders, emphasising the importance of human capital as a long-standing element of place marketing activity (Ward 1998). Ward describes universities as 'invariably key ingredients in the post-industrial [urban] mix' (1998, p. 189). According to Florida, they constitute 'a basic infrastructure component of the Creative Economy' (2002, p. 291), and as such, are 'a huge potential source of competitive advantage' for the places in which they are located (ibid, p. 292), in terms of both economic development (Charles 2006) and the 'creative milieu' of a place (Landry 2000, p. 133). Thus, academic resources and infrastructure are high on the wish list of many organisations wanting to find a new place to locate to or open facilities in. Having access to a highly educated workforce can be a real

incentive for many companies in choosing a specific location (Charles 2003), a specific factor which is part of the notion of economic clusters mentioned above.

Also of interest is having strong schools and educational establishments for the families and children of companies based in, or moving to, an area, especially those offering good international programmes for companies with international employees who have to relocate. One Nordic city the first author has worked with is particularly lacking in respect of both a strong university, as well as good international schools, and this has proved to be a real hindrance in its development plans.

Religious Organisations

In some destinations, religious organisations should also be classified as a key stakeholder and influencer group. Not only will they provide an important view of the destination that might not have been available from the more commercially oriented groups but, depending on the region, these groups can also have profound impacts on the local population, and even legislation (although it must be stressed that religious organisations within a place may not necessarily constitute a homogenous group).

In the UK, around 10–15 % of the population regularly attend religious services (Gallup 2004), and in the US a comparable figure is around 40 % (Gallup 2013). In specific places, these can constitute a significant proportion of the population, and those representing and articulating the views of their congregations can be influential stakeholders. In Sweden, where less than 5 % of the population on average regularly attend religious services (Gallup 2004), one could be forgiven for thinking this group would not be significant. However, on one particular project, in the south of the country in a traditional blue-collar employment area, the strong church-going habits and beliefs of the local population had led to stricter than normal local laws when it came to drinks licence approvals for local restaurants. The first author had been asked to consider ways of helping develop this traditional manufacturing area into one with a greater white-collar—and especially *creative class*—focus. Facilities such as restaurants, bars and social entertainment are a high priority for many in the creative class (see Florida 2002). Talking with the local religious leaders to gain their views and input as a plan was developed for making these adjustments was critical in this case.

In concluding this section of the chapter, an important point to make (and exemplified in the preceding paragraph), is the fact that the specific blend—and relative importance—of individual stakeholders who will input into the development of place branding activities in a particular place will vary. This reflects the notion of place-specificity, which has been identified as a factor which characterises place marketing and branding (Warnaby 2009), and requires those responsible for the development of place branding activities to make meaningful efforts to identify who exactly the stakeholders are, and equally importantly, to ascertain the nature of

the interactions and power relations between them (perhaps utilising some of the classificatory frameworks outlined in 'The Stakeholding Concept' section above) in order to create a consensus in relation to a place branding strategy. In the next part of this chapter, we consider some general lessons from practice that will hopefully optimise the effectiveness of this process.

Engaging Place Brand Stakeholders

This section seeks to address the issue of once the particular key stakeholder groups in the destination have been identified, how should their input and involvement be captured. A number of issues relating to this are discussed below.

Stakeholder Workshops

Experience from the first author's work with numerous places suggests that stakeholder workshop sessions can be extremely valuable and informative in gaining insights. These are typically designed to be short sessions, of 2–3 h, or longer sessions, of up to 6 h. Decisions made regarding the composition of workshop participants usually mixes different stakeholders together in order to get a degree of cross-fertilisation and interaction. The size of groups for such workshops varies, but typically somewhere between eight and twenty people would be normal for an individual workshop session (which is then sub-divided into smaller 'breakout' groups to conduct the exercise elements undertaken during the workshop). If there is a need to engage a larger group of people, two or three workshops would be run on successive days.

Workshop sessions are deliberately structured to combine some short educational elements, where attendees are taken through a particular aspect of brand or place marketing, and then more specific topics and exercises, where attendees are asked to work together to provide feedback on a particular area of interest. This could cover subjects such as visions and values, target audiences, identity, value propositions, story-telling, competitors etc. Sessions are kept short, fun and highly engaging, asking all attendees to take part in developing the feedback as well as presenting it. This last part, asking the participants to present their conclusions back to the full group, is particularly important as it stimulates a good degree of debate, discussion, and obviously disagreement at times. But by doing this, and exposing the thinking of the sub-group to the larger group, more effectively tests the strength of attendees' attitudes and ideas, and for the moderator, quickly provides a good indication of the main issues and discussion points. Having run hundred of such workshops over the years, the first author suggests that each session develops its own dynamic, and rarely two session are alike. In addition to providing valuable insights and learning, these workshops importantly get the attendees enthusiastically engaged in the subject and

process—this can be one of the most important success factors for any destination. Of course, once stakeholders are engaged, the momentum must be maintained, and it is important to keep the stakeholders involved and provide constant feedback and updates on what is happening in the destination, to maintain their high level of engagement.

Shared Vision and Positioning

Getting different stakeholder groups to work together, despite having very different views or opinions, is an important issue. Inevitably, stakeholders become engaged in the process either because of a genuine interest in the destination or, as is more often the case, because they have a stake in it from their own perspective, and wish to influence any future decisions or plans. Given the fact (highlighted at the very start of this chapter) that no one person or organisation owns a place brand, then these disparate stakeholders will somehow have to find common ground in order to develop a strategy for the place brand. This can present obvious challenges, but a key aspect in this is to develop a common vision for the place that supports each individual stakeholder, allowing them to maintain their own individual goals and objectives (but without descending to the lowest common denominator of generic and bland messages mentioned previously). Along with its vision, positioning goes to the very heart of any brand building initiative. Defining what you are, what you stand for and represent, and then having the supporting evidence to back it up can be the key. Developing tag lines or mere slogans is not.

The branding work carried out by the first author for the city of Stockholm is a case in point. In initial workshops with the key stakeholders there was a high degree of diversity in the goals, and a wide spread of opinion with regard to the topics that had to be discussed with a number of discrete target audiences that had been previously identified. An initial aim was to promote the city for tourism, and position it as a great tourist destination and the natural place to start a vacation in the Nordic region or to choose for a short city break. However, there was also a need to engage with a variety of business audiences, and a desire to appeal to the meetings and congresses industry, and position Stockholm as a strong venue for conferences and exhibitions. The very difficult challenge was how to appeal to all of these diverse audiences at the same time while keeping a strong, singular positioning. The city's positioning had previously been quite inconsistent, focusing first on one topic and one audience and then, as another became more important, jumping to a new topic and new audience.

The answer was found in developing a positioning strategy that enabled the city brand to more effectively communicate on all of these topics in a relevant context and maintain a consistent focus (see Iverson and Hem 2008). Thus, Stockholm was positioned as *The Capital of Scandinavia.* The city of Stockholm as a brand would thus represent the best elements of Scandinavia. Using this umbrella positioning made talking across the wide range of subjects relating to the place brand much

easier, whilst not unduly focusing on—or alienating—any of the individual groups of internal stakeholders that had been part of the brand development process. Finding this common ground and positioning enabled a great deal of flexibility in the individual topics the Stockholm brand needed to engage in (there were three legs to this positioning, relating to culture, business and centrality), whilst maintaining a common point of reference. This positioning strategy was somewhat contentious, with inevitable reaction from other Scandinavian cities. Finding a common vision and brand positioning is not always easy, and it takes time and energy, but can be an extremely valuable way of uniting a group of disparate stakeholders goals.

Developing Close Relationships

Notwithstanding the inherent advantages of developing a shared vision and positioning for the place brand, an obvious issue to be faced is the potential competition between the different stakeholder groups. Moreover, such competition can exist within—as well as between—particular broad stakeholder groups: for example, hotels in a destination will regard each other as competitors and are more focused on how to beat each other as opposed to promoting the destination for everyone's benefit. The most successful approach is to again find some common ground where these potential competitors can come together and genuinely work together with a common focus. Working with the destination of Sigtuna, a municipality of forty thousand people just north of Stockholm, the first author found extremely close co-operation among the different stakeholder groups and a willingness to work together to help the destination's overall situation. Part of the overall brand positioning was a focus on environmental activities, and in the hotel and conferencing sector, companies that would normally view each other as competitors were willing to set aside competitive issues to work together in joint initiatives, with regard to this environmental aspect of their operations in order to contribute to an overall positioning strategy for the place in this respect.

Internal Brand Engagement Plan

One of the aspects that can be easily overlooked or underestimated is brand engagement. Getting the stakeholders fully in alignment with the brand and marketing strategy and keeping them updated regularly as the situation progresses. In general, those responsible for the management of consumer brands recognise the value of internal marketing, namely, the application of marketing concepts and principles, within an organisation, normally targeted at employees with a view to encouraging them to support and endorse the organisation's strategy, goals and brands (Baines et al. 2011). If this is true in the consumer world, it is even more so

with regard to places, given the often very disparate nature of place stakeholders. Thus, those responsible for place branding need a programme of constant brand engagement, to keep key stakeholder organisations aware of the latest developments, as well as to simply remind them of the overall strategy. For many clients, the first author runs such stakeholder update sessions every 6–18 months, bringing stakeholders back around the table, to inform them of successes, failures and any changes that are needed. Often the personnel turnover in place stakeholder organisations is such that half the faces in the stakeholder groups will be new, and so a reminder of the vision, strategy, positioning and goals are needed.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to demonstrate the critical importance of, as far as possible, engaging all relevant stakeholders in the development and implementation of place branding activities. As noted above, the complexity of both the place 'product'/brand itself and the organisational mechanisms for its development and management have been identified as key characteristics that distinguish place marketing and branding from other application contexts (Warnaby 2009). As a consequence, it can be argued that the successful practice of marketing will be highly place-specific. Indeed, as noted above, the tendency for very different places to develop place marketing/branding activities that are very homogenous has been advanced as a critique of place marketing practice—Eisenschitz (2010, p. 27) argues that many of the same marketing techniques are commonly used and that 'once a formula has been adopted, then no city will have a unique selling point'. Barke and Harrop state that the convergence of place marketing activities 'could be argued to be a significant step in the 'commodification' of place' (1994, p. 99). In the process of developing a distinctive brand position, which Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2008) argue is important in successful place marketing/branding, fully understanding the blend of stakeholders and the interactions and power relations between them—which will vary markedly from place to place—is critical. As examples from the first author's practice outlined above show, developing this understanding can be time-consuming and require much effort, but is worth it in the long run.

This also reflects the fact that, as mentioned in other chapters in this book, place products and brands are *co-created* by those within a place—in other words, by those who have a 'stake' of some kind in it. Such a perspective links back to the notion of a place itself as something created and produced by people and their actions, either as individuals or within the context of organisations. This draws explicitly on the social constructionist and phenomenological dimensions of place outlined by Cresswell (2004), and as far as place brands are concerned, suggest that those responsible for their development and management should be open to the widest possible stakeholder participation in terms of brand development.

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