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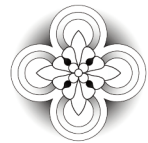
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## THE COMPETING DYNAMICS AND RELATIONSHIPS IN CORPORATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCY CONSTRUCTIONS OF PLACE

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### Abstract

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*This paper explores the dynamics of how private sector business entities and local government bodies perceive and interact with the identity of the locality in which they operate. It identifies tensions and differences in, and consequences of, the dynamics and relationships between how private sector business entities view constructions of 'place' and how government and publicly-funded place-marketing organisations portray and promote localities.*

*These issues are examined through the phenomenon, brand and slogan of 'visit, live, invest' which is gaining credence in the United Kingdom and elsewhere in the world. The paper develops data using in-depth interviews and a small-scale survey set within an overall interpretivistic case study approach.*

*The data and the case-study demonstrate that, despite the rebranding of the local government agencies as a place-marketing organisation committed to the new 'live, visit, invest' initiative and brand agenda, there is an ongoing 'cultural hangover' from previous place promotion policies. There are also serious impacts and consequences for relationships between the public and private sectors and with other stakeholders. The prevailing image of UKTown (real name anonymised) by business leaders is one that sees this town fundamentally as a historic, traditional and conservative town. This image has been the product of many years of older style promotion in this vein. While such an image may suggest pleasant aspects of the living environment, it has little to do with corporate image, values and concerns and many private sector business entities do not identify with it. In several instances it is even considered by certain business sectors to be 'detrimental' to the need for a dynamic business environment and the forms of relationships and activities these necessitate. The paper indicates a number of strategic moves that could be adopted in order to improve this predicament.*

**Keywords:** private business entities, local government agency, place identity, place marketing, branding, perception

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper looks at a range of issues and implications surrounding the relationship dynamics which are driven by competing perceptions and constructions of place between public and business entities in a United Kingdom context. Collins English Dictionary defines the term 'relationship' as 'the state of being connected or related' and this definition is applicable throughout this paper (www.collinsdictionary.com (2014)) In recent decades there has been an extensive range of initiatives by national and local

government bodies aimed at identifying, representing and, frequently, reconstructing relationships connected with identity of place. This is normatively undertaken with the purpose of developing and sustaining economic activity and regeneration.

Governmental infrastructure has a mission to engage and connect, where possible, with the commercial and corporate community. This is generally considered imperative for economic growth and development. This engagement is likely to involve a range of actions and programmes covering topics such as collaboration, support networks, public-pri-

vate organizational relationships and pump-priming funding. However, there will also be deeper processes at play and these are likely to centre on the building of a shared identity between governmental and business communities and a shared sense-making and vision. In commercial terms such activities are likely to invoke, and see the operation of, branding to some greater or lesser extent. Overall, the interplay and exchange between these processes and actions reveals varying perspectives and dynamics of differing communities and positions. Consequently, the research question of the paper is:

To explore the dynamic relationships between local government agencies and corporate/private stakeholders in the development place marketing and perceptions of place identity through a case study set in a UK context.

The structure of the ensuing then proceeds as follows: the paper examines the literature on place branding and identifies pertinent areas for theoretical development in relation to the ways in which public-private relationships produce 'perception' of place identity and the consequences of this. The argument then develops a data set of perceptions of government and commercial entities drawn from a particular urban context in the United Kingdom, referred to in the paper as 'UKTown'. The argument then progresses to identify a range of issues and challenges that arise in relation to this and seeks to develop solutions that will address them.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Every aspect of public policy which 'improves' a region potentially helps to 'sell' it: every new job created, new house built and improved public transport link serves to promote an area as a good place to live in. However, such activity is not necessarily motivated by an attempt to 'sell' an area to *new* individuals or bodies. Rather, it is more often an attempt to improve it for visitors, residents and employees who are *already 'customers'*. Traditionally, place-marketing has been the vehicle to do this and is an activity that *promotes* a region, city or place, typically with the purpose of *attracting new* residents and businesses. However, in recent years there appears to be a dramatic shift towards using

place-marketing in order to retain residents as much as to encourage new entrants and this is particularly pertinent to business entities.

### 2.1 Place-marketing as a dialectic in dynamic business entity and local government organizational relationships: historical perspectives

While academic and policy conceptualisations of place-marketing have developed rapidly in the last few years (Gertner, 2011a; Gertner, 2011b; Lucarelli & Berg, 2011), 'the conscious attempt of governments to shape a specifically-designed place identity and promote it to identified markets, whether external or internal, is almost as old as civic government itself' (Kavaratzis & Ashworth 2005). Indeed, as long ago as the tenth century, the Norse settler Erik Thorvaldsson named a recently discovered land 'Greenland' as he reasoned that 'people would be attracted to go there if it had a favourable name' (Erik the Red's Saga, 1997). In the same vein, the opening up of the early USA and Canada to white settlers saw the promotion of the 'green' land that had been discovered in order to attract new inhabitants (Ashworth & Voogd, 1994). During the nineteenth century, place-marketing developed within the context of increased nationalisation and globalisation of markets (Gold & Ward 1994). While the modern conceptualisation and emergence of place-marketing may seem to wish to situate it as a contemporary phenomenon, it is evident that its longevity can be readily located in the nineteenth and early twentieth century (Logan & Molotch 1987; Kearns & Philo, 1993; Gold & Ward, 1994; Gold & Gold, 1995). In the later twentieth century, place-marketing came to be considered a valid activity for the public sector (Burgess, 1982). Indeed the process became increasingly sophisticated, including a 'tool box' of techniques available to the place marketer (Ashworth & Voogd, 1990; Berg et al., 1990; Kotler et al., 1993). Much of this public sector activity focussed on developing tourism communication or promoting suburban residential areas (Ward 1998; Walton, 1983). It used marketing images to promote a concept of 'place' (Holcomb, 1993) or promoted places as hubs of cultural capital through public art or festivals (Kearns & Philo, 1993).

Academic concern with place-marketing activities, and the dialectics and dynamics that surround them, intensified in the late 1980s and by the mid-90s had undergone a startling growth. Early authors such as Bartels & Timmer (1987) and Ashworth & Voogd (1990) detailed mechanisms by which places were being marketed and they bemoaned a lack of academic literature upon which to build. Within only a few years their work was supported by a raft of similar publications including Logan & Molotch's *Urban Fortunes* (1987), Bailey's *Marketing Cities in the 1980s and beyond* (1989), Kotler et al *Marketing Places* (1993), Keans & Philo's *Selling Places* (1993), Smyth's *Marketing the City* (1994), Gold and Ward's *Place Promotion* (1994), Duffy's *Competitive Cities* (1995) and localised studies such as Gold & Gold's *Imagining Scotland* (1995), Neill et al.'s comparative study of Belfast and Detroit, *Reimagining the Pariah City* (1995) and Rutheiser's *Imagineering Atlanta* (1996).

Place-marketing became quickly adopted into theories of urban regeneration. Harvey's *The Urban Experience* (1989) focused on the mechanisms by which cities deliberately adopted strategies to attract inward investment. This work was followed by Healey et al. (eds) *Rebuilding the City* (1992), Imrie & Thomas (ed.) *British Urban Policy and the Urban Development Corporations* (1993), Bianchini & Parkinson (eds) *Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration* (1993) and Law's *Urban Tourism* (1993), which all served to build a case for private sector-led property design and real estate businesses as significant drivers in place-marketing. Central to these developmental discussions to place-marketing was the tenet that traditional marketing techniques could be applied to a place (Ashworth & Voogd, 1990; 1994). Places are considered 'products' that can be consumed, advertised and marketed (Kearns & Philo, 1993). Kotler et al. (1993) developed this further in advising that places and communities must begin to act like companies by developing strategic marketing plans. Their work formed a model for place-marketing, called 'Levels of Place Marketing', which they developed later for Europe (1999) and Asia (2002).

## **2.2 Place-marketing as a dialectic in dynamic business entity and local government organizational relationships: contemporary perspectives**

Early approaches to place-marketing and branding have been fiercely criticised for their lack of sophistication and appreciation of the full nature of the perceptions and the dynamic relationships that they encompass. Kavatzis & Ashworth have argued that marketing professionals:

"too easily assume that places are just spatially extended products that require little special attention as a consequence of their spatiality. Equally public sector planners have long been prone to the adoption, overuse and then consignment to oblivion, of fashionable slogans as a result perhaps of their necessity to convince political decision-makers who place a premium on novelty, succinctness and simplicity" (2005: 507).

In contrast, they propose that places need to be recognised as complex packages often marketed and experienced simultaneously and dynamically by huge number of different actors (including, for example, individuals, businesses, public sector organisations, politicians), which are experienced and consumed in various ways. This revised view does not entirely discount traditional marketing theory and techniques but rather states that there is a need for new marketing practices adapted for relationships in place rather than product. As a consequence much attention has been placed upon the concept of 'place branding', which is based upon traditional marketing discourse and has been adapted to fit the specialised conceptions of place.

In contrast to product-place co-branding, place management branding refers to the use of place branding to create an *internal identity of consciousness amongst* residents/businesses which can then be utilised for other political purposes. There is a need for place branding (or the making of place) to take into account a wide variety of perceptions and experiences if it is to be fully effective. Indeed, there is a growing recognition by academics that the development of inter-stakeholder brands is important to successful tourism marketing (Mak, 2011; Hankinson, 2001; 2004; Uysal et al., 2000)

Within the academic literature highlighted above there has been a marked lack of perspectives from non-marketers and this is a critical part for the present paper. There is relatively little written about how the private sector perceives the place in which they conduct their activities and how it is promoted. This has occurred despite attempts by *practitioners* to incorporate stakeholders (residents, visitors and the business community) in the creation of place. Those studies which have utilised the views of multiple stakeholders (Merrilees et al., 2012; Hum, 2010; Gopalan & Narayan, 2010; Murtagh et al., 2008)

### **2.3 The United Kingdom's 'Visit, Live, Invest' Agenda – A Basis for a Dynamic Local Government Agency and Corporate Business Relationship?**

One of the driving forces behind this approach in the United Kingdom was the re-structuring and re-naming in the late-2000s of the Tourist Boards in England and Wales. Many of these organisations were re-tasked to promote their regions and cities as attractive destinations to live and invest in, while continuing to promote them as tourist destinations. A range of these place-marketing organisations directly support the twenty-four Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) across England and Local Regeneration Boards (LRBs) both of which are private sector led organisations intended to support and develop local areas so that they *retain* and *attract* residents and businesses leading to private sector led economic growth and prosperity (Local Growth, 2010). As a result, there is a focus at national and local level on developing, and promoting, regions and cities so that they attract new residents and businesses ('invest'), benefit existing residents and businesses ('live'), while continuing to attract visitors ('visit').

A simple search of the internet will bring up several hundred United Kingdom national, regional and city websites that use the words 'visit, live, invest', or a variation on these words, to promote their chosen area. International examples from the English-speaking world include Far North New Zealand ('an ideal place to live, work and invest'), Collingwood Canada ('Since 1858 a place to live work and play') and Downtown Los Angeles USA ('Thanks to our commercial, creative and cultural re-birth, many people live, work and play here every

day'). The regional government of Queensland, Australia, has even used 'work, live, play' a part of their web-address ([www.workliveplay.qld.gov.au](http://www.workliveplay.qld.gov.au), 2012). This is mirrored within the United Kingdom where the Foreign Office *GREAT* campaign seeks to 'send out a clear message that Britain is one of the very best places in the world to visit, live, work, study, invest and do business'. A strategic objective of the Scottish Government's Wealthier and Fairer Scotland plan is to 'make Scotland a more attractive place to live, work and invest'. While in Wales, the Cardiff improvement plan 2005-2009 aims to 'create a 'quality of life' in the City making it a great place to live, work, visit and invest'. Likewise, regions and cities within the UK are often promoted in line with the 'visit, live, invest' agenda. Some examples are: 'Are you thinking of living in, studying in, working in, investing in, visiting Swansea Bay?', 'live, work, invest, study, whatever you want to do it's Liverpool' and 'totally involving – Visit Reading, Stay in Reading, Move to Reading'. The websites of these regions and cities are designed and structured around the 'live, visit, invest' agenda for easy navigation.

However, the 'live, visit, invest' agenda and its role in place-marketing has only recently received attention (Merrilees, 2012). Likewise, there is very little information available about how the private sector has been engaged in this reconstruction of the identity of place in which they operate (as opposed to being 'name-checked' in promotional websites). For example Virgo and de Chernatony's (2006) study of city branding in Birmingham proposed that city branding often involves multiple brand visions but their assessment is based upon the visions of the public sector stakeholders. Similarly Paganoni (2012) explored the branding inherent in the online presence of twelve United Kingdom cities and while her findings take forward the discourse around how a city promotes itself to its citizens and the wider world there is again a public sector focus. Indeed only very recently have authors such as Kavaratzis (2012) stressed the need for place branding to include a wider stakeholder group:

"The conceptualization of place branding that this article embraces and the argument for a stronger and more direct involvement of stakeholders in the place branding process.... Managers should see themselves as leaders of the place brand dialogue. They should act as initia-

tors, facilitators and moderators of the dialogue between the several stakeholder groups over the meaning of the place brand.” (2012: 15-16)

This work has been supported by Warnaby & Medway (2013) whose study of the ‘I ♥ MCR’ (I Love Manchester) campaign highlights the role of local citizens and consumers both in constructive and destructive creations of place identity. Manchester is a major city in the north of England and this campaign was developed by a group of individuals from Manchester who took inspiration from New York’s highly successful I ♥ NY campaign.

Both these articles suggest a need for greater study of the role of stakeholder dynamics in the creation of place identity and this paper seeks to build on this. It does so by exploring the ways in which stakeholders from the private sector in a given town and specific geographical region view and relate to its promoted image and the relationships and dynamics that this may engender. It investigates what is meant by ‘place’ and how locations are defined by the different actors (e.g. local authority, residents and businesses). In doing so, the paper addresses issues of construction of place within and across boundaries. Within the context of place-marketing or place branding there is a temptation to think of a *boundary* as the extent of a domain bordered by a defined geographical border. In this way, the psychological construction of place boundaries operates as a sensemaking device for the person or group involved (Weick, 1995; Brown et al. 2013). Indeed, the most common manner of thinking about a boundary is in this spatial or geographical area manner. This might be a wall or enclosure which contains or separates objects or animals for example. However boundaries can also function in a number of more complex ways based upon other delineations. Such boundaries are not necessarily physical. Boundaries *emerge* and are *brought into being*. For example, in terms of linguistics, talking in a particular accent such as received pronunciation, may be interpreted by some people as making the speaker seem more important or more educated than other individuals, thus creating a form boundary based on identity. In terms of time, deadlines offer a clear example of a temporal boundary (Fleming & Spicer, 2004; Gabriel and Willman, 2004; Heracleous, 2004; Hernes, 2004; Keenoy and Seijo 2010; Paulsen & Hernes, 2003;

Sturdy, Clark, Fincham & Handley 2009). Therefore, in terms of the concept and notion of ‘place’ in a regional town context, a ‘place’ is necessarily defined in *different* ways according to the person doing the defining. A local authority may define it along strict administrative geographical lines, in contrast to, for example, a business representative whose ‘world’ is defined by their market which operates trans-border. Having considered the literature and the nature of ‘place’, the argument now turns to consider these issues in the context of a specific case study: UKTown.

## 2.4 The Case Study: UKTown

UKTown is a small town within the United Kingdom which supports several hundred small, medium and large business entities in the aerospace, agricultural, automotive manufacturing, financial and professional services, paper manufacturing and sports sectors. The town is part of a larger sub-region that can be defined and delineated in different ways according to the boundaries of the Local Authority Agency and the private-sector led Local Enterprise Partnership and Regeneration Boards. The publicly-funded place-marketing organisation in UKTown supports the marketing activities of the town and its sub-region.

The town has a rich history offering museums, buildings and artefacts spanning the centuries since Ancient Roman times. Tourism and retail are important aspects of the local economy.

In many ways, UKTown has been fortunate in having a rich and varied fabric of wealth creating activities and industries. While this does not mean that the area is devoid of a socio-economic spread of population, it does mean that overall, the area and its hinterland is what might be described as being of high net worth.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

With the aim of examining the issues identified and discussed above in their dynamic context, a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted during 2011 and 2012 in the vicinity of a UKTown. These were targeted at senior manager and representatives of locally-based business entities, the heads of the

private-sector led Local Regeneration Boards and representatives of the marketing organisation previously known as the Tourist Board. These interviews provide a case study within which to examine the phenomenon of perception of place (Yin, 2008).

The semi-structured interview is well-established qualitative research method (Van Maanan, 1988; 2010; Maylor & Blackmon, 2005; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Semi-structured interviews were considered as the most suitable data collection method because they enable contributors to recount their own story and impressions in their own language providing a powerful impression of their world (Bryman & Bell, 2003: 477; Barbour & Schostak, 2005: 42-44; Easterby-Smith et al. 2008, 88; Gray, 2009: 373). This approach equally encompassed acknowledgement of reflexivity and the impact of the researcher on the researched and vice-versa (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2009).

The businesses in which the interviews were conducted included large national and multi-national organisations. One senior member of staff at policy and strategy formation level was interviewed within each of the businesses considered. Within the businesses, the researchers did not expressly attempt to interview marketing professionals because the objective was to identify a more general, less specialist, body of informants. Table 1 outlines the senior members of staff interviewed.

Access to interviewees was secured through email and telephone exchanges. A number of contacts were already established from earlier engagements and project work. The businesses represented were included in the research project due to their economic importance within their sectors, the number of people they employ and their availability and willingness of senior staff to take part in interviews. The sample was purposefully selected as these business entities have a recognised major economic impact in the region of UKTown. As such, these are key sectors for the economy of the town and sub-region in question and form the basis of many local economies throughout England and the United Kingdom. This was a judgemental sample designed to include key stakeholders in the place marketing of the UKTown. The organisations and businesses were interviewed in confidence.

The local place-marketing organisation is contracted by the Local Authority to provide the place-marketing for UKTown and its sub-region. It is important to note here that the businesses interviewed often did not make a distinction between the Local Authority and organisation contracted by the Local Authority: they are considered one and the same. It is also important to note that many of the businesses viewed the Local Authority as a generic entity while not appreciating that it is a complex amalgam of bodies and relationships. These issues are discussed in-depth in the findings.

The interviews centred on perceptions of UKTown and the sub-region and were deliberately left open, within the semi-structured process, so as to capture views which may not have been captured through a set of predetermined questions. This allowed the researchers to identify opinions and perceptions. The data analysis involved identifying the salient themes that emerged, the similarities and differences of perceptions of interviewees from the key sectors and any indicative strategies for progress that emerged from this. It is important to stress that the information is based predominantly on the interviews. It is also important to say that the discussion of how the respondents in organisations present themselves is a *limited view* of the organisations concerned. This was acknowledged during the data analysis.

Table 1: Interviewees by Business Sectors

Business sector	Member of staff interviewed
Sports	Chief Executive
Manufacturing	General Manager
Agricultural	Managing Director
Automotive (organisation 1)	HR Director
Automotive (organisation 2)	Board Member/ Personnel Manager
Financial Services (organisation 1)	Head of Marketing
Financial Services (organisation 2)	Head of Communications
Aerospace	Head of Communications
Legal Services	Partner

Source: Interview data

#### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF THE PERCEPTION OF PLACE IN UKTOWN

##### 4.1 Local Government Agency: Private Business Entities - Boundaries and Identities

UKTown is perceived in fundamentally different ways by the Local Government Agency and corporate sector. The first key difference is that, among the business respondents, UKTown is not necessarily defined by clear geographical boundaries. This is most evidently demonstrated by the following example: some business respondents perceive themselves as being *part of* UKTown even though they are actually situated *outside* the geographical area recognised administratively as such by the Local Authority. In one example of this occurring, the business representative said that he felt 'divorced' from the town as he perceived that the key stakeholders did not want to be associated with his business. While he attributed this reluctance to a perception that his manufacturing business did not fit in with the image of UKTown, it could also be attributed to a conflicting perception of UKTown as a *place*: while the business respondent identifies himself with the community of the town, the Local Authority do not necessarily perceive him as part of it as his business lay *outside* the defined geographical area. While businesses often operate across county, regional and national boundaries, this is not a world-view shared by local authorities and this has major implications for the dynamics of relationships. The main reason for this tension is that the Local Authority (and the place-marketing organisation) is required to impose operational restrictions on their activities due to limited resources. This is done, of course, in part along geographical lines. However, the sense-making (Weick, 1995) of the business entities operates in a differing manner.

An additional tension is inadvertently created by the website of the place-marketing organisation. It is structured in such a way so that, on the homepage, the audience have to self-select (in essence self-define themselves), as *residents, visitors or businesses* in order to access information (see examples of comparable 'live, visit, invest' websites in the literature review). It should be noted here that in structuring the websites in such a way place-marketing organisations are attempting to *include* resi-

dents and businesses, where previously the focus was on solely attracting visitors. However, in doing so, a subtle false dichotomy is created between residents, visitors and businesses, which conflicts with the world-view of businesses. Businesses tend to define UKTown by its *inter-related* communities: the business community, the local community, the local authority and the educational community (e.g. further and higher education establishments), with significant overlap between them. Significantly, business representatives do not consider themselves distinct from residents. In UKTown, they consider themselves part of the local community: their employees live in the locality; many support local events and organisations through corporate social responsibility programmes; and some have been based in UKTown for several generations. This element of identity of UKTown is partly lost by the way in which the place-marketing website is structured.

A further key difference between public and private sector perceptions of UKTown relates to the transient or changing nature of the town. For example, some business representatives emphasised that although their businesses were located in UKTown for historic reasons; they *remained* there because of a functioning business model. Businesses in the town valued the good land asset and low commercial costs, the geographical location with access to important markets, the good infrastructure of roads, good rail links, international airports, access to sea ports and the availability of a high-calibre of workforce. Indeed the quality of the workforce was particularly important to those businesses that employ apprentices and they expressed that they had positive working relationships with colleges of further education and universities. However, business respondents emphasised that they are *not* tied to being located in UKTown due to customers: the customers of businesses in the aerospace, agricultural, automotive manufacturing, financial and paper manufacturing sectors are based across the UK, Europe and worldwide. Indeed, it was made very clear by the business representatives that they would relocate their businesses if necessary and that their commitment to UKTown only extended as far as the business case allows. However, they expressed frustration that this did not appear to be understood by departments within the Local Authority (e.g. planning depart-

ment), who they perceived as taking business commitment to UKTown for 'granted'. Consequently, these business representatives criticised UKTown as being 'staid', 'slow-moving' and 'non-dynamic'. In effect, their poor relationship with certain departments of the Local Authority coloured their perception of the town as a whole. A key reason given by business representatives for the perception that the Local Authority takes them for 'granted' is the focus given to attracting visitors to UKTown by the Tourist Board and, more recently, by the place-marketing organisation. UKTown has been promoted for many decades as a historic town with distinctive architectural features and despite the renaming and repurposing of the Tourist Board in line with the 'live, visit, invest' agenda, businesses still perceive the town's focus to be on attracting tourists. 'Traditional' was the most common adjective used to describe the town by the business representatives.

While business representatives resented the exclusive nature of this focus, some clearly identified advantages afforded to them by being located in or near a town with such a history and reputation. The focus on tourism has led to considerable investment in the hospitality sector and visitor attractions over the years. Business respondents in the aerospace, financial and professional services and automotive manufacturing sectors stated that they enjoyed 'show-casing' the town to business visitors and utilising the hospitality of local restaurants and other amenities. Likewise, due to the image of UKTown as a good place to visit there was the general perception that it offered a 'good lifestyle' and that the town and its immediate sub-region are 'green' and 'pleasant', which was particularly important for attracting employees from abroad. It is important to note, however, that this image could also be considered a disadvantage: while UKTown offers a good quality of life, it could also be perceived by potential employees to be 'expensive' and having a higher cost of living in relation to surrounding areas.

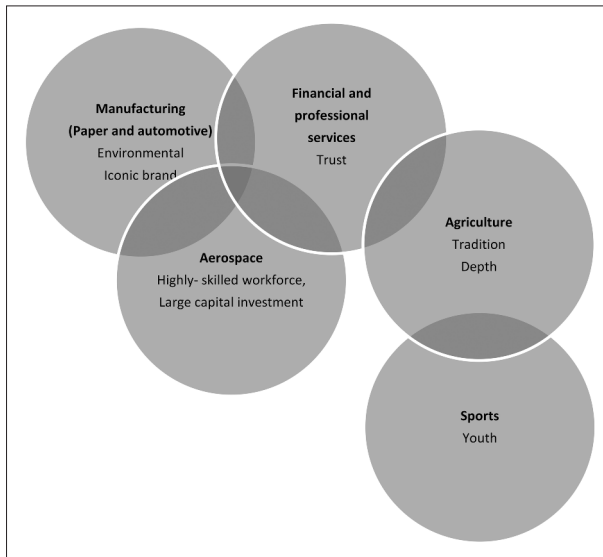
Representatives of business entities in UKTown stated that its prevailing image as a historic and traditional town can have a 'drowning' affect. For example, a business respondent in the sports organisation stated that a key descriptor of his business was 'youth' and that youth participation and programmes were fundamental to the identity of

his business. However, UKTown's image focus as a historic and traditional town drowned these aspects, resulting in him having to make the decision not to identify his business with UKTown.

As indicated above in the literature review, it is common to engage in comparisons when discussing place-marketing. There is potential value here in comparing UKTown with another historic town: the Hanseatic City of Lübeck in northern Germany. Lübeck has distinctive architecture and is easily identifiable by the image of the seven spires of the Gothic churches that dominate the sky-line. Unlike UKTown, local businesses in Lübeck have *incorporated* images of the town in the branding of their own products (e.g. Bad Schwartau marmalade and Niederegger marzipan). In UKTown this has not occurred despite the commitment of the businesses to the town: businesses do not identify themselves through their branding as being based in or near UKTown. Indeed, like the sports organisation, there are several examples of businesses located near UKTown that identify their business brands with a town or area further away. One reason for this is that interviewees believe that UKTown's image does not reflect key aspects of how they perceive themselves and want to be promoted. There is a dynamic tension between how UKTown is promoted and perceived and how the businesses based in there want to be promoted and perceived.

Across the sectors, the most commonly used words that the business respondents used to describe their businesses were 'efficiency', 'innovation', 'technological', 'sustainable' and 'quality' (see Figure 1). Within the manufacturing sector the business representative stressed the high level of investment that goes into the workforce and the plant and how their manufacturing is 'environmental' and 'innovative'. Within the professional and financial services sector 'trust' was considered fundamental to the business identity and brand. In contrast, UKTown is predominantly 'historic' and 'traditional'. Therefore, while UKTown is predominantly perceived as a historic and traditional town, very few of the businesses described themselves in similar ways. Notably, business representatives of long-established companies preferred to emphasise the highly technological product that they *currently* produce.

Figure 1: Self-Perceptions by Business Sectors



Source: Interview Data

#### 4.2 Perceptions in Relation to Place Identity

It is important to note that the interviews about the identity of UKTown with business representatives tended to be highly emotional. The business representatives were clearly proud to be based in or near UKTown and expressed a strong desire to see the town flourish. However, there was a certain level of frustration in regards to the lack of a single clear and coherent town identity. This was due to three main reasons: business representatives felt frustrated that the image of UKTown being promoted did not fully equate to how they perceived it to actually be; they felt that the current image of the town was damaging to their own business (the ‘drowning’ effect); and they felt that UKTown was not fulfilling its potential. As businessmen and business women they are acutely aware of the importance of branding identity and therefore understand the importance of the town having a strong brand, underpinned by a clear sense of self identity. They want to see UKTown flourish and consider the current situation as damaging to the town’s realisation of its full potential success. In addition there was anger at the perceived exclusivity of the current focus on tourism, and, at the other extreme, a sense of alienation and feelings of disenfranchisement. There was a general sense of lethargy that the town was ‘staid’ and that ‘nothing will change’. Figure 1

illustrates the self-perceptions of the various business sectors and these are elaborated upon in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Summary of Perceptions of the town by varying industry respondents

	Positive Perception	Negative Perception
Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affluent</li> <li>Modern</li> <li>Traditional</li> <li>Upmarket</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expensive</li> </ul>
Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good Lifestyle</li> <li>Traditional</li> <li>Quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expensive</li> <li>Poor infrastructure within city-centre</li> <li>Staid</li> </ul>
Sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good Lifestyle</li> <li>Traditional</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expensive</li> <li>Staid</li> </ul>
Aerospace/ Automotive manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good academic links</li> <li>Good Lifestyle</li> <li>Traditional</li> <li>Upmarket</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor infrastructure within city-centre</li> <li>Superior</li> </ul>
Professional and Financial Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Modern</li> <li>Upmarket</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Slow-moving</li> </ul>

Source: Interview data

These issues are not wholly unrecognised by the place-marketing organisation, contracted by the Local Authority, to promote UKTown and its sub-region. This organisation had restructured its website in line with the ‘live, visit, invest’ agenda and has recently staged two very high profile events for the business community. However, it became clear through during the interview process that although the organisation had a clear strategy for developing tourism in UKTown, it lacked strategies for marketing UKTown to its other target markets (i.e. residents and businesses). The strategic focus remained on tourism. This accounts for the latent perception among business representatives that UKTown’s focus remains on attracting tourists.

The underlying problem identified is a lack of integrity between the promotion of UKTown as a place to ‘live, visit, invest’ and the reality of relationships with businesses; that is, the prevailing strategic focus on promoting it as a tourist destination. The interviews with business representatives demonstrated

that the rebranding of the place-marketing organisation and the new website structured around the 'live, visit, invest' agenda is not sufficient. Activities need to be underpinned by strategies informed by a clear and coherent understanding of the identity of UK-Town and its inter-related communities.

## 5. LIMITATIONS

The findings of this article are based on a limited number of interviews with business representatives within one town in the UK. There is scope to develop the findings by exploring notions of identity with businesses at different stages of business development. There is also the potential to further explore notions of cross-border identity for businesses operating geographically outside areas but perceiving themselves to be part of it. The continuing development of public sector responses to this agenda is likely to lead to a number of actors and agencies becoming involved and further research could explore the mechanisms for this engagement in different areas across the country.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Kavaratzis & Hatch (2013) have stressed that "effective place branding should become a practical tool for allowing locals to express cultural features that for them already form part of the place identity" (2013:79). The UKTown case-study explores that existing place identity and how this is embedded in a specific context and set of dynamic relationships for a specific sub-group of locals.

The study demonstrates that despite the re-naming and rebranding of the Tourist Board as a place-marketing organisation committed to pursuing the 'live, visit, invest' agenda, there remains a 'cultural hangover' from previous place promotion policies. The prevailing image of UKTown is as a historic and traditional town. However, it is an image with which most business entities do not identify with and is even considered by certain business sectors to be 'detrimental' to business. As a result, the majority of business representatives did not choose to identify their businesses with it through their

branding, although they are proud to be based near or in UKTown. This 'cultural hangover' needs to be addressed if business perceptions are to change.

The paper argues that for initiatives such as the 'live, visit, invest' agenda to be successful, in future manifestations they need to be underpinned by a clear understanding of the business perspective. While the 'live, visit, invest' agenda aims to be inclusive (residents, visitors and businesses) there is the danger that it actually creates a false dichotomy and dynamic between businesses and residents: the case-study suggests that business representatives define and describe UKTown in terms of its inter-connected communities and do not consider themselves *distinct from* residents. Business representatives view their world in a distinctly different way to how it is promoted by the place-marketing organisation: driven by their markets and customers rather than by artificial and superimposed local authority boundaries. Over the next five to ten years, UK government policy envisages an increased role for private sector involvement in and funding of place marketing activity. Insufficient stakeholder engagement could lead to the alienation of key stakeholders in the business community and to a diminution of funding to support place marketing from the business community and it is important that this disaffection does not take place.

These findings have major implications concerning the effectiveness of the efforts of public bodies to support 'place making' and thereby enhance economic performance and thence economic growth. This paper argues that stakeholder engagement should be fundamental to the formation and promotion of place-identity. This is, perhaps surprisingly, a relatively novel concept in place-marketing, which has for decades focussed on attracting *new* residents and businesses. The evidence strongly underlines the need for greater stakeholder consultation and stronger relationships in the place marketing and branding of the location.

## EXTENDED SUMMARY / IZVLEČEK

Članek raziskuje dinamiko dojemanja in součinkovanj med večjimi gospodarskimi združbami in organi območne oblasti pri izpostavljanju značilnosti območja, na katerem oboji delujejo. Predstavlja napetosti in razlike ter posledice dogajanja in razmerja, pogojena z razlikami, kako združbe dojemajo urejanje območja in kako oblastni organi ter trženjske združbe, financirane z javnim denarjem, predstavljajo in pospešujejo razvoj območij.

Zanimanje akademikov za trženje območij se je povečalo v zadnjih letih (Gertner 2011a, Gertner 2011b; Lucarelli in Berg 2011), prizadevanja območnih oblasti za predstavljanje prednosti določenih območij pa so starejšega datuma (Kavaratzis in Ashworth 2005; Ashworth in Voogd 2005). V zadnjih letih dvajsetega stoletja je trženje značilnosti območij v javnem sektorju postalo zanimiva dejavnost in to predvsem z namenom pritegniti turiste ali izpostavljati prednosti predmestnih stanovanjskih sosesk. Pri tem so bile za oglaševanje uporabljene ustrezne predstavitve v podporo območju oziroma so bila območja prek javnih umetnostnih prireditev ali festivalov oglaševana kot nosilci premoženja kulturne vrednosti. V nekoliko bolj oddaljeni preteklosti se je trženje območij osredotočalo na vabljenje turistov, novih stanovalcev in zaposlencev. Zadnje čase pa se je poudarek od vabljenja možnih stanovalcev in nosilcev poslovanja premaknil v smer zadrževanja stanovalcev in poslovnih združb v prostoru.

V Združenem kraljestvu (ZK) so se v Angliji in Walesu konec dvajsetega stoletja dogajale spremembe v delu turističnih uradov in njihova preimenovanja. Številni uradi so ob ohranjanju poudarka na turistični privlačnosti območij dobili nove naloge za uveljavljanje njihovih regij in mest kot privlačnih namembnih točk za bivanje in naložbe. Posledica je premik osredotočenja na državni in območni ravni k razvoju ter uveljavljanju regij in mest, ki naj pritegnejo nove stanovalce in nosilce poslov (vlagati), delujejo v korist obstoječih stanovalcev in nosilcev poslov (bivati, delovati) in to ob ohranjanju vabljenja obiskovalcev (obiskati).

Nekaj sto državnih, regijskih in mestnih spletnih strani v ZK zdaj uporablja geslo »obiskati, bivati, vlagati« ali različico povezav teh besed za uveljavljanje svojih območij. Tuji primeri iz angleško govorečega sveta vključujejo del Severnega otoka Nove Zelandije (idealni kraj za bivanje, delo in naložbe), Collingwood v Kanadi (od leta 1858 kraj za bivanje, delo in zabavo) ter Downtown, Los Angeles v ZDA: »zahvaljujoč našemu tržnemu, ustvarjalnemu in kulturnemu preporodu zdaj tu biva, dela in se zabava vsak dan mnogo ljudi«. Deželna vlada Queenslanda, Avstralija, geslo »delati, bivati, zabavati se« uporablja celo kot del svojega spletnega naslova ([www.workliveplay.qld.gov.au](http://www.workliveplay.qld.gov.au) (2012)).

V članku se pristopa k razlagi primera neimenovanega mesta v ZK (ZK mesto). Območje je sedež nekaj sto malih, srednjih in velikih podjetij v različnih sodobnih tehnoloških dejavnostih. Mesto je del večje regije, ki bi jo glede na meje območne oblastne agencije in območni doseg zasebno upravljanega podjetniškega družabništva ter odbora za obnovo lahko omejili na različne načine. Javno financirana trženjska združba v ZK mestu podpira trženjske aktivnosti v mestu in delu regije. ZK mesto ima bogato zgodovino ponudbe muzejev, stavb in drugih stvaritev, ki segajo vse od stoletij vladavine rimskega imperija. Turizem in trgovina na drobno sta pomembna vidika območnega gospodarstva.

Z nizom delno usmerjenih intervjujev v obdobju med letoma 2011 in 2012 v območju ZK mesta so skušali ugotoviti dojemanje pomembnih deležnikov glede primernosti načinov, s katerimi skušajo tržiti ZK mesto. Intervjuje so opravili z višjimi poslovodnimi ravnatelji in drugimi predstavniki podjetij na območju, predstojniki zasebno upravljanih odborov območij za obnovo in predstavniki trženjske združbe, prej znane kot turističnega urada.

Iz teh intervjujev je očitno, da je ZK mesto dojeto na bistveno različne načine pri območni oblastni agenciji in sektorju gospodarstva na območju. V teh intervjujih so ugotovili, da kljub jasni strategiji trženjske združbe glede razvoja turizma v ZK mestu ta ni popolna, saj ne vsebuje vsebin za trženje ZK mesta drugim ciljnim uporabnikom, t. j. stanovalcem in podjetjem. Poudarek v strategiji je ostal na turizmu.

Problem, prepoznan kot pomanjkanje povezanosti med uveljavljanjem ZK mesta kot kraja za »bivanje, obisk, naložbe«, in dinamično stvarnostjo razmerij s podjetji, je torej v še vedno prevladujočem strateškem poudarku na ZK mestu kot turistični točki. V intervjujih s predstavniki poslovnega sveta je bilo nakazano, da zgolj nova »blagovna« znamka združbe za trženje območja in nova spletna stran, zasnovana na geslu »bivati, obiskati, vlagati«, nista dovolj. Aktivnosti bi morale biti povezane s strategijami, ki bi utrjevale jasno in celovito prepoznavanje identitete ZK mesta in njegovih bližnjih okrožij.

Raziskava je pokazala, da kljub preimenovanju in drugačni oznaki turističnega urada kot združbe za trženje območja, privržene utrjevanju gesla »bivati, obiskati, vlagati«, ostaja prevladujoče »breme kulture«, povezano s prejšnjimi politikami oglaševanja območja. Prevladuje dožemanje ZK mesta kot zgodovinskega in tradicionalnega mesta. To pa je podoba, s katero se večina podjetij ne more poistovetiti, in jo del poslovnega sektorja razume celo kot »škodljivo« glede na potrebe dinamičnega poslovnega okolja. Navedeno »breme kulture« mora biti pretehtano, če naj se dožemanje ZK mesta v poslovnem sektorju spremeni. Članek utemeljuje, da morajo biti za uspešnost iniciativ, zasnovanih na geslu »bivati, obiskati, vlagati«, le te podprte z dobrim razumevanjem potreb poslovnega sektorja.

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