

Book review

N. Papadopoulos and M. Cleveland (eds), *Marketing Countries, Places, and Place-associated Brands: Identity and Image* (Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA, USA, Edward Elgar Publishing 2021) 366 pp.

Maria Psimouli*

Fellow, Center of Excellence in Food, Tourism and Leisure, and Assistant Professor of International Business and Entrepreneurship, The American College of Greece, Athens, Greece

Place marketing is a field characterized by great polyphony as it has attracted the interest of various disciplines, such as international relations, political science, anthropology, sociology, and history – each one of them exploring the dynamic nature of the construct through a different prism, and all of them together revealing its multi-dimensionality. Research in the area is aligned with this multi-faceted approach, with published studies aiming to address some of the parameters associated with marketing places from a more micro-perspective (such as place branding, country of origin, destination branding) or from a more macro one (for example, nation branding). *Marketing Countries, Places, and Place-associated Brands: Identity, and Image* provides a holistic and integrative, cross-disciplinary critical overview of the main aspects that academics and practitioners should be aware of and take into consideration when studying or managing a place or place-associated brand, thus offering valuable guidance to anyone interested in the field. Making fresh and original contributions, the book is divided into four parts and consists of 19 chapters written by 28 acknowledged leaders of thought from 22 universities across the world.

The book begins by reminding us that we all are ‘birds of a feather, all over the place’ through Part I, which discusses *images* of places, linking to people and products. In Chapter 1, Warnaby and Medway delineate Agnew’s (1987) conceptualization of place in terms of location, locale, and a sense of place, exploring the interrelated geographical notions of scale and territory. Using two examples, each referring to one end of the spatial scale – St Ann’s Square (Manchester, UK) and the Oresund region (encompassing parts of Denmark and Sweden) – the authors identify the inherent complexities associated with the spatial and territorial aspects of place brands and raise two interrelated questions: (1) what exactly is being marketed/branded; and (2) who is, or what institutional arrangements are, responsible for marketing/branding? In Chapter 2, Kavaratzis and Florek use the 5Ws (why, who, what, when, where) and 1H (how) of journalism to better organize confusing questions around place brands, thus contributing to a clearer ‘mapping’ of the field that can work as a roadmap for future research. Different approaches to place branding – for example managerial, theoretical, destination branding, cultural, critical – converge around the key role of the stakeholders. In Chapter 3, Papadopoulos and Cleveland draw from humanistic geography (Relph 1976) to explore the key constructs of ‘place’ and ‘country’.

* Email: mpsimouli@acg.edu

Acknowledging that research has so far approached these two aspects through different conceptualization pathways and methodologies, the authors identify potential linkages between the two perspectives and highlight that many critical questions remain unanswered. The chapter ends with the inspirational quote claiming that ‘Data do not yield information except with the intervention of the mind. Information does not yield meaning except with the intervention of imagination’ (Levitt 1984: 99), thus inviting future researchers to delve into the field. In Chapter 4, Zenker critically discusses the current state of place marketing, posing six propositions that challenge existing assumptions, among them the starting point of many studies: that places compete for resources and target audiences. Calling for the development of new paradigms, Zenker encourages discussion and debate towards a true scientific revolution.

Part II focuses on *identity* and the role of residents in place and space. In Chapter 5, Florek explores several perspectives of the concept of place brand identity, reviews existing product-, corporate-, and destination-related brand identity models, and underlines the need to develop a place brand identity model that will reflect the importance of people, culture, and heritage, thus capturing a place’s vision and mission. In Chapter 6, El Banna and Stoica critically discuss the multiple roles of residents in the place brand co-creation process as brand ambassadors, storytellers, and, in some cases, co-destroyers (especially when they are not involved in official place branding activities). They also highlight the ways in which residents can generate value for places, aligning with Källström (2016), who claims that residents can create the ‘value-in-use’ of a place, filtering and testing official propositions through their personal experiences. In Chapter 7, Insch focuses on the multicultural nature of today’s urban communities, and discusses the need for belonging and place attachment (sense of home) through the philosophy of placemaking that ‘builds connection between spaces, people and environment’ (Nurse-Bray 2020: 305). In Chapter 8, Cleveland and Papadopoulos draw from astrophysics to delve into the person–place–time fabric and explore the self and social identity effects within this context. Inspiring examples are provided, depicting consumer–brand relationships as complementary constellations, while managers are invited to understand ‘how the stars align’ to be able to respond to *Star Trek*’s call and ‘boldly go where no one has gone before’.

Part III examines *associations* as the effects of country images in the field of country of origin (COO). In Chapter 9, Andéhn and L’Espoir Decosta challenge the status quo in the COO area, drawing from the consumer culture theory that underlines the symbolic element of consumption (Levy 1959). The authors identify a central conceptual problem with COO research: the fact that it deals not only with countries but also with places (Van Ittersum et al. 2003), referring not strictly to origin but rather to associations (Papadopoulos et al. 2018). Broadening the COO research beyond international marketing and being open to an increased plurality of perspectives could help the field reach its full potential. In Chapter 10, Magnusson and Westjohn review and discuss the role of stereotyping on country image perceptions through the literature as well as through a 12-year longitudinal study. The authors underline the importance of country stereotypes for COO studies and make suggestions for firms, countries, and future researchers. In Chapter 11, Cleveland, Papadopoulos, and Bartikowski propose a three-dimensional roadmap that aims to predict Which consumers (Person) will respond favorably to What (Product) products When (Position – time and context), linking social identity to place-based hierarchies. The discussion provides novel insights useful to both academics and practitioners, and applicable not only to places but also to relevant products and services. The authors invite future researchers to explore aspects such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the massive migrant waves

that can be characterized as ‘shocks to the system’. In Chapter 12, Bartsch and Zeugner-Roth focus on COO cognitive, affective, symbolic and normative cues, and discuss how processing of COO information used in advertising by consumers varies according to four contextual factors – product origin, product ethnicity, consumer characteristics, and market differences. Their summary of relevant knowledge to date is depicted on a conceptual model that could be empirically advanced through future research. In Chapter 13, Matarazzo explores the effects of cross-border acquisitions and offshoring strategies on country/place image and reputation. Drawing on several theoretical scenarios, the author attempts to understand consumer reactions to changes in the home country of a company/brand and link them to the customers’ buying behavior. Factors such as downward and upward transitions as well as corporate reputation are discussed and accompanied by relevant examples providing both academic insights and managerial implications.

Part IV aims for a holistic overview of various topics and concepts related to country and place marketing/branding, focusing on their applications and highlighting their inter-relationships. In Chapter 14, Wilson proposes a place branding advertising model to help researchers and practitioners looking to design, execute, and evaluate advertising strategy in a place branding context. Examples and measurement methods presented strengthen the proposed guiding framework. In Chapter 15, Oliveira and Hersperger explore the relationship between place branding and strategic spatial planning, based on case studies from Western Europe and North America. Selected findings concern place narratives in terms of attractiveness, promotion, and branding. The chapter concludes with a six-point practical agenda to support cities and metropolitan areas in reaching their long-term sustainability goals. In Chapter 16, White focuses on the role of popular culture on a country’s image and soft power, and discusses its impact on the country’s commercial brands, thus linking to the COO effect. The author concludes that popular culture is a mediating variable in the formation of country image, viewed through different cultural lenses. In Chapter 17, Kramavera and Grix try to understand public diplomacy, nation branding, and soft power in relation to hosting sports mega-events. Focusing on the Olympic Games, the authors present a comparative analysis based on a classification of all Games since 1936 and raise the question of whether soft power is always the proper explanation of why states host sports mega-events (nation branding or propaganda could be more appropriate in some cases). In Chapter 18, Therkelsen, James, and Halkier discuss how tourism is incorporated into sustainable place branding, focusing on the Danish city of Aalborg, which is considered one of the leaders in the field. This case study underlines the importance of cooperation among multiple stakeholders, and calls for further cross-sector synergies towards sustainable place branding strategies. In Chapter 19, Govers, through an overview of the current state, highlights the interdisciplinarity, complexity, and potential of place branding as well as its value for people interacting with places in any possible way. However, he underlines challenges and the need for specialists to advance the field so that it becomes a more meaningful and strategic part of tomorrow’s world.

The book ends with an invitation to academics and practitioners to continue navigating the oceans of knowledge and experience of the field, despite choppy and dangerous waters ahead. In my opinion, this is a great book that challenges our thinking and tries to move the field towards the next, more sustainable (in every sense) and inclusive step. Now is the time to build on accumulated knowledge, think differently, and adopt an interdisciplinary approach, not only to move forward but also to sustain the main foundation of the field: the basic existence of place that we could all relate to – our home at every level (local, regional, national, transnational, and global).

REFERENCES

- Agnew, J.A. (1987): *Place and Politics: The Geographical Mediation of State and Society*, Boston: Allen & Unwin.
- Källström, L. (2016): Rethinking the branding context for municipalities: from municipal dominance to resident dominance, in: *Scandinavian Journal of Public Administration*, 20(2), 77–95.
- Levitt, T. (1984): The globalization of markets, in: *Harvard Business Review*, 61(3), 92–102.
- Levy, S.J. (1959): Symbols for sale, in: *Harvard Business Review*, 37 (July–August), 117–124.
- Nursey-Bray, M. (2020): The ART of engagement placemaking for nature and people in cities, in: Hes, D, Hernandez-Santin, C. (eds), *Placemaking Fundamentals for the Built Environment*, Singapore: Springer, 305–326.
- Papadopoulos, N., Cleveland, M., Bartikowski, B., Yaprak, A. (2018): Of countries, places, and product/brand place associations: an inventory of dispositions and issues relating to place image and its effects, in: *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 27(7), 735–753.
- Relph, E. (1976): *Place and Placelessness*. London: Pion.
- Van Ittersum, K., Candel, M.J., Meulenberg, M.T. (2003): The influence of the image of a product's region of origin on product evaluation, in: *Journal of Business Research*, 56(3), 215–226.