Chapter 3
Defining Place Image

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ABSTRACT

The image of a place is important as it has implications for investments made in cities, workforce locations, and tourism. Place image incorporates concepts including brand, visual image, reputation, the sense of place, and the identity of the place - all of which create an overall image of a place and can lead to investment or abandonment. Place image has ramifications for decisions made about the place, including where businesses locate, where workers live, and where tourists visit (Smith, 2006). Place image has serious ramifications for decisions made about the place as people choose to stay, work, visit, and invest. This research outlines the inconsistencies in the literature, clarifies the terminology, and begins to set research standards for how place image is described through a conceptual model.

INTRODUCTION

The image of a place is important as it has implications for investments made in cities, workforce locations, and tourism which can include upwards of 600 significant new expansions or relocations in a state in a given year with each creating jobs and value to the economy (Conway, 2015). Place image incorporates concepts including brand, visual image, reputation, the sense of place, and the identity of the people - all of which create an overall image of a place and can lead to either investment or abandonment. Place image has ramifications for decisions made about the place, including where businesses locate, where workers live, and where tourists visit (Smith, 2006; Zenker, Eggers, & Farsky, 2013). Place image has serious ramifications for decisions made about the place as people choose to stay, work, visit, and invest. This research outlines the inconsistencies in the literature, clarifies the terminology, and begins to set research standards for how place image is described through a conceptual model.

Promoting places requires the "sale" of the image of particular place "so as to make it attractive to economic enterprises, to tourists, and even to inhabitants of that place" (Philo & Kearns, 1993). The goal of promoting cities is to encourage interest and investment to a specific place. Promoting places is

one way to boost regional growth through self-promotion and to "manufacture an environment that will secure the acceptance and even the affection of peoples who might otherwise rebel against it" (Philo & Kearns, 1993). Selling places makes one location stand out from the competition (Trejo, 2008; Avraham & Ketter, 2008). The marketing of places is crucial because practitioners argue that 71% of location decisions are based on image and these decisions are made based on emotions and rationalized with data (personal communication).

Place brands are now disseminated through a variety of tools including advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion, public relations and personal selling (Kotler, et al, 1993). Close attention should be paid to how valuable marketing dollars are spent and where the best impact for the money will be seen. Experts have said that an audience is perhaps five times more likely to be influenced by editorial copy than by advertising (Kotler, et al, 1993). As Andy Levine, President of Development Counsellors International noted, "If Money magazine says you're a great place to live that means more than if you say it. If a corporation says you're a great place to do business, that's more credible than your ad" (as quoted in Baker, 2007). Oftentimes, the media has a great influence on prospective place buyers by highlighting current events, sports highlights and publicized rankings ranging from most walkable to most miserable places.

There has been a major global shift toward increasing activity at the urban level to attract attention, capital, residents, and tourists, and one of those activities is place branding (Jensen, 2007). Anholt (2010) argues that given the effects of globalization, every country and every region must compete with every other for its share of the commercial, political, social, and cultural transactions. The brand is the shortcut for the "informed buying decision" about a region (Anholt, 2010). The brand, however, may not be known in- depth by the people who are potential residents or tourists. For example, a person may make a decision to visit Orlando because of Disney World, not knowing anything else about the region or its image.

CONCEPTS OF PLACE IMAGE

"The Image of the City" written by Kevin Lynch (1960), is a well-cited resource on city image. He calls for future research on how images develop and how this process can be influenced. The concepts and terminology surrounding place image are inconsistent in both the academic literature and among practitioners to this day. What one source calls image, another calls identity, and a third will term brand (Stock, 2009). This confusion is one of the major challenges for those researching this topic. The literature offers few empirical studies of this topic and instead relies mostly on case studies and anecdotal practitioner information (Dinnie, 2004; Uhlir, 2005; Herstein & Jaffee, 2008; Fan, 2010; & personal communications). Due to the inconsistencies in the literature, there is a great need to clarify the terminology and begin to set research standards for how place image is examined.

This lack of cohesiveness on definitions for all concepts of image includes concepts such as brand, image, reputation, stereotypes, sense of place, quality of place, identity, and quality of life. Gertner (2011) brings out this subject in a meta-analysis of the place marketing and place branding literature between 1990 and 2009. He found that most articles were not concerning business, management, marketing, or branding, but instead in the fields of public diplomacy, urban planning, geography, and political science, perhaps due to the lack of collaboration between disciplines. He also notes that most articles were essays or editorials with "doubtful scientific value" and 200 of 212 were subjective and anecdotal. He reported that several articles talked about brand and image as interchangeable concepts; he stated that out of the

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