

Tourism places, brands, and reputation management

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INTRODUCTION

The first decade of the twenty-first century was one of ‘many perfect storms for the travel and tourism industry’ (Chiesa, 2009); it began with the September 11 2001 attacks in the USA and ended amidst the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. The decade witnessed war in Afghanistan and Iraq, the SARS and avian and swine flu outbreaks, and devastating natural and human-induced environmental disasters that are too many to list. The collapse of real estate and stock markets around the world has left consumer confidence low and unemployment high in the world’s more economically developed economies and as tourism growth rates are closely correlated with economic business cycles, the coming years promise to be tough ones for the industry. Characterised by the influential writer Richard Florida (2010) as ‘The Great Reset,’ these are sharply transitional times, which may well prove to be a generational period of economic and social change during which individuals and places will need to find new ways of living and working.

Places compete in attracting visitors, residents, and businesses. A place with a positive reputation finds it easier to vie for attention, resources, people, jobs, and money; a positive place reputation builds place competitiveness and cements a place as somewhere worth visiting. This means that places looking to build or maintain strong reputations must consider a holistic approach to their brand which incorporates tourism, economic development, and a sense of place – all of which opens up potentially controversial questions of place authenticity, brand narratives, leadership and authorship, performativity, story-telling, and aesthetics. This chapter will:

- discuss place reputation management;
- locate tourism in its wider place reputation context; and
- introduce the virtuous circle of destination reputation model.





PLACE REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

Tourism destination development and marketing and place reputation management have a hugely significant but complex relationship and the various connections between brand, image, reputation and identity, and creative and competitive destinations are not well understood. What do we even mean by ‘destination’? It is a commonplace to suggest that tourist destinations are composites of services and natural, socio-cultural landscapes and that they exist on multiple geopolitical levels (Buhalis, 2000; Morgan, 2004; Pike, 2004). Yet, the notion of a destination is a problematic concept and is variously used by marketers and tourism professionals (as a geopolitical system with its own Destination Management Organisation or DMO) and by sociologists and cultural geographers (as a socio-cultural construction). In other words, some treat a destination as a set of attributes and others treat it as a set of cultural and symbolic meanings and contested ‘realities.’ Thus while Buhalis (2000, p. 98) defines a tourism destination as a ‘geographical region which is understood by its visitors as a unique entity, with a political and legislative framework for tourism marketing and planning,’ Saarinen (2004) understands a tourist destination as a socio-culturally produced space, the result of constantly evolving discursive practices. Arguably, the term destination is probably of most significance to marketing professionals and academics, and destinations exist only through the act of marketing. In other words, a ‘place’ only becomes a ‘destination’ through the narratives and images communicated by tourism promotional material.

Since this book was first published in 2002, the landscape of place and destination brand studies has transformed. At that time, it was the only book on tourism destination brands. Since then, Baker (2007) has published *Destination Branding for Small Cities* and several books now address the broader field of place brands and competitive identity (e.g., Anholt, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009a; Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 2006; Dinnie, 2008; Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2010). In 2004, the journal of *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* was launched and today a growing number of seminars and conferences regularly attract international audiences of academics, branding consultants, and DMO professionals. This third edition of our book gathers together leading professionals, consultants, and academics to discuss the relationship between tourism and place brands; in its 25 chapters and accompanying online case studies, the contributors examine a range of tourism destinations with different profiles, reputations, markets, and resources – each grappling with the challenge of being competitive in the twenty-first century. Part 1 reviews the conceptual connections between tourism, identity, branding, and place reputation; part 2 addresses nine key challenges in tourism destination brand management (ethics, leadership, partnership, authenticity, aesthetics, tone of voice, the digital revolution, measurement, and future scenario planning); and part 3 reflects on how DMOs have confronted these challenges in 11 case studies.

We know that places compete in attracting visitors, residents, and businesses. In addition, we also know that their reputation or brand plays a hugely significant role in determining just how successful they are in this

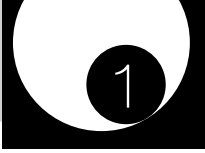


competition. According to Florida (2002) and Jansson and Power (2006), places which have strong and dynamic brands have an easier time attracting businesses and talent within the knowledge economy. But despite the recent growth in academic writing in the area of place brands or place reputation and identity management, we still lack a clear understanding of what this means in practice. The very terms ‘destination,’ ‘competitiveness,’ ‘authenticity,’ ‘creativity,’ and ‘place brand’ are slippery, elusive, contested, and often misunderstood.

Yet, our need for more understanding in this area is paramount. A consumer brand with genuine equity builds emotional connections and brings a powerful identity benefit, drives consumers’ behaviour, and shapes their perceptions of reality; it opens doors, creates trust and respect, and raises expectations of quality and integrity. In short, a strong brand has a positive ‘reputation.’ In the case of a place brand, it is a powerful mediator of culture, communities, and peoples and if it has a positive reputation it will find it easier to compete for attention, resources, people, jobs, and money. A positive place reputation builds place competitiveness and creates a reservoir of goodwill. This is where a positive destination brand or competitive identity which appeals to specific tourism market segments cements a place as somewhere worth visiting. Having a strong brand is hugely important for any destination whatever its size in the fight to combat increasing product parity, substitutability, and competition. Developing a strong brand requires tenacity and commitment but if those responsible can align the agendas of tourism and investment promotion agencies, exporters, policy-makers, and cultural organisations in a long-term stewardship strategy, then they can build a real sense of purpose and vision.

Branding was applied to consumer products long before the industrial revolution, but the idea of tourism destinations pursuing formalised brand strategies as we understand them today only originated in the 1990s. Whereas earlier ‘image-building’ marketing activities in the 1980s by cities such as New York and Glasgow (encapsulated by the slogans ‘I love New York’ and ‘Glasgow’s miles better’) foreshadowed such strategies, a strategic approach to destination branding was first introduced at a national level with countries such as Spain, Hong Kong, and Australia. Later, a host of countries, regions and cities – like the US cities of Seattle, Las Vegas, and Pittsburgh – embraced it, responding to a need to compete more effectively, to create a strategic decision-making framework and, in some cases, to increase accountability to their stakeholders. Many destinations now see place branding (which is broader than simply tourism and may encompass all or some of the following: inward investment, exports, culture, sports, events, education, and immigration) as a major part of their competitive armoury. In fact, the Destination Marketing Association International, the world’s largest official destination marketing organisation designates the development of a brand strategy as one of the critical items needed for accreditation in its Destination Marketing Association Accreditation Program (Baker, 2007).

Many academics have questioned whether places can ever be brands and in a strict marketing sense they cannot, which is why some commentators talk of place reputation management or competitive identity rather than place branding (see Chapters 2 and 4). Whilst this is a more accurate description, we would say that the term ‘place reputation stewardship’ is even more useful,



especially in the tourism sphere. In these financially strained times, DMOs face serious challenges – especially as a result of the digital revolution – and their cost, relevance, and value-for-money has come under greater scrutiny (Chapter 12). The reality for DMOs is that place reputation is derived from a host of sources, of which tourism marketing is but one (Chapter 3). The DMOs cannot control the place story or the image and they do not own the destination. Moreover, in our disintermediated world dominated by social media, it is the consumer who is increasingly shaping the brand and the media, so whilst DMOs never controlled the product, now they can't even pretend to control the message and have to think in terms of conversations and not campaigns (Epperson, 2009).

Yet, if a place's reputation exists whatever its DMO does, a place can still have a vision of how it wants to see itself and be seen and brand management can enable its key stakeholders to get there, to achieve differentiation, and secure a competitive identity (Chapter 21). In this sense, DMOs are less responsible for the 'management' and more for the 'stewardship' of destination reputations. But, theirs is still a key role in supporting and facilitating place brand management – not only speaking to the consumer alone but also to the whole tourism system, establishing, nurturing, and servicing partnerships between stakeholders (Chapter 19). In an ideal world, everything and everyone would be on brand but partnerships require encouragement and leadership. This is where the DMO comes into its own as the brand steward, leading, guiding, and coordinating the destination's online and offline 'critical promise points,' all those interactions in the material and virtual world when the destination brand promise is encountered and evaluated by its key target markets (Baker, 2007). The challenge of such stewardship should not be underestimated in today's rapidly and radically changing world.

THE NEED FOR RELEVANCE IN A WORLD OF PARADIGM SHIFT

There does seem to be something hugely significant going on out there in the world. Whatever it is, we've been in the middle of it for a while, and the recently termed 'Great Recession' has brought it into stark relief. Some say it's the end of the capitalist industrial age in America and the West and the beginning of something else. Some call it the age of globalisation, others the information age or the knowledge or experience economy. Yet others predict the dawning of a new transmodern age of planetary responsibility. Many are describing our era as one of regime change, system flip, or paradigm shift (<http://www.stockholmresilience>). Whilst it is a characteristic conceit of modernity to label every period as transitional, ours do seem to be particularly sharply transitional times. Indeed, this period may well prove to be one of generational economic and social change during which people, communities, and places will need to find alternative ways of living and working. Consumer confidence is fragile and many of the world's more economically developed economies are enduring recession and plummeting economic confidence, whilst volatile energy costs, political instability, and environmental disasters are global



concerns. Despite the end of the Cold War, the world remains a hostile place and there are many threats to peace, of which global inequalities, food, water, and energy shortages, and transnational terrorism are just three. Moreover, there loom more gradual, insidious global threats to which most of us pay only periodic attention – human pressures on our planet’s natural resources, resulting in climatic change and food, water and energy shortages (Hall, 2010).

We can perhaps be certain of only one thing about the future: that the competition for relevance and resources will be fiercer than ever. Just take the World Wide Web. Today, there are almost 250 million websites and 126 million blogs, whilst in 2009 the world’s 1.7 billion internet users watched a billion YouTube videos and sent 247 million e-mails every single day. At the same time, the amount of spam in those e-mails had increased by a quarter on 2008 (royal.pingdom.com, 2010). It is becoming harder to distinguish what is significant, authentic, and worthy of our attention in our information-heavy but knowledge-light world. Ours has become a cluttered world of the long tail, where so many places position themselves as ‘a great place to work, live, and play’ and so many tourist destinations promise a multitude of experiences and products, that it becomes ever more important but harder to achieve stand-out (Chapter 13). Too many destinations have, in fact, become ‘any country’ – communicated by marketing cliché, they lack relevance or stand-out in our changing world (Table 1.1).

Over the last 50 years, tourism patterns have altered dramatically. In 1950, almost 90% of the international tourists visited the world’s top 15 destinations. By 2005, things had become much more complicated and the most popular tourism destinations accounted for less than 60% of the tourist arrivals (UNWTO, 2009). Now, tourism is truly global and almost everywhere is a

Table 1.1 Any Country: Marketing clichés lack differentiation

Any Country: The Land of Contrasts

- *Any Country* is everywhere’s best kept secret. It’s so close to home, yet a world apart. The perfect place to escape the stresses and strains of modern life.
- Come and discover *Any Country*’s many hidden gems. Step back in time at one of hundreds of heritage attractions and museums. Or just kick off your shoes and relax on one of our award winning beaches. With more than 1000 miles of coastline, you’re sure to find your perfect spot.
- Whatever you’re looking for *Any Country* has it all. From mountain biking or walking to surfing and sailing. *Any Country* truly is an adventure playground packed full of fun for all of the family.
- And after all that activity, what better way to unwind than to savour fresh local food at one of our award-winning restaurants. Whatever your taste, you’ll find *Any Country* has the perfect ingredients for a short break or longer holiday, all year round. And wherever you go you’re sure of a warm *Any Countryish* welcome.
- But don’t take our word for it, come and see for yourself. What are you waiting for?

Source: walesthebrand.com

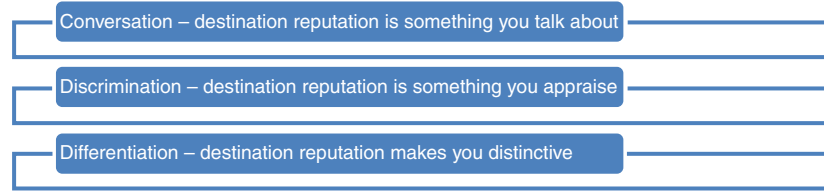


Figure 1.1 The essence of destination reputation

tourist destination so that places are engaged in a fiercely competitive battle to retain and attract not only visitors, investment, and events (Chapters 14, 15, and 17) but also talented human capital, students, residents, and even medical tourists (Chapter 16). In such a world, a positive place reputation becomes the key to place competitiveness. Further, distilled to its essence, destination reputation is the culmination of three factors (Figure 1.1). First, conversation – reputation is something you talk about; secondly, discrimination – reputation is something you critically assess; and thirdly differentiation – reputation makes you distinctive (Chapter 9).

Regardless of the quality of their reputation, today most countries have a destination brand, whether it is 100% ‘Pure New Zealand,’ ‘South Africa it’s Possible,’ ‘YourSingapore,’ or ‘Incredible India.’ Even Afghanistan positions itself as the ‘Last Unconquered Mountains of the World’ and countries such as Iraq, Iran, and Libya have ambitious plans to grow their tourism sectors over the next decade. The top 4 destination brands as voted for by their peers are: New Zealand, India, Spain, and Australia. Research conducted for the [WTO and ETC \(2009\) Handbook on Tourism Destination Branding](#) revealed that the majority of DMOs (82%) had an official brand strategy and a toolkit explaining how to apply the brand (80%), whilst 75% think that they have a unique positioning – although we might well question whether that is truly the case. Rather startlingly, over a third of the DMOs have spent money on developing a brand strategy which they have no plans to evaluate, revealing a certain lack of professionalism and expertise (Table 1.2).

This paints an interesting picture of current DMO practice and the attitudes of their chief executives and managers to tourism destination brands. But how much do we know about the processes involved? Are these brands created by an agency in consultation with the DMO? How ‘authentic’ are these brands, how reflective are they of the destinations concerned, their constituencies, and their narratives? Do they move beyond the realm of marketing and public relations into the fabric of the material world, do they have resonance in the character, and personalities of the places? This survey reveals that 60% of these brands are focused only on tourism. To what extent are governments and agencies aware of the benefits of a more holistic approach to place reputation management, which speaks to (amongst others) tourists, investors, residents, and students? How many of these worldwide destinations can be described as creative destinations? Some of these questions are taken up by the contributors in this book as they consider destination brand concepts, challenges, and cases. In this introductory chapter, we offer a contribution to the debates over place brands, reputation management, and destination brand stewardship, which draw on these contributions. More than simply précising them, however, we explore



Table 1.2 Current DMO branding practice

DMO branding practice	%
Have an official brand strategy	82
Have a brand manager	37
Have a set of brand values	80
Think they have an unique positioning	75
Have a brand toolkit	80
Developed the brand in collaboration	90
Do cooperative branding	37
Are tourism-related only	60
Don't measure their brand's impact	37

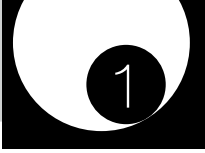
Source: Adapted from WTO and ETC (2009) Handbook on Tourism Destination Branding.

the DNA of creative destinations and put forward a new model, which locates destination reputation stewardship in its broader context of place reputation management – the virtuous circle of destination reputation management.

THE VIRTUOUS CIRCLE OF CREATIVE DESTINATION REPUTATION

Places compete in attracting visitors, residents, and businesses and many of them are doing this by promoting a place brand that encapsulates the qualities that the place has in order to generate memorable positive associations and powerful place brand equity. Some have been particularly successful, for instance the 100% Pure New Zealand brand is calculated to be worth around US\$13.6 billion, ranked the 21st brand in the world just behind Samsung and ahead of Dell (10yearsyoung.tourismnewzealand.com). But, whilst places which have strong and dynamic brands have an easier time attracting businesses and talent within the knowledge economy of the twenty-first century, recent research suggests that it is becoming increasingly difficult to differentiate places according to ‘hard’ factors such as their infrastructure, economy, accessibility, and the availability of financial incentives as so many score well in this regard ([Pride, 2008](#)).

Instead, a place’s so-called ‘soft’ factors such as its environment, friendly local people, entertainment and leisure services, and traditions in art and culture are assuming more importance with potential investors and tourists alike. Thus, we need a more dynamic and nuanced view of the factors which create the right conditions for creativity, competitive identity, and a strong destination brand to flourish. Florida’s creative class (2002) – those people who generate ideas and innovations – is attracted to places that are open to new ideas and newcomers and attaches a high value to urban facilities and cultural services such as cinemas, bars, restaurants, museums, art galleries, and upscale retail ([Boschma & Fritsch, 2009](#)). This means three things. First, that imagery traditionally associated with tourism promotion could have a significant



influence on wider perceptions of the place. Secondly, that positioning and communications for economic development audiences should take full account of both rational and emotional considerations in destination or location choice. Thirdly, as tourism marketing is often the most professional part of a place's reputation management portfolio, it can lead the way in reputation management.

Whilst we have said that 'destination' is a problematic term in tourism, so 'creativity' and 'competitiveness' are equally hard to pin down for scholars and practitioners in economics, urban studies, and development and policy studies. Both are elusive, slippery terms which are often overly associated with urban areas (Clifton & Huggins, 2010). A place's competitiveness is typically measured by the ability of its economy to attract and maintain profitable firms and stable or rising standards of living for its population (Storper, 1997). While the competitiveness of places is therefore primarily coupled to their economic performance, there is a growing consensus that competitiveness is best measured in terms of the 'assets' of the local business environment, including the quality of the local infrastructure and human capital and the degree of innovative capacity (Malecki, 2004, 2007). Together with factors including the availability of high-quality cultural facilities, these 'assets' are seen to influence the ability of communities, cities, and regions to attract creative and innovative people and secure regional competitive advantage (Kitson et al., 2004). In other words, competitiveness is being increasingly discussed in relation to creativity, knowledge, and environmental conditions, rather than an accumulated wealth index (Huggins, 2003).

Just as definitions of competitiveness are being broadened in economic geography and urban studies it is time to reconsider how we judge competitive tourism destinations. Until very recently, tourism development has consistently been characterised in terms of an accumulated growth index. Success has been predicated on increased volumes of visitors and higher levels of spending; reports and strategies, whether emanating from the UNWTO or regional and national governments, measure the industry's health by its growth achievements and growth potential. Given that if everyone on earth lived like the typical European, we would need three planets to live on (<http://www.oneplanetliving.org>), we must question the value and long-term sustainability of such measures of success and competitiveness. We need alternative ways of measuring the competitiveness and success of destinations, such as their relevance, their capacity to provide sustainable, cohesive communities, a high quality of life, attractive and universally designed public places, their ability to embrace innovation and creativity and their stewardship of a place's culture, traditions and environment. We need to devise KPIs for mindful, syncretic growth and not mindless development.

Arguably, creative tourism destinations are urban and rural places which enhance the well-being of their populations through tourism and embrace new ways of thinking and sustainable living; places which are attractive to live in and to visit. They are change destinations which prioritise social benefit and 'mindful' development. They are also clever places which are able to command attention no matter their size or diplomatic influence. In a context of a world where stakeholders demand more for less from public sector budgets, creative destinations are those which find bottom-up, inclusive ways of enhancing



and sustaining their reputation, taking advantage of the events economy, harnessing popular culture and digital platforms, delivering unique individual experiences and employing the testimonies of residents, tourists, investors, and students as place ambassadors (Chapter 18). Creative destinations are moving toward holistic place reputation management, effectively integrating the attraction of tourism, investment, and talented human capital. They are confident places which are engaging issues of social responsibility, ethical practice, and sustainable ways of living and building strong partnerships between civil society, government, and business.

The harnessing of creativity, innovation, talented human capital, and sustainable ways of living are vital for communities, cities, and regions seeking to become creative destinations. The virtuous circle of destination reputation has six elements which will mark out tomorrow's strong brands – a place's tone, traditions, tolerance, talent, transformability, and testimonies (Figure 1.2). These interconnected elements build on each other to create an (ideally) ever-improving radial cycle or a virtuous circle of creative destination reputation. Whilst we focus here on the impact of these elements on a place's tourism reputational balance sheet, it is impossible to separate tourists from all those other consumers and mediators of place identity.

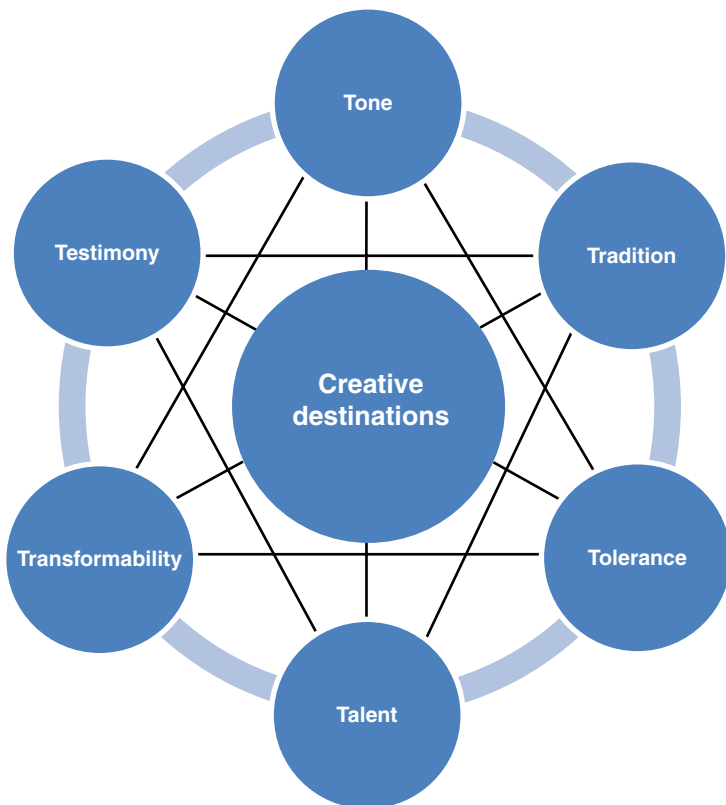
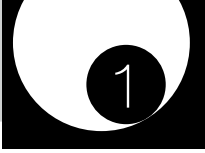


Figure 1.2 The virtuous circle of creative destination reputation



Tone

It is difficult to overstate the emotional power of a destination's tone, its identity, and sense of belonging. Vitiello and Willcocks (Chapter 22) discuss a place's ambience, its physical fabric and character and describe how some places evoke humanity and character whilst others offer anonymous, bland homogeneity or even induce fear and insecurity. A destination's ambience provides clues to its culture; a place tells its stories in its everyday fabric, communicating a message to its residents and visitors more powerfully than any marketing campaign. The public management of space is thus a key ingredient in any place reputation strategy. Creative destinations present residents and visitors with opportunities to continually rediscover and enjoy their spaces, which are designed from the bottom-up with an emotional as well as a utilitarian dimension to allow the originality of the local people to shine through in the making of place (Chapter 22, this volume).

Place tone exists in the material, symbolic, and virtual worlds but to have impact in destination reputation management it must be consistently and effectively communicated in all these worlds. Places are trying to engage visitors, residents, and other stakeholders in a stimulating conversation and place reputations must be communicated with a strong, distinctive, and engaging tone of voice in all online and offline interactions with the key target audience (Chapter 10). A place's tone (its ambience, the attitudes of its people, its heritage, and narratives) is inseparable from a destination's sense of place. Yet, communicating this is no simple undertaking and opens up controversial challenges of place authenticity, brand narratives, leadership and authorship, performativity, story-telling, and aesthetics (see Chapters 5–9).

Tradition

Of course, for many urban destinations the recognition that a place's culture and history offers unique value is not surprising and yet many destinations attach so little importance to it that they demolish their heritage to make way for sports stadia, shopping malls, and the increasingly ubiquitous and anonymous skyscrapers, which are in fact a major turn-off for tourists in search of the 'real' or 'authentic' place (Leiper and Park, 2010). Authenticity has become a hugely controversial concept amongst tourism scholars. Some argue that today's emphasis on the post-modern, the hypermediated, the global rather than the local, all suggest the redundancy of authenticity. Yet, for the creative destination, its authenticity or traditions coupled together with its tone, is a vital ingredient; for many places it is the well-spring of their reputation and identity premium (Chapter 8). Effectively and sympathetically communicated through marketing activities, tradition is the alchemical ingredient which distinguishes the bland from the unique place; it is the philosophers' stone which transforms the narratives and stories of a destination into a relevant and appealing identity (Chapters 20, 23, and 24).

This should not be a tradition which is merely static and preserved history, but one which is being constantly performed, engaged, renewed, reinterpreted, and augmented by new narratives which respond to and are engaged with



making new socio-cultural forms. This is a collective authenticity, which recognises the central agency of a wide range of people in its ongoing creative production and reproduction. Without this collective authorship and support, the use of destination brand narratives in marketing activities will be doomed to failure as inhabitants at best fail to recognise and at worst reject any ‘top-down’ authored stories.

The difficulty in communicating tradition should not be underestimated given the need to manage and harness what Hornskov (Chapter 8) refers to as both the material (the physical) and immaterial (the marketing) realms. Even when agencies recognise the value of stewarding a successful brand, such a diverse group of actors and stakeholders are involved (with so many competing priorities and resource demands) that bringing them together is a huge task. Local authorities/municipalities, their own varied technical and infrastructural departments, government agencies, the cultural and business sectors, and the communities themselves are just a few of the interested parties we could name. All of these actors operate with very different values, goals, and operating procedures; they may be suspicious of each other and this often becomes a volatile combination (see Chapters 6 and 7).

Tolerance

Tolerance is an interesting addition to our DNA of the creative destination and our use of the term in this context is intended to convey openness to difference, to new ideas, thinking, and ways of living. Tolerant places welcome talented people of any race, religion, ethnic background, or sexual persuasion and embrace innovative and creative ways of living and working. For example, we might say how a place engages with issues of social responsibility, ethical practice, and sustainable ways of living – what we might term the global social responsibility agenda – typifies its degree of tolerance (Chapter 5). We are familiar with the notion of corporations being scrutinised and evaluated on their social responsibility records and with the power of ethically focused and socially engaged consumers to hold these corporations to account. As Anholt (2009b, p. 95) argues, ‘Branding at its best is a technique for achieving integrity and reaping the reputational rewards of integrity.’ We are less familiar with applying these principles to places, although there is a growing list of countries facing consumer boycotts for contravening human rights (e.g., Burma/Myanmar; Israel; Jamaica; China) and animal rights (e.g., Canada – fur seal culls; Mauritius – live exports of primates; Japan – whale hunting) (<http://www.ethicalconsumer.org>).

We can discern tentative indicators of sustained consumer interest in how places respond to the global social responsibility agenda and these will give rise to opportunities and threats for tourism destinations (Chapter 5). We only have to look at the recent experience of Italy. This may seem a surprising example to choose as we are all familiar with Italy’s appeal as a tourism and cultural destination; indeed, it has regularly topped Anholt’s Nation Brand Index in these areas. However, Italy’s poor ratings for business and governance have led to a steady shift in its reputational balance sheet – particularly for its failure to act as a responsible steward of its environment and its globally significant heritage (Anholt, 2010). This loss of brand value may well have



longer-term consequences for Italy's place reputation as people begin to hold more places to international account.

Talent

Supporting indigenous or incoming talented human capital is vital for any creative place seeking to enhance its economic or tourism competitiveness. Whilst Florida (2002) estimates that the creative class constitutes around a third of employment in more developed economies like the United States, service jobs in areas like tourism, hospitality, and leisure are vitally important to the growing number of countries highly dependent on tourism, especially in the less developed economies of the world. We have suggested above that creative places thrive on diversity and openness, to immigrants, to people of all sexual orientations, to new ideas, and lifestyles. In addition, we also noted that the availability of activities and services traditionally associated with tourism could have a significant influence on wider perceptions of the place and that, as a result positioning and communications for economic development audiences should take full account of both rational and emotional considerations in destination or location choice. It is instructive that Canada has recently reaped the benefits of being a welcoming place for immigrants by comparison with its larger US neighbour. When the software giant Microsoft established its new development centre in Vancouver in 2008 it cited the major reason as the city's position as 'a global gateway with a diverse population,' a place where it could 'recruit and retain highly skilled people affected by immigration issues in the United States.' The new facility is in one of the most ethnically diverse regions on the planet, whose 2.2 million residents include immigrants from dozens of countries including Asia, South America, and Europe (<http://investincanada.gc.ca>).

Here, a major corporation saw an ethnically diverse staff as a major asset, considering that such a range of worldviews creates innovative thinking and inspires fresh ways to interpret and solve global challenges. When Microsoft began to research locations for a new development centre staffed with experts from around the world, Vancouver's unique attributes – high scoring on all six elements in our virtuous circle of place reputation – made it an immediate choice. The city's ethnically diverse communities help immigrant employees feel at home, while its temperate climate, thriving arts scene, and high quality of life make recruitment easy and foster creativity. The city also has excellent public health care, educational, and transportation systems and scores well as an eco-city with high use of renewable energy and low pollution levels. It is also within a short drive of Whistler Blackcomb, one of the world's top ski destinations and is regarded as an attractive tourist destination. In fact, a 2010 independent study ranked Vancouver as the world's fourth best city for its quality of life – a place with a strong creative and competitive reputation (<http://www.mercer.com>).

Transformability

Creative, competitive destinations are agenda-setting places. Whilst stewarding and communicating the tone of a place and its tradition, a forward-looking destination simultaneously looks to embrace what is best in new practices and ways of living. Take the digital revolution, which is forcing destinations



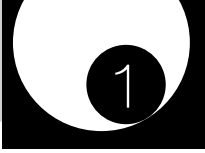
to finally realise that they never had control of their brands and that they are open to consumer scrutiny. This poses a number of challenges for the creative destination (e.g., of content, socialisation, integration, and measurement, see Chapter 11) but when DMOs strike the right note (as with Queensland's best job in the world or the YourSingapore portal and living logo) there is a conversational capital to be made, which extends beyond segment boundaries like tourism, business, and studying.

Of course, transformability in this context is about much more than embracing new technologies. It is the capacity to act and think differently and whilst in difficult times, there may be a tendency to give up on innovation and retreat into safe thinking and known markets until the worst is over, this is the time for places to examine new possibilities. Of course, changing the way we measure destination success toward mindful indicators and rejecting the cult of growth in tourism (Cater, 2010) is itself a transformative act – and ahead of the curve. There is no doubt that the pressure of climate change and human development will eventually lead to a fundamental shift in our consumption patterns as the world's population hits 9 billion in the middle of this century. These pressures may also stimulate more localised holiday-taking with the concomitant demand for high-quality, locally sourced produce. In the future, steady-state tourism consumption could lead to newer travel behaviour and a move from more distant to local and 'slower' travel could heighten the importance of the domestic market as a sustainable alternative for many destinations (Hall, 2010). For instance, Cittaslow (literally Slow City) is a movement founded in Italy in 1999. Inspired by the slow food movement, Cittaslow celebrates and supports the diversity of local town cultures and cuisines and has accredited communities in 14 countries (<http://www.slowmovement.com>).

At the moment, it is difficult to predict the trajectory of slow travel but moves toward more mindful, socially driven development and the resultant popularity of destinations which support local diversity seem inevitable in the long term. Similar initiatives include fair trade, carbon neutral and One Planet communities, cities and nations. There are currently Fairtrade Towns in 17 countries; carbon neutral regions are positioning themselves as proving grounds for sustainable technologies in a bid to attract new businesses and become models for sustainable living (<http://www.cnr2030.org>); and One Planet Communities are designed to enable people to reduce their ecological footprint (<http://www.oneplanetliving.org>). Currently in the van guard, such communities, cities, and regions are opening pathways through new cultural or political terrain for other places to follow. Moreover, not only do they demonstrate transformability but this is likely to translate in the long term into a reputation which makes it easy to attract tourists and employees and foster creativity. Thus, at the moment there is a strong correlation between those cities which are in the top 50 for eco-living and the top 5 in the Mercer quality of life rankings: Vienna (1); Zurich (2); Geneva (3); Vancouver, Auckland (=4) (<http://www.mercer.com>).

Testimonies

The last and most important element in the cycle of destination reputation management are testimonies – those stories told by tourists, students, residents, and businesspeople of a destination, which add or subtract the real equity



to a destination's reputation. If the destination experience is memorable and delivers or exceeds the brand promise then positive testimonies make the circle a virtuous one – reinforcing and enhancing a place's reputation. Of course, if the opposite happens, then equity flows away from the brand and the reservoir of goodwill is slowly drained. Despite all the marketing opportunities which exist today, word-of-mouth is still the most powerful form of communication and the digital revolution is accentuating its importance.

Digital channels have created an irrevocable change in consumer–brand relationships, which is evident in the proactive role customers take in shaping the dialogue with the brand and ultimately its reputation. This is also transforming how creative destinations perform online, with participation, openness, conversations, community, and connectedness the key words characterising this digitally inspired revolution (Spannerworks, 2007). As this conversation culture replaces our information culture (Leonhard, 2009) much of the social networking sites' content provides a wealth of 'independent' peer-produced dynamic content. Today 'the wisdom of the crowd is embodied in a wiki' and customers are 'lifecasting' their brand experiences on sites such as Wikitravel, Trip Advisor, and IgoUgo (Chapter 11). In this way, the power of testimony is magnified and as it spreads it gathers momentum.

Every person who has something positive to say about a destination – its culture, the welcome of its people, and the quality of its environment and infrastructure – becomes a place ambassador for that destination. Tourists', residents', investors', and students' testimonies are crucial to any destination's attempts to manage their reputation and it is commonplace to see place advertising which uses the testimonials of celebrities and 'ordinary people' (e.g., the 'feeling good about Newport' campaign by the host city of the 2010 Ryder Cup, used both on banners around the city <http://www.newport.gov.uk>). People talk about the places they have visited and it is very difficult to overstate the cultural capital of conversation about travel. At the same time, research has identified the power of friends and relatives as the number one influence on destination choice, so it is not only how 'you' talk about a place but also with 'which friends' as well (Yeoman, 2008).

Whilst in the world of the 'wiki', everyone has an opinion, those of some people are doubly important. Thus, opinion leaders and formers are highly positioned and influential individuals in their respective fields (across business, media, government, international organisations, academia, law, science, and popular culture) to whom others turn to for advice, opinions, and views and whose ideas and behaviour serve as a model to others. Communicating to a particular group and influencing their attitudes, opinion leaders have an important role in shaping markets. If they can be recruited (formerly to provide testimonials as with Newport) or simply informally as a result of positive experiences to become ambassadors for a place, then place marketers are using the opinion leader to carry and 'trickle down' its message to influence its target group. The power of opinion leaders is why DMOs place so much store on organising familiarisation visits for journalists and travel writers, why convention bureaux invest heavily in attracting conferences, seminars, and conventions, and why places strive to attract major sports, cultural, and political events, which bring leading figures from a range of fields to their cities and regions (Chapters 14, 15, and 17).



CONCLUSION

Destination reputation management might largely be concerned with enhancing how the outside world sees tourism places but it begins at home; as part of the wider process of place reputation stewardship, it depends upon building a productive coalition between civil society, government, and business which can then act as a powerful dynamic for progress. But this demands new ways of working together, building partnerships across disparate, competing, and even conflicting stakeholder groups with the DMO, an obvious coordinator. Central to the whole process is a place's vision for its future. What kind of place does its leaders, stakeholders, and communities want it to be? A place's reputation reflects how *others see it* and how *it sees itself*; its management moves its reputation forward to where it *wants to be seen*. Simon Anholt (Chapter 2) tells us that a place's symbolic actions will be central to a place's storytelling. This is as much about envisioning a place community's dreams for its future as stewarding its traditions and culture.

How can communities harness their traditions, cultures, and imagination, environment and human qualities to get where they want to be? This process involves asking fundamental questions about the kind of society its leaders, stakeholders, and communities want, the kind of environment they want to live in, the significance they place on social justice and human rights, values, family, culture, learning, immigration and desirable levels of growth and development. How can they reconcile competing needs, pressures, and desires and build consensus and an agreed platform for action? When it comes to tourism, communities must ask what kind of tourism industry they want. Do they see tourism as important in their development? If so, how will they project their traditions and culture to the outside world? Who will have the authority to tell their stories, whose narratives will be told, and whose will be excluded? These and other questions need answers if a place is to enhance its reputation and build equity in its tourism brand.

In this chapter we have seen how, in today's competitive globalised tourism marketplace, standing for something and standing out from the crowd have never been more important. This is, in fact the first of this book's three broad messages, which unfold in the following chapters. The second is that DMOs tend to be the most experienced and professional in a place's reputational management 'team' and as they move into viral marketing their role is likely to be enhanced. Tourism provides us with a unique opportunity to personalise our relationship with places either in a domestic or in an international context. Just the very act of visiting somewhere makes a place's reputation or image more significant for the visitor; once we are there our experiences will lead us to reappraise our image of that place – for good or ill. Crucially, to be truly effective place reputation management must be a holistic strategy which coheres tourism, economic development, urban planning, major event planning, and a host of other activities and sectors. And the final message – which we have summarised here in the virtuous circle of destination reputation management – is that those responsible for the stewardship of places and their reputations must embrace creativity, innovation, and sustainable ways of living – in fact, their future depends on it.

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Useful Websites

<http://www.cnr2030.org/>
<http://investincanada.gc.ca>
<http://www.ethicalconsumer.org>
<http://www.mercer.com>
<http://www.newport.gov.uk>
<http://www.oneplanetliving.org>
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