

Book Reviews

Elgar encyclopaedia of city and place branding (book review)

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Elgar Encyclopaedia of City and place Branding features a collection of research essays by leading researchers in the area of place branding in over 30 universities worldwide. Over a hundred short chapters ranging from two to maximum six pages, including references, examine how local activities have influenced and increased the international reputation of countries worldwide.

Positive place branding for a country is important commercially and politically for improving its ability to build and maintain its international commercial and political presence. Place brand is an important part of Public Diplomacy, the process through which a country and key cities and regions can become internationally recognised and respected and can lead to increased tourism, export and import of key products and services and economic development as well as positive political relations.

For language teachers and teachers interested in the countries whose language they are teaching recognising and teaching how positive inter-cultural relations and understanding place branding are an important part of the learning process.

Place Branding raises the international image of a country by the quality and attractiveness of environments and is an important asset in building positive recognition and international relationships.

As one contributor describes it, Los Angeles in the state of California in the USA is not just a place brand as the home of the movie industry and many of its stars but also emerging as a leading AI centre with companies running international businesses based there. In doing so they add to the political and economic reputation of the USA and encourage visitors and interest in US products and services for export worldwide.

The Encyclopaedia offers chapters on key areas of development in international business and public diplomacy, making countries and their key cities attractive places to visit and be involved with. Through their research essays the authors present key achievements in technological and economic development, international recognition and pleasure, economic support through manufacturing, exports, attracting investment and encouraging tourism and perhaps above all raising the profile and importance of the country in Public Diplomacy, its international political image.

The edition also features experts in place branding worldwide, especially Simon Anholt whose contribution comes at the beginning and explains the growing importance of place branding in developing and upholding international reputation. In his first chapter he presents the six key principles on which a region or a whole country can be

assessed. They are Tourism (the ability to attract people from overseas), Exports (the products sold abroad), People (the character and attitudes of the local population), culture and heritage (history and the arts) and finally, Investment and Immigration and Governance. Assessing all these gives us an indication of a country or region's ability to appeal to visitors, tourism, investment and positive international business and political relations. Anholt also contributes a description of his Good Country index and identifies seven category ranks of a country's international reputation based on contributions to science and technology, culture, international peace and security, world order, planet and climate, prosperity and equality and finally, contributions to health and wellbeing and goes on to list each contribution of the databases used to assess results.

Dr. Robert Govers contributes a chapter entitled *Imaginative Communities*, including cities, regions or countries who share geography, history and a sense of belonging, encouraging common sense of comradeship and purpose.

Usually, when discussing Public Diplomacy and soft power, attention turns to exploring the strength of a country and its international status and foreign policy that is based on the quality of its national life, focusing on lifestyle, architecture, what it is famous for and how these give it importance in international politics and business.

The Encyclopaedia, however, also explores a number of other areas that can influence international appreciation including, brand identity, labels and certifications, food tourism, geographical Indications and place development, the role of diasporas in the country, climate change communication, wine tourism, urban regeneration, spatial planning, songwriting and soundmarking, science and technology diplomacy, public relations, and other areas the recognition of which by other countries might recognise

the country's position and international prestige. All these can affect international identity and can influence admiration and cooperation by other countries.

However, not everyone argues in favour of place branding as a way of publicising national quality and achievements. Bill Baker, a specialist in Total Destination Marketing examines the challenges of developing a place brand. He stresses that the danger of having a profile that is not clear and is not shared by the population can reduce its influence over people outside the area, including overseas. He summarises by saying that successful development of a place branding project is change management ensuring that everything is examined and if necessary modified or altered to suit the brand. There may be new stakeholders organising the brand presentation, the end of 'sacred cows', supporters of an older and not-acceptable image of the society and a different approach to change management to ensure the place brand works in the future.

Another very interesting article by Filipe Roquette of Bloom Consulting in Portugal examines the function of AI (Artificial Intelligence) and its role in developing and publicising place brand and the image it aims to present.

In conclusion, the *Encyclopaedia* is an excellent addition to the libraries of departments with an interest in commerce and international business development and in national and local image to present in international sales, the encouragement of tourism and international diplomacy. Each essay written by researchers in universities around the world focusing on different ways of achieving place branding and international recognition, is immensely informative and in many cases entertaining. The over 100 chapters written by researchers based all over the world will be an essential resource in your own work and a valuable stimulus to further research.

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