



ITÄ-SUOMEN YLIOPISTO

Stakeholder participation in regional level place branding in Finland

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Outline

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motivation of the study

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(questions etc.)

Background of the study

Original interest
in place branding

- Observation success of “Brand Finland” in Japan

Master's thesis
subject

- Discursive legitimation of nation branding program of Finland

PhD thesis
subject

- Place branding in regional level in Finland

Examples from place branding in regional/city level



VisitKarelia.fi



Lapland–North of Finland, Imagomarkkinointi hanke (Lapland – North Finland image marketing project) 2011–2013

7 073 843 € planned,

5 051 436 € final

Pohjois-Karjalan ja Joensuun vetovoimaohjelma (North-Karelia and Joensuu city attractiveness program) 2011–2013

2 580 000 € planned,

2 399 036 € final

Etelä-Savo – elinvoimainen Saimaan maakunta (Southern-Savonia – Vital province of Saimaa region)

1 552 834€ planned,

1 556 226 € final

Motivation to practice place branding

- Dominant discourse of increased “**global competition between places**” (not just companies in places) in the governance.
- Thomas theorem: “If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” -> if policymakers perceive their places as being in competition, they will embark on policies to improve the competitive position of their places (Boisen, 2007a).
- “Proponents of the Europe of Regions have accentuated the importance of the regional identities in effort of regional actors to gain resources for development plans and to make regions into ‘products’” (Paasi 2002, 2).

Conceptual framework - What is place branding?

- Place branding diverged around 20 years ago from corporative branding of products to it's own field.
- Main purpose is to **separate the place positively from other places** (cities, regions, nations) and **add value to the place** in question in a broad sense.
- Most common task for place branding in theory, and especially in practice place branding is (Kavaratzis and Hatch 2012):
 1. to define single place identity
 2. to identify ways in which the defined identity is relevant to several audiences and
 3. to attempt to convince these audiences that the place is relevant to them
- This means place branding is usually understood as communication-promotional tool of place marketing.
- Place branding is considered far more complex practice than corporate branding because of many different stakeholders involved from different sectors and with different perspectives. (Saraniemi 2009)
 - Also, "Unlike a product, service or organisation, nobody owns a country, region or a city." (Boisen, 2011)

Stakeholders in place branding

- Authors in place branding literature have started to emphasize the role of stakeholders in place branding:
 - **“.. the most effective place branding initiatives are those where a wide range of local players are involved and energized.** On the contrary, initiatives, which do not engage, and in some cases alienate local stakeholders, are almost always destined to fail” (Houghton and Stevens, 2011)
 - **“.. it is the conflicting voices of different stakeholder groups that contribute to the place brand,** arguably adopting a brand-as-dialogue approach.” (Baker 2007)
- Who are the stakeholders in place branding? For example:
 - Local residents
 - Local companies
 - Local NGO's
 - Investors
 - Etc.....
- **.. But “who will participate from an endless list of possible participants and stakeholders?” (Kavaratzis, 2008)**

Research question

Who has the right to participate in the place brand and who, on the other hand, doesn't and why?

What kind of stakeholder network is surrounding the place branding programs, how management of place branding programs identify the stakeholders and who is left outside of it and why?

How do the stakeholders in the place branding program see their possibilities to participate and influence the program and have their perspective included in place brand?

How do the materials produced by place branding program and the media communications represent power relations between different stakeholders?

Data

- Three case studies on regional level place branding programs:
 - **North-Karelia and Joensuu city attractiveness program** (Pohjois-Karjalan ja Joensuun vetovoimaohjelma) 2011 – 2013,
 - **Lapland: Above Ordinary project** 2013-,
 - **Southern Savonia – Vital Province of Saimaa** (Etelä-Savo – elinvoimainen Saimaan maakunta) 2012-2013
- Explanation for this selection:
 - 1) These are regional council programs (regional level administrative unit in Finland) -> not only marketing but also regional development.
 - 2) Programs are funded mainly with public funding (EU and state), so there is strong public investment (but who gets the benefit?)
 - North and East of Finland get most EU structural funds money – more funding also for the place branding initiatives
 - 3) Closeness to the border with Russia gives own dimension to place branding in these areas-> e.g attracting investments and tourists from Russia

Methodology

- Guiding line in the methods selected is to cover study question from various perspectives (management, stakeholders and the researchers objective perspective)
1. In depth Interviews with the management of the selected place branding programs and possibly also group discussions with the stakeholders included.
 - Utilizing snowballing method (asking “who would you recommend to ask about this subject”) to find more interviewees for more insight in the topic
 2. Electronic survey questionnaire for stakeholders identified in the interviews and background research.
 3. Critical discourse analysis of the marketing material, strategies and other available documents of the place branding programs
 - Textual analysis with purpose of finding the underlying discursive power relations present in the material (e.g who has right to say what, who’s voice is more presents, who is omitted etc.)

Expected results

- Expected result is that the participation possibilities (and omission) of stakeholders in place branding projects reflect more general socio-economical, or even political power relations of the region:
 - (Referring to the power-struggles in stakeholder involvement in place branding) “.. most of place branding practice actually testifies that these struggles **are not only evident as results of power inequalities and institutional agendas but also, most commonly, solved to the interest of the most powerful group.** “ (Kavaratzis, 2012)
 - “.. Place marketing and image-making projects **have enabled ruling minorities to use the power of visual imagery and mental associations to determine who will dominate, use, live in and profit from urban spaces**” (Broudehoux, 2001)

Final remarks and questions

- Final dissertation will consist 3-4 peer reviewed articles each with it's own perspective on the study topic. Possible fourth article will be a comparative case study in other country if funding is secured.
- Currently doing a literature review of the place branding and stakeholder theory, collecting information from the selected place branding programs and creating contact network with researchers with similar interests
- Questions for the audience:
 - Is place branding or place marketing common in Denmark?
 - How do you think I could improve the study plan (e.g methods, data, interesting theories) ?

Tak!

- References:

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