

Place Branding, Catwalking the City

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ABSTRACT

In recent years branding has become a ubiquitous in our lives, as a brand can be a name of product, a trademark, or even a sense of a customer's beliefs about a product. Everything can be branded; company, people and even place. As much as a product needs to be competitive, a place facing the same challenge. If a product needs to win the heart of its consumers to purchase it, a place also needs to compete to attract the attention of tourist, investors, media and governments to come and experience it.

Place branding is not a new phenomenon in place marketing strategy, thus this paper offers a different approach in looking at the idea of place branding. Place branding is a powerful idea about introducing a place to the world where the people, products and services are reflected in the brand. The metaphor of a fashion catwalk is used to illustrate how the city identity and image are expressed within a brand identity. To brand a place is to put that place in the spotlight and expose it on the world stage. When a brand identity has been developed, it is time to catwalk the city to the rest of the world. Every place has its own story and characteristic that is built up by the collaboration of the urban and soft hardware. The construction of place branding has to capture these characteristics and create the distinctive identity of place. The process of place branding is both a creative initiation and the action of careful maintenance.

This paper offers two case studies of place branding of different types of localities; Pyrmont as a community space and Singapore as a regional space. The study reflects on the realization of active engagement necessary for developing the brand identity of a place and maintaining it.

Keywords: *branding, place branding, catwalk, collaboration*