

Regionalization

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**PLACE MARKETING IN THE PROCESS
OF TERRITORIAL IDENTITY CREATION
AND STRENGTHENING**

Abstract

The paper discusses the problems referring to place marketing related to the process of territorial identity creation and strengthening. Territorial identity strengthened by the activities carried out within the framework of place marketing constitutes the crucial component of the development process occurring in the contemporary territorial units due to emotional relations of a given community with the place of its existence.

The core of the study is focused on the presentation of selected elements constituting place marketing areas which can have a favourable impact on regional identity strengthening. Each of the areas has been supplemented by the list of potential advantages in this particular context. The following factors were listed: brand and image of the place, an effective promotion process, entrepreneurship enhancement, the organization of events, regional (local) products, Corporate Identity for territorial units, international cooperation, the creativity of self-government authorities or flexible management systems.

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Territorial identity, place marketing, territorial unit, socio-economic development, factors of competitiveness.

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1. Introduction

In the times of intensified national and international competition between territorial units both methods and concepts, resulting in their competitiveness improvement and better socio-economic development, become more and more important. In this perspective place marketing, as the reaction to meeting both needs and desires of a particular space users, seems to grow in significance. Territorial identity, strengthened by activities performed within the framework of place marketing, constitutes the crucial element of the process aimed at contemporary territorial units' development resulting from emotional relations of a particular community with their place of residence.

Several key components can be distinguished as part of the marketing process analysis, referring to territorial units regarded as the core ones in place marketing and playing major role in the context of territorial identity strengthening (Kotler et al., 1993). One of them is designing and selecting the set of adequate components, which combine the most favourable qualities and services typical for a particular territorial community. Another one is the implementation of motivating incentives for current and potential customers and users of territorial products and services. Additionally, it is of key importance to carry out progressive promotion of any valuable activity areas, typical for a particular place, as well as its brand and image (Middleton, 2011) in the manner which facilitates obtaining, by potential users of the offered products and services, full awareness regarding their advantages, benefits and generated added value. The community, having been aware of a territorial unit offer value, is naturally more inclined to raise the level of its identity.

At this point it should be emphasized that self-government authorities represent the leading, however, not the exclusive creator of activities covered by

place marketing. Business, science and education, representatives of territorial communities (Stimson, 2006) and also activities performed by NGOs (Claval, 2001) are, in particular, included among other entities or institutions involved in the marketing process of a given territory development. The participation of actors, representing a wide spectrum of territorial entities in local development through the implementation of particular projects, is neither an easy nor an obvious process which, to a great extent, depends on creative initiatives as well as coherent and attractive vision of development promoted by self-government authorities (Wong-Gonzalez, 2001). It is important in the sense that communities often identify themselves with a territory by their commitment and attachment to institutions, economic system or development objectives it is influenced by.

The purpose of the hereby study is an attempt to point to selected areas and place marketing components, which are crucial in the context of territorial identity creation and strengthening processes.

2. Theoretical aspects of place marketing and territorial identity

An attempt to define the concept of territorial identity should start from characterizing a territorial community as such. It may be perceived as a group of individuals associated with a given territory by the system of relationships (justified by different institutions) featuring certain common qualities and distinct from other communities following the principle of otherness. In this case the principle of otherness refers to the feeling that a given social group, owing to some of its attributes, is different from others. Therefore, territorial community members enjoy the sense of sharing basic values, relations and ties with a particular territory, as well as their distinctiveness from other communities. Territorial community, as opposed to non-territorial one, which functions only based on common values and goals to be carried out, is usually assigned to particular administrative borders (Kornblum, 2011).

Social science offers a number of territorial identity definitions, frequently characterized by a certain divergence. In a simplified version it can be referred to as the sense of identity with a particular fragment of space perceived as part of ourselves. It is also emphasized that emotional bond with a given place, surrounding landscape, local community, material and spiritual culture products (Deffner and Mataxas, 2010) and broadly understood cultural heritage (Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones, 2006; Miranda and Adib, 2007) represent significant determinants of territorial identity. Such approach is of great importance in the context of place marketing, where emotional sphere of human existence is frequently referred to.

Residing or staying in a particular place is related to the whole spectrum of experienced emotions or impressions and therefore does influence our perception of reality. Depending on the scale of positive experiences our attachment and feelings, regarding a given location, are created and our identification with it, in a long time perspective (Hague, 2005), is established.

Another issue which requires explanation is the spatial aspect of territorial identity which may be analyzed from the perspective of different geographic or administrative divisions. For the purposes of the hereby study the problems discussed refer mainly to local level identity (town, commune), sub-regional (district) and regional (voivodship). The identity associated with an individual household, a city quarter or the identity at a national, European and global scale, require totally different research approaches. It should also be observed that in the modern world particular dimensions responsible for territorial identity do penetrate one another and create a peculiar network of ways in which one perceives his/her individual belonging and otherness.

Place marketing, in its aspect of competitive advantage construction, may be understood as an integrated set of instruments or activities resulting in higher competitiveness of the defined and utilized space with reference to other territorial units of this kind. However, having taken another perspective, place marketing is understood as such "arrangement" of a given place which meets expectations of its target markets. In this case success is determined, to a great extent, by the degree of territorial community satisfaction and becomes indirectly translated into the level of its identity (Kotler et al., 2002; Proctor, 2007).

Among the factors deciding about the competitiveness of a given place one can basically distinguish soft and hard factors. It has to be pointed out that the role of soft factors in terms of regional or territorial competitiveness (see tab. 1) keeps growing. Soft factors seem to be particularly important from the perspective of activities undertaken in the area of place marketing.

The following factors of competitiveness can be referred to as major ones in the context of place marketing:

- socio-economic environment featuring high efficiency in solving developmental problems of a territorial unit,
- the functioning of enterprises or organizations characterized by the above average absorption of innovative solutions, as well as creating innovative solutions in the course of their functioning,
- spatial availability of a territorial unit,
- the quality of life in a community with particular emphasis on the area of social infrastructure,
- intensified activities for the benefit of unfavourable demographic processes stabilization and improvement,

- high quality of public services,
- the condition of natural environment, the potential of natural resources,
- pro-innovative and modern methods for a territorial unit management by self-government authorities,
- major economic entities investing in the area of a territorial unit in the context of attracting more investors and constituting the form of investment recommendation.

Table 1

The selected factors of regional, territorial competitiveness in place marketing

Hard factors	Soft factors
economic stability,	quality of life,
production capacity,	culture and education,
costs of conducting business activities,	professional competencies (including international ones),
business environment,	the development of market niches,
technical infrastructure with particular emphasis on communicational infrastructure,	flexibility and dynamism in action,
social infrastructure,	professionalism in management,
private ownership structure,	human resources quality,
favourable geographic location,	professionalism in dealing with the market,
the system of investment incentives,	entrepreneurship ingrained in the community,
the supply and management of the area,	creativity in solving problems,
the availability of modern technologies.	the level of territorial identity.

Source: Author's compilation based on (Kotler et al., 1999)

Place marketing may also be referred to as overall range of actions undertaken and focused on attracting investors, tourists, residents to a particular region, as well as the construction of favourable external image aimed at the quality improvement of local community living standards (Clark et al., 2010). Another

attitude to place marketing presents it as the set of techniques and activities applied by local and regional organizations and communities in the process of local development project planning and covering economic, urban, social cultural and tourism sectors, as well as the identity oriented one.

Still other definitions indicate direct relation between place marketing and territorial identity (Govers and Go, 2009). Following them place marketing refers to the process of place branding value establishment based on territorial (local, regional) identity. In other words, this approach recognizes place branding as the derivative of identity and a favourable internal and external image.

3. Place marketing components influencing territorial identity creation

An approach to the role and significance of territorial units' place marketing in socio-economic development has been advancing in line with the occurrence of new components and areas manifesting its positive influence. Owing to its broad spectrum of impact place marketing plays an important role in territorial identity formation and strengthening. The table below presents examples of positive influence exerted by place marketing in the discussed context. It is definitely not the final and closed list. Its extension should be expected together with the changing circumstances of contemporary territorial units functioning.

The majority of presented components and areas depend, to a great extent, on the involvement presented by self-government authorities. The activities performed by due authorities have to be supported by the sectors of business, science, education and NGOs. Such configuration allows for relatively more effective and efficient implementation of place marketing potential in the process responsible for territorial identity strengthening.

One of the more attractive areas of territorial identity creation is represented by the role of regional (local) goods understood as products or services to be identified with by a given area residents. Such products are manufactured and services are rendered in a non-mass scale and following environmentally friendly processes, as well as using locally available raw materials. Local (regional) products may become the distinctive factor of a given place owing to their specific and unique nature (Bellini et al., 2010). By means of emphasizing the relationship of products with a particular place it is easier to activate local community entrepreneurial resources, to strengthen interpersonal ties and the sense of identity with the place of residence. The growing popularity of local products is also related to the fact that potential clients, in their attempt to escape from the generally available market offer commercialization and unification, do search for high quality, unique products and services.

Table 2

Selected areas of positive impact exerted by place marketing on territorial identity

Area (component) of place marketing	Potential advantages resulting from territorial identity creation and strengthening
Place branding and image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the sense of pride and prestige related to residing in a given territory, • better perception of a particular place in the country and outside it, • mental identification of the place as recognizable and an elite spot, • the sense of belonging to an exceptional community, • an opportunity for becoming distinctive at the background of other units, • smaller tendency of residents to migrate, • residing in a particular territory as the manifestation of social status, • reduction of negative information about a given territory in closer and more distant environment, • higher level of satisfaction with life resulting from financial situation and internal self-assessment.
Effective promotion process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more frequent involvement of territorial community in the promotion process, • perception of one's own region attractiveness by emphasizing its beneficial conditions, • intensified interest in promotional activities manifested by territorial community, • creating positive feelings about a particular place in the minds of territorial community, • perception of a town as an attractive place for spending free time.
Stimulating entrepreneurship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gradual improvement of economic situation experienced by both local and regional entrepreneurs and employees, • higher level of trust in self-government authorities and local business, • creating favourable climate for the development of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial attitudes.
The organization of events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • potential opportunity for strengthening interpersonal ties, • attractive way of spending free time by territorial community,

Area (component) of place marketing	Potential advantages resulting from territorial identity creation and strengthening
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social awareness formation based on the leading themes of events referring to culture, art, history, relics of the past, nature, regional products, education, ecology, etc.
Regional (local) products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • products are manufactured from locally and regionally available raw materials, resources, clearly indicating the relationship with a given place, • awareness of the potential and unique resources featuring a particular territory, • products may become the flagship of a given place and stay permanently in the minds of local community.
Corporate Identity for territorial units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implementation of corporate identity elements (visual identification system, the system of attitudes, communication system) confirms professional approach to place identity approach, • coherent image oriented manifestation strengthening competitive advantage of the territory over other units, • development of unifying elements for a territorial community to be identified with, • logical and coherent arrangement of all symbols and attitudes referring to a given territory in order to be clearly recognized and distinguished at the market.
International cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transfer and implementation of internationally applied favourable solutions in local and regional environment, • the possibility of territorial community representatives participation in international projects, • taking mutual advantage of cultural heritage, • upgrading qualifications of territorial human resources.
Creativity of self-government authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • higher trust in local authorities, • the ability to invent solutions prior to the occurrence of a need or desire expressed by territorial community, • the skill of stimulating local community in order to benefit from energy inherent in it, • giving good example and enhancing social creativity level, • searching for, promoting and taking advantage of potential ingrained in creative personalities,

Area (component) of place marketing	Potential advantages resulting from territorial identity creation and strengthening
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased loyalty presented by territorial community, • creating territorial community consensus for the benefit of finding solutions to key development problems.
Flexible management systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • swifter response to the occurring expectations of territorial community, • upgrading the quality level of services rendered, • easier implementation of tasks arousing lower social acceptance, • facilitated implementation of development strategies for the benefit of territorial community, • higher level of professionalism in management, • enhanced cooperation with other territorial units and local community representatives, • the adjustment of management systems (in public and private sector) to the requirements of contemporary rivalry by introducing development oriented factors.

Source: Author's compilation based on (Anholt, 2007; Gelder, 2011; Kotler et al., 2009; Metaxas, 2002; Rainisto, 2003; Wong-Gonzalez, 2001)

The organization of events, which can be clearly associated with a given territory, may result in higher level of territorial identity and increase interest in a given territorial unit by tourists, local community, public institutions, enterprises or potential sponsors in subsequent editions. Stimulating entrepreneurship may influence better perception of conditions for running a business. Potential benefits for a territorial unit are, in this case, quite significant. New investments go along with innovative solutions, regional knowledge resources become more abundant, modern management structures are implemented, new jobs are opened, training cycles are held, revenues earned by local authorities usually increase, new products are available, new markets are created. Nowadays the places which enjoy strong economic position and are observed as adventurous do facilitate the process of territorial identity strengthening.

Regarding the creativity presented by self-government authorities it should be indicated that creative personalities seem to be particularly desirable and searched since they may bring significant input into development processes occurring in territorial units, which should take advantage of their creative potential owing to its role in solving civilization problems, generating new pro-development

policy, stimulating economic processes, strengthening territorial identity and social tolerance, as well as creating and implementing innovative solutions in economic and social sphere (Florida, 2005; Hall, 2000).

4. Final remarks

Referring to the presented above discussion one may assume that place marketing plays an important role in the process of territorial identity creation and strengthening. Both components and activities included in the broadly understood place marketing, among which there are brand and image of a territorial unit, the process of promotion, organization of events, international cooperation, entrepreneurship enhancement, creativity, definitely influence the establishment of territorial identity. The community residing in a given territory and featuring high identity level is more active, adventurous, involved in solving developmental problems occurring in a territorial unit and cooperative in relations with representatives of self-government authorities. Territorial identity stimulated by place marketing oriented activities may become the natural source of winning competitive advantage by territorial units.

Each place features the certain level of territorial identity. It is the role of territorial marketing to strengthen such identity, to upgrade its level and perform creative activities in the areas predisposed for meeting such objectives. The strengthening of territorial community identity is a long lasting process and should be performed in a consistent manner as well as take full advantage of the whole set of place marketing components. This process should be incorporated in an overall concept of territorial unit's development.

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