
Introduction

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The promotion and marketing of places is not a new concept. Although it is generally agreed that the development of marketing theory began to emerge in the early part of the twentieth century (Jones and Tadajewski, 2015; Kumar, 2015; Shaw, 2015; Tadajewski, 2009; Vargo and Lusch, 2004), others argue that the marketing of places, or perhaps, more correctly, the promotion of places has a much longer history. In support of this contention, Ashworth and Voogd (1994) refer to the very early example of the Viking, Leif Erickson, who, around 1000 years ago, named a very large and newly discovered island 'Greenland', in order to project an attractive image to potential travellers and settlers. Heeley (2015) alludes to a rather more recent development when he argues that Beau Nash established the format of the world's first destination marketing organisation in Bath, England in 1705. Places, destinations and even countries across the world are faced with increasing competition in attracting tourists, well-trained and educated residents and inward investment (Morgan et al., 2015). The response to this increasing competition has included the widespread establishment of destination marketing organisations in very many parts of the world all tasked with the projection of a positive image in order to attract scarce and valuable resources. However, the image of a place and the way that it is perceived in the minds of potential visitors may be shaped by many factors that lie outside the remit of destination marketing organisations. As well as considering the changing role of place and destination marketing agencies this special issue also explores some of the wider issues that contribute to the reputation of a place or country.

The special issue opens with Sousa, Nobre and Farhangmehr's 'The influence of consumer cosmopolitanism and ethnocentrism tendencies on the purchase and visit intentions towards a foreign country'. This paper is based on international research into the extent to which consumer cosmopolitanism and consumer ethnocentrism impact on the intention to purchase domestic rather than foreign products and to the degree to which these factors influence the intention to visit Portugal. The authors found that cosmopolitan consumers are more likely to purchase foreign products and to visit Portugal. On the other hand, ethnocentrism appears to inhibit visits to foreign countries. These findings have important implications for international marketing managers.

The article on 'Israel's foreign tourist industry: potential growth and constraints' examines how Israel's tourist industry has suffered a relative decline since 1995 compared with the period between 1950 and 1980. This is attributed to concerns over security and to high prices particularly in the hotel sector. As the author, Schein, states, Israel has much potential to attract foreign tourists given its wealth of religious and archaeological sites, the Dead Sea and its numerous beaches. The paper recognises that the current security situation deters tourists and acknowledges that little can be done about this unless a peace settlement is reached between Israel and the Palestinians. However Schein argues that Israel could make more effort to ensure that entry into Israel becomes a more pleasant and less time-consuming experience and this might be assisted by the increased application of technology. In addition Schein argues in favour of increased government intervention with regard to hotel pricing and other factors that deter tourists. It is also suggested that the proliferation of low cost airlines and the rise of Airbnb could also help in making Israel a more competitive destination. The paper concludes that the Israeli tourism industry will not achieve its full potential unless Israel can remedy both its security and high prices issues.

Sports clubs generate a substantial amount of tourism in themselves but a prominent sports team can also contribute significantly to the image of a place or even a country. One thinks of FC Barcelona which has become both a symbol of the city of Barcelona and also a symbol of Catalan culture. In a similar manner, the All Blacks embody the spirit and sporting culture of New Zealand. These are both powerful brands and two papers in the special issue explore the concept of branding with reference to sports clubs and sports fans.

The first of these, Shuv-Ami's 'The relationship between the dimensions of Lovemarks and commitment and their impact on sport fan behaviour', compares and contrasts behavioural characteristics of Israeli football and basketball fans. The paper confirms the deep bond that can form between fans and their sports clubs and identifies the points when this commitment and engagement can be at its strongest level. This provides the basis for important recommendations regarding the timing and nature of promotional activity which has the potential to engender an emotionally-led attachment and bond to the sports club's brand.

The second paper which explores sports branding, Marques, Nobre and Gordon's 'Sports fan relationships with soccer teams', is a case study centred on Sporting Club de Portugal (Sporting CP) who are based in Lisbon, Portugal. The paper alludes to the importance of soccer to the national economy of Portugal and to its role in promoting Portugal's image abroad. The work advocates an integrated approach to promotional activity but emphasises the importance of social media in fan communication. It concludes that the Sporting CP brand still has considerable scope to grow.

The next contribution, 'Cemetery gates: souvenir collection and archiving – leisure activities in dark places', explores aspects of dark tourism. Legitimate leisure consumption is well-documented in the extant tourism literature but dark tourism has received much less attention. Robinson and Dale point out that dark tourism has a long history extending back over many centuries. In more recent times dark tourism associated with sites of death and disaster such as Auschwitz and Ground Zero has become a discernible trend. Just as in more mainstream tourism activities the collection of souvenirs associated with dark tourism sites has emerged as a phenomena. Robinson and Dale explore souvenir collection associated with dark tourism sites together with the varied motivations to visit such sites. Robinson and Dale found that visits to dark tourism sites evoked powerful emotions in visitors and the collection of souvenirs reinforced the emotional experience. Souvenirs, whether photographs or artefacts, when shared with others, enabled visitors to communicate their emotional relationship to dark tourism sites to others. The authors believe that this knowledge has important implications for the management of dark tourism sites.

The special issue concludes with Scott, Higson, Fletcher and Stokes' 'An analysis of the transformations of leadership and direction-setting in place marketing: a UK contextual view and case study'. This paper is based on research into place or destination marketing organisations in the UK. The backdrop to the research is the dramatic reduction in public sector funding that this sector has experienced in recent years and the leadership challenges that this situation presents. In many cases these changes are likely to require new and unfamiliar forms of leadership as place or destination marketing organisations transit from their former predominately public sector status into organisations that are more aligned with and funded by the private sector.

In summary, the special issue brings together an eclectic and international compilation of papers which unearth novel, new perspectives on the subjects of country-of-origin, international tourism, dark tourism, sports branding and leadership and management in a place marketing perspective. The papers develop solutions and recommendations in response to the changing external environment and thus make an important contribution to this area of study.

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