

Revitalizing Forgotten Place Brands through Touring Consumption: The Case of The Old London Underground Company

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Touring consumption as applicable to place branding

The consumption of a place brand is an interdisciplinary science lying between tourism, marketing, economics, sociology, urban planning, sustainability and psychology which creates challenges for researchers who prefer to dwell in narrowly defined empirical studies (Papadopoulos and Heslop 2002; Fan 2006; Gilmore 2002; Prichard et al. 2011). There is a need for a polydimensional viewpoint in design of research studies. A place brand as defined by Zenker and Braun (2010: 4) is a sum of the networks of association in the consumer's mind developed from the visual, verbal and behavioural expression of a place which itself is based on the aims, communication, values, general culture of the place's stakeholders and the overall place design. To add to this complexity is the issue of mobility in tourism consumption. Today's place consumers want variety as they embrace "a desperate search for experience in a world of ontological excess" (Thamassen and Balle 2012). While constructing a place brand, "choice" and choice criteria become important (Erdem and Swait 2004). A tourist can dwell in the range of mobilities (Urry 2000: 157; Sheller 2004) suggesting that place brands need to be endowed with liminality (Edensor 2007:199) as tourism mobilities are "fluid, ambivalent and labile" (Gardiner 2000: 6). Hones and Leyda (2005: 1025) for example suggest that for reinterpreting geography of a place, we need to move away from discrete places and separate scales (local, regional, and national) to a geography of networks (circulatory sites).

To quote Sheller and Urry (2004: 1), "Different mobilities inform tourism, shape the place where tourism is performed and drive the making or unmaking of a tourist destination. Mobilities of people and objects; airplanes and suitcases, plants and animals, images and brands, data system and satellites, all go hand in hand into 'doing' tourism. It also concerns the relational mobilization of memories and performances, gendered and racialized bodies, emotions and atmospheres. Places have multiple contested meanings that offer disruptions and

disjunctures. Tourism mobilities involve complex combinations of movement and stillness, realities and fantasies; play and work.”

Further while designing a place brand, it is important to restructure consumer demand away from short-run benefit decisions into deferred gratifications (Bogart 1973: 998). For this, a practitioner must be able to find the contact zone and engineer multiple encounters to manage multiple representations (Firat and Schultz 1997). This can be done by managing the touristscape (Edensor 2006) or the “*sensuous concatenation of material forces*” (Wylie 2002: 251). Based on the above theoretical perspective, it is possible to define touring consumption as the mobile consumption of a place brand related through multi-sense encounters (not necessarily at the physical site) which are reconstructed through the associations tourists form across time, people, atmospheres and media by the cognitive and affective rationalization of these encounter experiences.

Briefly this research paper is divided into two parts. The first part explores the theory relevant to how forgotten places can be revitalized through re-imagination using touring consumption. The process of re-imagination is presented as a conceptual model, which looks at four gaps or spaces that need to be bridged. The second part of the article illustrates the case of The Old London Underground Company (TOLUC) which is a project focusing on re-development of abandoned London underground stations. The methodology is grounded research using qualitative data (case study), and is presented as a narrative (e.g. Glaser and Strauss 2009; Charmaz 2014). This study is significant as it is a longitudinal study chronicling a start-up from idea to launch and the 4½ year journey of managing TOLUC from 2011 to 2014. Data was collected through three interviews with the CEO of TOLUC; secondary articles in various media; social media observation and a field visit with the CEO to the Mayor of London’s Office. Cross-referencing with existing theory helped provide a robust method for revitalization of abandoned places. The study is presented using storytelling, which is a more creative form of qualitative research that presents an emic (insiders) point of view (Hansen and Kahnweiler 1993; Frank 2008).

This paper contributes to theoretical knowledge of place brands and identifies the gaps destination marketers need to work on to create viable projects for the communities, project stakeholders and final consumers of the project. This paper also adds to our knowledge of the creation of start-ups and theoretically contributes to our knowledge of entrepreneurship. Practically the paper presents a checklist of tools available to start-up projects that manage multiple stakeholders.

Forgotten places need reimagination before revitalization

A review of literature on places whether forgotten, abandoned or requiring revitalization shows a variety of settings (see Figure 1) and they all have one thing in common, that of using the original essence of that place by rethinking our notions of space/space-time (Massey 1999). The preferred methodologies in these studies are the use of single cases. Surprisingly, forgotten places can lie dormant in urban communities, decaying in plain sight as urban planners are unable to assess indicators of distress (Jennings 2012). Though there are many successful revitalization projects of forgotten places, for example, like Canary Wharf in London in 1980, Pittsburgh, USA in 1950, or Central Park, New York in 1909, they all begin by reimagination of the place (for example Cochrane and Jonas 1999; Hall 2004). At the time of this study, there were no scholarly documented studies of abandoned underground stations though abandoned underground air-raid shelters have been the focus of a venture start-up in the past in China (Xiu Li Hawken converted some into shopping malls) and currently there is a consortium looking at Hong Kong's abandoned Kai Tak Airport. Re-imagination can lead to civic engagement (Gordon and Koo 2008) and help reform relationships with the past and present (Banting 2012).

Reimagining needs to be followed by revitalization. As places are forgotten, employment opportunities are lost, safety decreases and there is a slow degeneration of community areas (Frumkin 2003). Not all revitalization can have positive consequences (Van Hoving et al. 2010). The Bilbao effect (Plaza 2007), the destroying of indigenous populations (Pattullo 1996), loss of sustainability (Pickering and Hill 2007; Gössling 2002), species extinction (Walpole et al. 2000), destruction of foci of site itself (Shakley 1999), or managing the risk of investment (Evans 2014) are some of the documented challenges. This means there are trade-offs and the debate on the whether place-based infrastructure and development programs may be effective at stimulating investment continues (Spencer and Ong 2004). From a subject perspective, it is hard to delineate between the topics of tourism and development (Hoffman 2000) as development often is perceived as civil or infrastructure requirements whereas tourism falls often into the purview of place marketing.

| Study setting | Authors |
|--|---|
| Creation of new spaces | |
| Non place/empty place to place making | Lavrinec 2011 |
| Abandoned Agriculture lands – rewilding | Navarro and Pereira 2012 |
| Hinterland tourism – create gateways | Zurick 1992 |
| New Fashion City in Brazil in Belo Horizonte, Dubai Global Village | Example: http://foresightinhindsight.com/article/show/262 |
| The Palm, Dubai “urban fascination” | Balakrishnan 2008 |
| Revitalizing infrastructure | |
| Abandoned mine roadway tunnels – future heating centers | Luo and Chen 2011 |
| Adaptive use of abandoned churches | Ahn 2013 |
| Use of abandoned/forgotten cemeteries | Uslu 2010 |
| Slum Tourism | Durr 2012; Foster 2009; Freire-Medeiros 2009 |
| Industrial heritage – redevelopment/tourism | Edwards 1996; Choi and Lim 2013 |
| Dams – make a recreational and alternative transportation corridor paralleling the river | Laiho and Fitzgerald 1998 |
| Old building for archives | Haymond 1982 |
| Disused Bridges – market | Bressi 2001 |
| Revitalization after disaster/riots/extinction | |
| Tourism after forest fires | Hystad and Keller 2008 |
| Destruction tourism | Gould and Lewis 2007; Strohlic 2012 |
| Toxic tourism – e.g. after Chernobyl | Goatcher and Brunsden 2011; Stone 2013 |
| Revitalization after riots/ghettos – empowerment zones, historical/culture peg | McGuire 1997; Rama 2013; Hoffman 2000 |
| Extinct tourism | Pennisi et al. 2004; Leahy 2008 |

| Revival Through Psychic Stimulus using tools like Cultural/History/mythology | |
|---|--|
| Dark tourism | Lennon and Foley 2000 |
| Rural tourism | Briedenhann and Wickens (2004). |
| Tourism with legends /mythology | Hennig 2002, Cohen 2010 |
| Tourism of historical relics | Candelaria 2005 |
| War memorials | Mayo 1988 |
| Commercial decline – revitalization | Sutton 2010; Forbes 2006 |
| Declining central-city districts - ethnically themed revitalization | Ford et al. 2008 |
| Virtual Tourism | Behr et al. 2001 |
| Crime/movie tourism | Sydney-Smith 2006; Yamamura 2009 |
| Shopping/cultural festivals | Getz 1993; Hsieh and Chang 2006; Anwar and Sohail 2004 |
| Trust tourism (Las Vegas – What happens in Las Vegas Stays in Las Vegas) | Wood 2005 |
| Sports/game for tourism and revitalization | Gu 2007; Chapin 2004; Austrian and Rosentraub 2002 |
| Self-discovery through reframing: Religious tourism, romance tourism, self-discovery, retreat, retail therapy | Arnould and Thompson 2005; Creighton 1995; Norman and Cusak (2014) |

Figure 1: Studies on abandoned places or places requiring revitalization.
(Author)

Bridging gaps to revitalize forgotten place brands

To revitalize a place brand, you must be able to manage gaps from a tourist point of view. There are two key methods of bridging that can be identified from literature. The first is reframing (Schembri 2009; Rama 2013) which is to create a new emotional and cognitive frame of reference. This helps overcome resistance and change the status quo. As emotions tends to dominate decision making, the conditioning a consumer is exposed to prior to the decision can impact the choice or post-experience recall (McClure et al. 2004; Armel et al. 2008; Rajagopal and Montgomery 2011; Esch et al. 2012). Neuromarketing and behavioral economics are showing that decisions are rarely rational and hence reframing can help overcome prior bias or lethargy by infusing energy into a situation (Finuacane et al. 2000; Zaltman 2003; Baars et al. 2003; Ariely 2011;

Pessiglione et al. 2008). With forgotten places, there is an opportunity to rebuild them again or “reconstruct memories” (XuDong and Bell 2005).

The other method is to create a cultural movement (Goodson 2012). Movements are initiated by translating “personal experiences into publicly resonant ones” (Knight 2009:115) and “establish(ing) temporal communities of passers-by, who share the interest of spending some time together, sharing emotions and taking part in something different than everyday routine” (Lavrinec 2011: 64). Movements are emotion based. Research shows that while cognition is important to create change, affect-based attitudes (yours and others), can affect decisions (Epstude and Roese 2011; Gray et al. 2002). While many place brands focus on functionalization for decision making as choice criteria, it is clear during decision making that emotions can take over rationalization affecting the brand associations (Finucane et al. 2000; Burke and Edell 1989). Positive emotions also have a contagion effect on groups (Barsade 2002), which are important for creating cultural movements. However, positive emotions can dissipate suggesting that the challenge in managing place brands is protecting the system from leakages through disenchantment (Moisescu 2006). Most place brands will need constant revitalization or reimagination as the setting of place brands is the dynamic global arena where the resources involved like time and money are finite but customer choice is plenty (Haddad et al. 2011).

Based on the case study, it is clear that to reimagine a space and begin the process of revitalization to create touring consumption mobility, there are four gaps that forgotten places must bridge. These four gaps are:

1. Mental – bringing cognitive and emotional gaps
2. Temporal – bridging past, present and future
3. Physical – making the intangible, tangible
4. Economic – helping with the “valuation of money”

There are various concepts found in literature used for revitalization or re-imagination. The purpose of these concepts can be to create a toolbox that can be used to stimulate thinking and emotions that can engage touring consumption. Reimagination of space needs tools for stakeholder engagement. This requires education (Jickling and Wals 2012), writing (Reynolds 2004; Banting 2012) and storytelling. Storytelling can be used to precondition and give meaning to a brand (Szondi 2007; Scolari 2009; Lichrou et al. 2010). Hope has been found to be a powerful emotion and overlaps with brand charisma according to Smothers (1993). And for generating hope, self-narratives of the “underdog” have been found to be linked with greater motivation towards the cause (Prestin 2013). Another important tool is making the stakeholder a co-creator and hence gets

stakeholder buy-in and ownership (Payne et al. 2008). The stakeholder buy-in also increases from a psychological point of view using self-discovery and social alignment as motivators (for example Tung and Ritchie 2011).

The second set of tools is for visualization or “eye-balling”. This means increasing tangibility of the project either through the creation of iconic structures (Dempsey 2012), servicescape (Lin 2004), using symbolic reminders like mementos or souvenirs (Balakrishnan 2010) or imagineering technology (Rhinesmith 2013). Branding is a shortcut for visualizing (Pawson 1997). Brand architecture helps in managing mental representations and creates synergy in product portfolios (Douglass et al. 2001; Aaker 2003; Stebringer 2004).

The third set of tools overlaps the first two as it creates an experiential backdrop to reimagination by immersing the customer through technology, writing and servicescape and engaging the customer through interactive displays that use technology or people. Music and lyrics (Botta 2006), media and popular culture like books, movies (Iwashita 2006; Hudson and Ritchie 2006) and mobile gaming (Hoffman 2011) are additional tools being used.

The fourth set of tools is for creating energy. This requires active engagement with media, stakeholders and generation of positive emotions using writing, press conferences, tours and meetings. It overlaps with all the three set of tools and focuses on creating a cultural movement. Perceived choice in the product portfolio creates energy by catering to the variety-seeking behavior (Kemperman et al. 2000) and hedonistic appeal (Bigne et al. 2009; Bigne and Andreu 2004). These engagement tools which can be abbreviated by as E⁴ (see Figure 2) help create touring consumption.

The purpose of creating touring consumption is to create brand equity and brand loyalty to the place which result in reputation, relational and venture capital (Goldberg et al. 2003; de Castro et al. 2004; Quelch et al. 2004; Aaker 2009; Balakrishnan 2011). Brand equity is defined from the consumer (stakeholder) point of view and can be considered as the perception or desire that a brand will meet a promise of benefits (see Raggio and Leone 2007). Brand loyalty is the set of meaningful relationships a consumer/stakeholder has with the brand and can bridge involvement at the emotional, behavioral and cognitive levels (Fournier and Yao 1997). At the operational level, brand equity and brand loyalty lead to emotional attachment, positive word of mouth (WOM), positive reputation, brand credibility, satisfaction, positive decisions making behavior (choice, commitment to buy) (see Balakrishnan 2011).

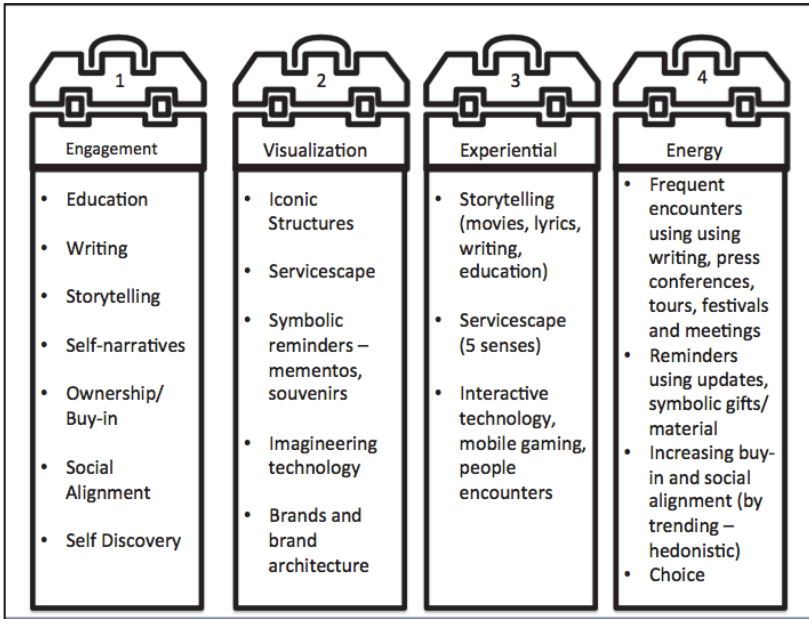


Figure 2: E⁴ Re-imagination toolbox: Creating connectivity by initiating movements and precondition. (Author)

Gap 1: Bridging temporal spaces

Decision-making is affected by time or temporal space (Balakrishnan et al. 2011) and can be bridged through emotions by converting intentions to actual behavior (Mohiyeddini et al. 2009). Relevant communications strategies can give form and substance to temporal vistas through specific stories (Castano et al. 2008; Ooi 2001: 190). This may create the phenomena of “timelessness” which according to Mainemelis (2001) is the creation of a psychological, and sometimes physical, space in which one can become totally involved in the task-away from worries, problems, or distractions. While reimagination from past to present can be achieved using education and technology (or “*imagineering*”) to create timelessness (Hoffman 2011; Rhinesmith, 2013), revitalization from present to future needs the benefits of the project to be tangible (Rowley and Slack 1999). This is done through engagement strategies using the toolbox described in Figure 1. It has been found that the *strength of the engagement* contributes to the

experienced value (Higgins 2006) which leads to various positive consumer behaviors like commitment to buy; positive word of mouth, trust and repeat behavior (Vivek 2009). For example a study found that business engagement on Twitter related directly to consumers' engagement with online word-of-mouth communication, even though the life cycle of a tweet was generally only 1.5 to 4 hours at most (Zhang et al. 2011). Openness in dialogue and active engagement is important to create credibility to bridge temporal spaces (Yang et al. 2010).

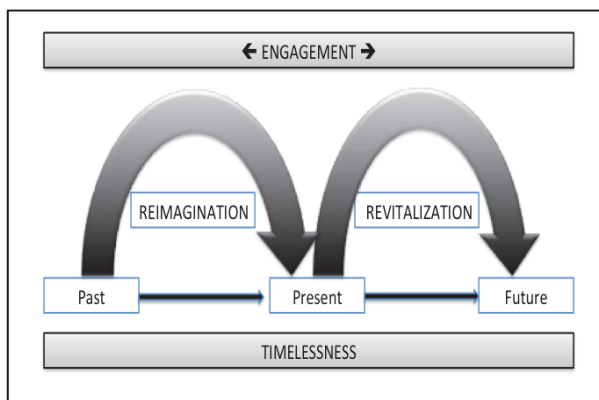


Figure 3: Creating consumption mobility through temporal space. (Author)

Gap 2: Bridging the functional or physical spaces

To bridge the functional space from past to present, the challenge with place revitalization is making the intangible, tangible (Rushton and Carson 1985). The physical environment or servicescape (what you can see, touch and smell) has been found to generate excitement in leisure settings, which affects repatronage intentions and willingness to recommend (Wakefield and Blodgett 1999). Physical attributes lead to place attachment and satisfaction (Stedman 2003). Product attributes contribute to brand equity and brand choice (Myers 2003) and the importance of various attributes peak at different stages of the tourism choice process (Balakrishnan et al. 2011). This makes mobilities between product offerings important. Another objective of bridging the functional or physical spaces is to reduce spatial search. This can be done by giving access to a “*behind the scenes*” tour or self-organized tours using maps or virtual interactive devices (Murphy and Rosenblood 1974).

Visualization of a project, especially one with huge infrastructure costs or requiring community participation needs to be tangible for “*reimagination*” to achieve revitalization. In the place context, consumption mobility takes place across areas of functional, experiential and symbolic elements through the spheres of physical goods, service, experiences and even concepts (Ariely and Norton 2009; Picard 1996). Since perceived choice is important to bridge functional spaces a variety of products should be offered and can be chosen from the portfolio depicted in Figure 4. Since hedonistic characteristics of a space help bridge functional space – tourism products offered must be able to create these pleasurable emotions. Pleasure is temporary and hence the place needs to be able to capture these memories either through pictures, souvenirs and social media narratives (see Bruner 1989; Xiang and Gretzel 2010). Narratives can create (in some cases distort) memories (Garry and Wade 2005) showing how powerful a tool it can be. These strategies help increase perceived value by increasing benefits associated with the place and reducing perceived costs. A model to bridge the functional or physical space is presented in Figure 5.

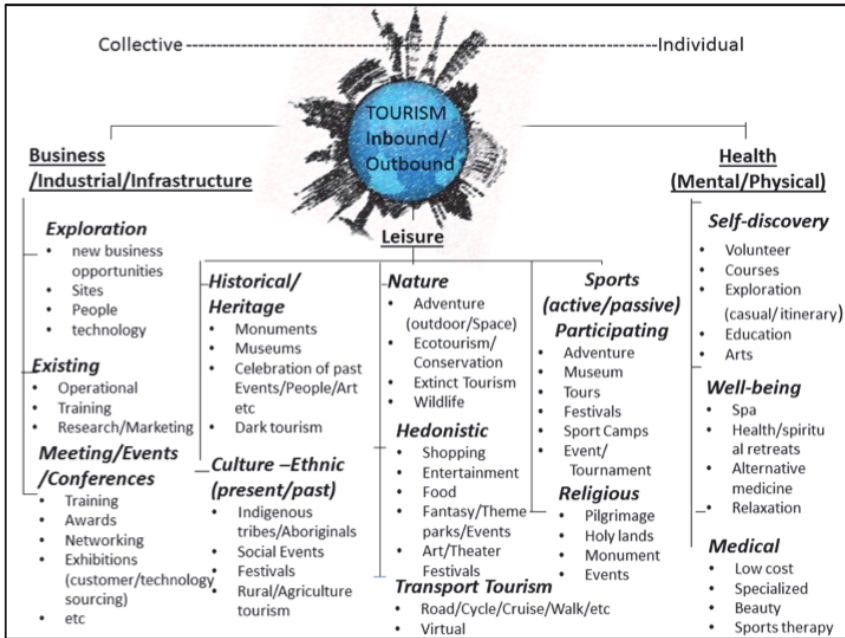


Figure 4: Tourism product portfolio. (Author)



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