
Branding Cities and Clusters for Economic Development

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Abstract: This paper will analyse branding as it pertains to a nation, city or cluster. Most of the academic and practitioner literature on geographical branding is rarely applied to a nation or a city. For economic development, clusters have been accepted as the key in the last few decades, more important than nations. This paper will argue that branding a community or cluster is key to attracting economic development, and to creating the needed social structure and rallying cry that will spawn entrepreneurial activity, innovation and growth. If Silicon Valley, or Route 128, or even Hollywood, hadn't been given their brand names and associated brand slogans or identities, they wouldn't have been nearly as successful as they have become.

This paper will first review the idea of branding a nation or a city to provide a basic understanding of how it is different from more traditional branding. The paper will then apply the ideas of nation branding to the branding of a cluster, the importance of clusters and address some implications of cluster branding on the social capital in a cluster. Finally, the paper will conclude on some ideas for how to brand a city or cluster, and look at one that I am actively involved in, Mississauga, Canada, and by extension provide some suggestions for how to brand other economic clusters. A city brand gives a voice or a name to its culture and social capital, the glue that defines and creates a cluster and brings a community together. To be successful, and foster economic development, clusters need to identify what they stand for, what their brand is, and be able to voice it in a clear, compelling message.

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Introduction

“Grow, dammit, grow!” shouts the front cover of the Economist (2010) almost in desperation after the Great Recession and several years of an anemic recovery.

How nations, regional economies and cities can grow and create more jobs and prosperity, given the Great Recession of 2008 -2009 and now the lacklustre recovery, is unquestionably the number one issue for governments, business practitioners and people themselves today. Obama has his “Jobs Agenda”, Bob Rae’s top three priorities are “Jobs, Jobs and Jobs” and New York Times columnist and Nobel price winning economist Paul Krugman continues to proclaim that we need a jobs stimulus immediately - “it’s all about the jobs, stupid”.

The economic development of cities, and the development of clusters, has been a focus for economists and other academics, public policy practitioners and business people for decades starting with Marshall in the 1920’s discussing the importance of scale or agglomeration, Porter (1990) argued for industrial clusters and cluster competition like industrial competition, Krugman’s economic geography positioned skills, education and unique benefits as key and Florida (2008, 2009) stated that creative clusters that could attract gays, bohemians and creative knowledge workers would be the most successful. While these academics have focused on many different factors there has not been as much attention on the important role branding a city or cluster has in fostering and accelerating economic development, entrepreneurial activity and innovation. Cities and clusters need a vision and a brand to market it and to rally people around it, just like companies or products do. Cities need a brand if we want them to be in demand, attract tourism, economic development, and to be prosperous and grow? Historically, city branding has been important from a tourism promotion standpoint, but increasingly it is also important to promote a city for economic development in an increasing competitive market to attract relocating companies and innovative entrepreneurs. More importantly, in order to create a cluster or a community where diverse people will feel included and part of a whole that is greater than just them and their firm, then they in that community will need to be part of a vision or an image for that area, and be able to identify with the brand for that city or cluster?

Last September, I sat in on the presentation of the Mississauga Economic Development Strategic Plan titled “Building on Success” (Mississauga 2010). I was invited to this session in my capacity as co-chair of the Mississauga Summit, a civic engagement organization made up of community leaders from business, government, the not-for-profit sector and residents, all together focused on improving Mississauga, the sixth largest city in Canada. The presentation was a comprehensive plan focused on growth. But it was far from unique. Three objectives were laid out to achieve the vision of Mississauga becoming a global business magnet:

1. Target opportunities in high growth sectors: the Life Sciences, High Tech, Green Tech, Financial Services and Advanced Manufacturing
2. Ensure a supportive business environment.
3. Provide a compelling global brand to attract business, investment and jobs:
 - a. Create marketing tools to emphasize the City's attractive local assets, quality of place, and the strengths of its business community and support infrastructure.
 - b. Develop and implement an international marketing strategy to recruit entrepreneurial companies involved in emerging areas of innovation.
 - c. Explore opportunities to co-market the City with Mississauga-based companies internationally.

Source: Mississauga 2010.

Two other visions and their objectives were also laid out: building a culture of innovation, and building a knowledge economy. I wonder how many different cities, regions and nations have almost the exact same buzzwords in their economic development strategies: business magnet, innovation and knowledge economy. Probably way too many. How could Mississauga be unique? How would Mississauga develop that compelling brand when everything they were trying to do dozens of other cities are trying to accomplish at the exact same time; high tech, green tech, life sciences and knowledge economy and innovation?

At the front of the room was a banner with about 50 words describing what Mississauga wanted to be around the theme of "Building on Success", including: "Move, Belong, Connect, Prosper and Green" (Mississauga 2010). For the launch session, the City had invited a keynote speaker to speak on "Exploiting Chaos to Spark Innovation". His message was that for any message to be successful, to spark innovation, it had to adhere to three rules, be "simple, direct and compelling" (Gutsche 2010). I asked the keynote speaker if Mississauga's banner and Economic Development strategic plan met his objective, and if not what he would suggest. His embarrassed response was that the current banner was confusing and unfocused, and then, without a lot of thought, he suggested that a better one might be "Mississauga - young, innovative, and dynamic" (Gutsche 2010). Mississauga believes in the importance of a new compelling global brand, wants to create marketing tools, and launch an international marketing strategy, but the best they could come up with so far was "Building on Success". Really? I wasn't impressed with either of the suggestions given that the first was blandly bromidic and the second was a more generic slogan than specific to Mississauga.

This paper will analyse branding as it pertains to a nation, city or cluster. Most of the academic and practitioner literature on geographical branding is for products or tourism, and is rarely applied to a nation or a city. For economic development, clusters have been accepted as the key in the last few decades, more important than nations, and this paper will argue that branding a cluster is similar to branding a nation or a city, and it will make some suggestions on how to do so. This paper will argue that branding a community or cluster is key to attracting economic development, and to creating the needed social structure and rallying cry that will spawn entrepreneurial activity, innovation and growth. If Silicon Valley, or Route 128, or even Hollywood, hadn't been given their brand names

and associated brand slogans or identities, they wouldn't have been nearly as successful as they have become. Florida (2009), in his many articles and books on the creative class, says that a place needs to become like a scene, a music scene or an art scene, before it becomes a creative cluster. I think that when a place has become a scene it has probably been given and adopted a brand name with an associated identity that resonates with people such as the Queen Street West district (a fashionable edgy downtown neighbourhood in Toronto), the City, Hollywood or Silicon Valley North.

This paper will first review the idea of branding a nation or a city to provide a basic understanding of how it is different from more traditional branding. The paper will then apply the ideas of nation branding to the branding of a cluster, the importance of clusters and address some implications of cluster branding on the social capital in a cluster. Finally, the paper will conclude on some ideas for how to brand a city or cluster, and look at one that I am actively involved in, Mississauga, Canada, and by extension provide some suggestions for how to brand other economic clusters.

A city brand gives a voice or a name to its culture and social capital, the glue that defines and creates a cluster and brings a community together. The Big Apple, Silicon Valley, Hollywood, The Left Bank and some tag lines such as “The City that Never Sleeps”, “I Love New York” or “What goes on in Vegas, Stays in Vegas”, all evoke images and perceptions of a place and what it stands for, just like branding works for companies as diverse as Coke or McDonalds or Disney or Nike with catch-phrases such as “The real thing”, “You deserve a break today”, “The happiest place on earth” or “Just do it”. To be successful, and foster economic development, clusters need to identify what they stand for, what their brand is, and be able to voice it in a clear, compelling message.

The Nation, City or Cluster as a Brand

A nation or a region can be a brand. Think of Swiss chocolate, French perfumes, Italian sports cars, California wines, Silicon Valley venture capitalists, Hollywood movie tycoons, Paris waiters and Upper West Side brownstones. Nation, city and neighbourhood branding has captured the attention and financial resources of numerous governments including Poland, New Zealand, Taiwan and Botswana, who have all hired marketing gurus and launched programs to create and communicate a particular version of national identity (Aronczyk 2008). The national or regional brand describes a cultural history and identity for both the area and the products it is modifying. O'Shaughnessy (2000) argues that branding can apply to any mass communications including products, companies, nations and even political parties where some think that party leaders need to be brand managers of their parties and their nations to be successful. Voters need to identify with the vision and image of the country that the leader intends to lead – they need to buy into the brand for the country that the political leader is selling.

Branding, the idea that one product is made more valuable, or has more equity, than an alternative because it is attached to a recognizable name and promise of authenticity, probably began two centuries ago when Wedgwood put his name on his dinnerware (Winfield-Pfefferkorn 2005). In the 1930s, Procter & Gamble first

established the brand management system as an organizational structure. By the '70s, companies had brand managers, and by the '80s, brands were applied to retailers and entire companies such as Apple and Disney (Winfield-Pfefferkorn 2005). Since 2000, cities and countries (such as Tony Blair attempting to rebrand Britain as cool Britannia) worldwide have been looking to branding as a way to spur economic development. "Creating a distinctive brand that captures the spirit of a city must be able to inspire – the travelers, the industry, and the general populace itself" (Winfield-Pfefferkorn 2005, page 13). Brands are so valuable now that companies value them on their balance sheets. Brands are a personality that triggers an emotional response and delivers sustainable competitive advantage (Schiffman 2010):

"A brand is a product or service made distinctive by its positioning relative to the competition, and by its personality, which comprises a unique combination of functional attributes and symbolic values" (Kavaravtitz 2004, page 65).

In, The Global Brand: How to create and develop lasting brand value in the world market, Hollis (2008) describes the real reason for enduring market leadership – vision and will. "Enduring market leaders have a revolutionary and inspiring vision of the mass market, and they exhibit an indomitable will to realize that vision. They persist under adversity, innovate relentlessly, commit financial resources and leverage assets to realize their vision" (Hollis 2008, page 53). He goes on to say that strong brand experience is built on clarity of positioning, dynamism and innovation, authenticity, and a strong culture with genuine belief in and commitment to the brand. I have always thought of the marketing process as awareness, trial, purchase and repeat purchase, but Hollis (2008) describes how to maximize a brand based on achieving the following:

- Stronger presence than the competition.
- Stronger conversion from presence to bonding.
- Stronger attitudinal loyalty about satisfying consumer desires.
- Loyalty.

Source: Hollis 2008, pages 35-65.

As a communications strategy, branding allows governments to control their area's image and to attract investment, tourism, and human talent. According to Aronczyk (2008), in an environment where "a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention", attracting positive recognition by "breaking through the clutter" with a distinctive image is critical. A nation-branding strategy is a public good that unites the people in understanding and reflecting the image and brand they want to in a competitive world for international recognition and domestic loyalty:

"Interestingly there is nothing particularly novel about the concept of branding the nation. Only the word 'brand' is new. National image, national identity, national reputation, are all words traditionally used in this arena and they don't seem to provoke the same visceral hostility as the word 'brand.' Although the technologies are new and infinitely more powerful and pervasive than ever before, and the word

'brand' is also new, the concepts which it encompasses are as old as the nation itself' (Aronczyk 2008, page 49)

Frost (2004) believes that product and place branding are the same. "It's all about identifying, developing and communicating the parts of the identity that are favourable to some specified target groups....But the analysis of identity and of target group perceptions, coupled with brand building activities are much more complex for places than for products. It is far more difficult to obtain a fully integrated communication mix in place of branding. Products can be discontinued, modified, withdrawn from the market, re-launched and re-positioned or replaced by improved products. Places do not have most of these choices. Their image problems may be founded in structural problems that can take years to fix" (Frost 2004, page 1).

The brand of a nation or a region really gives a name to or an image to the social system or social capital within a geographical area (O'Shaughnessy 2000). Social capital has been described as key to economic development in clusters and in nations, but it is a difficult concept to understand and describe. Social capital is the bonds between people that produce trust, camaraderie, a sense of team and togetherness (World Bank 1998). "Even if we accept that the concept of a brand has applicability to a nation, a nation is not a product, and the national image is very much bound up with the social concept of the nation. The concept of a nation consists of a people inhabiting a fixed territory, sharing key elements of a common culture (values, beliefs, norms, institutions), and possessing a sense of common interests" (O'Shaughnessy 2000, page 56).

Sometimes a country's image or brand is a stereotype. "Stereotype means a biased (usually prejudicial) view of a group or class of people— a view that is resistant to change or correction from countervailing evidence" (O'Shaughnessy 2000, page 57). Stereotypes are either helpful and positive, or negative and unhelpful. They can be based on racism or media or historical attitudes. Different regions of a nation can have very different images – think of Rome or Sicily or Tuscany with all giving different impressions of Italy. Images of nations also change over time. Japan was once a brand for cheap shoddy quality, not luxury brands. But national images and brands are based on history, and established prejudices and are hard to change. "Journalists noted how in the final soccer match of the 1998 World Cup, the multi-racial French team triumphed over a German team that was entirely white and rather older. Bad images from the past sleep lightly and are easily awakened" (O'Shaughnessy 2000, page 58). Nations can have contradictory images or brands, and for different people. For example, for the U.S., some might think of it as hedonistic and others as puritanical, focused conversely on the "pursuit of happiness" but also Prohibition and religious conservatism, or embodying McCarthy's Red Scare and Woodstock's free love.

While numerous images can exist, there is often a dominant one. For the U.S. it's probably freedom, progress and hedonism, while some might argue its consumerism or materialism. Products, tourism and the culture of the society itself use and take after the national image or brand. People around the globe buy American products to feel American; they must be buying a brand or an image. O'Shaughnessy (2000) refers to this

as reputational capital which is beliefs in addition to image. In The Competitive Advantage of Nations, Porter (1990) argued that the home base was critical to the success of a firm globally. Porter (1999) argues that the paradox of today is that while we may think local is less important in a time of globalization it is local things such as reputation, trust, and social capital that are increasingly important. Porter (1990) describes national competitiveness as being based on four conditions including:

1. Factor conditions: the nation's position in factors of production, such as having the skilled labour or infrastructure;
2. Demand conditions: the nature of the home market demand for the industry's product or service;
3. Related and supporting industries: supplier industries and other related industries that are internationally competitive;
4. Company strategy, its structure, and industry rivalry: the conditions in the nation governing how companies are created, organized, and managed, as well as the nature of domestic rivalry.

Source: Porter 1990.

These four factors are similar to the original Porter five forces of industry competitiveness: barriers to entry, rivalry, substitutes, and the bargaining power of buyers, and of suppliers (Porter 1990) but applied to the country rather than the firm.

A nation's reputational capital is its core competencies, or the factor conditions that are strong or unique. Once nations figure this out they will work to maintain it such as French and their wine, Scotland and their scotch, Japan and its cars, Italy and its fashion. O'Shaughnessy (2000) suggests that there are several keys to doing this successfully including:

1. Link to the social norms of the target audience, or its values or valued images through symbols.
 2. Link to a feeling of solidarity with others.
 3. Link to position and prestige such as those with higher social status or celebrities.
- Source: O'Shaughnessy 2000.

“While all the above ways of making an association compelling are used, the focus by governments is usually on an association with core values. Governments think in terms of what the country stands for, on the grounds that this alone can act as a unifying theme. There is obviously some logic here. But some such themes can represent wishful thinking or at least a normative goal rather than something realizable” (O'Shaughnessy 2000, page 62).

Aronczyk (2008) presents four stages for the establishment of a brand that need to be executed. The key, which is maybe different than in product brand building, is to base the creation of the brand on current perception because any nation brand has to be authentic, build upon it, and then communicate it repeatedly to ensure that, both internally and externally, people accept and understand the brand. The stages she suggests are:

1. Evaluation: Public Opinion as Marketing Research – you need to understand what people’s current image of the place is, and then build on it.
2. Training: How to improve on the existing images and focus them on that which is critical and attractive.
3. Identifying the “Core Idea”: Focus on the essential elements of a brand and a marketing plan.
4. “Living the Brand”: Communication as Implementation.

Source: Aronczyk 2008.

According to Frost (2004) the challenges with place branding are significant, and include the lack of unity over purpose and objectives, the lack of control over inputs and outputs, restrictions on flexibility, and the lack of marketing know-how. He provides the following examples:

- Place marketing involves multiple stakeholders, often with competing interests such as tourism versus industrial development.
- Measuring the effectiveness of place marketing is fraught with difficulties.
- Place branding is seldom under the control of a central authority.
- Marketers have far less control over place brands. People learn about a country in school; from media; from purchases; and from trips or friends / relatives that live there.
- Few in government have the skill sets required to design major marketing campaigns.

Some nations develop a national brand in a formal manner, but sometimes it happens almost spontaneously. Promoting a country can include identifying spokespeople and events that can influence public opinion globally (Frost 2004). Citizens gain the most from a successful national or regional branding campaign. “Just as corporate branding campaigns can raise the morale, team spirit, and sense of purpose of a company’s employees, national branding campaigns can provide a country with a common sense of purpose and national pride – not to mention a higher standard of living” (Frost 2004, page 3). Community engagement and buy-in is critical to the success of any branding program. “To deliver, everyone must believe in the brand. Just as companies must solicit the trust of consumers by behaving transparently and accountably, so will country brands have to work at maintaining credible reputations” (Frost 2004, page 3).

Risen (2005) in a provocative article, “Re-branding America: Marketing gurus think they can help 'reposition' the United States – and save American foreign policy” argues that America needs to rebrand itself and recommended as a start a better appreciation for what their current national image was, internally and globally, and then align a new brand with domestic and foreign policies that allow the U.S. to “live the brand”. “The United States might brand itself as a nation of personal freedom, risk-taking, and cultural tolerance, and then coordinate policy around the promotion of that brand (by, say, expanding market-friendly foreign aid programs)” (Risen 2005, page 1).” He also recommended that countries appoint cabinet ministers for branding, and exclaimed that he’s seen numerous

ministers of far less important areas. Risen (2005) interestingly did reference a quote by left wing activist Naomi Klein, “who warned of authoritarian undertones in nation-branding strategies” but who also wrote that “America's problem is not with its brand – which could scarcely be stronger – but with its product” (Risen 2005, page 2).

Clusters and Branding

In a supposedly “Flat World” economic development is surprisingly “spiky” in its location. Florida (2008) wrote a fascinating book about this spikiness called, Who’s Your City? How the Creative Economy is Making Where to Live The Most Important Decision of Your Life. Brugmann (2009) wrote a similar one called, Welcome to the Urban Revolution: How Cities are Changing The World. Both of these books have as their thesis how cities or clusters are now the focus for all economic development. They speak to city images and choosing one that has the attributes that you’ll feel comfortable with and within. Florida (2008) suggest that choosing a City to live in is next in importance to the decision of who to marry and, more important, who to work for, because you’ll probably be in the city longer than in the job, but hopefully in the marriage longer than both others. Neither deals with city brand-building exactly, but the essence of both books is the importance of the city, who it is as a place, its buildings, its open spaces, its businesses, its diversity, its beliefs and norms, and its people. Collectively, I think that adds up to its brand, that is, what you understand the place or city to be.

With the publication of The Competitive Advantage of Nations (Porter 1990), clusters and national competitiveness have become key concerns of government and business. The World Bank (1999) says that clusters, and social capital in clusters, are the key to economic development. Developing clusters is on the mind of every Mayor and economic development practitioner, and, as an absurd example, supposedly 48 of 50 states in the U.S. say they are building a biotech cluster.

But according to Mihailovich (2006) “The branding of such clusters is often clumsy and badly structured, as it tends simply to slap generic brand names on a group of firms sharing the same industry within a nation-state...with little thought, if any, given to the architecture of the brand” (Mihailovich 2006 page 230).

I have been involved for the last four years as co-chair of the Mississauga Summit, a civic organization of community leaders from business, the not-for-profit sector, government and residents who are working together to improve the well being of Mississauga. Mississauga is the sixth largest city in Canada, and the third largest city in Ontario, the largest province by population and GDP in Canada. It his home to many Fortune 500 Canadian subsidiary offices, and is known for its “Pill Hill” cluster where many of the multinational pharmaceutical companies are located in the shadow of the Niagara Escarpment, but also its growing high technology sector. Mississauga was created through the amalgamation of several villages over 25 years ago, and it has grown rapidly with suburban growth around Toronto and the economic development of the City. However, Mississauga is usually thought to be a ‘bedroom suburb’ of Toronto, and is

generally not a known city. It's best known for the Mayor of Mississauga, Her Worship Hazel McCallion, who has been Mayor ever since the City was created and is now in her twelfth term at the age of 90. Two years ago, she was runner up for Mayor of the World. New York has 'I love New York'. Toronto has 'Diversity is our Strength'. Waterloo is known as the 'City of Innovation'. Ottawa is 'Silicon Valley North'. What is the right brand for Mississauga? Given the force of nature that the 90-year-old 'Eveready Bunny' Mayor represents, maybe it could be "Mississauga endures!"

Marketing of urban places, primarily from a tourism standpoint, and only really for promotional purposes, has been practised since the 19th century. More intensive use of typical marketing methods has only been used since about 1970 as cities initiated competition for tourism and investment. What has changed is entrepreneurial-oriented cities are engaging the entire marketing mix as a "philosophy of place management" (Kavaratzis 2004, page 59). Cities are being run with business characteristics such as risk taking, inventiveness, promotion and profit motivation (Kavaratzis 2004). Initially, city marketing was not very professional, characterized by "crudely defined and vaguely-targeted boosterism, widely, if inaccurately, spread by many public sector place promotion agencies, (which) barely counts as marketing at all" (Kavaratzis 2004, page 59). According to Kavaratzis (2004), three factors lead to more professional marketing by cities, the development of marketing for non-profit organizations, social marketing, and image marketing.

Marketing for cities then started becoming more professional, or more like product marketing, by establishing a framework and adopting branding. Kavaratzis (2004) reviews the importance to place improvement that establishes a competitive advantage including:

- design (place as character);
- infrastructure (place as fixed environment);
- basic services (place as service provider); and
- attractions (places as entertainment and recreation).

Source: Kavaratzis 2004.

He also recommends several ways to convert a good place into a spectacular one:

- advertising and promotion;
- large-scale physical redevelopment;
- public art and civic statuary;
- mega-events;
- cultural regeneration; and
- public-private partnerships.

Source: Kavaratzis 2004.

A friend running an architecture company tells me that a city is known by its iconic buildings, many on the waterfront, most for public gatherings. She believes a City defines itself by the design and location and surrounding of its municipally built main cultural centers, such as an Opera house on the waterfront surrounded by public places, or a Museum in a historic palace in a garden on a river with a pyramid lobby, or a football

stadium, or a shopping mall built in a field surrounded by parking. It shapes and reflects the cultural values and psychology of its residents, and its uniqueness.

Kavarvztiz (2004) concludes with the importance of establishing a city image or brand, much like the need for successful marketing companies to establish a corporate brand typically thought to include image, identity and communications. An identity “is a holistic concept that articulates the corporate ethos, aims and values, and presents a sense of individuality that can help to differentiate the organisation within its competitive environment” (Kavarvztiz 2004, page 64). Kavarvztiz (2004) outlines a comprehensive framework for developing a city brand with the following investigational stages. This framework helps to put into context how everything that makes a city a community is important. It addresses the impact of buildings, density, the town council, the community organizations and social capital issues such as if people interact, are engaged and feel included in the city and social networks and interactions, including:

- understanding the existing city image and how it is communicated;
- how does landscape and public art contribute;
- how does the social and civic organizational and government structures contribute;
- how does the infrastructure and architecture contribute;
- how does social behaviour such as festivals and social capital contribute;
- what are the actual current marketing materials used and how; and
- what is the word of mouth and face to face communication about the city.

Source: Kavarvztiz 2004

“City branding provides, on the one hand, the basis for developing policy to pursue economic development and, at the same time, it serves as a conduit for city residents to identify with their city. In this sense, the relevance of and need for a framework describing, and clarifying the processes involved in city branding, are equally strong for facing increasing competition for resources, investment and tourism on the one hand, and for addressing urgent social issues like social exclusion and cultural diversity on the other” (Kavarvztiz 2004, page 58).

Mihailovich (2006) explains that branding is important for the success of countries, domestically and internationally. “Altruistic goals such as sustainable, long-term employment and prosperity are primary objectives. A coherent place brand architecture is fundamental to an emerging nation’s growth strategy as it provides a structure for forging powerful alliances and driving the country’s overall development strategy” (Mihailovich 2006, page 229). Mihailovich (2006) describes the importance of attention to many aspects of branding; a place which he says includes a place’s commodities, citizens, industry, culture and any kind of cluster and social alliances.

According to Winfield-Pfefferkorn (2005): “In order for a city to be a good brand, it must possess defining and distinctive characteristics that can be readily identified. These are functional as well as non-functional qualities. These include city appearance, people’s experience of the city, people’s belief in the city, what the city stands for, and what kind

of people inhabit the city” (Winfield-Pfefferkorn 2005, page 3). She analysed case studies on several cities, and concluded that some were successful: New York, Paris, and San Francisco, “because they had the qualities that strong brands do, and marketed their history, quality of place, lifestyle, culture, diversity, and formed cooperative partnerships between city municipalities and government in order to enhance their infrastructure. They were proactive in their approach” (Winfield-Pfefferkorn 2005, page 3). She also identified some cities in need of re-branding: Rochester and Berlin, because they had confusing non-unique brands with economic challenges. The brands lacked awareness and couldn’t be identified. She concludes that cities do need to be branded to be economically successful. “It is possible for a city to have a brand and an image that evolves into a ‘quality of place’. This in turn establishes brand loyalty, which is essential to a city’s survival” (Winfield-Pfefferkorn 2005, page 4). She believes that cooperative efforts between residents and governments are key in determining the brand of a city. Weaknesses as well as strengths must be explored. To market a brand, the brand needs to deliver, and in order for a brand to deliver, it needs actual support within the reality of the city. According to Winfield-Pfefferkorn (2005), the support for a city brand comes from the following:

- The city’s equivalent of a brand’s functional properties. What does the city deliver?
- The demographics of the city’s population.
- The wisdom and long-sightedness of the city government.
- The creative climate.
- How all this is projected in terms of a brand.

Source: Winfield-Pfefferkorn 2005

“Cities should try and promote themselves in ways that their residents find believable. When branding a city, the personality of the people who live there needs to be an essential part of the brand, and if people are promoting the city from within, the word-of-mouth advertisement finds its way to potential customers’ (Winfield-Pfefferkorn 2005, page 15).

Branding a city has to start with its functionality just like you do with a product, it has to work. Then a brand needs added-value, often non-functional and emotional, but just as important. For a city, added-value comes from the four following factors:

1. People’s experience of the City?
2. Perception. How is the population perceived?
3. Belief in the City. Does it stand for something?
4. Appearance: What does the city look like?

Source: Winfield-Pfefferkorn 2005.

According to Aronczyk (2008), national branding is a public good and what democracy is all about, deciding who we are. “The brand is meant to represent the nation’s distinct and unique value among diverse international publics: investors, tourists, migrants, workers, scholars, arts and sports franchises – anyone who might have cause to bring their

economic, symbolic, or human capital to bear on one country instead of another, equally viable option” (Aronczyk 2009, page 292). She is concerned when we outsource this to professional brand management consultants rather than engage our citizens. She argues that by engaging in a national or community discussion of identity and allegiance we are strengthening our sense of that nation or community, particularly in a global modern world where there may be tendencies to be similar, not distinct and unique. She is very concerned however, if we take this important conversation away from elected officials or community leaders and hand it over to professional marketers then we are allowing professionals who are motivated by what will sell, to define us, who we are and what we stand for. “Nation branding affects the moral basis of national citizenship” (Aronczyk 2008, page 43).

“A key dimension of the nation-branding process is to assemble, in the early stages, a number of different groups – business interests, government parties, civil society actors, and citizens – in a “grassroots”-style approach to the creation of the new national identity. The premise is that in order to be effective, the brand must be the conceptual product of all of its “owners” or “stakeholders,” as national constituents are called in this context. Moreover, implicating individuals from multiple levels of society in discussions about how to define the national self appeases those who would criticize the practice’s potential for elitism” (Aronczyk 2009, page 293).

The movement to nation branding, is seen by Aronczyk (2008), as a reaction to the reduced importance of the nation-state in a globalized world. She worries that national identity is negatively impacted by cultural homogeneity, regional allegiances and global networks of travel, business, media and migration. Corporate branding has been able to brand unique identifications for products or corporations by highlighting certain attributes. National branding is now being used to establish a national identity and enhance economic development in our competitive globalizing world. “In its ability to assemble diverse motifs of heritage and modernization, domestic and foreign concerns, and economic and moral ideologies in the projection of national identity, nation branding appears to some as a benign way to communicate national interests, one that lacks the “chauvinistic” and “antagonistic” elements of more reactionary nationalisms” (Aronczyk 2008, page 43). Nation branding is a “soft” power national promotion not the “hard” power alternative of military expansion – America has conquered the world many times over with their ubiquitous cultural dominance in movies, music and television generated by the dream factory of Hollywood. Aronczyk (2008) describes the critical difference between branding a product and branding a place, “you don’t have to ask the beans in the can how they feel about the label” (Aronczyk 2008, page 57).

“Put simply, nation branding purports to be about what it means to call oneself a national citizen” (Aronczyk 2009, page 294).

In a second article, which is even more critical of professional branding consultants, Aronczyk (2009) argues that the current economic and moral crises have caused resurgence in interest in the nation and disillusionment with the globe. National leaders have taken advantage of that, used their cultural identities, developed a national brand, and with their good reputation, have tried to gain diplomatic, economic, internal political

and other benefits. Governments have turned to marketing professionals in reputational value to help them create and market their brands:

“These experts are nation-branding consultants, and their self-styled *raison d’être*, is to create and communicate a particular version of national identity that will make the nation matter to a wide range of audiences. With their quasi-academic journals and textbooks, proprietary indices and rankings of metrological effectiveness, and an acute awareness of the power of the press release, nation branders purport to offer national leaders the “robust” identity they require to retain both their own and their jurisdiction’s relevance in the context of global transformation” (Aronczyk 2009, page 291).

Several of the articles above have excellent case studies of New York, Paris, etc., and also failed ones such as Rochester and the Research Triangle. But I came across one of the best, a very fun case study on city branding in a blog about Atlanta, “Laura’s blog on the business of branding” that points out a few important aspects to city branding extremely well: involve the people, base the brand in reality, and make the brand statement distinctive and memorable:

“Finally the silly slogan for my hometown of Atlanta “Every day is an opening day” has been benched...Not only is it a generic, meaningless idea, but a better idea is already out there in the hearts of minds of consumers. An idea that is powerful, credible and motivating...Summarizing the attributes of a city/state/country brand with one word or phrase is extremely difficult. Unlike a toothpaste, soft drink or an automobile, places have an incredible amount of diversity. Volvo is safe. Coke is the real thing. Crest fights cavities. But what is Atlanta? A southern metropolitan city with a variety of leading industries? Not exactly catchy...The mission of a slogan is not just to define your brand, but more importantly to differentiate it from other brands.

“This is New York City” is not powerful, memorable or unique. It doesn’t say anything about the city that distinguishes it from any other city. You could easily substitute any city name in the world into the campaign. Paris, London, Rome, San Francisco, or even Atlanta. New York City is the most exciting city in the world. It is home of the financial, media, theatrical and fashion centers of the world. New York needs a verbalization that reinforces that idea in the mind. The reason to visit New York is because it is the Big Apple. The biggest, most exciting city in the world. One of the best city slogans in recent years is the Las Vegas campaign “What happens here, stays here.” Brilliant!

”How should Atlanta be positioned? Let’s look at some of the facts: Busiest airport, fastest growing housing, residential and TV market, attracts young professionals, best travel index... When we arrived in the city back in 1997, a friend called us and his first words were “Welcome to Hot-lanta.”...“Hot-lanta,” is a slogan that deals with the negative, and turns it into a positive. It is the hottest-growing metro area in the

country. Who doesn't want to live in the hot place, eat at the hot restaurant, or work at the hot company? (Ries, 2010).

City, cluster or nation branding needs to involve the people, reflect reality, and be simple, direct and compelling. Mississauga doesn't have a brand today and the ideas currently being floated are as bad as Atlanta's or New York's. Maybe we should be "Cool Mississauga"! Who doesn't want to live in a cool place? Or, "The best place to raise a family" because it speaks to recreation, education, jobs and community. Or as the keynote speaker suggested, "young, dynamic and innovative". However, none of these are compelling or unique. We have a lot of work to do. The most important factor in the communications of a city or cluster brand is that the brand must deliver and be consistent and cohesive. The city has to offer the things its brand claims to offer; otherwise, like any other brand – it will be doomed.

Conclusion

Clusters are the key to economic development. One of the criteria I believe defines a successful cluster is when it has a recognized brand. A recognized brand indicates it has an image, it has become a scene in its particular chosen industry, and it has social capital, a people network that work together, trust one another and have built a community that will spur entrepreneurial activity, innovation and economic development. These brands can't be wishful thinking, and can't be lies just like you can't try to brand a product as quality when it's not. But assuming a brand for a city or cluster grows out of the history of the place is authentic, then its use and repetition will dramatically assist in the growth of the cluster and the identification with it both internally and externally. Hollywood represents the center of the movie business which is far bigger than just the City of Hollywood. Wall Street is something different than just the street, as is Madison Avenue, and Bay and King in Toronto. Silicon Valley wouldn't have been the magnet it has become if it hadn't been given the name.

That Mississauga launch keynote speaker said it best I think when he said, "Relentlessly, obsess about your story" (Gutsche 2009, page 260). His recipe for exploiting chaos is to follow a methodological approach with four steps:

1. Have a culture of revolution – it breaks down structure and liberates your organization, and allows you to obsess about your customer.
2. Hunt trends to fuel creativity and innovation.
3. Adapt your innovation, then define, brainstorm, synthesize, prototype, test and optimize it.
4. Infectious messaging enables your message to break through all the clutter and go viral. Tell a story, create a narrative, and articulate a mantra in seven words or less. Have a message or a brand that is simple, direct and compelling.

Source: Gutsche 2009.

To ensure our communities grow and remain dynamic, they must be places where people want to live, volunteer, worship and play, as well as work. Cities need to have a strong brand identity, a positive image, a vibrant brand, that talks to who they really are and want to be – an aspirational image. The best branding campaigns are reliant on a good product to be authentic. “The brand MUST deliver” (Winfield-Pfefferkorn 2005, page 139). Brand development must be done through an engaged community, and the residents need to feel comfortable with and agree with the brand identity. Even in an era of global communication, people and face-to-face and word-of-mouth communication of a brand and its vitality are the best promotional vehicles. To execute a city or cluster branding, the community needs to go through the following analyses:

1. Understand both strengths and weaknesses, and leverage some and diminish others.
2. Obtaining facts about the city, population and economic growth, education, diversity, jobs, start-ups etc., to understand the starting point.
3. Obtaining qualitative research on the city – how do people feel about the city?
4. Create a focused brand marketing strategy.
5. Identify the public face of communications of the brand.

I believe it is critical for nations, regions, cities and clusters to understand their current image in the global marketplace, establish an identity that they are happy with, build a brand that describes that identity, and that resonates both with its own citizens and with the world’s tourists, investors, governments and other stakeholders. The first and most important key to this is developing that “holistic and consistent brand” that “speaks to people” is authentic, compelling and memorable.

“Nation brand is national identity made tangible, robust, communicable and above all useful.” (Aronczyk 2009, page 291).

Recommendation

Mississauga, to achieve its goals of being the most prosperous, innovative, inclusive city and cluster in Canada needs to convene a City Summit including residents, business, not-for-profit and government to consider and decide on a brand and a brand strategy. This can not be left to consultants or media / advertising people, it needs to be done by the key stakeholders. This Summit needs to consider the following:

- Mississauga’s history and historical image based on facts and market research, strengths, weaknesses and opportunities to change them.
- Mississauga’s strategic plan, and where the residents want the city to go.
- Brainstorm several potential brands and marketing strategies.
- Market research on the several identified options.

Decide on one brand and formulate the communication and implementation plan.

The key is the brand needs to reflect the community, be decided on by the community and be implemented and embraced by the community, in order for it to be authentic and effective. And it must be memorable, direct, and compelling, and not a generic slogan.

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