

Competing for legitimacy in the place branding process: (re)negotiating the stakes

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ABSTRACT

Although stakeholder participation in place branding is actively encouraged, there has been a paucity of studies examining why uneven involvement persists in practice. This study builds on Bourdieu's theory of field and capital to explain how stakeholders from the local state, destinations, businesses and local communities negotiate influence and legitimacy in the place branding process. A multi-case study of two UK cities was employed involving semi-structured interviews with 60 stakeholders. We identify the specific characteristics of cultural capital in place branding: procedural know-how and place-sensitive knowledge. Our findings show that community representatives can acquire a seat at the place branding table by possessing distinct place-sensitive knowledge and drawing on procedural know-how accrued from professional settings. Nevertheless, traditionally dominant stakeholder groups, such as local state actors, destination management organisations and the business community, can build strategic collaborations that counter deficits in cultural capital and thus retain their status.

1. Introduction

Branding remains a powerful tool for destination marketers, but reducing complex places into simplistic visitor-facing destination brands risks overlooking the myriad of meanings attributed and shared by a place's multiple stakeholders (Braun et al., 2013; Zenker et al., 2017). In response to this tension, destination branding has evolved beyond an early focus on the dyadic relationship between potential visitors and destination management organisations (DMOs), to consider places more holistically and a wider range of stakeholders within them (Hanna & Rowley, 2015; Warren & Dinnie, 2018; Zenker et al., 2017). Prescriptions for effective place branding (inclusive of the branding of destinations) focus on the need for a participatory branding process (Kavaratzis, 2012) involving a range of stakeholders including tourism providers (Warren & Dinnie, 2018), tourism advocates (Knollenberg et al., 2021), destination businesses and entrepreneurs (García et al., 2012; Halme, 2021), visitors (Fileri et al., 2021), investors (Jacobsen, 2012), tourism lobbyists (Knollenberg et al., 2021), and community and resident groups (Braun et al., 2013; Campelo et al., 2014; Zenker et al., 2017). These developments are also reflected in place branding being defined as "a demanding governance process involving many stakeholders

and characterised by cognitive complexity, with stakeholders holding different views of the brand and emphasising different aspects of a place" (Braun et al., 2018, p. 27). This governance process should ideally allow for the engagement of multiple stakeholders in discursive activities to negotiate associations, meanings and ultimately place brand identities that reflect the place and its tangible and intangible constituents (Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015). While inclusive and collaborative processes are viewed as important in generating sustainable and effective place branding activities, the realities of such processes and their outcomes remain under-researched (Halme, 2021).

Wider stakeholder engagement through more decentralised and inclusive branding processes (Insch, 2021; Knollenberg et al., 2021) is viewed as boosting stakeholder perceptions of authenticity, satisfaction and place attachment, creating beneficial outcomes for tourist destinations (Campelo et al., 2014; Chen & Dwyer, 2018; Eusébio et al., 2018; Lin et al., 2017). Attention has also been paid to stakeholders' individual gains from sharing knowledge within networks (Baggio & Cooper, 2010), and the longer-term development of mutual trust, reciprocity and cooperation in the form of social capital (Knollenberg et al., 2021; Moscardo et al., 2017; Soulard et al., 2018). The rosy picture of the benefits of greater stakeholder participation has been challenged by

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recent studies questioning the degree of change in practice, with some stakeholders still struggling to gain meaningful involvement and empowerment (Gonzalez & Gale, 2020; Insch, 2021). Moving beyond the positive accounts of stakeholder participation outcomes for destinations and key players requires a critical investigation into how and why certain stakeholders are able to reap participatory benefits, while others remain underrepresented and even excluded.

Where barriers to participation are considered in the wider tourism literature, studies have tended to focus on the reasons why some stakeholders struggle to gain access, encompassing weaknesses in engagement processes, structural barriers restricting access to resources and opportunities, and stakeholder characteristics such as apathy or mistrust deterring their involvement (Hatipoglu et al., 2016; McComb et al., 2017). There is a paucity of work examining the experience of stakeholders that do gain access to place branding processes in terms of the dynamic interaction and competition for participation amongst groups of stakeholders, and identifying the resources required to secure a strategic position. Understanding these factors may provide those managing destinations with insights into how to manage the branding process more effectively, and provide clues to unlocking the full benefits of wider stakeholder participation promised in the literature, but often challenging to realise in practice.

This study offers one of the first theorisations of the power relations behind place branding processes by explaining how stakeholders negotiate positions of influence. It does this by applying Bourdieu's theory of field and capital (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986) which investigates how actors compete for legitimacy and status within a given social arena. Bourdieu's theory has previously been applied in tourism and place branding. A range of studies describe how key players draw on their resources to influence consumption and production practices (Çakmak et al., 2018; Pappalepore et al., 2014; Thompson & Taheri, 2020; Warren & Dinnie, 2018). Bourdieu's concepts allow for a critical analysis of the process whereby actors deploy and legitimise their stocks of economic, social and cultural resources (capital), while being both influenced by, and simultaneously influencing, an arena's (field) socially shared norms, dispositions and behaviours (habitus). Our approach allows us to understand how key players utilise their different forms of capital within the interlocking fields of tourism, community development and economic development to influence stakeholder interactions. In particular, we examine strategies of capital exchange within two city destinations located in the West of England. By identifying how influence is gained and retained the findings are of relevance to the host of public, private and third sector stakeholders involved in the everyday shaping and sharing of a brand.

2. Place branding and stakeholder participation

2.1. From destination to place branding

Both the practice of destination branding and the body of academic research concerning it have been hampered by a narrowness in how they were initially conceived. Destinations were regarded as places that tourists will visit, rather than as places where people also live, study and work. More recently, the complexity of places and the facilitating role of the people who reside and work within them has gained traction (Braun et al., 2013; Braun et al., 2018; d'Angella & Go, 2009). This shift sees a move beyond the tradition of "top-down" decision-making by DMOs that often prevailed in destination branding toward an appreciation of the role of a "brand web" of public and private individuals and organisations concerned with local regeneration, marketing, communication, culture and economic development (Hanna & Rowley, 2015).

The evolution of visitor-facing destination branding into the broader notions of place branding is also marked by a move beyond a focus on the brand as an output and its characteristics in terms of brand image, personality, experience, awareness and positioning (Caldwell & Freire, 2004) and a preoccupation with taglines and logos (Kavaratzis, 2012).

Branding places, particularly cities (Kavaratzis, 2004), can seek to reflect the complex range of meanings that stakeholders assign to material (including the landscape, landmarks and artefacts that reflect a place's heritage) and immaterial (for example institutions, practices and customs) components of places. These components reveal the essence of a place through communication in images, symbols and narratives (Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015). The heightened acceptance that destinations can rarely be removed from the wider place and its constituents unites the place and destination branding literatures (Hanna & Rowley, 2015; Zenker et al., 2017). This holistic approach sees the place brand (including destination brands) as "a network of associations in the place consumers' mind based on the visual, verbal, and behavioural expression of a place, which is embodied through the aims, communication, values, and the general culture of the place's stakeholders and the overall place design" (Zenker et al., 2017, p. 17). Thus, while the destination remains contextually important as the site for this study, conceptually it is pivotal to evaluate stakeholders' participation through the wider lens of place branding.

2.2. Involving stakeholders in the place branding process

A key point of agreement within the literature is that branding places is more complex than branding products because of the range of actors with an interest in the brand and/or the branding process (Zavattaro et al., 2015). Instead, it is accepted that the components cannot be easily managed, and require a holistic governance approach, with stakeholders at the core (Klijn et al., 2012). By taking a governance approach, the attention shifts from scripted outputs, to a consideration of place branding as a governance process that necessitates the involvement of local people and practices through ongoing dialogue and negotiation (Kavaratzis, 2012; Zenker & Erfgen, 2014). To be considered an open and inclusive branding process, stakeholders should therefore be afforded "more than enough opportunities for an open debate and discussion" (Braun et al., 2018, p. 22). Understanding how to achieve participation in place branding has been hampered by a tendency within the literature to romanticize actor interactions (Hall, 2003), characterising them in terms of unity and over-emphasising positive collaborations (Busser & Shulga, 2018). Future understanding of place branding within a destination setting will be aided by research that captures the full complexity of places in terms of engagement, interaction, and the politics, power and influence at play within them (Beritelli & Laesser, 2011).

Stakeholder engagement involves "embrace[ing] the processes whereby stakeholders are identified, their interests surfaced and interactions managed" (Hanna & Rowley, 2011, p. 465). It is seen as a valuable, often long-term, approach to managing disparate stakeholder claims in ways that can build co-operation, trust and reciprocity (Souard et al., 2018). Managing engagement is challenging because it can involve multiple, interlocking and continually evolving formal and informal relationships across a network of diverse actors (Beritelli & Laesser, 2011). The lack of clear brand ownership can also make engagement cumbersome (Hanna & Rowley, 2015), with multiple stakeholder groups seeking to develop and communicate a particular version of the city corresponding with their often competing activities and ideas about place identity and intended image (Gonzalez & Gale, 2020; Houghton & Stevens, 2011). Although the literature tends to emphasise collaboration and coordination, practitioners may find themselves faced with conflict and competition with little explanation as to why, or about how to manage it.

Recent studies have questioned the application and success of stakeholder engagement (Henninger et al., 2016), and highlighted the risk of paying only lip-service to participation as an alternative to top-down approaches (Källström & Siljeklnt, 2021; Zenker & Erfgen, 2014). Distinctions have emerged between stakeholders fully able to engage in the entire branding process, and a façade of consultation and involvement for others through structured and inflexible meetings and fora (Houghton & Stevens, 2011). Henninger et al. (2016) highlight the

dangers of certain stakeholder groups dominating others with some groups lacking knowledge about how to become involved or navigate the engagement process. Previously, local governments were central in place branding but diminished funding has encouraged them to open up brand governance. This has created the potential for disputes and challenges over how to incorporate multiple stakeholders into a complex branding process (Kavaratzis, 2012), within which stakeholder roles and brand ownership can become blurred (Todd et al., 2017). Furthermore, the actual dynamics of such engagement, the resources or actions required to facilitate participation, and why stakeholder inclusion may not lead to full engagement remain under-explored and poorly understood in place branding (Insch, 2021; Källström & Siljeklinton, 2021).

Our review of the literature highlights the uneasy relationship between a recognition of the necessity of stakeholder involvement versus difficulties in translating these calls into effective engagement practices. To understand why some stakeholders are able to succeed while others continue to struggle, this paper investigates how stakeholders negotiate influence over the place branding process. In particular, how are resources valued and exchanged when navigating stakeholder interactions in a changing and contested place branding arena?

3. Forms of capital and capital exchange

One resource that attracts considerable attention in the tourism literature is social capital (e.g., Knollenberg et al., 2021; McGehee et al., 2010; Moscardo et al., 2017; Soulard et al., 2018), summarised as “the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures” (Portes, 1998, p. 6). Studies document the economic, socio-cultural and political gains for its recipients, which include supporting knowledge sharing (Baggio & Cooper, 2010), but also improving community wellbeing and perceptions of empowerment (Moscardo et al., 2017; Strzelecka et al., 2017). Other studies highlight the beneficial outcomes for destinations, such as increased competitiveness, innovation and sustainability (McGehee et al., 2010). Despite its widespread popularity and expansive nature, the concept has a number of limitations. First, obtaining and using social capital requires the ‘virtue of membership’ that is not afforded to all stakeholders. Second, social capital captures the outcomes stemming from trust, reciprocity and cooperation, that may be diminished in situations where conflict and distrust persist. More is therefore needed to determine how to engage and involve disparate groups effectively, particularly where trust and harmony may be lacking (Moscardo et al., 2017). Most importantly for this article, social capital does not operate in isolation. Stakeholders may gain influence by drawing on other economic and cultural resources at their disposal. It is the interplay and exchange of stakeholders’ varying stocks of cultural and social resources, in particular, that this paper seeks to unpack.

Bourdieu’s theory on field and capital helps to explain how stakeholders can exchange various forms of capital to gain influence over a phenomenon (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986; Tapp & Warren, 2010). Whereas applications of social capital identified above form part of a tradition of looking at social capital as something altogether positive, Bourdieu focuses on the forms of capital as a way of reproducing existing (unequal) power relations. Bourdieu (1984) explains how actors bring together their resources, knowledge, expectations, understandings and roles within a given field that forms a heuristic device through which to explore relations between actors within a specific social, cultural, political or economic context. A field can consist of a single arena or an amalgamation of smaller subfields (Bourdieu, 2005). Place branding can be characterised as interlocking fields, such as the state, the visitor economy, the arts, sports and education that combine to form the larger field (Warren & Dinnie, 2018). This conceptualisation, however, does not include the community arena of place branding (Braun et al., 2013; Zenker et al., 2017), and the specific roles and responsibilities of residents and community representatives. We therefore argue that place branding is a field at the intersection of the state, the market and the

community. By this we mean the juncture between economic development, community development, conservation, heritage and tourism.

Within overlapping social arenas, stakeholders compete for legitimacy by commanding and mobilising forms of economic, cultural, social and ultimately symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986). Capital operates as the currency that actors collect and employ when seeking to assert a strategic position (Warren & Dinnie, 2018). Each form of capital represents different resources. Economic capital refers to the tangible resources that stakeholders have at their disposal, including liquidity, investments, property, assets, income streams or access to funding (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu acknowledges the significance of economic resources for attaining other forms of capital. It is most pervasive in its ‘transubstantiated’ form, facilitating the development of additional social or cultural capital. Social capital looks at the legitimacy that can be gained by actors working collectively, establishing relationships, networks and affiliations when developing and retaining group support. Cultural capital centres around the possession of skills, expertise, knowledge and talents that enable negotiation of favourable positions. Possessing and mobilising stocks of cultural capital provides some actors with access to otherwise closed institutions and practices within a field, while those lacking the relevant skills and understanding are discretely excluded. Furthermore, the attainment of honour, prestige or recognition of resources enables actors to turn social and cultural capital into symbolic capital. Through this conversion greater value for the capital is secured, creating legitimacy for actors’ claims and affording them strategic positions in the field (Bourdieu, 1986). In this paper, we employ the theory of field and capital to examine how stakeholders, representing economic development, community development and/or tourism, exchange their financial, interpersonal and intellectual resources for legitimacy and ultimately influence over the place branding process.

Bourdieu’s framework has been applied across many disciplines, including marketing (Tapp & Warren, 2010), tourism (Çakmak et al., 2018; Pappalepore et al., 2014; Thompson & Taheri, 2020) and place branding (Warren & Dinnie, 2018). Previous studies employed a Bourdieusian lens in tourism and destination management to examine notions of taste, status and consumption (Pappalepore et al., 2014; Stringfellow et al., 2013). More recently, attention has been paid to the deployment of capital as a means of exchange and competition (Thompson & Taheri, 2020), helping to explain how actors negotiate complex and often overlapping fields (Warren & Dinnie, 2018), and to highlight power differences between actors (Çakmak et al., 2018). Warren and Dinnie (2018), for instance, provide an important advancement by highlighting the multiplicity of capital forms held by those actors professionally involved in promoting a place. Leveraging stocks of social and cultural capital enable place promoters to accrue legitimacy for their roles and the city they represent. Social capital has also been shown to facilitate capital exchange where economic resources are lacking (Çakmak et al., 2018), or to have enhancing effects on individual stocks of cultural capital for a wider array of place-based actors (Pappalepore et al., 2014). As such, these studies recognise the potential for capital deployment to help explain collaborative and positive outcomes for the destinations they represent.

Place branding, however, has increasingly been recognised as a more contested arena. In this paper, we start from the idea that place branding has changed so that greater stakeholder participation is associated, at least academically, with greater prestige for stakeholders. We question the extent to which these changes impact the negotiation of capital within the field, and highlight persisting unequal power relations. We specifically examine how and why cultural and social capital is deployed, and identify the specific characteristics of knowledge, institutions and social relations that are legitimised within the field of place branding. We therefore answer the question of what counts as cultural capital in place branding. In doing so, we extend previous applications of Bourdieu in place branding to study multiple stakeholders, to investigate how different forms of capital interact and how these

overlapping resources are mobilised by stakeholders to negotiate an influential position in the fluctuating place branding field.

4. Materials and methods

We employ a multi-case study of stakeholders' participation in Bath and Bristol over an 18-month period starting in October 2015 to March 2017. Case studies provide a flexible and detailed methodology through which to critically examine under-researched, complex and evolving phenomena (Xiao & Smith, 2006), and are popular in tourism research (Çakmak et al., 2018; Moscardo et al., 2017), and in place branding studies more specifically (Campelo et al., 2014; Warren & Dinnie, 2018). Of particular benefit, case studies allow for an intricate evaluation of how people are both shaped by, and shape, their physical and social environment (Ponting & McDonald, 2013). Through qualitative data we were able to produce rich, detailed and meaningful interpretations of the power dynamics involved in place branding processes in both locations. The replication of the study in a multi-case study research design produced more reliable, rigorous and relevant results (Stewart, 2012).

The two case studies of neighbouring cities 11 miles apart within the West of England were instrumentally selected as complex cases in which there was a recognition of place branding challenges related to competing stakeholder interests (Campelo et al., 2014). While Bath and Bristol differ in population size (88,859 versus 463,400 respectively at the last census (ONS, 2019)), both are popular UK city-destinations (among the top 12 UK cities visited by overseas tourists pre-Covid) and they share multiple governance similarities and challenges. Both feature high living costs for residents (being within the top 15 places for UK cost of living (ABC Finance, 2018)) and share a regional governance context as part of the West of England Combined Authority, which aims to encourage inward investment under the 'Invest in Bristol and Bath' banner (West of England Combined Authority, 2015). Both are important sites for (non-tourism) commerce, education (as University cities) and cultural events, and therefore embody the overlapping governance challenges at the intersect of the place branding field (i.e. economic development, community development, tourism and heritage). At the time of case selection, both cities' DMOs were governed by public-private partnerships, led by management boards comprised of key players from tourism, hospitality, retail, heritage, business and the local government. In both sites there was evidence of a growing decentralisation of the branding process, and a transition from a strong visitor-facing perspective to a recognition of a wider, multi-stakeholder audience for the place brands, making these valuable sites in which to investigate how stakeholder interactions and engagement were governed (Braun et al., 2018; Klijn et al., 2012). While the case studies were conducted prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, recent research posits that a sustainable recovery will require improved local stakeholder involvement within tourism (Sharma et al., 2021).

The branding narratives for both cities were multifaceted and contested, and not solely linked to their destination status. In Bath, the DMO positioning around beauty and elegance, wellness, and living heritage and style (Bath Tourism Plus, 2015) competed with the slogan 'beautifully inventive' produced by a public consultation led by business leaders and supported by the local government (Bath Bridge, 2017). Bath's branding was also inescapably linked to its status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Bristol's branding combined being a "city of openness, imagination and originators" (Bristol City Council, 2017, p. 1) with its legacy as a sustainable city stemming from its award of European Green Capital in 2015 (Bristol Green Capital, 2017). The DMO positioned its branding around the fusion of creativity and heritage, with the tagline, "Welcome to Bristol – A city that doesn't just buzz, it thumps!" (Visit Bristol, 2016).

While many studies take either a resident and community-led (e.g., Aitken & Campelo, 2011) or place promoter focus (e.g. Warren & Dinnie, 2018), this study used a purposive sample of 60 participants drawn from the local state (e.g., local council officials, elected officials,

political leaders), destination management (DMOs, hotel owners, restaurant proprietors), businesses and residents (Table 1). Respondents were selected due to involvement in place branding activities including marketing and promotions, heritage services, inward investment, business and economic support, place planning, placemaking, lobbying, word-of-mouth and custodial positions. Moreover, each case study included a higher education representative, reflecting the sector's importance in promoting and shaping places (Hanna & Rowley, 2015).

Semi-structured interviews with participants, each lasting 60–90 min, were recorded and transcribed, creating over 760,000 words of data. The interviews were designed to explore how, and to what extent, stakeholders were able to participate in place branding activities. For example, participants were asked to detail their role in shaping the presentation and representation of the city, including any promotional and engagement activities. Subsequent questions examined participants' connections to the city and the resources utilised to access and influence place branding activities, as well as the extent to which they worked collaboratively.

Several measures were incorporated into the data collection to enhance its validity and reliability. Interviews followed a semi-structured format, allowing for in-depth follow-up questions to unpack participants' understandings. Moreover, short projective technique exercises were performed, including sentence completion exercises, word associations, and city and self-personification. This data was subsequently compared against responses to involvement within the interview template, checking for inconsistencies. The research design employed data triangulation by incorporating numerous data sources (i.e., multiple groups of stakeholders from across two cities). The interview process was also supported by non-participant observations and analysis of secondary material. Observations (n = 12) were undertaken at sites across both cities, including key visitor attractions and city-wide tours. Reflections from these observations informed the interview process, including the production of interview aids. Secondary data sources also supported the evaluation of participants' responses, which included publicly available information from websites, as well as pamphlets, promotional material and policy handbooks provided by participants. The interview process continued until theoretical saturation was met.

To understand how participants justified their claims to participation and influence over place branding, a three-stage concept coding was manually conducted by the first author and periodically reviewed by the research team (Saldaña, 2021). The first stage assigned codes to sections of data capturing the resources and activities that enabled and restricted certain stakeholders from meaningfully participating in place branding activities (i.e. from promotion through to creation and sharing of narratives assigned to the city). The second stage clustered these codes based on their overarching meaning and the outcomes they provided for participants. The categories pointed to the variety of resources and capabilities that different participants relied on when justifying, and aiming to extend, their influence. The final stage translated the categories into core themes that helped advance current understandings of stakeholder participation in the place branding process. The categories were compared, contrasted and re-evaluated alongside existing conceptual and theoretical insights. Appendix 1 displays the codes, categories, themes and additional data.

Detailed analytical notes (n ≥ 350) were collated throughout the data collection and analysis supporting the development, and later testing, of emerging coding and theory building. Moreover, the transcribed data and resultant coding were entered into a qualitative software programme, NVivo, where the research team performed additional 'peer checking' by reviewing codes and categorisations against the data.

5. Findings

Stakeholders negotiate influence in a decentralised place branding process by drawing upon their legitimised capital. Stakeholders in our sample utilised their cultural capital by relying on generic *procedural*

Table 1
Participant information and descriptions.

Bath (n = 31)			Bristol (n = 29)		
Group	Code	Profile	Group	Code	Profile
<i>Business</i> (n = 7)			<i>Business</i> (n = 6)		
	BA-B1	Marketing consultant for business collective		BR-B1	Innovation Manager for business collective
	BA-B2	Director of business collective and owner of branding agency		BR-B2	Chief Executive of business representative body
	BA-B3	Member of business collective and entrepreneur		BR-B3	Chief Executive of investment hub
	BA-B4	Chief Executive of business improvement collective		BR-B4	Treasurer of a private entrepreneurial and third-sector
	BA-B5	Director for a partnership for businesses and professionals		BR-B5	Community engagement officer and cultural business representative
	BA-B6	Owner of city-wide business chain		BR-B6	Marketing and communications for a regional development organisation
	BA-B7	Chair of business representative group			
<i>Residents</i> (n = 8)			<i>Residents</i> (n = 5)		
	BA-R1	Secretary of residents' association and volunteer for environmental group		BR-R1	Secretary of a residents' association
	BA-R2	Secretary of a heritage protection lobby group		BR-R2	Chair of a residents' association
	BA-R3	Chairman of a heritage protection lobby group		BR-R3	Committee member for planning and lobby group
	BA-R4	Member of residents' association		BR-R4	Chair of a residents' association
	BA-R5	Treasurer of residents' association		BR-R5	Community partnership representative
	BA-R6	Secretary of historical association			
	BA-R7	Chairman of a collective of residents' associations			
	BA-R8	Chair of resident volunteers and local tour guide			
<i>Local state</i> (n = 8)			<i>Local state</i> (n = 7)		
	BA-LS1	Marketing and communications for regeneration team		BR-LS1	Previous senior elected official
	BA-LS2	Coordinator for cultural and creative strategy		BR-LS2	Elected official representing the local community
	BA-LS3	Official for place policies		BR-LS3	Local authority official for place policies
	BA-LS4	Commercial manager for heritage services		BR-LS4	Director of Inward Investment and Innovation
	BA-LS5	World Heritage Site Manager employed by local authority		BR-LS5	Neighbourhood Partnership Coordinator
	BA-LS6	Senior official in local authority		BR-LS6	Museum Development for Bristol and wider region
	BA-LS7	Official for economic development		BR-LS7	Official for local authority cultural strategy
	BA-LS8	Community engagement officer			
<i>Destination</i> (n = 7)			<i>Destination</i> (n = 10)		
	BA-D1	Hotel management for a heritage hotel		BR-D1	Chief Executive of DMO
	BA-D2	Coordinator of cultural destination project		BR-D2	Marketing Manager for heritage attraction
	BA-D3	Chief Executive of DMO		BR-D3	Community Engagement Officer at a religious attraction
	BA-D4	DMO board, hospitality representative and business owner		BR-D4	Chief Executive of a cultural attraction
	BA-D5	Director of Marketing and Communications for a spa attraction		BR-D5	Visitor and Services Manager at a city landmark
	BA-D6	Manager of heritage preservation group and associated attractions		BR-D6	Street art tour business owner
	BA-D7	Chief Executive of preservation organisation		BR-D7	Curator and visitor management for cultural attraction
				BR-D8	Marketing and PR for maritime heritage attraction
				BR-D9	Volunteer for maritime heritage attraction
				BR-D10	Tour guide for maritime heritage attraction
<i>Higher education</i> (n = 1)			<i>Higher education</i> (n = 1)		
	BA-HE1	Communications for a higher education institution		BR-HE1	Communications for a higher education institution

Source: Created by the authors.

know-how and advancing specific *place-sensitive knowledge*. As more stakeholders were encouraged to participate, they sought to gain or retain favourable positions of influence by using their social capital to accumulate the necessary cultural capital to strategically (re)position themselves in the field. Our findings therefore show the enabling and restricting role of capital deployment in the place branding process.

5.1. Procedural know-how

Decentralisation of the place branding process resulted in confusion and a sense that “*there’s no driver of the bus ... perhaps in the old days, inverted commas, there was a council that did all of that, albeit not very well, but at least everyone knew who that was. Nowadays I’m not sure people know who does what anymore*” (BA-D4). Stakeholders equipped with the understanding of these changes and experience of a range of branding activities were able to capitalise on this knowledge to navigate influence. This procedural know-how included possessing relevant expertise and experience in undertaking engagement activities, advocacy abilities, knowledge of multiple city sectors and groups, educational and professional achievements and organisational backing that provided the baseline to represent the city effectively.

Participants utilised a host of capabilities and applied them to the place branding process. State actors used pre-existing procedural knowledge of the funding environment to pursue strategies intended to enhance the place brand, for example, European sources of funding were obtained in Bristol for its green capital and smart city initiatives:

“*We were successful in winning quite a lot of funding out of European Innovation projects. We started to build a portfolio of projects around this notion of smart cities. It wasn’t always a word we liked, but it had enough resonance with businesses, industries and funders for us to start to use it.*” (BR-LS4).

The subsequent funding was invested back into the city, with state actors directing promotions, events and signage, as well as engaging small businesses and residents through community grants that were considered aligned with the ‘smart city’ and ‘green capital’ straplines.

In Bath, the DMO returned to council ownership during the study. However, it was considered important that the DMO Board should retain its autonomy and structure. Participants connected to the DMO recognised the benefit of having a destination organisation insulated from the council “*bureaucracy*” and functioning more like a business:

“We’re running it as a business and not a bureaucracy, which is a massive difference. A bureaucracy is run through policy and procedure and the customer is almost disregarded. In business it’s run for shareholders, well in effect our shareholders are stakeholders. It’s run for the stakeholders, the members’ benefits, and in terms of regen[eration] trying to bring people here to spend money, which is we think good for the resident.” (BA-D3)

DMO representatives explained the maintenance of autonomy with their focus on customers and wider community rather than on policy. Similarly, participants from the business community discussed the rewards of accumulating practical business and sector-specific knowledge, expertise and experience that would assist with everyday branding activities. For instance, actors involved in a social enterprise comprised of key business leaders and entrepreneurs from across Bath were central in delivering the ‘*beautifully inventive*’ narrative. The group members possessed knowledge of business and commerce, finance, creative industries, innovation, promotion and branding:

“You can see a whole array of people from different sectors and industries. They’re very high powered and creative thinkers.” (BA-B1)

The narrative was initially commissioned by Bath’s local council, involving “*a huge amount of people*”, before being refined by a group of approximately 15 “*highly engaged [actors]*” (BA-B1). The group employed its collective understanding of the multiple sub-fields within place branding to secure outcomes from the project and to “*hold the Council and other stakeholders to task around the narrative*” (BA-B2). The narrative has been integrated into several local council strategies, including for economic development, placemaking, regeneration, and creative and cultural industries.

Procedural know-how also grants those involved in running resident associations, lobby campaigns, planning groups and social investments a seat at the table. Local community groups discussed the range of expertise and experiences they accumulated from their current or previous occupational settings. A retired civil servant and secretary of a residents’ association in an affluent area of Bath explained how their own and other group members’ skillsets benefited the association in its ability to influence:

“I think having a residents’ association, having people who have the area of expertise does carry more weight, because one local resident whining doesn’t do much.” (BA-R1)

In conclusion, stakeholders from Bath and Bristol capitalised on their own and group cultural capital, based on existing practical and professional knowledge and experience, to help navigate the organisational and financial activities of place branding. Participants did not necessarily consider that their legitimacy stemmed from being place promoters specifically, instead, value was drawn from the accumulation of practical and transferable knowledge and expertise gained from a series of roles in the city and elsewhere. Procedural know-how is not only attributed to place branding professionals, but also to those able to support the promotion and presentation of the place through their existing skillsets. While those participants acting in a professional capacity, such as the policy makers, business leaders and DMOs, referenced their employment as their source of legitimacy, other actors sought to replicate these claims through reference to similar skills developed through a portfolio of past and present professional activities.

5.2. Place-sensitive knowledge

Top-down branding was increasingly critiqued, as a senior official in Bristol’s local authority explained, “*I think it’s very difficult to impose a brand from above. It wouldn’t be right for the city council or other strategic organisations to just impose a brand. You need to engage with people on what they think and how they see the city. If I see those sorts of words I just said [creative, dynamic, full of entrepreneurs, full of independents] that’s my*

sense of the Bristol brand, but what would most residents say?” (BR-LS3). The recognition that the brand, and its branding, belonged to multiple stakeholders legitimised place-sensitive knowledge, comprised of a depth of local knowledge, the showcasing of custodianship for the city, statements of pride, passion and ownership, and a willingness and ability to challenge actions that were considered detrimental for the place.

Residents discussed their role as “*local experts*” (BR-R3) and “*guardians*” (BA-R6) of their place. Resident associations and lobby groups also possessed hyper-local level knowledge of the city’s people and under-represented voices:

“[The residents’ association] is very much on a street level, it is about neighbours, it’s about community, it’s about sending emails around to people telling them what’s going on, it’s about having meetings, having social events ... all we want to do is get everyone speaking to each other.” (BR-R1)

Local knowledge based on attachment to ‘their’ city provided legitimacy for stakeholders, creating pride, enthusiasm and protectiveness over the way the city was presented:

“Thinking about how you make the city not just a place that you live but it’s a place that you’re actually a part of. By being a member of this place called Bath, you’re a part of something you’re proud of and actually gives you access and opportunity to get involved in stuff that’s just interesting.” (BA-B3)

Similarly, participants involved in a lobby group to protect Bath’s heritage highlighted their knowledge of Bath as a resource underpinning their involvement, presenting themselves as the “*common sense of Bath*” (BA-R2). Responding to moves to modernise the city, the participants combined their unique knowledge of the city (in the present and the past) to lobby for the protection and promotion of landmarks:

“I suppose our pinnacle was that we actually did get to meet the UNESCO inspectors when they came to Bath five-or-six years ago. There were only six groups of people outside the council that got to meet with them and we were one of them. They are the highest sort of group that you could get that oversee the World Heritage Site.” (BA-R3)

They alluded to a hierarchy of actors, with UNESCO as the “*pinnacle*”. Being part of a select cohort invited to participate in discussions provided more legitimisation for their cultural capital, thus increasing their symbolic capital. There was also legitimacy attached to voluntary participation for the protection and enjoyment of others:

“There’s something quite powerful when you give your time for no money, sometimes more so than giving money ... To actually say I’ve done this, and given my time, so you can have a nice time when you come to Bath.” (BA-R8)

Participants involved in attracting visitors to Bath and Bristol based on the quality of their art, literature, music, heritage, leisure and beauty also used their knowledge of place to justify their position in the place branding field. One participant sought to promote the artists behind the art, first creating a digital-app whereby street art could be tracked and credited, then curating a city-wide street art tour:

“I knew there was over 30-years of history into street art and graffiti art and it had to stand up to my initial reasons for getting involvement in the creativity of Bristol, which was to promote and support the artists. This was a key ethos and I was determined to hold strong.” (BR-D6)

The establishment of a tourism business was “*a secondary aspect*” to the initial plan “*to run an independent organisation that can promote the arts, unfunded*” (BR-D6). To achieve these ambitions, the street art tour manager discussed the importance of building a shared narrative with street artists. In particular, they developed a partnership with a well-established street artist credited for inspiring the generation of artists

that made Bristol famous. Knowledge about the place and its people was shared through a series of promotions, activities, events and images helping to entrench the importance of the street art culture. Similarly, in Bath a group of appointed local tour guides, called the Mayor's Guides, were considered place "ambassadors" (BA-R8). Despite the role being voluntary and unpaid, to be awarded the Mayor's Guide seal, the tour guides must first pass a test demonstrating knowledge of Bath and its history.

5.3. (Re)negotiating cultural capital through social capital

Not all participants justified their involvement in place branding with reference to cultural capital. Instead, a common approach was to counter deficits in procedural know-how or place-sensitive knowledge through strategic and selective alliances. In doing so, social capital could be exchanged for cultural capital to help develop a presence in the place branding process, offset existing deficits and emerging tensions, build knowledge exchanges and enhancing interpersonal relationships.

Mobilising social capital and collaboration were frequently mentioned as strategies for gaining access:

"How Bristol used to work was that it was the powerful people in the city used to be outside of the political class of the city. So, it would be people who controlled land, developers or people with resources and money ... With changes in the city's leadership, it seems to have brought all the different energies together, to say actually together we are stronger." (BR-LS5)

The local council in Bristol, for example, were able to lead partnerships with residents, visitor attractions and businesses that enabled them to utilise their high concentration of knowledge of place branding processes with other stakeholders' affective connection to place. Bristol's elected mayor was also considered essential in "crossing boundaries" between groups (BR-LS5).

Similarly, business and destination representatives could gain greater status by exchanging generic (procedural know-how) or specific (place-sensitive knowledge) cultural capital for social capital:

"We bring local resource, know-how, energy, and sometimes money and ideas to the table that sometimes local government just can't do." (BR-B2)

"What's interesting over the last five-years is that all of the cultural organisations have declared themselves businesses, and joined those [business] networks on an equal basis." (BR-D4)

Using cultural capital, participants accrued necessary social capital to reposition themselves more favourably within the field. Stakeholders were able to balance the competing demands of marketisation versus place sensitivity through forming strategic alliances. Participants also discussed the rising prevalence of informal connections, outside the remit of formal partnership, that enabled the pursuit of shared interests:

"You'll quite often have those golf course type of conversations that aren't done in meetings and things. So, a lot of that influence and conversation happens there." (BA-LS5)

While social capital could be deployed to help encourage wider stakeholder participation, it could also reinforce exclusionary tendencies. Residents noted the limits of participation most frequently, with access to the strategic partnerships considered as restricted to "a quorum of select people that don't truly represent the people of the city" (BA-R3). Bath's relatively small population size was felt to exacerbate the necessity of social capital when navigating the field: "Bath is small enough for it to be run by a whole series of people who you could probably list on two hands." (BA-R7). An absence of social capital can restrict participants' ability to build and deploy knowledge of process and place:

"[Bath] is a bit like a playset family who look after each other. It takes a long time to get into the clique. I'm only saying this because I was born

here, lived here all my life, worked here, and ran businesses here. It's more to do with the fact that if you're an outsider coming in, whether that's as a resident, business owner, what have you, you can't just pitch up and go 'right, I'm a new business, look at me I'm great, everyone take me under their wing'." (BA-B7)

Those that are protected by social capital can determine the entry requirements and restrict the rewards from being a part of a close-knit family that protects their own interests. As a participant heavily involved in business collaborations noted, "some of those small bubbles are getting into a collection of bubbles and getting bigger" (BA-B3). Moreover, these closed circles often resulted in a replication of the same groups retaining influence, with engagement through partnerships being characterised by one hotel owner in Bath as "all about you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours" (BA-D1).

The findings point to select participants renegotiating deficits in procedural know-how or place-sensitive knowledge through the strategic deployment of social capital. This process was particularly pertinent for local state actors and the business and destination actors they collaborated with. However, the findings suggest that residents were less able to change their position in the field and therefore experienced diminished participation and status.

6. Discussion

Building on Bourdieu's theory of field and capital (Bourdieu, 1986), this study identifies how stakeholders compete for influence through two oscillating strategies; legitimisation through cultural capital and (re)legitimisation through exchanging social capital for cultural capital (Fig. 1).

6.1. Legitimisation through cultural capital

Stakeholders benefit from leveraging their professional and organisational experiences and expertise (Knollenberg et al., 2021; Warren & Dinnie, 2018), mobilising institutional and embodied cultural capital attained from a broader understanding of the connected fields involved (including tourism, marketing, economic development, placemaking, planning, policy making, diplomacy). While this included professional competences from occupational settings (Warren & Dinnie, 2018), they were only one part of the puzzle. Stakeholders without professional roles, including residents, showed an awareness of the requirements of the place branding field, and the need to demonstrate similar skillsets to those in positions of influence. Recognition and prestige was also gained through stakeholders' everyday interactions across the cities, alongside the continued use of marketing and promotional activities. Unsurprisingly, destination and local government actors, including DMOs, retained the higher stocks of procedural know-how. Increasingly, however, business community stakeholders were able to deploy their procedural know-how to capitalise on governance uncertainties and a wider discourse of entrepreneurialism.

The professionalisation of the field continues apace, local knowledge, however, can equal professional knowledge in its capacity to grant access. Procedural know-how was predominately generic, meaning that it could be exercised from experiences and knowledge gained from a wide remit of activities outside of the place. A more specific form of cultural capital emerged that relied upon local stakeholders' place-sensitive knowledge. Stakeholders needed to demonstrate depth and nuance of local knowledge, a meaningful connection to the place, and an ability and willingness to protect and promote its material and immaterial assets for their knowledge to be seen as legitimate. Theoretically, this builds on existing applications of Bourdieu and demonstrates that stakeholders can gain a stake by transferring capital from elsewhere, and encouraging those with an existing stake to recognise the value of focusing attentions locally.

We evidence parallels with studies of place attachment, considered

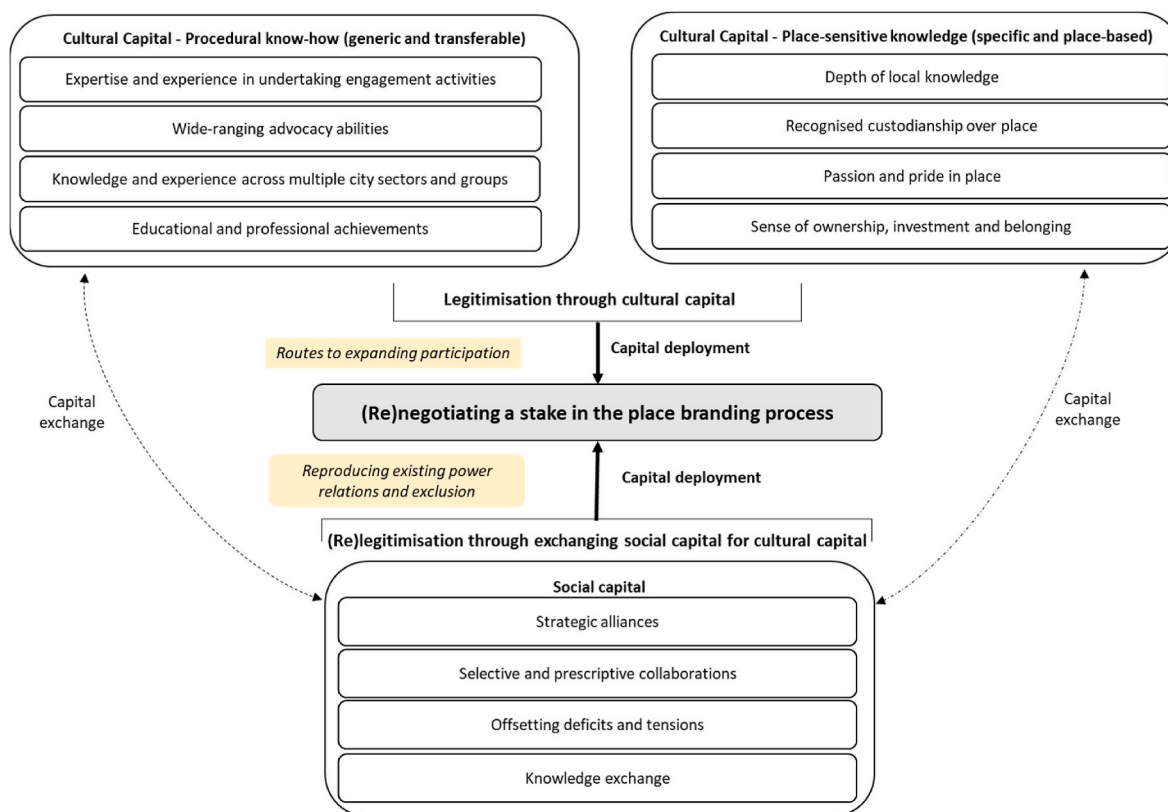


Fig. 1. (Re)negotiating a stake in the place branding process. Source: created by the authors.

traditionally as “individuals’ emotional bindings to geographic areas” (Ram et al., 2016, p. 111), focusing predominately on the symbolic associations and meanings attached by individuals to a place that holds a deep-rooted connection (Yuksel et al., 2010). It is well-established that residents’ place attachment can benefit the brand through the increased likelihood that residents will share their positive associations and recommend the place to others (Eusébio et al., 2018; Lin et al., 2017). Moreover, residents are ambassadors for places, wanting their complex place knowledge to be reflected in promotional activities (Casais & Monteiro, 2019; Zenker et al., 2017). Yet, existing studies on place attachment have principally presented the benefits of place attachment for places (Chen & Dwyer, 2018), as well as the creation of positive associations and emotions for its stakeholders (Strzelecka et al., 2017).

We suggest, however, that place attachment not only operates as an outcome from stakeholder involvement, but can also facilitate stakeholders’ legitimacy and involvement. Recognising the enabling properties of place-sensitive knowledge builds on the acknowledgement that cultural capital is created by people within a place (Pappalepore et al., 2014), and highlights the importance of recognising that residents are local ambassadors and custodians (Aitken & Campelo, 2011; Campelo et al., 2014; Zenker et al., 2017). Increasingly, it is not only the residents’ place attachment that is considered of value for destinations, tourists’ expressions of admiration on social media build emotional connections to their chosen destinations (Filieri et al., 2021). Similarly, in our study, we show that place attachment does not need to align only to residents’ connection to their place, but is also evidence in other stakeholders’ (in particular destination stakeholders) connection to the arts, beauty, culture and heritage. This can be understood in the context of place branding as a response to the need for places to position themselves in a global competition for investment, talent and prestige. However, competition should be characterised within a global-local nexus since global prestige requires local actors’ attachment. We therefore show it is not only the places and their communicated brands

that benefit from showcasing place-specific emotional connections (Casais & Poço, 2021), local stakeholders who facilitate and share in the branding can also use this connection to leverage their own influence over the place branding process.

Despite signs that possession of cultural capital opened pathways for greater participation, the logic of professionalisation and marketisation did not always sit easily alongside attachment to place. A further argument beginning to gain traction in the literature is the potential for conflict and contests between groups as they aim to exchange and maximise their capital (Liang & Chan, 2018; Stringfellow et al., 2013; Thompson & Taheri, 2020). Therefore, we suggest that changes in the field granted heightened importance to social capital as the basis of capital exchange and transubstantiation, helping actors to strengthen their cultural capital to navigate the field.

6.2. (Re)legitimisation through exchanging social capital for cultural capital

Bourdieu (1986) depicted transubstantiation as material (i.e., economic) capital being used to facilitate the production of additional immaterial resources (i.e., social and cultural capital). Our study points to a similar trajectory for immaterial capital, with the strategic use of social capital enhancing the necessary procedural or place-sensitive knowledge required for privileged access to engagement and promotion activities. Those with stocks of social capital from their position within the state and market fields form a mixture of ad-hoc and long-term alliances when required. This reinforces Halme’s (2021) finding concerning the importance of social capital in institutionalising a longer-term perspective within place branding collaborations. Social capital therefore not only allows for the deployment of cultural capital, it also aids its creation.

Our results indicate that legitimisation of social capital continues to separate the privileged from the struggling stakeholders. A fundamental

way this plays out in the field is local government's use of other actors to support the enhancement of their cultural capital (Çakmak et al., 2018). While other examples have looked at local governments exchanging economic capital for cultural capital, our study points to the reverse. The diminishing resources of local state actors are countered by their social and cultural capital, i.e. connections and knowledge to advance external funding streams and, more importantly, to retain their standing. Selectivity in place branding therefore remains (Boisen et al., 2018), though it is now operating in a slightly different way. Instead of responding to who is influential at a given time and forging alliances (Warren & Dinnie, 2018), this study points to stakeholders' strategic deployment of their time spent in the field, memberships, networks and informal relationships to form partnerships that enable them to build and strengthen the required cultural capital. Responses to calls for participatory approaches remain relatively nascent, meaning that the more limited dominant groups retain the bulk of the social capital. Over time these groups have established stocks of social capital and exchanged it for expertise navigating the field, making them well-equipped to foster the alliances needed to strengthen their position (Liang & Chan, 2018). While the recognition of place-sensitive knowledge shows change is underway, entrenched patterns of social capital slows these advancements and make it difficult for new entrants to the field to lead initiatives, rather than becoming involved on a tokenistic basis.

7. Conclusion

Negotiating competing stakeholder interests is a complex endeavour for those involved in an evolving place branding process where ownership over the place 'brand' is increasingly contested (Hanna & Rowley, 2015; Warren & Dinnie, 2018). Our study explains how stakeholders assert a stake and why more participatory approaches to place branding that go beyond tokenistic inclusion are difficult to achieve in practice.

7.1. Theoretical implications

Our paper contributes to theoretical debates surrounding uneven stakeholder participation in the place branding and wider tourism literature. This is an important issue, as despite the calls for wider stakeholder participation, in practice top-down approaches and limited engagement persist. We offer novel findings by extending previous applications of Bourdieu's work in tourism (Çakmak et al., 2018; Stringfellow et al., 2013; Thompson & Taheri, 2020; Warren & Dinnie, 2018) to a study of multiple place-based stakeholders, highlighting in particular how the forms of capital interact, and how these overlapping resources are mobilised by stakeholders to gain and retain an influential position in the place branding field. In doing so, our study identifies specific resources used by different actors that results in parallel dynamics of participation and exclusion in the place-branding field.

Our findings identify transferable professional and organisational skillsets and place-sensitive knowledge as the characteristics of cultural capital legitimised in place branding. The importance of place knowledge suggests pathways to expanding participation in place branding. We thus extend previous applications of place attachment (Eusébio et al., 2018; Lin et al., 2017; Strzelecka et al., 2017) to illustrate how stakeholders are able to leverage this asset to gain legitimacy for their actions. Moreover, we use Bourdieu's theory on the field and capital to demonstrate how cultural and social capital interact, with social capital becoming transubstantiated to counter deficits in cultural capital. Therefore, a hierarchy of stakeholders prevails, ensuring that change remains difficult, albeit not impossible, to enact.

We confirm the fluidity of stakeholders' positioning (Çakmak et al., 2018), creating a capital exchange process that is dynamic, multi-directional and strategic. The rules of the game and the accepted behaviours change over time (Pappalepore et al., 2014). Having a foot already in the door, however, assists the same players to reposition

themselves strategically to respond to any field-level changes. While forms of engagement, such as partnerships and collaborations, offer hope for those entering the field to gain the social capital needed, this also takes time and effort, even for those 'already in the know', to build the necessary procedural know-how. Moreover, key players are able to overcome their deficits in place-sensitive knowledge and create alliances when and where needed. Therefore, this study explains the continued conflict between participation and selectivity. As capital exchanges operate in both legitimising and delegitimising ways, they create routes for involvement and retain barriers to participation. Importantly, we add to Bourdieu's work by demonstrating that capital is not only reproductive, but it is simultaneously generative. Capital thus needs to be seen as dynamic rather than a static stock. Capital exchanges are iterative and at the root of the continued contestation and unequal power relations within the place branding field.

7.2. Managerial implications

Competition not only exists across destinations, but also within destinations, and between various stakeholders. To manage stakeholder conflicts, the reasons why tensions occur must first be understood (Braun et al., 2013). Our study offers novel explanations of stakeholders' dynamic capital exchanges, and the discrete opportunities and barriers they create. The findings suggest that destination actors retain a strategic position in the field by being able to deploy stocks of cultural and social capital at their disposal. Local knowledge can be successfully used by stakeholders (e.g., residents, visitor attractions and local businesses) to negotiate influence within place branding processes. These gains can, however, be negated when local government and DMOs employ strategic partnerships (unintentionally or by design) that retain the *status quo* and exclude community actors.

For DMOs, this article highlights that stakeholder inclusion in a place branding process does not guarantee active engagement, and that proactive management is needed to balance the full range of stakeholder interests. Recruiting professionals to manage place branding practices is not enough. Professional experience and expertise needs to be complemented with knowledge of, and attachment to, the place itself. Key stakeholders from the local government and DMOs could look for approaches that rely on participation from outside their usual networks and groups. Knowledge of the place may be a worthwhile recruitment criterion due to the advantages that local candidates may hold in terms of pre-existing capital and relationships, and provide employment opportunities particularly in under-represented and disadvantaged communities. We encourage a wider understanding of where value is held, acknowledging the importance of local residents as place consumers as well as producers, rather than the primary focus being on attracting an external audience. Active policies and practices are also needed to equip struggling stakeholders with the resources required to participate in order to benefit from their knowledge.

Our study also provides insights into how local government actors retain an influential position, despite diminishing spending on branding activities (Hristov & Ramkissoon, 2016; Klijn et al., 2012). Instead of economic currency driving involvement, the existing stocks of social and cultural capital enabled the local state to retain an influence position when it was required. Rather than taking sole financial responsibility for branding, local authorities provide leadership for public-private partnerships, whereby the economic risk can be shared across key groups. Moreover, DMOs recognised the necessity of sharing access with a range of other groups, building longstanding partnerships that promote the sharing of knowledge and resource. Yet, more is needed to balance the demands of competing groups and overcome a continued gulf in participation. In addition to being more equitable, existing studies suggest a brand is more likely to be successful if actors can work together (Campelo et al., 2014; Eugenio-Vela et al., 2020), therefore more is needed to bring the residents and local economy behind the brand and overcome stakeholder silos.

7.3. Limitations and opportunities for future research

While we focused on the specific characteristics of cultural and social capital legitimised within the place-branding field, we do not deny the importance of economic capital. Arguably, this study's sample of salient stakeholders means that many of those interviewed have the necessary level of economic capital needed to commit their time and knowledge (Pappalepore et al., 2014). Economic capital continues to function as a prerequisite for other forms of capital. Its absence may exclude potential participants from the field (Thompson & Taheri, 2020). Future research could extend our findings by widening the sample to encompass further city stakeholders, including city planners, developers, place-makers and importantly, the civic society groups who remain underrepresented.

Our finding that stakeholders can generate capital and exert influence as a result of place attachment raises interesting questions about the emotional dimensions of place branding (Casais & Poço, 2021). The notion of emotional capital in place branding has recently been advanced by Filieri et al. (2021), however Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* rather than capitals could provide a vehicle for expanding the investigation of these emotional dimensions. Future research could further integrate the ways in which demonstrations of emotional attachment to a place (e.g. through expressions of protectiveness, pride or 'cheer-leading') may represent a route to accessing place branding processes.

The selection of two British cities also creates certain limitations for a study centred around the exchange of cultural and social capital. Social capital is seen as culture related (Smith et al., 2012) raising the question as to whether these results would apply similarly to case studies outside of the UK context. Follow-up studies could provide international comparisons, which would also examine the differences between cultural and social capital that is generic, versus resources that must be built, enacted and reinforced in the locality of the actors. Similarly, the impact of evolving socio-economic, cultural and environmental factors such as the role of social media, sustainable environmental transitions and more recently the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic in building or undermining local resources could be explored. While efforts were made to ensure the validity of the research, the data relies on the participants' perceptions of themselves and others around them. Follow-up studies could incorporate additional ethnographic methods to observe capital exchanges. Our research also provides a contemporaneous account of the process at a given point in time, further research could examine if, and how, the field and its actors navigate influence over time.

Finally, Braun et al. (2013) found that residents played particular roles within place branding processes, such as brand ambassador or legitimiser of a brand. Our research suggests that there may be a richer range of roles being adopted within these processes reflecting stakeholder resources of social and cultural capital, their local knowledge, and their emotional attachment to the place. Respondents used language suggesting a range of roles including expert, integrator, custodian, guardian, curator, entrepreneur, cheer-leader and lobbyist, and a significant future research opportunity, particularly for ethnographic research, would be to investigate those roles and the opportunities that adopting them affords stakeholders to build capital and exert influence.

Author statement

Laura Reynolds: Conceptualisation, Methodology, Investigation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft preparation, Writing – review & editing, Funding acquisition. **Nicole Koenig-Lewis:** Conceptualisation, Methodology, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft preparation, Writing – review & editing, Project administration. **Heike Doering:** Conceptualisation, Methodology, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft preparation, Writing – review & editing. **Ken Peattie:** Conceptualisation, Methodology, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft preparation, Writing – review & editing.

Accompanying research statement

This paper adopts a social constructionist epistemological and ontological position to examine destination actors' claims regarding their accumulation and use of cultural and social capital within the place branding field. The qualitative research uses multi-stakeholder perspectives across two UK case study sites. Semi-structured interviews with 60 stakeholders (totalling 760,000 words of transcribed data) were supported by onsite observations and the collation of secondary sources allowing for a degree of triangulation. Participants were selected purposively based on a threshold of existing involvement in the representation of the case study sites. An interpretive approach to data analysis was undertaken. A research diary was kept throughout, allowing the researchers to reflect on, and analyse, participants' responses. The authors had no previous links with any of the research participants or their organisations, nor were they residents in the case study cities, thus taking an outsider position in the research process.

Impact statement

Despite the calls for wider stakeholder participation in place branding, top-down approaches and limited engagement remain dominant in practice. This article provides insights into why barriers for involvement remain by identifying the knowledge and resources that stakeholders need to participate actively in the branding process. Local knowledge and a connection to the place are as important as an understanding of professional procedures and practices. Local government stakeholders and destination management organisations counter shortcomings by building strategic partnerships, which is more difficult for residents, local businesses and visitor attractions. Raising awareness of why uneven stakeholder participation persists supports a move toward equitable destination brand management and provides practitioners with recommendations of how to overcome cycles of stakeholder exclusion. We recommend practitioners look outside of their traditional networks for collaborations; equip local actors with resources required to lead their own engagement activities; and actively promote decentralised approaches to branding.

Declaration of competing interest

This research is based on data produced during a PhD funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and advanced during a ESRC Postdoctoral Fellowship. The authors do not have any financial or non-financial interests or affiliations to disclose connected to the research. All research was approved and adhered to principles set out by Cardiff University's ethical approval committee. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2022.104532>.

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