Toponyms as carriers of heritage: implications for place branding

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Toponyms as Carriers of Heritage: Implications for Place Branding

Abstract

Purpose –This article analyses the role of a place's name as the carrier of identity and heritage from the residents' perspective. We assess the extent to which names of municipalities carry the place's heritage, and how this can further be transferred to the place brand. The context is a situation in which a municipality changes its name, or is at the risk of doing so, as a result of municipal consolidation.

Design/methodology/approach – We conducted a large survey in the South Western Finland in spring 2013. The survey questionnaire was posted to 5,020 randomly selected residents, and the final sample comprised 1,380 recipients. We offer a framework for operationalising place heritage, comprising four components: history, place essence, symbols and residential permanence.

Findings – Most respondents attached importance to the name of their home town. The majority also felt that a name change would mean losing part of the place's history. A strong place heritage proved to correlate positively with the importance of the municipality name.

Implications – The developed framework for place heritage can serve as a tool for place-branding studies and practical place branding. A stable name has an essential role in branding places. The authorities should understand the crucial relationship between place name, heritage and identity, and their importance to the residents.

Originality – To our knowledge, this study is the first to report empirical research on the relation between place names and place branding from the heritage perspective.

Keywords Place branding, names, heritage, identity, municipality consolidation

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

> A person can leave a place but a place cannot leave the person – roots are important and they are there to stay – its heritage lives on in the place and its name.

The word *heritage* is generally associated with 'inheritance', in other words something that is transferred from one generation to another (Nuryanti, 1996). The concept includes almost all inter-generational exchange between societies as well as individuals, but it should not be confused with the concepts of past and history. According to Balmer *et al.* (2006; see also Urde *et al.*, 2007), heritage has tripartite temporal dynamics: it is meaningful to the past, the present and the future. It is created and transferred by means of language as well as via our socio-cultural practices and tangible products. It is the timeless value of the past justifying our ideas of the future. Inherently bound up with a physical space, a place, heritage is one of the attributes that play a significant role in distinguishing places, as well as in building the identities of the individuals and communities within them (Graham *et al.*, 2000).

A general premise in linguistic onomastics (the study of names) is that names are closely connected with the concept of identity; place names, i.e. *toponyms*, are words that carry individual and social identity as well as historical values, thereby building generational ties and a communal spirit (Helleland, 2009; see also, Ainiala *et al.*, 2012). The linguistic nature of names makes them perfectly suitable for creating and transmitting heritage. Embedded in history and heritage, the name of a place may also constitute the basis of its branding (cf. Balmer, 2009; Balmer and Gray, 2003). Many place names go back decades, even centuries, thus representing continuity and longevity and helping places to differentiate themselves. A place's name – like other symbols – also has a significant role in developing a collective group identity and a feeling of belonging (Mueller and Schade, 2012). Moreover, it communicates the place's identity to external stakeholders. Identity, in turn, is a complex concept that can be approached from many perspectives depending on the discipline in question. *Personal identity* is a psychological concept, *collective identity* is more or less sociological, and *place identity* is primarily geographical. *Toponymic identity* is linked to all of these aspects. (Kostanski, 2009)

The purpose of this article is to analyse the role of a place's name as the carrier of identity and heritage from the residents' point of view. Our objective is to assess the extent to which place names, specifically the names of municipalities, carry the place's heritage, and how this can further be transferred to the brand. The context of our investigation is a situation in which a municipality changes its name, or is at the risk of doing so, as a result of municipal consolidation, and the perspective is that of the residents. By looking at the phenomenon from the residents' point of view we want to emphasise their role as vital participants in the process of place branding, as encouraged by Braun *et al.* (2013). Previous research has shown that both opponents and supporters of name change link the toponym to their personal and collective identity, and that the retention of place names in a community supports the stability of toponymic identity (Kostanski, 2009). On the theoretical level the topic is related to socio-onomastics, sociology and branding: such a multidisciplinary approach is essential given the special nature of place branding (Medway and Warnaby, 2014).

In order to gather empirical evidence we conducted a large survey covering all the 28 municipalities of the South Western Region of Finland in spring 2013. The survey is a part of our broader study on the impact of municipality name change on place branding (see Hakala and Sjöblom, 2013). The focus in this article is on heritage in terms of the corporate identity of the municipality as an organisation or institution, and its interaction with the collective identity of a community and its people. Naming is a critical element of any branding process, and in relation to place brands it has received little attention in academic research (Medway and Warnaby, 2014). To our knowledge, our study is the first to report empirical research on the relation between place names and place branding from the heritage perspective.

In pursuit of the above-mentioned aims, first we give an overview of the literature on the three focal research areas covered in the study: the inheritance of a corporate identity from the perspective of the places in question, place names as signs and as carriers of identities, and the concept of heritage. Second, we attempt to narrow the gap in the literature on *place heritage* as a concept and build up a framework. Third, we develop four hypotheses related to the importance of a place's name to its residents, the potential relationships between the place's name, history and heritage, as well as the personal and collective identity of the residents in the community. Fourth, we describe the research design and present the findings. In the final section we draw our conclusions, discuss the theoretical and managerial implications as well as the limitations of the study, and give suggestions for future research.

Corporate brand orientation in the case of places

Commercial producers have long seen the advantage of branding their products, and the idea of discovering or creating uniqueness also attracts place managers. (Ashworth, 2009) However, the traditional product-marketing framework has proved to be inadequate for places, and place branding has rather leaned on corporate branding (Kavaratzis, 2009). The management of corporate brands is arguably far more complicated than traditional product-brand management (Wilkinson and Balmer, 1996). The complexities involved in place branding as such arise from the number of stakeholders, the number of organisations steering the brand, as well as the limited control of the brand and the diverse target groups. Place branding is a long-term, strategic process that requires continuity, and the actions take time to be recognised. (Kavaratzis, 2009)

In the above-mentioned process, the name of the place – having stayed unchanged – has traditionally represented longevity and stability, and could be regarded as the place's memory (Basso, 1996). Any organisation nowadays has to coordinate its communication and behaviour (Olins, 2000), and the name could provide the necessary means. The place name, being established and unique, asserts the existence and individuality of the place to outsiders and insiders alike (Ashworth, 2009). People create associations with places in the same way as specific associations are attributed to commercial brands (Boisen *et al.*, 2011). The name has a mediating role in this process in marking a geographical entity and creating the identity and image of the place. What, then, happens in the case of municipality consolidation? Can the associations of the old place (and name) be transferred to the new place (and name)? (cf. Round and Roper, 2012)

Place identity[1] is as essential to the locality as corporate identity is to the company. Identity here refers to the factors that define what the organisation, in this case the municipality, is. (Wilkinson and Balmer, 1996) Places can be identified *inter alia* through their history and heritage, but also strong unity among internal groups and a strong identity are required to transmit a consistent image among stakeholders (Mueller and Schade, 2012; Simoes and Dibb, 2001). On the other hand, as Balmer and Gray (2003) note, brands – meaning place brands – play a vital role in the construction of individual identities. According to the results of previous studies (see Mueller and Schade, 2012), there is a close connection between symbols, such as the name of the place, and the collective identity of residents and other internal audiences: the name can incorporate togetherness and a feeling of belonging.

The significance of toponyms as linguistic signs and cores of brands

Names can be seen as symbolic signs. In the field of semiotics, a symbol is a sign that is based on an arbitrary or conventional relation to its referent. (Peirce, 1998 [1894]; Beasley and Danesi, 2000; Messaris, 1997) The term symbol, in turn, is defined as something that stands for something else. Most words in language are symbolic signs. A place name is a word that stands for a particular place, and the relationship between the name and the referent, in other words the place it stands for, is in that sense fixed.

In linguistic terms, a name, or more precisely a proper name, is a word or combination of words that consistently refer to one entity – a person, a place or an object, for example. Names are mono-referential, meaning that their primary role is to identify the object by differentiating it from all other referents of the same class. They do not carry a classifying meaning, as appellatives do, but they do have a correspondence in the mind that could be interpreted as a meaning. (Sjöblom 2006; Ainiala *et al*, 2012) As a matter of fact, names convey a great deal of subjective and collective meanings that are already present in a culture.

The longer the history behind a name, be it of a place or anything else, the more meaningful it is as a word and part of a language. Most toponyms were, at the time they were given, descriptive and hence conveyed something about the place and its relation to people at that stage, such as *Church Point*, *Land's End* and *Whalers Bay*. Opaque names such as *Birmingham* and *Bournemouth* also had quite a comprehensive meaning at the time they were coined. Contemporary users may sense the historical content of the name, even if they do not specifically know it or consciously think about it. Some current meanings of names arise from the individual emotions embedded in them, and some belong to the folklore. All these meanings accumulate in the place name over the decades and centuries, and are transferred to the next generations. (Helleland, 2009; Kostanski, 2011) Old toponyms have significant, historical documentary value, and carry memories of the place's past and its culture. By their very existence they transfer messages about the earlier life, behaviour and history of the dwellers, representing what Balmer (2013) refers to as the collective memory. This

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[1] The concept of place identity is approached from different angles in the academic research. In the context of environmental psychology it refers to a sub-structure of self-identity that describes *a person's* socialisation with the physical world (see e.g., Proshansky et al., 1983; Knez, 2005), whereas the research on place branding considers it from the corporate perspective, i.e. that of the *municipality* (e.g., Boisen et al., 2011).

collective memory helps in defining a group as Londoners, Parisians or New Yorkers, for instance. People born in a specific area, or who live there for most of their lives may have particularly strong feelings about the historic ties of the place names, which also produce a feeling of social belonging (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996; Helleland, 2009).

According to Kostanski (2011), people become attached to toponyms just as they become attached to places. *Functional attachment* to a place, i.e. dependency, refers to its importance in providing circumstances that enable people to reach their desired goals. *Emotional attachment*, in turn, could refer to its symbolic importance, a kind of psychological investment, self-esteem and a feeling of belonging to one's community. *Toponymic attachment* reflects the role of toponyms in the process in which a community and its historical identity are formed, and the extent to which dependency is relayed by the use of names in printing on maps and signs, for instance. According to Kostanski (2009), dwellers' connections with a place's history and the community are actually stronger with regard to the names than to the places themselves. (On place attachment, see Proshansky *et al*., 1983; Hay, 1998; Williams and Vaske, 2003; Knez, 2005; Gosling and Williams, 2010; Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013)

Externally and in terms of image, place names have a history (heritage, values, culture) that resembles the country-of-origin effect, which may be positive or negative (Thakor and Lavack, 2003). People remember place names because of what the places mean to them based on their experiences and their knowledge of the past. The names of cities, such as *Chicago* in the US and *Vichy* in France, may also be associated with negative stereotypes that are detrimental to the city's attractiveness (Avraham, 2004). On the other hand, positive stereotypes may evoke positive images and create a differential advantage: indeed, many places base their branding on their names, which represent the most visible aspect of the branding effort (Medway and Warnaby, 2014; Beverland, 2001). Stakeholders in the place-branding process tend to be confronted with established names, and given that most are working within limited budgets, a positively laden place name can turn into an intangible asset (Mueller and Schade, 2012; Balakrishnan, 2009). In the light of the above observations, it is understandable that the decision to change a place name – for administrative and political reasons – may evoke strong emotions among people. On this level, according to Medway and Warnaby (2014), changing the name of a place is tantamount to changing the name of an established megabrand such as Coca Cola.

Likewise, consumers establish a relationship with a brand when they connect with it emotionally (Boisen *et al*., 2011; Fournier, 1998), and emotional bonds develop when brands are humanised, in other words made human-like (Aaker, 1997). According to the literature on consumer behaviour (see Aaker, 1997; Hede and Watne, 2013), brands can be humanised via anthropomorphisation (using humans or stylised icons in the branding, Ronald McDonald being one example), personification (referring to brands with adjectives) and user imagery (seeking a match between a person's own personality and that of the brand). These strategies have been deemed too marketer-driven for places, however. Consequently, a more customer-driven approach has been suggested, the sense of place (SoP) strategy, according to which place attachment may be strengthened through storytelling and raising awareness of local history, for instance. Storytelling about a particular place could thus connect people with both the place and the products associated with it. A sense of place derives from local heroes, connections with prominent historical persons, folklore and myths, as

well as local heritage, all of which provide the creative content for humanising the place. Local heroes – real or imagined – are used to connect people with their consciousness of the place, and folkloric traditions and myths are used to build brand narratives and to express paradoxical human concerns. (Hede and Watne, 2013)

Sharing similar ideas, Ashworth (2010) names personality association as one of the instruments to be utilised in place branding. In the search for a unique identity and image, some places associate themselves with a named individual in the hope that the qualities of the individual will be transferred to the place. Using Barcelona as an example, Ashworth (2010) calls this technique the 'Gaudi gambit': Antoni Gaudi, architect and designer of some 60 years earlier, was adopted as representative of the city. In spite of the risks involved related to the person as well as his political past and unconventional art, the technique has proved successful for Barcelona. According to Ashworth (2010), becoming the place associated with a renowned person contributes place-name recognition and historical continuity if the person is from the more distant past. This further leads to the concept of heritage.

Heritage – building the place brand on the past

The economic uses of heritage have been ignored or regarded as second-rate in the cultural domain (see Graham *et al.*, 2000), although it has recently been acknowledged as one of the future priorities in branding research (Keller and Lehmann, 2006). It belongs to the intangibles, in other words associations that differentiate brands and are a source of tangible wealth (Kalaignaman and Bahadir, 2013). Many of these associations are susceptible to copying by competitors – but not the heritage or the name.

Ashworth and Graham (1997) acknowledge the fundamental role of heritage in constructing the identity of a place. Furthermore, in defining heritage simply as 'the contemporary uses of the past' they, too, highlight its role in place branding. They point out how people as individuals and places as communities need their pasts in order to express their identity. Places may engender particular cultures, influenced by the heritage legacy, and use them in their branding efforts: the association of Stratford-upon-Avon with Shakespeare's plays is an example (de Chernatony, 2007).

History is a function of heritage, which according to Lehmann *et al.* (2008) clearly offers an authentic opportunity for differentiation: it is impossible to "turn back the hands of time". All places have a history of their own, and the history has a strong effect on the identity of both the place and its people (cf. Urde *et al.* 2007). As long as heritage and history can be made relevant, they can play a role in positioning the brand.

Before going deeper into the conceptualisation of place heritage, it is important to clarify the relationship between the central concepts of this study: heritage, identity, place name, and place brand (Figure 1).

INSERT FIGURE 1

First, one needs to distinguish between the two constituents of a place: materiality and the realm of meaning (Creswell and Hoskins, 2008). The personal identification with – or attachment to – a place among individual residents is stronger or weaker depending on how long or strong the relationship is. They all have their own subjective ideas, a mental place, in their cognition based on their knowledge, experiences and emotions. Through communication they create shared meanings linked to their individual mental places. Among these meanings is the place's heritage, which in itself is involved in building place identity. The common mental place also includes many other shared meanings, such as image. The place's name is the linguistic sign referring to the real world on the one hand, and on the other hand it carries all the cognitive meanings linked to the mental place. The brand comprises all these dimensions: the place name, the mental place and the meanings connected to it, and the physical place.

Given the scarcity of literature on the conceptualisation of place heritage – in fact, to our knowledge it is practically non-existent – we offer a potential starting point in the form of an initial framework. We posit that place heritage comprises four components: place history, place essence, place symbols and residential permanence (see Figure 2). In our below analysis, the value of the place heritage is constructed as the sum of these four components.

INSERT FIGURE 2

A known history is a prerequisite in terms of heritage (cf. Hakala *et al*., 2011). In an attempt to operationalise the history of the municipalities under investigation, therefore, we traced the age of churches and other old buildings as well as their written history, and compiled a list of prominent people from the past. We then categorised the data into classes (0 = notable history only from the 20th century, 1 = notable history from the 19th century, 2 = notable history from the 17th–18th centuries, 3 = notable history from the 14th–16th centuries, 4 = notable history from the 12th –13th centuries).

Given that heritage is not only about the past, we include what we call 'place essence' in the concept, meaning elements that are special to a place and that can be used in the furtherance of its branding. Ashworth (2009; 2010) names three such instruments: signature buildings and design, hallmark events and personality association. The elements we have included reflect these instruments to some extent. First, with reference to signature buildings we look at attractions in general. Second, we take *annual* events in order to bring out the perpetuity that can further a place brand. Third, in terms of personality association we consider nationally recognizable celebrities who are associated with the place. The fourth element comprises the recreational possibilities offered and highlighted by the town on its website. Fifth, we include prominent businesses, which at best can lend support to the place: businesses that successfully develop a beneficial image with a certain line of products or services can use it in their branding. (Boisen *et al*., 2011) In order to operationalise place essence we delved into the websites of each municipality, listing the attractions, annual events, prominent businesses, recreational offerings as well as any national celebrities. With a view to facilitating their measurement we categorised the elements and gave them values (0 = no significant features, 1 = features on the local level, 2 = features on the national level, 3 = internationally recognised features).

7

Symbols such as names, slogans, flags and coats of arms are integral to the heritage of a place (cf. Urde *et al*., 2007). Of these, we decided to include the name of the municipality as well as its coat of arms in the symbols component, giving values (0–4) based on the age of the settlement name as well as on the heraldic age of the coat of arms. We then valued the use of these two symbols on the municipalities' home pages (0 = neither of them is noticeable, 1 = one of them is noticeable, 2 = both are noticeable, 3 = both symbols have been noticed and highlighted).

Finally, we argue that the more stable the residence base in a community, the stronger is the place heritage. In order to operationalise residential permanence we counted the ratio of every (28) municipality's removal (numerator) to their population (denominator) during 10-year time spans, and then counted the average. People born in a specific area or who live there for most of their lives may have particularly strong feelings about the historic ties of the toponyms, which also produce the feeling of social belonging.

In order to assess the place-heritage value of each municipality we first standardized the original values of the four components. The final value of place heritage was the sum of the four standardized component values. The municipalities were divided into four groups based on quartiles, and these groups were used for further analysis (see below).

To illustrate the strength of place heritage of the 28 municipalities we drew a radar graph (see Figure 3). As there were negative values, we transformed all component values by adding the overall minimum of three to every value. The heritage values for each municipality were reached by summing the values cumulatively in the following order: history, symbols, essence and place permanence.

INSERT FIGURE 3

Research hypotheses

Our four hypotheses reflect the purpose of the study – to analyse the role of a place's name as the carrier of its identity and heritage from the residents' point of view. First, related to the name of the place, we posit that:

H1a. The name of the place is important to the residents.

Researchers (see Hay, 1998) have found the length of residence to be a key factor in developing place attachment. Thus:

H1b. The longer a resident has been living in a place, the more important the name is to him or her.

Second, given that place names belong to the history of a given area (see e.g., Helleland, 2009), we posit that:

H2. In the minds of the residents, the name is the carrier of the history and heritage of the place.

Third, a place's name – like other symbols – is of special significance for the development of a group identity and a feeling of belonging (Mueller and Schade, 2012). We therefore posit that:

> H3a. The place name matters in building the personal identity of the residents and the collective identity of the community.

Today's urban dwellers are said to have weaker roots in a particular place given their high levels of residential mobility (Hay, 1998). However, the strength of their sense of personal and collective identity may be related to occupational status, farmers in particular having ancestral connections to particular pieces of land (Gosling and Williams, 2010). It has been reported in earlier studies that farmers form an emotional attachment to their property. Through long-term generational interaction they may begin to define themselves in terms of that place, and having grown up there may affect their feelings of rootedness and security (Hay, 1998). We therefore propose that:

> H3b. Farmers have a stronger sense of personal and collective identity because of their generational ties.

We further posit that the sense of identity is dependent on the size of the municipality:

> H3c. The smaller the population of a municipality, the stronger is its sense of personal and collective identity.

Our fourth hypothesis concerns the strength of the heritage that a place carries, and how it relates to the personal and collective identity of the residents. Accordingly:

> H4. The stronger the place heritage of a municipality, the stronger is the sense of personal and collective identity among its residents.

Empirical research

Geographically, the study concerns the South Western region of Finland, which has a relatively high density of small municipalities compared to other parts of the country. One reason for this is the long history of the area and the strong role of the established church. Close, compact and socially coherent parishes provided a basis for the later development of municipalities. (Laamanen, 2007) There are 28 municipalities in the region, 10 of them with fewer than 4,000 inhabitants. In terms of population they range in size from Kustavi with 900 residents to Turku, the largest city in the area with 182,000 residents. Table 1 gives the (grouped) frequency distribution of the numbers of residents living in the municipalities.

INSERT TABLE 1

In accordance with the extensive reform of local governance, the number of municipalities in Finland will decrease markedly. There has already been a significant drop, from 431 in 2006 to 320 in 2013 (Local Finland, 2012). The Government aims at a much lower number – in some estimates

even to one third of the current number. This would mean extensive consolidation – especially in our research area. The reform is also revolutionising the nomenclature in that most municipal names will disappear: a few have been combined to form a joint name, and new names are also being created. (Hakala and Sjöblom, 2013) The authorities have given virtually no attention to what the upheavals may mean to the place brands.

Our survey questionnaire was posted to 5,020 randomly selected residents, and the percentage response rate was 27.5. The final sample thus comprised 1,380 recipients. In line with the purpose of the research, the unit of analysis was on the individual level, in other words the residents of the municipalities. The data was weighted for the purpose of sample adjustment, and statistically analysed. The questionnaire comprised 52 questions in total, but for the purposes of this study we analysed the following seven statements, which are directly linked to the heritage issue.

1. *The name of my place of domicile is important to me.*
2. *The name of a newly merged municipality is a secondary issue.*
3. *The history of my place of domicile is important to me.*
4. *If a municipality's name changes part of the place's history will be lost.*
5. *If my place of domicile were to undergo a name change I feel I would end up losing my roots.*
6. *If my place of domicile were to undergo a name change I will lose part of my identity.*
7. *A name change will weaken the sense of community and solidarity in the municipality.*

The following table shows the links between the hypotheses described above and the respective statements. As discernible in the table, some statements are related to more than one hypothesis.

INSERT TABLE 2

A five-point Likert-type scale measured the level of agreement (completely disagree [1] to completely agree [5]). The code number 0 was used for "I can't say" in Tables 4 and 5. The code numbering 1–5 for the Likert scale values are used in Tables 4–9.

Results

Respondent profile

The sample comprised 794 (57.5%) female and 586 (42.5%) male respondents. In terms of age distribution, 37 per cent of them were between 18 and 39 years old, 20 per cent between 40 and 59, and 43 per cent between 60 and 79 years. The sample was stratified according to the number of residents in the respondent's place of domicile. Given the differences in distribution between the sample and the general population, the cases were weighted by age and gender in the analyses.

The numbers of years the respondents had been living in the municipality were as follows: median 21.0; mean 25.25; standard deviation 20.04; minimum 0; maximum 79. Only 2.5 per cent of them were farmers (see the occupational distribution in Table 3).

INSERT TABLE 3

Testing the hypotheses

Frequency distribution, cross tabulations, Chi Square tests and Spearman rank correlations were used to test the four hypotheses. According to the findings, most respondents attached importance to the name of their home town (see Table 4): furthermore, 47.6 per cent of them did not consider the name of a city a secondary matter, as opposed to the 36.7 per cent who did. Thus, Hypothesis 1a 'The name of the place is important to the residents' holds.

INSERT TABLE 4

We tested Hypothesis 1b by computing separate Spearman's correlations between the number of years the respondent had lived in his/her current city or town and the statements *The name of my place of domicile is important to me* (statement 1) and *The name of a newly merged municipality is a secondary issue* (2).

The correlation coefficient was positive (0.263) in the first relation, and negative (-0.136) in the second: both were statistically significant at the level of 0.1% (p<0.001). In order to analyse the dependencies in more detail we computed – for each category – the means of the years the respondent had been living in the community. With regard to the first statement, the mean number of years of residence among those in the 'completely agree' category (30.4) was considerably higher than among those in the 'completely disagree' group (18.0). In the case of the second statement, the highest mean (31 years) was in the 'completely disagree' group, as opposed to 21.9 among those in the 'completely agree' category. Accordingly, these results support Hypothesis 1b 'The longer a resident has been living in a place, the more important the name is to him or her'.

In testing Hypothesis 2 we first computed the frequencies of responses to statements three, four and five (see Table 5). According to the results, the majority of respondents attached importance to the history of their place of domicile, and felt that if the name changed, part of the history would be lost. However, a name change would not mean losing their roots. What is noteworthy in these results is the number of 'I don't agree or disagree' (18.2%) and 'I can't say' (7.3%) responses. Evidently some respondents were undecided on this issue.

INSERT TABLE 5

In order to test the relation between the three statements we cross-tabulated the data using *The history of my place of domicile is important to me* (3) as an independent variable, and *If a municipality's name changes, part of the place's history will be lost* (4) as well as *If my place of domicile were to undergo a name change I feel I would end up losing my roots* (5) as dependent variables. The results show dependency between the variables (Chi square test $\chi^2 = 514.33$, df = 16, p < 0.001), particularly with regard to statements three and four (see Table 6a). The dependency between statements three and five, although not as strong, was still quite high (Table 6b) (Chi

square test χ^2 = 536.33, df = 16, p < 0.001). The above results support Hypothesis 2 'In the minds of the residents, the name is the carrier of the history and heritage of the place'.

INSERT TABLE 6

The first step in testing Hypotheses 3a–c was to cross-tabulate *The name of my place of domicile is important to me (1)* with *If my place of domicile were to undergo a name change I will lose part of my identity* (statement 6; Chi square test χ^2 = 518.52, df = 16, p < 0.001) and *A name change will weaken the sense of community and solidarity in the municipality* (statement 7; Chi square test χ^2 = 309.16, df = 16, p < 0.001). The findings reveal strong dependency between the variables (see Tables 7a and 7b). Hence, Hypothesis 3a, which states that 'The place name matters in building the personal and collective identity of the community', is supported.

INSERT TABLE 7

Next, in order to test Hypothesis 3b 'Farmers have a stronger sense of personal and collective identity because of their generational ties' we cross-tabulated the occupational status of the respondents with the statements *If my place of domicile were to undergo a name change I will lose part of my identity* (6; Chi square test χ^2 = 28,623, df = 4, p < 0.001) and *A name change will weaken the sense of community and solidarity in the municipality* (7; Chi square test χ^2 = 18,446, df = 4, p = 0.001). According to the findings, farmers seem to feel more negatively towards municipality name changes, and to identify more strongly with the place than people in the other occupational groups (see Tables 8a and 8b). Thus, Hypothesis 3b 'Farmers have a stronger sense of personal and collective identity because of their generational ties' is substantiated.

INSERT TABLE 8

Third, to test Hypothesis 3c we calculated Spearman rank correlations between the population of the respondent's community and the statements *If my place of domicile were to undergo a name change I will lose part of my identity (6)* and *A name change will weaken the sense of community and solidarity in the municipality (7)*. The results provide only partial support for H3c 'The smaller the population of a municipality, the stronger is its sense of personal and collective identity': although there was no correlation between personal identity and the size of the municipality, a sense of personal and collective identity correlated statistically significantly with its size at the 0.001 level (Spearman's rho -0.122). Hence, the smaller the population of a municipality, the stronger is the sense of personal and collective identity in the community.

Finally, as the first step to test Hypothesis 4 we used the calculated heritage values (as described earlier in this study) and divided the municipalities into four according to the strength of the place's heritage (see Figure 4).

INSERT FIGURE 4

Thereafter, correlation coefficients were computed between the heritage groups and the statements *The name of my place of domicile is important to me* (1), *If my place of domicile were to undergo a name change I will lose part of my identity* (6), *and A name change will weaken the sense of community and solidarity in the municipality'* (7). Based on our analysis, we made an interesting discovery: as expected, the strength of the place heritage correlates positively with the importance of the municipality name (rho=0.080, p<0.001) but the effect of the name change on collective identity correlates negatively with the strength of the place heritage (rho=-0.057, p=0.001). These correlations are statistically significant. However, there seems to be no statistically significant linear dependency between the place heritage and personal identity (rho=0.029, p=0.093). These correlations are shown in Table 9a.

To delve deeper into the relations we cross-tabulated each statement with the heritage groups. The results of the cross-tabulations are discernible in Table 9b-d.

INSERT TABLE 9

The Chi square tests show dependence between the variables: In Table 9b) χ^2 = 68.904, df = 12, p < 0.001, in Table 9c) χ^2 = 45.962, df = 12, p < 0.001, and in Table 9d) χ^2 = 46.761, df = 12, p < 0.001. The above mentioned positive correlation is discernible in the cross-tabulation in Table 9b; for instance, the share of the 'completely agree' with statement *The name of my domicile is important to me* grows along the strength of place heritage of the municipality. In Group 4, the percentage is as high as 54.8%. Likewise, a negative correlation is discernible in Table 9d; for instance, the share of the ones who completely or partly agree with the statement *The name change will weaken the sense of community and solidarity in the municipality* is at its highest in those municipalities that have the weakest heritage (Group 1), and the percentage decreases as the heritage gets stronger. What is noteworthy is that even though the rank correlation between the variables (statement *If my place of domicile were to undergo a name change I would lose a part of my identity* and heritage groups) was not statistically significant, the Chi square test for Table 9c shows statistically significant dependence between these two. Interestingly, Groups 1 and 3 share similar attitudes as well as Groups 2 and 4.

Having said all that, Hypothesis 4 'The stronger the place heritage of a municipality, the stronger is the sense of personal and collective identity among its residents' can be only partially supported.

Conclusions

In times of change, people appreciate stability (de Chernatony, 2007). Changing the name of municipalities, which as described above is the intended policy in Finland in the near future, can create uncertainty among the residents. According to the results of our survey, such name changes have strong emotional effects on residents. The high response rate to our survey suggests that people want to make their voices heard on the matter. Offering participation and engaging residents

in decision-making could be beneficial for place branding, as underlined by Braun *et al.* (2013). Place-brand management needs to provide opportunities for residents to actively contribute to decision-making by strengthening the communication between them and the city authorities. A survey of residents' views could be regarded as a participatory tool. Names are, after all, the core of the brand also in the case of places (Boisen *et al.*, 2011).

Places are complex constructs but their names can be an effective shorthand means of capturing their essence (Braun *et al.*, 2013; Keller, 2008). Names have significant historical and heritage value, and in carrying memories of the place's past they represent its collective memory. Our aim in this study was to investigate the way in which toponyms, specifically the names of municipalities, represent a place's heritage. Our results carry certain practical, theoretical and managerial implications that could benefit the research on onomastics, branding and heritage.

We developed four hypotheses in order to assess the importance of the place name to residents, as well as the potential relationships between a place's name, its history, heritage, and personal and collective identity. According to the results, residents attach importance to the name of their place of domicile, and the importance grows along with the number of years they have been living there.

A place cannot manage without a name, and in the minds of residents, the name carries its history and heritage. From the heritage and branding perspectives the place name identifies, unites, differentiates and communicates, and from the geographical perspective it marks the place on the map. The name is an essential element of commitment to a place, and incorporates feelings of togetherness and belonging. It seems from our results that place identification is particularly closely connected with the municipality's name among farmers.

We also focused in this paper on the concept of heritage. Our aim in proposing an initial framework is to further understanding of the concept of *place* heritage. We hope that the framework will function as a starting point for future heritage-related place-branding studies. Complementing its theoretical value, the four components – place history, place essence, place symbols and residential permanence – and their operationalisation could serve as place-branding tools. It appears from our findings that municipalities do not make full use of their history, prominent persons, attractions, events and prominent businesses in their branding efforts. Furthermore, the place name and coat of arms are seldom highlighted on the websites and in other promotional material.

It is essential that officials responsible for making decisions understand the role and importance of the name element in branding (Round and Roper, 2012). As a managerial implication, therefore, we suggest that decision makers should be extra cautious in the planning of municipality consolidation, and should take the toponyms into account in the negotiations. Furthermore, changing the name may be harmful to place-branding efforts given the time taken to build any brand, not least a place brand. At best, building a strong relationship between a place's name and its heritage could enhance residents' identity with it, which could further be exploited in building a cohesive and consistent brand. If branding efforts are not based on identity they may produce a brand that is alien to the place (Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013).

Our study should be considered in the light of its limitations, which again can lead to interesting avenues for future research. First, our initial framework for operationalising place heritage needs

further testing and development. Furthermore, as the phenomenon was examined in a geographically restricted area, we encourage more research in other regions and countries. A worthy topic of future research would be to find out how the local businesses that have the place-name adjunct feel about the municipality name change. Place naming is an underexplored area that deserves much more research attention from different angles. All in all, our investigation reveals the need for more inter-disciplinary research in the field of toponyms and place branding.

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Figure 1. The relationships linking a place's name, heritage, identity and brand

Place history
Written history
Prominent persons
Old buildings

Place symbols
The importance of the place name and coat of arms

Place heritage

Place essence
Attractions; annual events; national celebrities; recreational possibilities; prominent businesses

Residential permanence
Municipality's removal vs. population

Figure 2. The four components of place heritage

Figure 3. The strength of place heritage by municipalities.
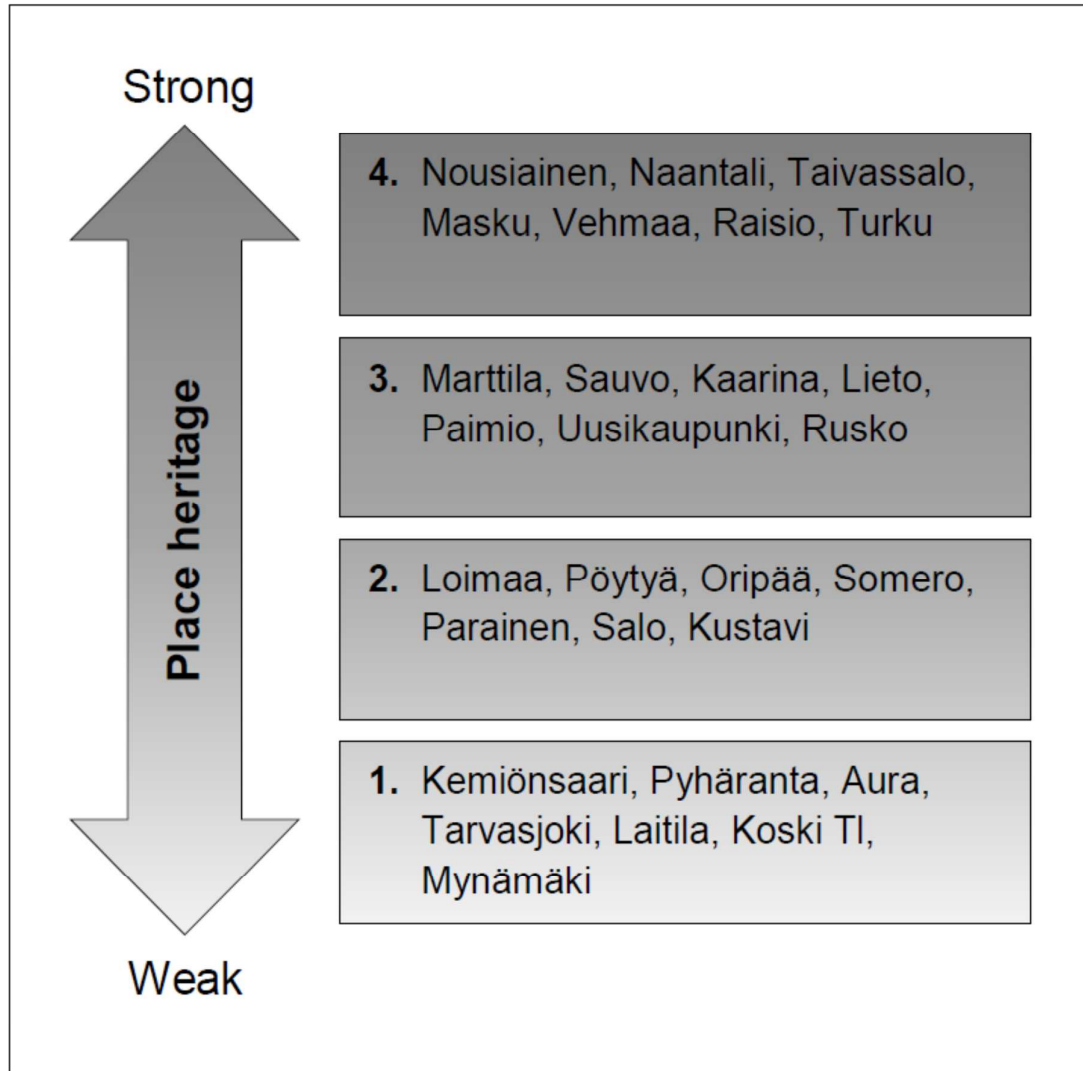
Figure 4.   The strength of the places' heritage involved in the study

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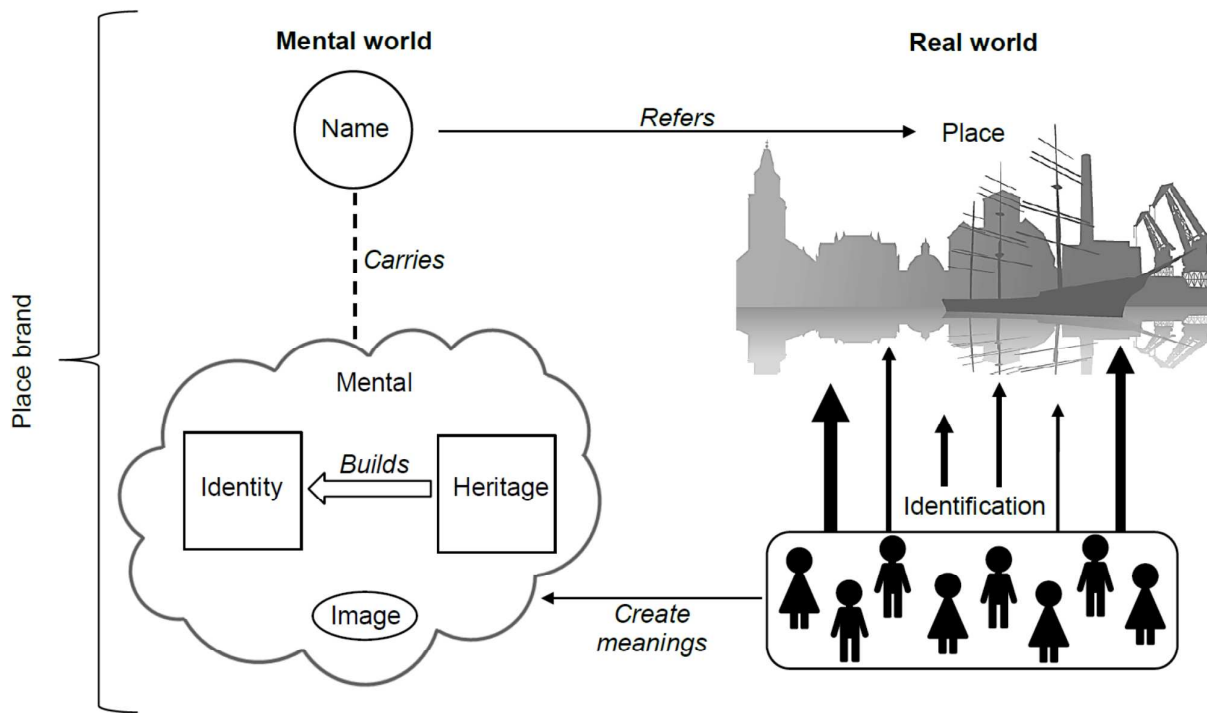41
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Table 1. Numbers of residents in the municipalities

Number of residents	Frequency	%
Fewer than 4,000	10	35.7
4,000 - 10,000	8	28.6
10,001 - 20,000	6	21.4
20,001 - 100,000	3	10.7
More than 100,000	1	3.6
Total	**28**	**100**

Table 2. Questionnaire statements related to the hypotheses

Hypotheses	Statements
H1a. The name of the place is important to the residents. **H1b.** The longer a resident has been living in a place, the more important the name is to him or her.	1. *The name of my place of domicile is important to me*. 2. *The name of a newly merged municipality is a secondary issue*.
H2. In the minds of the residents, the name is the carrier of the history and heritage of the place.	3. *The history of my place of domicile is important to me*. 4. *If a municipality's name changes part of the place's history will be lost*. 5. *If my place of domicile were to undergo a name change I feel I would end up losing my roots*.
H3a. The place name matters in building the personal and collective identity of the community. **H3b.** Farmers have a stronger sense of personal and collective identity because of their generational ties. **H3c.** The smaller the population of a municipality, the stronger is its sense of personal and collective identity.	1. *The name of my place of domicile is important to me*. 6. *If my place of domicile were to undergo a name change I will lose part of my identity*. 7. *A name change will weaken the sense of community and solidarity in the municipality*.
H4. The stronger the place heritage of a municipality, the stronger is the sense of personal and collective identity among its residents.	1. *The name of my place of domicile is important to me*. 6. *If my place of domicile were to undergo a name change I will lose part of my identity*. 7. *A name change will weaken the sense of community and solidarity in the municipality*.

Table 3. Occupational distribution of the respondents

Respondents' occupation	Frequency	%
Manager	95	6.9
Agricultural entrepreneur	34	2.5
Other entrepreneur	89	6.5
Other work	500	36.5
Unemployed/laid off	55	4.0
Retired	504	36.8
Student	66	4.8
Stay-at-home parent	26	1.9
Total	**1369**	**100**

Table 4. The importance of the place name (1 = completely disagree, 2 = partly disagree, 3 = I don't agree or disagree, 4 = partly agree, 5 = completely agree, 0 = I can't say)

	The name of my place of domicile is important to me.	The name of a newly merged municipality is a secondary issue.
1	4.4%	22.0%
2	5.3%	25.6%
3	10.3%	11.1%
4	27.3%	21.5%
5	50.2%	15.2%
0	2.5%	4.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Table 5. The effect of the name change on history and roots (1 = completely disagree, 2 = partly disagree, 3 = I don't agree or disagree, 4 = partly agree, 5 = completely agree, 0 = I can't say)

	The history of my place of domicile is important to me.		If the name of a municipality is changed, part of the place's history will be lost.		If my place of domicile were to undergo a name change, I feel I would end up losing my roots.	
	Unweighted count	Weighted %	Unweighted count	Weighted %	Unweighted count	Weighted %
1	45	3.7%	135	8.9%	336	24.0%
2	69	5.9%	149	11.7%	202	16.8%
3	192	14.3%	123	8.9%	235	18.2%
4	398	28.1%	395	30.1%	289	19.7%
5	629	45.7%	520	37.2%	209	14.0%
0	47	2.3%	58	3.3%	109	7.3%
Total	1380	100.0%	1380	100.0%	1380	100.0%

Table 6. Cross-tabulation of a) the importance of the place's name and history and b) of the name change and losing one's roots (1 = completely disagree, 2 = partly disagree, 3 = I don't agree or disagree, 4 = partly agree, 5 = completely agree)

(a)		The history of my place of domicile is important to me.					
		1	2	3	4	5	Total
If a municipality's name changes, part of the place's history will be lost..	1	23.0%	27.2%	11.4%	7.0%	6.8%	9.3%
	2	15.9%	20.5%	16.3%	14.8%	8.0%	12.2%
	3	17.5%	12.3%	19.0%	9.3%	4.8%	9.1%
	4	31.0%	21.5%	34.3%	40.0%	26.2%	31.3%
	5	12.7%	18.5%	19.0%	28.9%	54.2%	38.1%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

(b)		The history of my place of domicile is important to me.					
		1	2	3	4	5	Total
If my place of domicile were to undergo a name change I feel I would end up losing my roots.	1	51.6%	58.2%	33.5%	24.3%	17.9%	25.8%
	2	4.0%	17.0%	22.9%	25.6%	13.6%	18.2%
	3	20.6%	13.9%	28.8%	21.5%	16.0%	19.5%
	4	20.6%	9.3%	11.9%	20.3%	26.6%	21.4%
	5	3.2%	1.5%	3.0%	8.4%	25.9%	15.2%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

(a) χ^2 = 514.33, df = 16, p < 0.001

(b) χ^2 = 536.33, df = 16, p < 0.001

Table 7. The municipality's name in relation to a) personal identity and b) collective identity (1 = completely disagree, 2 = partly disagree, 3 = I don't agree or disagree, 4 = partly agree, 5 = completely agree)

(a)		The name of my place of domicile is important to me.					
		1	2	3	4	5	Total
If my place of	1	75,7%	75,4%	38,6%	35,9%	17,8%	30,8%
domicile were to	2	4,7%	14,0%	23,9%	25,9%	14,7%	18,3%
undergo a name	3	13,5%	8,4%	30,7%	21,8%	18,2%	19,7%
change I would	4	2,0%	0,6%	5,9%	14,3%	26,7%	18,5%
lose part of my identity	5	4,1%	1,7%	0,9%	2,0%	22,5%	12,6%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

(b)		The name of my place of domicile is important to me.					
		1	2	3	4	5	Total
A name change will	1	44,5%	31,2%	24,3%	10,5%	8,3%	13,4%
weaken the sense	2	6,2%	15,6%	10,8%	25,8%	11,8%	15,5%
of community and	3	29,5%	19,1%	32,4%	25,9%	20,4%	23,5%
solidarity in the	4	13,0%	26,6%	24,6%	28,9%	29,1%	27,7%
municipality.	5	6,8%	7,5%	7,8%	8,9%	30,4%	19,9%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

(a) χ^2 = 518.52, df = 16, p < 0.001

(b) χ^2 = 309.16, df = 16, p < 0.001

Table 8. The effect of occupation on a) a sense of collective identity and b) a sense of place identification (1 = completely disagree, 2 = partly disagree, 3 = I don't agree or disagree, 4 = partly agree, 5 = completely agree)

(a)		Respondent's occupation: farmer		Total
		Other	Farmer	
A name change will weaken the sense of community and solidarity in the municipality.	1	13.4%	11.8%	13.3%
	2	15.6%	16.2%	15.7%
	3	23.5%	14.7%	23.3%
	4	27.9%	17.6%	27.7%
	5	19.5%	39.7%	20.0%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

χ^2 = 18,446, df = 4, p = 0.001

(b)		Respondent's occupation: farmer		Total
		Other	Farmer	
If my place of domicile were to undergo a name change I would lose part of my identity.	1	31.0%	23.8%	30.8%
	2	18.4%	3.2%	18.1%
	3	19.7%	25.4%	19.8%
	4	18.7%	15.9%	18.6%
	5	12.3%	31.7%	12.7%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

χ^2 = = 28,623, df = 4, p < 0.001

Table 9. The strength of the place heritage related to place identity

(a)	Spearman's rho	The name of my place of domicile is important to me	If my place of domicile were to undergo a name change I would lose a part of my identity	The name change will weaken the sense of community and solidarity in the municipality
Strength of the place heritage	Correlation Coefficient	,080[**]	,029	-,057[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,093	,001

(b)		Heritage value, grouped				
		1	2	3	4	Total
The name of my place of domicile is important to me.	1	4.3%	4.2%	5.8%	4.4%	4.6%
	2	4.3%	9.1%	4.1%	4.5%	5.4%
	3	14.0%	12.6%	14.1%	8.0%	10.6%
	4	35.3%	25.0%	27.7%	28.4%	28.0%
	5	42.1%	49.1%	48.3%	54.8%	51.5%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

χ^2 = 68.904, df = 12, p < 0.001

(c)		Heritage value, grouped				
		1	2	3	4	Total
If my place of domicile were to undergo a name change I would lose a part of my identity.	1	35.1%	32.5%	36.4%	27.7%	30.8%
	2	21.1%	12.4%	17.9%	20.1%	18.0%
	3	17.5%	22.1%	18.4%	19.7%	19.8%
	4	12.7%	19.7%	15.3%	20.1%	18.6%
	5	13.6%	13.3%	12.0%	12.5%	12.6%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

χ^2 = 45.962, df = 12, p < 0.001

(d)		Heritage value, grouped				
		1	2	3	4	Total
A name change will weaken the sense of community and solidarity in the municipality.	1	8.7%	13.3%	15.6%	13.2%	13.4%
	2	17.8%	16.0%	13.9%	15.7%	15.6%
	3	18.3%	18.4%	21.4%	26.8%	23.4%
	4	33.0%	29.9%	25.0%	26.9%	27.7%
	5	22.2%	22.4%	24.0%	17.3%	20.0%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

χ^2 = 46.761, df = 12, p < 0.001