Ahmet Bayraktar and Can Uslay (Eds.), **Global Place Branding Campaigns Across Cities**, **Regions**, **and Nations**, Hershey, PA: IGI Global, 2016, 386 pp., $164.00 (hardcover).

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Two thousand feet above the Earth, a pair of hiking boots flutters in midair, teasing the pull of gravity. These boots extend from a young man perched dangerously close to the edge of Trolltunga, a massive cliff peering over the crystal waters of Lake Ringedalsvatnet in Odda, Norway. As his heart races and his feet dangle, a buddy snaps a pic on his smartphone: Instagram gold.

The tale of this hiker, and many like him, is detailed in a 2017 article in *National Geographic* entitled, "How Instagram Is Changing Travel." In this piece, author Carrie Miller suggests that social media use is responsible for an intense boost in international travel, especially among millennials. Trolltunga, for example, hosted about 500 visitors in 2009. That number increased to 40,000 by 2014. Miller says this exponential increase is due to the popularity of Instagram photo ops, luring young tourists to travel and capture their own social media sensations, #NoFilterNeeded.

Ahmet Bayraktar and Can Uslay, the editors of *Global Place Branding Campaigns Across Cities*, *Regions, and Nations*, were savvy enough to recognize this hot digital trend in travel and dedicated a large portion of their book to social media tools. Through various individual research projects and case studies, this book weaves together an exploration and analysis of marketing and branding techniques from cities around the world.

The book claims to be suitable for an audience of "professionals, researchers, policy makers, practitioners, and students," (p. xxii) and I tend to agree. The research conducted is rigorous and upholds high academic standards, making it a solid blueprint for researchers hoping to build upon prior studies. In the same sense, the writing is accessible enough for a graduate student or a highly motivated undergraduate studying communications, geography, or political economy. The authors also offer up practical takeaways and suggestions for the creation and execution of successful global branding and marketing techniques that would prove helpful to marketing professionals. It is quite difficult to appeal to such a wide variety of audience members, but I think this book does just that. In my opinion, that is one of its greatest strengths.

The self-proclaimed goal of this book is to "provide international insights into marketing strategies and techniques being employed to promote global tourism, competitiveness, and exploration" (p. xxii). The editors accomplished this goal by choosing research that varied in focus, methodology, and geographic location. The book begins with a case study on the tourist industry in Belfast, Northern Ireland. It seems like an odd choice, until the authors mention the HBO sensation *Game of Thrones* (GoT).
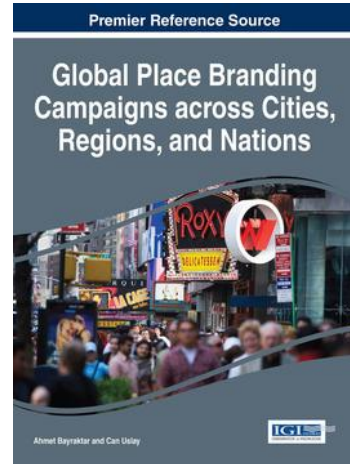
A pop culture reference from this wildly popular show immediately captured my attention and focus. I learned that the mythical world of Westeros is actually a mash-up of filming locations around Belfast, making this once war-torn and deprived city a tourist hotbed for GoT junkies. Kicking off the book with a GoT reference was a brilliant technique to seduce the audience right from the start. Practitioners, researchers, and students may have different purposes for engaging with this book, but including such a strong cultural reference makes the book intriguing to all groups. Who doesn't want to know more about the land of the Mother of Dragons?

Pop culture is used as an anchor in several of the other studies in this book. The research on Pittsburgh mentions the Pittsburgh Steelers and "yinzers." *Yinzers*, an endearing nickname for Pittsburghers based on their dialect, make up the fabric of the Steel City. The authors suggest that the unique everyday narratives of this group serve as a fantastic resource for promoting "The 'Burgh" to a national and international audience. The case study on Los Angeles mentions Hollywood and its world-renowned glitz and glam as a mechanism for battling the poor reputation of parts of the city, especially South L.A. Threading pop culture throughout the book makes it an easy and enjoyable read.

The international focus of this book is impressive. The editors gathered research from the U.S., Europe, Africa, and Asia to highlight the wide reach of global tourism. Research reveals the successful and not-so-successful branding techniques from cities such as Harare, Zimbabwe; Istanbul, Turkey; and Nyborg, Denmark. Each of these cities faces its own challenges and victories, and I think the editors did a good job of giving each location its fair assessment instead of whitewashing global tourism as a one-size-fits-all concept. I appreciated the thoughtfulness and effort the editors used when assembling research from each corner of the globe.

The editors' focus throughout the book on social media branding and virtual reality tools was very insightful. Sometimes scholars can dismiss social media and attach negative connotations to it such as violation of privacy rights or hyperdependence on technology to communicate, but the editors recognized the promise of social media tools and dedicated a healthy portion of the book to it. It was especially interesting to read about the social media techniques in the Middle East. Many of these countries have strict restrictions on online activity and dialogue. However, the case study of Izmir, Turkey, actually suggested that social media saved tourism in the city. Izmir was once viewed as a dangerous place. A large number of international flights stop there, but none of the travelers seemed interested in tourism. However, after breathtaking Instagram photos of Izmir gained traction online, young tourists began to see the city in a different light. Instead of a layover city, Izmir became a tourist destination all its own. The potential power of social media strategies for global tourism was a highlight of this book.

The variety of methodologies used throughout the chapters was also impressive. The book included ethnographies, case studies, interviews, content analysis, and surveys. Scholars pulled literature from the fields of communication, psychology, and geography. The wide scope of methods and literature provides a complete, big picture view of the global tourism industry from several different angles.

While the majority of my comments on this book are positive, there were a few spots in which I can make some suggestions for improvement. Even though I appreciated the variety of research projects,

methods, and approaches, it would have served the editors well to tie each individual project together a bit more. The book would have benefited from transitions crafted by the editors to make for a more complete narrative. The book seemed disjointed at times, and I think short yet thoughtful transitions would have helped to create a smoother flow for the reader.

It would be interesting to see a critical perspective applied to some of the work in this book. Many of the cities discussed are subjected to social and economic hierarchies, especially those outside of the U.S. Does tourism in these cities positively impact the entire society or are the benefits reaped only by certain subsects? In *Tremé: Race and Place in a New Orleans Neighborhood,* Michael Crutcher, Jr. (2010) argues that the tourism industry actually inhibited parts of the city. Tourists flocked to the predominantly white, upper middle-class French Quarter and thus so did the city's resources. In contrast, the neighboring area of Tremé, a historically black neighborhood with fewer economic resources, suffered. Highways were built to allow easier mobility for tourists to access the French Quarter, but these highways destroyed the local business district in Tremé. I wonder how often these types of problems occur in the cities discussed in this book. At least one critical article that engaged with these kinds of questions and concerns would have been a nice addition.

I think this book would have also benefited from engaging with the idea of race and the exotic. Tourism is based on experiencing another culture, place, and peoples. Tourists chase after the exotic—a life unlike their own—however, there are problematic trends with this idea. In "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance," bell hooks questions the motives of having an authentic cultural experience in another land. "When race and ethnicity become commodified as resources for pleasure, the culture of specific groups . . . can be seen as constituting an alternative playground where members of dominating races, genders, sexual practices affirm their power" (p. 367). Understanding the potential inequalities of global tourism would provide another layer to the scope of this book.

Overall, *Global Place Branding Campaigns Across Cities, Regions, and Nations* provides a contemporary and thorough exploration of global tourism. The book engages with modern tourism techniques such as social media but also emphasizes the importance of traditional marketing tools such as print ads and slogans. I would highly recommend this book for anyone who wishes to better understand the dynamic global tourism industry. It provides resources for researchers and practitioners alike.

References

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