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There's a time and place: Navigating omni-temporality in the place branding process

Laura Reynolds *, Ken Peattie, Nicole Koenig-Lewis, Heike Doering

Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University, Colum Drive, Cardiff CF10 3EU, United Kingdom

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates how multiple stakeholders understand and navigate the interrelationship between past, present and future time-frames through what is termed omni-temporality. Despite an interest in the phenomenon within the corporate brand heritage literature, a limited understanding persists concerning how omni-temporality shapes stakeholders' interactions with brands and with each other. These omissions are particularly pertinent in place branding where stakeholders are well-recognised as integral to the branding process. Through case studies of two city brands, our findings reveal tensions that arise when brand stakeholders prioritise the past or strive for a more contemporaneous and future-orientated framing. We identify the ways brand stakeholders navigate these tensions by utilising six (re)framing strategies that range from the reconciliatory to the destabilising. We show how facilitating stakeholders' expressions of diversity and dissent can produce meaningful brand exchanges, ease the challenges associated with balancing continuity alongside change, and support an iterative form of temporal agency.

1. Introduction

Time and temporality are relevant to all social phenomena that interest branding scholars and practitioners, and yet until recently much of its discussion was at best limited and simplistic, and at worst, absent (Balmer & Burghausen, 2019; Carlson et al., 2019). Corporate heritage branding represents an exception having explored the multiple ways in which an organisation's past can be utilised to support its present and future marketing endeavours (Balmer et al., 2007; Balmer, 2011; Balmer & Burghausen, 2019; Spielmann et al., 2021; Urde et al., 2007). Important to these developments is the recognition that isolating past, present and future time-frames is complex since they are inherently interlinked and overlapping. Instead of viewing each in isolation, there are calls to understand these temporal overlaps through an investigation of omni-temporality (Balmer, 2011, 2013).

Much of the initial discussion around omni-temporality centres on brand managers' stewardship of an organisation's past across concurrent time-frames (Balmer et al., 2007; Balmer, 2011, 2013; Urde et al., 2007), whereby "effective management […] calls for them to be not only of the past and the present, but also of the future" (Balmer et al., 2007, p.160). Temporal brand elements, such as history, heritage, memory, tradition, provenance, nostalgia, myth and legacy, are all aspects of the past that brands seek to package into an identity (Balmer & Burghausen, 2019). Brand stewards may face a balancing act in protecting brand heritage traits, while allowing their meaning to evolve, in a process that Balmer (2011, 2013) terms relative invariance. More recently, there are calls to investigate how multiple brand stakeholders act as temporal agents "individually and collectively shaping temporal relations and structures" (Burghausen, 2022, p. 354). These developments reflect a broadening understanding of brand ownership, moving away from a focus on a designated brand owner and recognising stakeholder involvement as a collective process of constructing, sharing and untangling the assortment of meanings associated with the brand (Balmer & Podnar, 2021; Preece & Kerrigan, 2015; Swaminathan et al., 2020).

Place branding is a relevant context to investigate omni-temporality since it pays specific attention to the importance of stakeholders as active participants within a dynamic branding process (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013; Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015). The place brand encapsulates the diversity of associations, narratives and activities that are shaped and communicated through the culture, policies and practices inherent to a place and its mix of stakeholders (Zenker et al., 2017). Stakeholders build an identity for the brand through their everyday

* Corresponding author.
E-mail addresses: ReynoldsL4@cardiff.ac.uk (L. Reynolds), Peattie@cardiff.ac.uk (K. Peattie), Koenig-LewisN@cardiff.ac.uk (N. Koenig-Lewis), DoeringH@cardiff.ac.uk (H. Doering).

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exchanges, collective experiences, debates and constructed brand meanings (Aitken & Campelo, 2011).

Within the place branding literature there has been some tentative exploration of the temporal context (Chao, 2023; Giovanardi & Lucarelli, 2018; Magnoni et al., 2021). Campelo et al. (2014) are among the few attempting to theorise temporality, positioning it as one of the four components (alongside ancestry, landscape and community) that shapes Bourdieu (1990) notion of a place's 'habitus' or embodied history. Elements of a remembered past and everyday experience influence residents' brand meanings and spark a rhythm or pace for the place. Yet, omni-temporality is arguably more nuanced and complex than these snapshots of time-frames suggest, influencing how stakeholders perceive the place brand, and also their interactions and exchanges with each other. However, few studies investigate these overlapping sources of brand complexity, and in particular, how multiple stakeholders navigate omni-temporality, and the opportunities and challenges it presents. To explore these omissions, this paper asks, how do multiple brand stakeholders understand and navigate omni-temporality in the place branding process?

Case studies of the UK city brands Bath and Bristol are used to explore this question. These cities are situated 11-miles apart and regularly communicate heritage as a key attraction for those considering the city as a place to visit, or to work or live in: Bath with its Roman and Georgian architectural accolades underlying its UNESCO World Heritage Status; and Bristol with its connections to maritime heritage, the industrial revolution and street art (Visit West, 2022). This exploration responds to the lacuna in temporal research in branding generally, and the calls for greater theoretical nuance in place branding specifically (Burghausen, 2022; Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013), by explaining how stakeholders position, understand and contest places in time, recognising that people's varied experiences, cultural meanings and societal interactions can conflict (Bergadaà, 1990; Gurvitch, 1964). In doing so, we identify six mitigation strategies that stakeholders deploy to navigate omni-temporality and to forge and embody their understanding of the place. We show that stakeholders rely on elements of transition and timelessness simultaneously (Bastian, 2014; Pecot et al., 2019) to communicate, experience and build agency for their shared and contrasting understandings of the past, present and future of their cities.

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows: Section 2 outlines the extant literature on theories of time, omni-temporality and place branding. Section 3 details the methodological steps. Section 4 presents the results thematically around positioning places in time and (re) framing stages. Section 5 sets out the theoretical and practical implications. Section 6 summarises the contributions and details avenues for future investigation.

2. Literature review

2.1. Constructing time: From monumental to social time

The past, present and future are bound together, not simply by the unstoppable chronological flow of time as a property, but also by an understanding of temporality that means our present was once an imagined future. Conceptualisations of time and its temporal expressions differ, however, with varying understandings of 'monumental' and 'social' time (Herzfeld, 1991). Monumental time represents an official chronology of events and the time perspective of the state, with a strong emphasis on the past, on notions of national destiny, continuity and collective experience, and on establishing categories and stereotypes (Herzfeld, 1991).

Social time, by contrast, is more indicative of people's everyday experiences, with an emphasis on subjective notions of how time is experienced and understood differently (Gurvitch, 1964), including across (sub)cultures (Bergadaà, 1990). Moreover, people's experience of time may be more a question of repetitive cycles and rhythms, rather than simply the linear flow implied by concepts such as duration and succession (Gurvitch, 1964). The variability of time and how it is understood is reflected in Sorokin and Merton (1937) claim that people's experience of the same (astronomically determined) quantitative time period can be socially unequal. The emphasis on the varying experience of time for different groups links time and communities, yet "… across the humanities and social sciences, there is surprisingly little research that explicitly problematises the relationship between the two" (Bastian, 2014, p. 138). In their scoping study of this relationship, Bastian (2014, p.147) identifies several research themes, including recognising the dynamic nature of communities; the intertwining of the past and future; a need to consider diverse understandings and potential contestation; issues of inclusion, exclusion and even domination of stakeholder narratives; and the tensions between dynamic communities and tendencies to retain entrenched past-orientations and with them static and "timeless" associations. Common among these themes is the potential for different actors to display agency when considering time and temporality in and of a place.

2.2. Time and temporality in branding

Branding is one of the few fields to escape from the "temporal myopia" (Balmer & Burghausen, 2019, p. 218) that pervades marketing and to take a more nuanced and social approach to time. There is a growing understanding of how perceptions of the past, and in particular heritage, influence how product and corporate brands are conceived and managed (Balmer & Burghausen, 2019; Balmer, 2013; Hakala et al., 2011; Rose et al., 2016), provide competitiveness (Spielmann et al., 2022), and inspire strategies aiming to exploit the past as a marketing asset through 'retro-branding' (Ahlberg et al., 2021). For product branding, such past associations may present tactical and strategic options and opportunities, but for place brands steeped in heritage, retro elements are not choices, aesthetics or additions, but fundamental components of the place's identity, where branding decisions concern which elements and eras of its heritage to promote and how.

Representing a brand's heritage can require a complex balance combining notions of longevity, stability and adaptability (Pecot et al., 2019), by demonstrating relative invariance, i.e., continuity and change simultaneously (Balmer, 2013; Lee & Davies, 2021; Spielmann et al., 2021). Pecot et al. (2019, p. 1624) argue that dealing with this complexity requires brand heritage to be considered holistically as the "temporal management" of the brand, and it is in the field of corporate brand heritage (e.g., Balmer et al., 2007; Balmer, 2011; Urde et al., 2007), and through the concept of omni-temporality, that this call has been most clearly answered. As Balmer and Burghausen (2019) demonstrate, the past is more than history to learn from and provides: "…substantive and symbolic relevance for the present and prospective future" (p. 223). Freed from viewing these timeframes separately and sequentially allows for the adoption of omni-temporality within the branding process, which they define as the "concurrence of the three time frames of past, present and future that are all constituted simultaneously" (Balmer & Burghausen, p. 223). A range of past-orientated concepts with (omni)temporal relevance to marketing and consumption are then explored, including history, heritage, tradition, provenance, memory, nostalgia, legacy and myth (Balmer & Burghausen, 2019). In navigating these temporal elements, marketers exercise their temporal agency to practice, share and even invent material and symbolic links to the past (Brunninge, 2023; Spielmann et al., 2021) and relate them to the present and future.

The ability to delineate and differentiate temporal brand elements therefore opens up debate around the temporal agency of multiple stakeholders (Burghausen, 2022; Pecot et al., 2019). Much of the work on temporal agency considers the "brand stewardship" (Urde et al., 2007, p.9) undertaken by managers, organisational members and increasingly consumers (Balmer & Burghausen, 2019; Balmer, 2013; Mir Bernal et al., 2023; Pfannes et al., 2021; Spielmann et al., 2021). However, recent developments call for widening the remit of

stakeholders (Burghausen, 2022; Lee & Davies, 2021) and a more nuanced understanding "both to the construction of the meaning(s) of the past and future and the enactment of connections between them in the present" (Schultz, 2022, p. 411). Despite the emerging attention, research into these multifaceted meanings and their material, symbolic and socio-cultural embodiment remains embryonic. Of particular interest are the ways in which multiple stakeholders draw on links across the past, present and future in their interactions with the brand and each other.

2.3. Time in place branding

The expanding field of place branding (Giovanardi & Lucarelli, 2018; Magnoni et al., 2021; Merrilees et al., 2009; Sadeque et al., 2020) provides a significant context in which to investigate multiple stakeholders' participation in shaping omni-temporality. What can be branded as a place varies, encompassing the natural and man-made; geographical scales ranging from nations to neighbourhoods; and encompassing the physical, fictional and virtual (Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015). The branding of places, in particular cities, is nuanced, with place brands existing within larger place brand webs (Hanna & Rowley, 2015), incorporating the brands for businesses, attractions, sports teams, universities or other organisations linked to the place, or the wider region or nation. Yet, a place brand is not only relevant to marketers. The ownership of place brands is diffused, with ongoing calls to treat multiple stakeholders as brand co-owners (Braun et al., 2018; Siano et al., 2022), shaping dialogue and activities as they evolve over time. Involving stakeholders in a process of building the brand is therefore a well-established necessity (Kavaratzis, 2012) with research investigating how diverse stakeholders construct and enact their brand meanings through everyday exchanges, practices and interactions (Aitken & Campelo, 2011).

Place branding is a marketing field within which there has been some tentative exploration of the temporal context (Chao, 2023; Magnoni et al., 2021; Wilson, 2018). Giovanardi, Lucarelli, and Pasquinelli (2013), for example, propose a concept of brand ecology that captures the balance between a place brand's functional and representational dimensions, involving the reciprocal interaction between a city's physical or material attributes and its social or anthropological dimensions of culture, symbols and meanings. Moreover, Kavaratzis and Kalandides (2015) specify four elements comprising a place's identity, namely materiality, social practices, institutions and representations. Each of these elements possesses a latent temporal dimension. For instance, material elements including monuments, museums and historic buildings help to 'crystallize' a place's history and collective memory. Social practices include rituals, festivals and traditions, and time-based practices relating to socialising and exercise whereby actors experience and collectively share their place. Institutions encompass organisations, property, regulations, planning policies, and social and aesthetic norms, which can encourage debate and dialogue around the preservation or modernisation of the place. Finally, representations through signs, symbols, maps, names and narratives can reflect a place's history, but also may include timelines demonstrating changes over time, or future visions of a place's planned development.

The importance of a temporal perspective reflects the dynamic nature of the place branding process (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013), and the primacy that authors such as Hankinson (2004) afford to history and heritage in shaping people's perceptions of places (particularly when considered as destinations). Similarly, Ashworth and Kavaratzis (2011) observe that those responsible for promoting and branding a place seem inexplicably drawn to the use of that place's historical attributes at the expense of more contemporary ones. More recently, authors such as Kaefer (2021) have contrastingly framed place branding as an inherently future-orientated activity. This future-orientation in place branding, particularly within the sub-field of city branding, reflects its close connection with the planning of urban development (Lucarelli, 2018). This became more visible since the turn of the millennium after which: "…a new set of policy agendas, based on the principles of sustainable urban development, have emerged which ostensibly put a concern with time and imagined futures at the heart of development agendas" (Raco et al., 2008, p. 2653).

Nonetheless, Raymond et al. (2017) stress the importance of time to a sense of place in terms of the 'slowness' with which place meanings evolve, lagging behind the evolution of social and material realities, and acting to inhibit change. Whilst sense of place is a recurrent theme (e.g., Aitken & Campelo, 2011; Campelo et al., 2014), sense of time features infrequently and mostly in the combined context of 'a sense of time and place' or when discussing how the combination of place and time can create specific atmospheres or auras (Burghausen, 2023; Steadman et al., 2021). To avoid the trap of their places being framed as "timeless" (Bastian, 2014, p.147), place branding needs to evolve in ways that reflect a place's communities. The place branding field is arguably more advanced in terms of encouraging stakeholder participation and its recognition that involvement also includes the everyday interactions and exchanges of brand stakeholders as they socially construct and share their brand meanings (Aitken & Campelo, 2011; Campelo et al., 2014). Yet, it lags behind corporate branding in its application and understanding of omni-temporality (Wilson, 2018). Navigating temporal relations is pertinent in this setting given the dynamic nature of places (Amatulli et al., 2019). We therefore investigate omni-temporality for the place branding process, particularly analysing how multiple stakeholders navigate past, present and future time-frames when shaping evolving and dynamic, rather than static place brands (Bastian, 2014).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

An interpretive multiple case study methodology is employed drawing on in-depth qualitative studies of two medium-sized West of England cities (i.e., Bath and Bristol). To assist the external validity a set of practical and theory-driven propositions were carefully considered (Ćwiklicki & Pilch, 2021). This included selecting sites featuring (1) a decentralised governance structure (e.g., cross-sector initiatives operating as destination management organisations); (2) debates around omni-temporality (e.g., the centrality of heritage) and/or future (e.g. sustainability) in their communicated branding efforts; and (3) multi-stakeholder involvement in place branding activities.

A multiple case study methodology supports the exploration of multifaceted and evolving phenomena (Battistella et al., 2017), and encourages theory-building (Al-Amad & Balmer, 2023). Moreover, the depth and richness of its qualitative design supports the positioning of the paper around omni-temporality as socially constructed, rather than objectively classified (Gliga & Evers, 2023). The popularity of the methodology in branding, and specifically place branding settings, also reflects its applicability (Cwiklicki & Pilch, 2021).

3.2. Sample and data collection

Theoretical sampling involved a purposive strategy to identify active and influential stakeholders within place branding processes, reflecting Mitchell et al. (1997) salience principles of urgency, power and legitimacy. To identify salience a synthesis of multi-stakeholder place branding studies revealed the primacy of local authority, business community, local community, third-sector and higher education stakeholders (Kavaratzis, 2012; Magnoni et al., 2021; Peattie & Samuel, 2021). Branding processes are exchanges and enactments of brand meanings, which include narrative curation, performances, identity formation and embodiments in place (Campelo et al., 2014; Preece & Kerrigan, 2015). Our sample was restricted to those able to facilitate and share these narratives across the web of place stakeholders (Hanna & Rowley, 2015).

Table 1
Interview descriptions.

Interviewee Reference	Interview Type	Brief description	Transcript word length (nearest 10)
Bath Interviewees			
BA1	Individual	Secretary of resident association and conservation volunteer	10,320
BA2a	Duo	Co-founder of heritage conservation group	18,660
BA2b	Duo	Chair of heritage conservation group	18,660
BA3	Individual	Hotel management for a premium city-centre hotel	8,260
BA4	Individual	Project manager and consultant for inward investment	13,230
BA5a	Duo	Founder of innovation and investment interest group	8690
BA5b	Duo	Founder and director of a branding agency	8690
BA6	Individual	Chief Executive of business and enterprise collective	8240
BA7	Individual	Branding expert and advisor for resident association	10,080
BA8	Individual	Leadership of Destination Management Organisation (DMO)	10,970
BA9	Individual	Secretary of a resident association and special interest group	7890
BA10a	Duo	Local authority representative for economy and culture	13,250
BA10b	Duo	Local authority representative for communications and regeneration	13,250
BA11	Individual	Board member for DMO and restaurant proprietor	13,440
BA12	Individual	Chair of DMO and director of business collective	6560
BA13	Individual	Local authority representative for heritage and culture	7030
BA14	Individual	Director of marketing and communications for spa attraction	8670
BA15	Individual	Coordinator for World Heritage Site	9230
BA16	Individual	Secretary for local historical organisation	13,430
BA17	Individual	Manager of membership organisation for heritage conservation	7600
BA18	Individual	Chair for city-wide resident association collective	10,160
BA19	Individual	Chief Executive for a large preservation organisation	9290
BA20	Individual	Chair of local volunteer and community engagement group	6080
BA21	Individual	Founder and chief executive for local restaurant chain	6100
BA22a	Duo	Local authority leadership	7990
BA22b	Duo	Local authority representative for economic development	7990
BA23	Individual	Chair of a small business collective	5760
BA24	Individual	Local authority representative for community engagement	6930
BA25	Individual	Marketing and communications for a higher education institution	3840
BA26	Individual	Local authority representative for place and development	4360
Bristol Interviewees			
BR1	Individual	Leadership of DMO	4140
BR2	Individual	Marketing director for heritage attraction	8500
BR3	Individual	Board member for DMO and local councillor	7310
BR4	Individual	Local authority representative for place and development	6570
BR5	Individual	Local authority representative for city innovation	6950
BR6	Individual	Chief executive for business collective and investment agency	6720
BR7	Individual	Community engagement officer for religious visitor attraction	8730
BR8	Individual	Chief executive for visitor and cultural attraction	8580
BR9	Individual	Local community partnership coordinator	6840
BR10	Individual	Visitor and service management for an infrastructure attraction	7190
BR11	Individual	Local authority representative for investment and innovation	7690
BR12	Individual	Curator and visitor management for a city centre museum	4800
BR13	Individual	Chief executive for city investment hub	4920
BR14	Individual	Founder of street art tour operator and visitor attraction	6530
BR15	Individual	Local authority representative for heritage and culture	6480
BR16a	Group	Volunteer coordinator for a maritime heritage attraction	10,110
BR16b	Group	Volunteer coordinator for a maritime heritage attraction	10,110
BR16c	Group	Marketing and communications for a maritime heritage attraction	10,110
BR17	Individual	Secretary for a local resident association and volunteer	8820
BR18	Individual	Chair of a local resident association	4840
BR19	Individual	Chair of a local planning and conservation group	8030
BR20	Individual	Local authority representative for culture	5300
BR21	Individual	Chair of a resident association	4890
BR22	Individual	Local community partnership coordinator	5900
BR23	Individual	Previously elected senior official and campaigner	6020
BR24	Individual	Chair of a private entrepreneurial and charitable organisation	4290
BR25	Individual	Community engagement officer for a digital media arts centre	4580
BR26	Individual	Marketing and communications for a higher education institution	4230
BR27	Individual	Project manager for cultural destination project	9700
BR28	Individual	Head of inward investment for regional inward investment agency	7310

Source: created by authors.

To identify salient representatives, searches of news articles, committee reports, social media channels and websites were performed. For representatives with a reduced online presence (such as local community representatives) snowballing, following recommendations by participants, was employed. We continued to recruit the sample until theoretical saturation was achieved. Following these steps to define and identify participants helps to secure construct validity (Ćwiklicki & Pilch, 2021). A total of 54 in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted across the case study cities over 18-months, incorporating 60 representatives from the local authority, destination management organisations, visitor attractions, small and large businesses, business representative groups, resident groups, lobby groups, third-sector organisations and higher education (see Table 1). Individual in-depth interviews were the primary method, however, a small number of duo and small group interviews were utilised where the participants were collaboratively involved in the place branding processes.

Interviewees received participant information and consent forms in advance, detailing the topics. Interview schedules matched these topics,

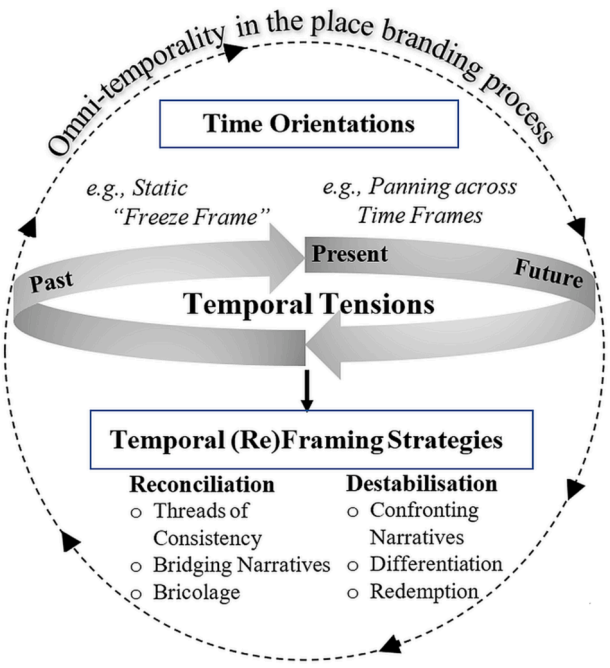

Fig. 1. Omni-temporality in the place branding process.

asking participants about the meanings they associate with the place; the routes through which they share and present these meanings; their experiences of the process and interactions with other stakeholders; and how they consider the city (branding) to be changing over time. A series of prompts encouraged participants to expand on discussions of time and (omni)temporality and subsequent interviews addressed recurrent themes (Charmaz, 2014). The depth of the data gathered is reflected in the over 55-hours of audio recordings and approximately 500,000 words of data transcriptions.

The case studies also incorporated non-participant observations and secondary data analysis (see Table A1). Observations included analytical notes and images taken during visits to sites, including museums, galleries, exhibitions, theatres, parks and recreational facilities, business parks and enterprise zones. Secondary data was collected from websites, brochures, promotional handouts, and policy documents. While interviews were the primary method of data collection, these supplementary tools supported the triangulation of method and analysis.

3.3. Data analysis

The analytical coding was broken down into multiple stages (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Saldaña, 2021). An initial stage of data immersion involved familiarisation with the transcriptions, memos and field notes. Second, temporal instances were highlighted per dictum. Third, explanatory labels were given to these temporal instances. Fourth, a series of coding clusters were identified and refined following team meetings. Subsequently, relationships across these clusters were explored and evaluated. Finally, coding clusters were compared against extant theory to develop theoretical constructs (Saldaña, 2021).

Steps were taken to ensure rigor and reliability. To improve inter-reliability the team met frequently to check for consistency in coding. Detailed memos (>200,000 words) taken throughout the data collection, transcription and data analysis were compiled to support the theory building process (Charmaz, 2014). To increase the internal validity (Ćwiklicki & Pilch, 2021), codes were checked against secondary sources and a further round of coding checks were performed using qualitative data analysis software (NVivo.12).

4. Results

The research unpacks the ways in which stakeholders understand and navigate omni-temporality in place branding. The first section details how diverse stakeholders from across the two city brands position the past, present and future time-frames and the tensions these framings create for stakeholders and the brand. The following section sets out how stakeholders mitigate these tensions through six (re)framing strategies (see Table A2 for coding stages and data extracts).

4.1. Positioning place brands in time

The diversity of meanings assigned to the past, present and future can be summarised as two contrasting time orientations: a 'moving picture' with a panoramic perspective and a static 'freeze-frame' with a tight focus on a single period. Navigating these temporal relations led to increased complexity with tensions coming from the different frames of omni-temporality.

4.1.1. Panning across time-frames

Bristol's stakeholders frequently frame their city as a 'moving picture' with a panoramic perspective, and with more emphasis on how the past is connected with the present and projected into the future. Bristol's brand is evolving from being more "*run-of-the-mill*" to "*a city full of surprises*" (BR1), becoming more multi-dimensional by translating many of its assets into something more contemporary or future-orientated. Bristol gained status by positioning itself as a vibrant and dynamic city, adjusting the focus from the past to "*what we're actively doing now to contribute to the vibrancy and dynamism of the city*" (BR24).

Examples included the rejuvenation of the historic docks; the evolution of its reputation for transport innovation into the aerospace era; and the shift of its tradition as a cultural centre into somewhere associated with cutting-edge street art. This included assigning the historical figure, Brunel, with a future orientation through the Brunel Institute's "*Future Brunels*" educational programme concerned with "*…inspiring children to become the next generation of engineers, scientists, and technologists* […] *something that Brunel would have been proud of*" (BR2).

4.1.2. One-dimensional 'freeze-frame'

Respondents in Bath highlighted how its aesthetic materiality influenced the temporal relations in its branding. The grandiose nature of the Georgian era identity subsumed other time periods, even its Roman roots. "*Bathness*", for instance, is the term used to describe: "*this idea that if you were blindfolded and dropped into a place … because of the design of the buildings, and their scale and the stone, if it looks largely like Bath stone, a Georgian style, you would assume it was Bath*" (BA2b). Participants discussed the difficulties of moving beyond its distinctive Georgian past, and how this "*monolithic view*" resulted in other periods being "*swept under the carpet*" (BA2a). Unlike Bristol's historic docks, which were preserved and redeveloped as an arts, hospitality and leisure attraction, Bath's became a car park. Such a loss of industrial heritage was not unique: "*It (had) the first electricity generating station that exported electricity around the country … again it was in the way, they put a bus station there*" (BA2a).

Nonetheless, the period of transformation in Bristol was also considered by some to be a recent and ongoing endeavour, with the city still being characterised by some as having a slow pace of life and pace of change. The legacy of Bristol as "*a deathbed of ambition*" (BR12), where "*people came to retire or have a less stressful life*" (BR11) was difficult to overcome. Moreover, while Bath was considered indivisible from its past, participants in Bristol discussed a preoccupation with its imagined future and a silencing of elements of its past, in particular the city's links to the transatlantic slave trade.

4.1.3. Temporal tensions

Tensions arose regardless of the temporal framing. Positioning places

Table A1
Secondary sources and site observations.

Secondary sources			
Source type		Description of sources	Data extracts
Promotional pamphlets and handouts	*n = 28*	Information and promotional content (in print) for historic, cultural, leisure and recreational attractions.	- Waters and wellbeing a longstanding association (Bath) - Celebrating Jane Austin as 'most famous' resident (Bath) - Identifying landmarks associated with Brunel (Bristol) - Diversity of heritage, attractions and neighbourhoods (Bristol) - Promoting conservation and education (Bath) - Rallying investment in small businesses and innovation (Bath) - Celebrating links across past and present through arts and culture (Bristol) - Pledging to protect the environment and future (Bristol) - Water & Wellbeing; Knowledge & Invention; Imagination & Design; Pleasure & Culture; Living Heritage (Bath: placemaking agenda) - Council vision around '*internationally renowned*' and '*beautifully inventive*' (Bath: place plans) - Working together to develop a fair, healthy and sustainable city (Bristol city plans) - Connection of arts, performances and museums through shared life experiences and stories (Bristol: growth and regeneration plans)
Websites	*n = 26*	Publicly available websites including for local authorities, tourist agencies, companies, attractions, campaign groups, local community groups, partnerships, forums, and people and communities.	
Policy documents	*n = 21*	Publicly available policy documents (online) for economic and growth strategies, regeneration, placemaking, place plans, neighbourhood partnerships, community and business forums, conservation and sustainability plans.	
Total	*n = 75*		
Site observations			
Observation type		**Description of sites**	**Data extracts**
Tourist attractions visit (self-guided)	*n = 12*	Key visitor sites including heritage visitor attractions; architecture, community and fashion museums; galleries; spa and leisure facilities; and street art exhibitions.	- Spa and wellbeing prevalent across time-frames (Bath) - Stories to connect past, present and future (Bath/Bristol) - Architecture iconic on skyline past to present (Bristol) - Innovation and pioneering from past to present (Bristol) - Previously untold past to be resurfaced (Bristol) - Lifestyle and leisure across time-frames (Bath) - Divisions in society in past and present (Bath/Bristol) - Celebration of street art through festivals/ figures (Bristol) - Past and present famous residents identified (Bath/Bristol) - Connection to water reiterated (Bath) - Emphasis on past time-frames (Bath) - Untold stories and contestation (Bath/Bristol) - Combination of past/present/future narratives (Bristol) - Links to prevalence of culture and arts (Bristol) - Businesses utilising historic buildings (Bath) - New attractions fusing old and new architectural styles (Bath) - Mixture of old and new (Bristol) - Street art in and around urban centre (Bristol) - Cross-sector working spaces to encourage growth and innovation (Bristol)
Tourist attraction (guided)	*n = 3*	Guided tours of local visitor attraction, street art and heritage attraction.	
City tours (guided)	*n = 6*	Sighting seeing bus tours; city walking tours; digital city tours.	
City tours (self-guided)	*n = 20*	Site visits across the cities and surrounding areas, including observations of streetscapes; recreational sites; businesses; enterprise hubs; and community centres.	
Total	*n = 41*		

Source: created by authors.

in time is entwined with omissions, contradictions, complacency and inequalities. For instance, respondents regularly critiqued Bath for being static and complacent, and as such "*stuck in a rut*" (BA11) and "*resting on its laurels in a way that needed nudging*" (BA24). The slow pace of evolution resulted in place meanings lagging behind the social and material realities of the place, creating tensions as stakeholders struggled to escape the dominance of a well-established, and once celebrated, period of the past.

While for Bath being stuck in one particular time period was challenging, multiple Bristolian stakeholders questioned the lack of meaningful engagement with the past. This was particularly pertinent when Bristol's historic links to the transatlantic slave trade contradicted the liberal and diverse image the city projects. Moreover, the panoramic view still requires respondents to make sense of different time-frames and benefitted certain stakeholders more overtly, and the prevalent inequalities across social, economic and cultural opportunities led to a frequent critique that Bristol remains *"a city of two halves"* (BR20). Neighbourhoods outside of the affluent city centre areas *"don't see all the big changes that you see in the more central parts of the city*" (BR25).

4.2. (Re)framing strategies

To manage and mediate the omni-temporal tensions stakeholders rely on a series of (re)framing strategies that sought to reconcile and challenge the connections between the city's past, the appeal to stakeholders in the present, and a vision of the city in the future.

4.2.1. Reconciliation: Threads of consistency, bridging narratives and bricolage

One approach used by respondents to reinterpret the privileging of a given time-frame was to find broad themes that represented a ***thread of consistency*** connecting the past, present and future. Bath's recently adopted place branding strapline of "*beautifully inventive"* was crafted to highlight themes that transcended a specific period of architecture and heritage to embrace Bath's green spaces, natural and built environment, and encourage a renewed emphasis on economic and social wellbeing

Table A2
Coding results.

Coding instances (per dictum exemplars)	Coding (labels)	Coding clusters	Aggregate dimensions
"*Georgian era has established Bath as a world heritage city, a World Heritage Site"* (BA6) *"…design of the buildings, and their scale and the stone, if it looks largely like Bath stone, a Georgian style, you would assume it was Bath*" (BA2b) *"The fact that you've largely wiped out the industrial past, or don't promote heritage, it's almost like 'oh I don't want to promote that bit of Bath, it doesn't exist, it never has existed'".* (BA2b) *"Bristol, for me, is a city full of surprises and changes regularly".* (BR1)	Heritage assets and World Heritage Site status Aligning with historical figures Uniformity in physical city appearance Static	Single time-frame One-dimensional	**Freeze-frame**
"I always think with Bristol in the way that it differs from Bath is that it has a much more varied heritage. You can see medieval, Georgian, and stunning Victorian". (BR12) *"We have a heritage and a history, and that's fine, but it's not about that. It's about what we're actively doing now to contribute to the vibrancy and dynamism of the city."* (BR24) "*…anything that goes, or might be perceived as against heritage, is always contentious*" (BA6).	Diversity in culture, arts and leisure Links between past, present and future Regular change Dynamic	Overlapping time-frames Moving picture	**Panning across time-frames**
"Part of the problem of having a status of world heritage city is that it's pretty easy to use that as a vehicle to do nothing because you don't want to offend, and you don't want to change." (BA8) *"…there is still a lot of tension around the fact that the wealth in Bristol was created from slaves. A lot of the street names reflect that […] Colston Hall, the concert hall in the city was named after the Colston family who made their money out the slave trade."* (BR11)	Slow to change Selective presentations Uneven opportunities	Complacency Contradictions Omissions and silencing	**Temporal tensions**
"[Bath] is not a museum. It's not a fossil. Almost everybody sensible understands that. It has to be a city that people want to live in, they want to come to and enjoy, not as a museum. So, it has to reconcile the things that make it a world heritage city, which largely rest in the past, but a past that needs preserving, with the need for the city to stay alive, and stay vibrant". (BA16) *"People were seen as doing what they're comfortable with and because we've been a trading city for a 1000-years and kind of pioneering then no one was surprised by anything that happened and just got on and did it".* (BR13) *"Beautifully inventive was put together, those two words, to describe exactly what Bath will be, which is a beautiful location, with a history of innovation and inventiveness. We want to bring that to the 21st century, and track the businesses that rely on creative, innovative, inventive thinking.* (BA22b) *"Instead of saying, it's got a history as that might be a bit backward to look at it, is instead to say that the way to look at [Bristol] is to actually say it has been a pioneering place … So, what it was doing then was really forward looking, and what we're doing now is really forward looking".* (BR8) *"…somewhere like Holburne got it right. You have this wonderful Georgian building, but out the back it has a feeling it has been modernised. Some of the best buildings are where they've taken something old and they've added something new to it. I do think we should still protect our Georgian heritage, so I wouldn't want to see glass boxes being put in front of the Royal Crescent and so on, but we also need to move with the times.* (BA21)	Ongoing threads across time-frames Connecting contemporary phenomenon across time-frames Using stories to connect the present, past and future Finding contemporary purposes for past assets Celebrating the present through a modern use of the past	Threads of consistency Bridging Bricolage	**Re-conciliation**
Coding instances (per dictum exemplars)	**Coding (labels)**	**Coding clusters**	**Aggregate dimensions**
"Bath needs a contemporary brand narrative that says actually we should be talking to the Googles of this world, we should be talking to Microsoft. That says actually if you're going to bring your team anywhere in the world to do some R&R and reimagining then, you know, Bath is the place to come and do that. For me that's [it] and all the conversation I'm not having at every level in the city is let's refresh the narrative." (BA5b) *"If we want to get change made in a city like this, which is incredibly difficult because things are entrenched. That might surprise you because if you look at the external image of Bristol, you think 'wow' in lots of ways. Actually, the city's institutions are resistant to change … there is a lot of work to do I think to pick up a city that has rested on its laurels for a long time. It needs thought about its future, with no resource itself really to do anything about that".* (BR17)"*So, there's a feeling around losing rather than changing. So that's a lot of the reason we stay here and work with the community, to look at the positive changes that can be made."* (BR25) *"There are two distinct brands. There's the classic history and heritage Bath, which are the beautiful buildings and the gorgeous valley setting. Then you have the urban environment, which is a bustling and happening place, with lots of university students, lots of activities, carnivals, film festivals, and things happening all the time. You've got both of those things happening in Bath at the moment, and they can live side by side perfectly well, but you're attracting two different audiences for those two different things".* (BA13) *"In Bristol it is a lot easier because an awful lot of their narratives and stories are already contested. Is it the Bristol of Banksy and street art? Or is it the Bristol of the Mayor and Clifton? It's a big city. It's big enough to have those different stories and communities to be told."* (BR27) *"It is something that perhaps for a long time the city refused to talk about it in terms of their identity. In the last five-to-10 years there has been a lot more public conversations about those tensions. It doesn't mean the tensions have gone away but I think people are finding a way to make it a part of the Bristol story that feels important rather than just pretending it never happened".* (BR11).	Voicing and sharing critiques Identifying separate and distinctive narratives Compartmentalisation of different time-frames and identities Positioning around recognition and acknowledgment of past wrongs Transformative and progressive expressions	Confronting Differentiation Redemption	**De-stabilisation**

Source: created by authors.

(BA4). The campaign built on the shared benefit of the "*historic fabric*", which is attractive for people wanting to live, work, invest in and visit the city (BA12). Instead of removing the connotation with the past, participants sought a way to: "*reconcile the things that make it a world heritage city, which largely rest in the past, with the need for the city to stay alive, and stay vibrant*" (BA16).

For Bristol, its status as a port city and place where "*a lot of innovative engineering has always gone on*" (BR16b) were the most utilised threads, including a strand around aerospace established over the past century and cemented with the establishment of a dedicated aerospace museum in 2017. These threads of consistency reduced stakeholders' unease around the status of the past in place branding processes by providing a focus through which multiple stakeholders could unite.

A related approach to identifying consistent themes was to find specific concepts that could act as ***bridging narratives*** between the brand's past and contemporary culture. In Bath, a parallel between the connectivity of the Georgian tea-room culture and contemporary internet-era social networking was shared, as both facilitated "*all sorts of ideas and innovations, with all sorts of connections getting made*" (BA25). Another bridging narrative reconnected Bath's twenty-first century interest in water and wellbeing back to the city's spa heritage. Alternatively, participants relied on stories and memories to connect the past to the present. Linking the past to their life events and families could effectively translate significant material assets of the city into symbolic assets that visitors and residents could relate to and represent more easily:

> *The [Clifton Suspension] Bridge as a piece of architecture and engineering could be very static. We could go, 'oh here's the history of how it was built and how it all works.'… But we thought it was really interesting to add in the personal stories of people related to the bridge because almost everyone has a personal story about it…… It's just a nice way to show that the bridge is a piece of personal history, as well as a monument in its own right* (BR11).

Not all participants sought to reconcile tensions through a search for similarity or consistency, stakeholders also sought to differentiate through emphasising ***bricolage***, i.e., the assembly of different elements across time-frames into a new representation as a strategy for garnering consensus. One approach was using past architecture as a blueprint and creating a juxtaposition of this with contemporary materiality and representations, "*showing that history and modernity can live very well together*" (BA14). Such juxtapositions included citing contemporary purposes for heritage buildings, such as the establishment of the innovation hub *The Engine Shed*, within the heritage asset of Temple Meads Station in Bristol. Similarly in Bath, the Holburne Museum was redesigned with a "*traditional face and amazing piece of architecture at the rear*" (BA5a) and the Thermae Bath Spa used a contemporary building to house its historic spa.

4.2.2. Destabilisation: Confronting narratives, differentiation and redemption

In contrast to attempts to reconcile contestation, other stakeholders shared their opposing narratives and sought to destabilise existing temporal orientations. Dissenting stakeholders shared and enacted ***confronting narratives***. This was evident in both cities, although more actively utilised in Bath where tensions between a desire to preserve existing historic buildings, and a need to redevelop and improve the city were most evident. Participants voiced their dissent at what they considered to be missed opportunities and sought to rally others to act.

Despite moves by some respondents to promote and embed Bath's "*beautifully inventive*" identity (BA4; BA5a; BA5b; BA6), others sought to emphasise the need to ***differentiate*** and separate identities. In Bath, participants distinguished between "*your old historic city … then you've got the emerging Bath, which is much more about the city being for young people and a lot of people being involved in new businesses, new IT type businesses*" (BA24). This compartmentalisation represents a spatial and social delineation between different communities within Bath, their different time-frames, and the different extents to which they are represented and influential within the place branding process. In Bristol the disparate narratives associated with its neighbourhoods and attractions were often celebrated as adding to the city's diversity and dynamism. However, concern was also noted that these social delineations reinforced "*huge inequalities*" (BR24) and socio-economic divides (BR23).

While for Bath, being stuck in one particular time period was problematic, multiple Bristolian stakeholders critiqued the lack of a meaningful engagement with the past. This was particularly pertinent when Bristol's "*shameful*" (BR23) links to the transatlantic slave trade clashed with the liberal and diverse image the city conveyed. Although respondents raised the issue as overlooked and unresolved, others also point to a connection to contemporary debates about race and diversity allowing the past to be at least confronted, challenged and **redeemed**:

> *In the last five-to-10 years there has been a lot more public conversations about those tensions. It doesn't mean the tensions have gone away, but I think people are finding a way to make it a part of the Bristol story that feels important rather than just pretending it never happened.* (BR11).

This clash between the overlooking of the past, specifically previously celebrated entrepreneurs' connection to the slavery era, and a present in which tackling racial injustice became a priority, reached a crescendo in June 2020. This led to symbolically important changes to the materiality of Bristol focusing on the role of slave trader James Colston in its past. A decision was taken to remove a stained-glass window dedicated to Colston, and his statue with a dedication reading 'Erected by: citizens of Bristol as a memorial to one of the most virtuous and wise sons of their city, CE 1895′ was toppled by protesters. The protestors edited the plaque to say that the citizens of Bristol rejected Colston and pushed his statue into the harbour next to a bridge commemoratively named after an eighteenth-century victim of the slave trade (Moody, 2021). Key Colston-linked representations have also changed with the renaming of the concert hall, multiple schools and a major residential block that bore his name, along with many unofficial efforts and campaigns to rename roads. The contestation around Colston has helped to make local stakeholders' responses to the darker aspects of the city's heritage a stronger part of its contemporary social identity.

5. Discussion

Our research identifies omni-temporality as an important and overlooked dimension of the place branding process, shaping the construction of brand stakeholders' meanings, exchanges and experiences with the brand and each other. We provide a novel account of omni-temporality across the place branding process (Fig. 1), showing how stakeholders position places in time and how these are iteratively forged, shared, (re)negotiated and embodied by relations with the brand and its stakeholders.

We first uncover how stakeholders position places differently in time. It was difficult for Bath's branding to escape a more static positioning, centred around a particular period of seventeenth and eighteen century history. In contrast, Bristol's stakeholders frequently discussed a positioning that pans across time-frames and in doing so often prioritised the future rather than the past. Omni-temporality is much more nuanced than starting in the past and determining how to represent this in the present and future. For brands and their stakeholders, temporal tensions arose regardless of the temporal strata prioritised. Focusing too concretely on the past prompts concerns over complacency, a slow pace of change and critiques of being outdated. Whereas looking too much to the future risks contestation, with concerns over omissions of shameful parts of the place's past and a reinforcing of current inequalities.

While omni-temporality presents another complex dimension of the place branding process, the ways in which stakeholders mitigate and manage these tensions provides some noteworthy insights for branding scholars and practitioners. Our analysis shows how place brands can

develop and be iteratively (re)framed in their relationship to time, and in particular, how stakeholders are able to navigate these fluctuations through conciliatory or opposing strategies.

5.1. Theoretical implications

This paper builds on recent developments in corporate heritage branding, particularly calls to explain how stakeholders navigate multifarious omni-temporal meanings, exchanges and experiences (Balmer & Burghausen, 2019; Burghausen, 2022; Spielmann et al., 2021) in the context of a "hyperconnected" notion of branding (Preece & Kerrigan, 2015; Swaminathan et al., 2020, p. 24). In place branding the necessity of stakeholders' participation is well-established (Kavaratzis, 2012), and yet theory development remains nascent (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013), especially in terms of temporality (Steadman et al., 2021). Research alludes to the latent role and implications of temporality (Campelo et al., 2014; Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015; Magnoni et al., 2021; Spielmann et al., 2021), with limited focus on how temporality (and in particular omni-temporality) interacts with calls for greater stakeholder participation in branding processes (Kavaratzis, 2012; Zenker et al., 2017). This study presents theoretical contributions of relevance to these nascent and topical areas of investigation.

We first add to the body of knowledge on omni-temporality by identifying the varying ways in which stakeholders position a place brand in time. As Warnaby (2009) notes, a city is not simply one clearly discernible thing and a city brand will have a multiplicity of meanings for its many stakeholder groups (Merrilees et al., 2009) across potentially multiple frames of omni-temporality. Much of the initial interest in omni-temporality begins with the past and explores how stakeholders use it in their present or future endeavours (Balmer & Burghausen, 2019; Balmer, 2011; Spielmann et al., 2021). Our research recognises that often present or future time-frames are shaping the branding, including those centred around the vibrancy or dynamic position of the brand (Scarborough & Crabbe, 2021). Whilst the heritage and history of a place seem bound to influence its branding (Ashworth & Kavaratzis, 2011), our study illustrates the inevitable countervailing pull from an imagined future identity and aspirations about the sort of place its key stakeholders desire it to become.

Another contribution relates to the acceptance that multi-stakeholder branding is complex and contested, especially when the ambiguous phenomenon of omni-temporality is also introduced. Multiple stakeholders bring with them opportunities for contestation over temporality (Burghausen, 2022), and our research shows that these tensions arose regardless of the temporal framing. Instead of these complexities hampering the branding, we identify a series of reconciliatory (threads of consistency, bridging narratives and bricolage) and destabilising (confronting narratives, differentiation and redemption) (re)framing strategies stakeholders employed. The study builds on work that has shown reconciliatory strategies can begin to ease tensions associated with the passing of time (Lee & Davies, 2021), and demonstrates the use of these strategies in allowing multiple stakeholders to represent a brand's different time-frames.

Moreover, we show that stakeholders also interact with the brand and other stakeholders through confronting strategies that relied on contestation and critique. By challenging cities' temporal positioning, a wider remit of stakeholders can encourage place and destination managers to reflect on the controversial and overlooked aspects of the city's heritage when reframing and transforming its social identity (Leroi-Werelds & Matthes, 2022). Accumulatively, involving multiple brand stakeholders can help mitigate the challenge of relative invariance, i.e., balancing continuity alongside change (Balmer & Burghausen, 2019; Balmer, 2013; Lee & Davies, 2021), by navigating at times contradictory and challenging concurrent time-frames through accommodating diversity and dissent. In doing so, however, stakeholders not only use the past to attain legitimacy for the brand (Phillips et al., 2020). Stakeholders in our study are strategically using the ambiguity and contestation surrounding omni-temporality to foster and embed *their* experience(s) of the brand.

In addition to forging and sharing narratives, the current study reveals the importance of temporal embodiments where stakeholders begin to enact their (re)framing narratives. Stakeholders construct collective and conflicting understandings of the brand (Preece & Kerrigan, 2015) and share these through social practices such as stories, memories, experiences, lobbying, partnerships and events (Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015). These strategies do not necessarily remove the tensions, instead they enable stakeholders to redevelop their understanding of the brand and relations with other stakeholders by drawing on and enacting iterative harmonious and confrontational expressions. Omni-temporality therefore goes beyond an embodied history (Campelo et al., 2014), and gives stakeholders the opportunity to present and iteratively recreate their present and imagined future. As such, we suggest that these harmonious and confrontational temporal expressions afford stakeholders a nuanced and iterative form of temporal agency, one that recognises that the constructing and sharing of temporal meanings is seldom simple (Schultz, 2022) and embraces the multiplicity of omni-temporality.

Finally, the current study builds on aspects of social and monumental time to theorise stakeholders' experiences of omni-temporality. Stakeholders in the study are relying on elements of transition and timelessness simultaneously (Bastian, 2014; Pecot et al., 2019) to communicate their shared and contrasting understandings of the past, present and (imagined) future. The mitigation strategies, such as looking for threads of consistency or bridging narratives across time-frames enable a rethinking of the city's narratives by harnessing heritage resources (Spielmann et al., 2021), and demonstrate efforts to translate place branding elements from a monumental to a social time-frame. For instance, the strategy of sharing people's stories and memories linking the Clifton Suspension Bridge to the life events and families of those living in Bristol today effectively translated a significant material asset of the city, and one located in monumental time, into a symbolic asset that visitors and residents could relate to (Spielmann et al., 2021), and represent more easily by locating it in social time. The past-orientated materiality provided an opportunity for stakeholders to centralise and celebrate the future-orientated social practices, institutions and representations (Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015).

Herzfeld (1991) argues that the existence of both monumental and social time-frames for a place poses challenging questions about who gets to decide whose history counts, and who gets to tell it? For those involved in place branding, the challenge was to find a balance between positioning their city between monumental and social time when expressing its identity, and to find ways to connect the two synergistically. Stakeholders in our study sought to adjust pre-existing monumental time perspectives within branding processes, preferably via collaborative social practices that created scope for consensus and contestation simultaneously. It is through a focus on social time that the nuance and complexity of stakeholders' varying and complicated temporal relations can be understood and (re)framed.

5.2. Practical implications

The study provides five practical contributions. First, the work shows that managing temporal relations means more than integrating the past across different time-frames. Place brands by their nature and design can also begin from a future-orientated framing and draw strategically upon past time-frames to legitimise and cement the images conveyed. However, brand stakeholders should do so cautiously (Brunninge, 2023), especially if it means omitting or reinventing a more controversial period of their past. Consumers and brand stakeholders are increasingly looking to brands to be progressive and transformative (Leroi-Werelds & Matthes, 2022), omitting narratives of a shameful past risks alienating current and prospective stakeholders and visitors.

Second, the assortment of stakeholder perspectives needs to be

closely monitored. Visitor and place management organisations with well-recognised heritage are often drawn to infusing their place brand with a nostalgic appeal to attract visitors. This, however, has the potential to clash with the pursuits of other stakeholders (such as urban planners, local businesses or residents) to promote a more contemporary or future-orientated view of their city. Policy makers and practitioners would benefit from engaging more widely with the different groups and balancing a diversity of interests.

Third, the research shows the multiple ways in which brand stakeholders interact with the brand and each other. Most of these interactions do not rely on a single brand manager, and instead involve multiple everyday exchanges, experiences and relations by an array of stakeholders (Campelo et al., 2014). In addition to brand stewards undertaking managerial roles (Urde et al., 2007, p.4), we suggest that there are multiple stewards of the branding process who present their own understandings of omni-temporality.

Fourth, and connected to the previous point, it is not to say that contestation can be necessarily avoided. The research identifies tensions that remain prevalent regardless of how the place brand is positioned in time and the presence of a web of brand stakeholders (Hanna & Rowley, 2015). Managing multifarious stakeholder understandings of omni-temporality is inevitably complex, ambiguous and contested (Burghausen, 2023). Nonetheless, this research shows that these complexities can be utilised to forge, share and bring to life different perspectives. Allowing for dissent, diversity and periods of reflection offers routes to meaningful exchanges across the place branding process.

Fifth, the cases demonstrate that monumental time perspectives continue to dominate within branding processes. This may be because the four elements Kavaratzis and Kalandides (2015) view as comprising a place's identity, are themselves skewed towards monumental and official time, particularly material assets, institutions and representations. The social time dimensions of a place may be less obvious. Increased effort is needed to unpack and advance these collaborative and social aspects of time within the place branding processes. Our study provides examples of how stakeholders are able to achieve this shift through managing tensions by sharing stories, searching for similarities across time-frames, encouraging debate and critique, illustrating difference and continuously pushing for change.

6. Conclusion and future research

Even within the field of branding, where a longstanding focus on (re) selling the past exists, research and practice predominately treats time as a backdrop rather than interrogating its nature, meaning and implications. A weakness in the extant literature is the limited application of omni-temporality outside of corporate heritage branding and a nascent understanding of how omni-temporality is influenced by the presence of multiple stakeholders within a diffused notion of branding (Lee & Davies, 2021; Schultz, 2022; Swaminathan et al., 2020; Wilson, 2018). Our research extends the body of knowledge in corporate heritage branding and the field of place branding by advancing understanding of how multiple stakeholders use omni-temporality to shape their interactions with the brand and each other. We unpack the nuance of involving stakeholders in omni-temporality, positing that harmonious and confronting temporal expressions are drawn upon simultaneously to reconcile and confront omni-temporal tensions, which can in turn afford brands a degree of both continuity and change when navigating past, present and prospective future time-frames. These temporal expressions also allow stakeholders to forge, share and embody their experience(s) with the brand and each other, which is indicative of an iterative and organic form of temporal agency that moves beyond a static understanding of monumental time and embraces the fluidity of social time.

As with the bulk of place-specific research, this study has the limitation that findings were derived from one type of place, in this case medium-sized UK cities with over 1000-years of history. Accordingly, the results may be less directly applicable to other city types, for instance, cities with a few hundred years of history, or mega-cities. Nonetheless, some parallels concerning the role of omni-temporality in the creation of place brands and the strategies adopted by stakeholders seeking to temporally reposition their place brand, can be observed in accounts from different types of cities. For example, research into Toronto's Distillery District mirrors similar searches for consistency through the inclusion of microbreweries; confrontational narratives around the risks of the nostalgic 'Disneyfication' of industrial heritage; and a redemptive narrative in which the emphasis on including artisanal and sustainable brands revived the idea of a city in which useful things are produced and consumed (Kohn, 2010). Nevertheless, further research into how omni-temporality impacts branding processes in different types of places is a critical next step to further develop the field.

The relations, processes and consequences of marketing continue to play out in space and time, even if the places where marketing activities occur are increasingly within the digital realm rather than purely on terra firma (Siano et al., 2022). Yet, the use of digital tools raises interesting questions around if, and how, agency is altered when stakeholders move their interaction with the brand online (Anderski et al., 2023). This could allow stakeholders to better link the past, present and future and shape the identity of their place in novel ways. These digital interactions were noted but not explored in detail during this study.

Finally, our research design centres on internal and active place stewards and the ways in which they forge, share and embody their temporal expressions in their interactions with the brand and each other. Future research could investigate how external stakeholders interact with each other when experiencing and negotiating a dynamic, complex and multifaceted omni-temporal brand. Stakeholders' positions and influence may also change (Balmer, 2009), and follow-up research could explore the ways in which, and reasons whereby, these individuals and groups gain or lose temporal agency over time.

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CRediT authorship contribution statement

Laura Reynolds: Visualization, Validation, Software, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization, Writing - original draft, Writing - review & editing. **Ken Peattie:** Supervision, Investigation, Formal analysis, Conceptualization, Project administration, Writing - original draft, Writing - review & editing. **Nicole Koenig-Lewis:** Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Investigation, Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Project administration, Writing - review & editing. **Heike Doering:** Validation, Supervision, Investigation, Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Writing - review & editing.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

The research was approved and adheres to principles set out by Cardiff University's ethical approval committee. Informed consent was obtained from individual participants. Data is not open access to protect the anonymity of participants.

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Appendix A

See Table A1 and Table A2.

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Dr Laura Reynolds (PhD, Cardiff University, UK) is a Lecturer in Marketing at Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University, UK. She received funding for her PhD and postdoctoral research from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). Laura's research interests include stakeholder participation in place branding, cultural heritage and omnitemporality, and sustainable and inclusive brand governance. Her research has been published in journals including *Tourism Management, European Journal of Marketing, Journal of Place Management and Development* and *Local Economy*.

Professor Ken Peattie is Professor of Marketing & Strategy and Head of the Marketing & Strategy Section at Cardiff Business School. His research interests largely focus on sustainability marketing, corporate social responsibility, social marketing and social enterprise and he has published three books and numerous book chapters and journal articles on these topics.

Dr Nicole Koenig-Lewis is a Reader in Marketing at Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University, UK. Her research interests include customer experience and emotions, sustainable consumption, access-based consumption, and events/ festivals as agents of sustainable behaviour change. She has published her work in journals such as *Journal of Business Research*, *European Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, and *Resources, Conservation & Recycling.*

Dr Heike Doering is Senior Lecturer in International Management at Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University, UK. Her research interests include the role of places in wider networks of accumulation as well as ethics and sustainability in management. Her work has been published in journals such as *Public Administration Review*, *Public Management Review* as well as *Review of International Political Economy*.