

Liechtenstein's five steps to superficial change

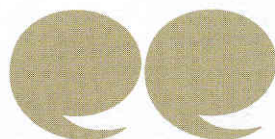
Liechtenstein, the tiny principality sandwiched between Austria and Switzerland, has a problem. As the sub-clause in that sentence suggests, nobody knows much about Europe's fourth-smallest state. In response, Liechtenstein has decided to conduct a formal branding campaign. Last November several brand consultants were shortlisted and Wolff Olins won the business. Six months on and the results have been revealed. Wolff Olins identified five themes that best capture the spirit of Liechtenstein. It expressed each theme as a symbol, and each symbol has been integrated into a unifying logo of a 'democratic crown'. Liechtenstein has been rebranded.

While Liechtenstein is unusual in providing a country case study, cities around the world are jumping on the b(r)andwagon. 'As we speak, a group of people are trying to create Atlanta's new branding campaign,' says Sam Williams, president of the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce. Atlanta's new 'branding message' will be rolled out next year. In Canada, a consortium of advertising and marketing executives recently completed the rebranding of Toronto. The results include a pixelated 'T' mosaic logo for the city and a \$4.5m (£1.9m) campaign using the slogan 'Toronto, you belong here'. Meanwhile, in Glasgow, a £2.25m marketing campaign has been launched to rebrand the city as a cool, cosmopolitan metropolis.

Wolff Olins has not restricted itself to country branding. Prior to the Liechtenstein account, it supervised the 2001 rebranding of Hull. In an approach which appears either remarkably consistent or worryingly generic, the consultancy identified five key values for the city, each of which

was transformed into a visual brand facet and then into an integrated brand identity mark for the city.

Concepts such as logo redesign are redolent of the lamentable era of the 90s when branding was big business for consultants and a waste of resources for the companies that invested in them. Cities and countries aren't like corporations. While their logos are alterable, their fundamental spirit,



Cities and countries aren't corporations. While their logos are alterable, their spirit and operations aren't

operations and constitution are not. Brands are built from the inside out, but when the inside proves too huge and multifarious to alter, the outside becomes the focus. Lipstick on the gorilla. Country and city branding emphasises superficial aspects and ignores the tangible, meaningful work that represents the true challenge of brand-building.

Just ask the people of Glasgow. Seventy per cent of the inhabitants of this newly



rebranded hip, cosmopolitan city live in council-owned homes, endure the highest murder rates in Europe and the lowest life expectancy in Britain. Several local experts have warned that this superficial approach to rebranding Glasgow may actually make the situation worse. Professor Vince Egan from Glasgow Caledonian University fears that the 'PR types' will encourage Glasgow 'to turn its back on, or at least marginalise, very real and continuing problems'.

So the bad news is that branding is back to its superficial best. As the trend in city and country branding inevitably increases, we are likely to see a return to the bad old days when redesigned logos and advertising campaigns masqueraded as brand strategy.

The good news for brand consulting companies is that a whole new client base of cash-rich, marketing-naïve clients now awaits you. Remember all that money you made from telecoms, financial services and newly privatised companies? The good times are back.



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30 seconds on... Liechtenstein

- Liechtenstein is just **10% the size of London**.
- It used to be known principally for its shadowy holding companies and dodgy financial deals, where the **wealthy took advantage of low taxes**. It was apparently a popular destination for South American drug money.

- In 2000 the Organisation for Economic Co-operation named the country as **the only money-laundering nation in Europe**. The principality has since passed a series of **tough financial laws** and cleaned up its act.
- To celebrate the launch of the new branding on the

- principality's national day, 15 August, the Liechtenstein royal family invited the entire **34,000 population** to a garden party in the grounds of its castle.
- The new logo will appear on **calendars, T-shirts and carrier bags**.