



City
Nation
Place

The Forum For Strategic Place Branding and Marketing

Place Branding Survey 2017



Place Brand
Observer.com

www.citynationplace.com

In collaboration with

Introduction

At the start of 2017, City Nation Place, in collaboration with The Place Brand Observer, reached out to the place brand community. We wanted to take the pulse of place branding and marketing around the globe, looking at priorities and prospects. Our aim: to get a better understanding of the key challenges facing today's place branders.

We spread the word about the survey via our websites and on social media and were delighted by the far-ranging response. The survey was designed to enable a comparison of responses from place brand practitioners, working for government or arms length government funded organisations, and place brand consultants/agencies.

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City Nation Place is the umbrella name for a series of live events designed to facilitate essential knowledge sharing and networking for the global place brand community. The portfolio includes City Nation Place Americas, City Nation Place Global and City Nation Place Asia Pacific. Each event also incorporates the prestigious annual City Nation Place awards.

City Nation Place's global and regional events provide access to case studies and specialist expertise for all those responsible for the place brand or place marketing strategy of nations, cities or regions; whether they are directly accountable for public diplomacy, talent attraction, tourism promotion, destination marketing, FDI promotion or economic development strategy.

The Place Brand Observer is an online resource for place professionals interested in the branding and reputation of cities, regions and destinations. The Place Brand Observer was launched in 2014 to encourage a different approach to place branding and to facilitate access to the latest research insights and expert knowledge. Today the site comprises a library of research and a collection of case studies, interviews and reflections on the latest trends, ideas and opportunities in place branding.

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Respondents

During the time that the survey was open (24th January – 3rd March 2017) we received 103 responses. From Argentina to Zimbabwe, Berlin to Boston and many places in between, responses represent the views of 44 different countries across the globe.

In terms of types of organisation, responses were relatively evenly split, with the highest percentage working for government or government funded organisations. Respondents who answered "other" included business funded and non-profit organisations with a place brand remit.

The chart below indicates how responses were broken down by continent.

What is your organisation?



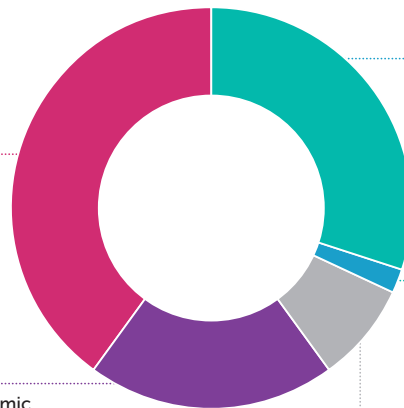
40%

A government department or government funded organisation



20%

An academic or academic based consultancy



30%



A consultancy, marketing, design, branding, media or other agency working with governments or government funded agencies as clients

2%

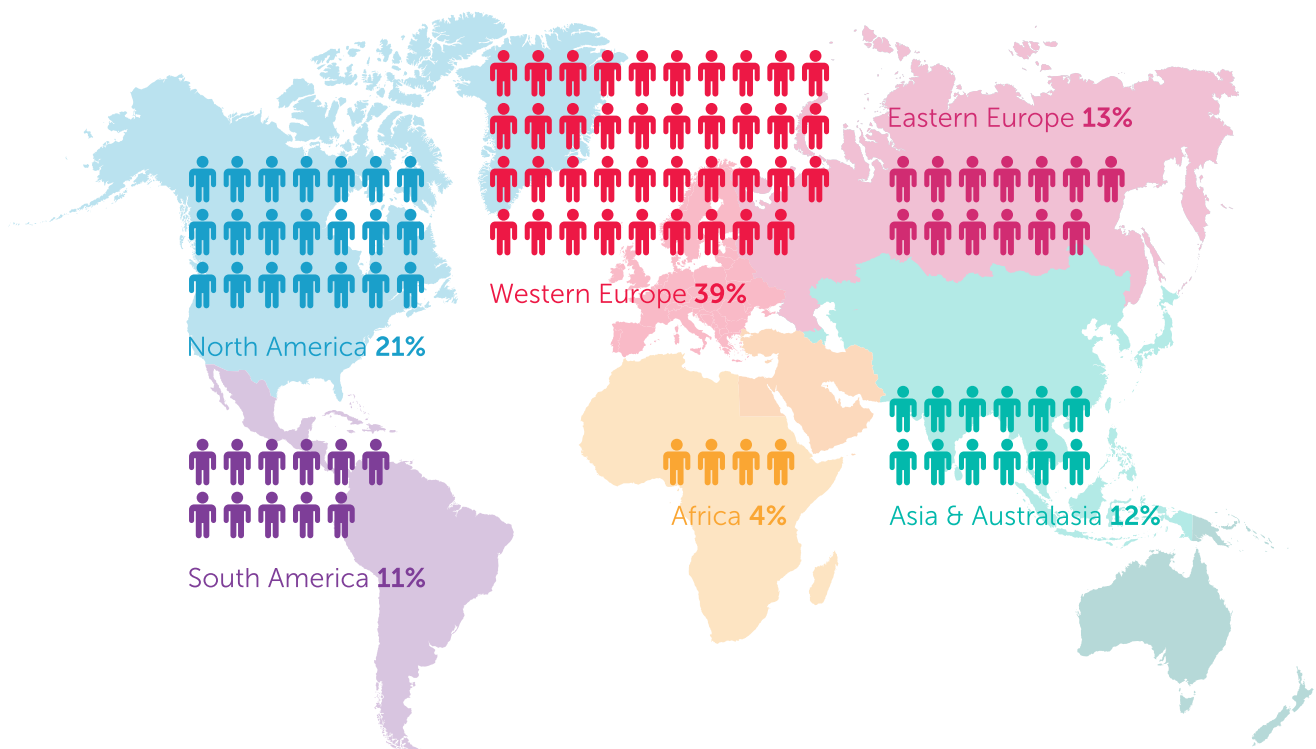


A media owner working with governments or government funded agencies as clients

8%



Other



Executive Summary

The Place Brand Survey 2017 has thrown up some interesting perspectives on place branders' key challenges, along with insights into what the future may hold for those working in the sector. It has provided an essential snapshot of the place branding community's priorities, which has enabled us to draw some useful conclusions.

Over all, there is great positivity and the outlook is optimistic. The broad benefits of place branding appear to be increasingly recognised. Investment is expected to increase for many aspects of place branding and consultants anticipate business will grow.

Particularly strong growth is anticipated in Asia. Growth in place branding is also forecast in many other parts of the world, including Europe, the US, Africa and South America.

Digital marketing is expected to attract the largest share of budgets moving forward, but this is certainly not to the exclusion of other place brand strategies and tactics. The findings also point to strong and growing interest in citizen engagement, market research and academic research. Significant references were also made to the increasing interest in the link between place making and place branding, influencer marketing and the need to focus on experiences.

On many points consultants and respondents from government/government funded organisations concur. For instance, they both see increasing interest in collaborative approaches to place brand strategy, both expect to focus more on city brands in the future and both agree that umbrella approaches to place branding are now widely being adopted.

However on some points their opinions do diverge. In particular it was notable that whilst consultants see changing political leadership as a key challenge they have to deal with, this was considered less significant to those working within government/government funded organisations.

Also, it was striking that whilst currently most interest in place branding is still focused around attracting tourism, both consultants and place brand practitioners working for governments or government funded organisations expect to focus increasingly on attracting investment and raising the profile of business hubs.

Another key insight is that whilst governments or government funded organisations anticipate they will be working more with place branding consultancies (an increase from 28% currently to 52% over the next 5 years), only 16% expect budgets for specific place brand consultancy will increase.

Additionally, whilst responses point to a forecast increase in digital marketing, only a relatively small number of the consultancies that responded to the survey are currently working in digital marketing.

These two points suggest that whilst there is a sense of optimism and growing interest in place branding, place brand consultants might consider diversifying their offering - to be able to cater to the range of strategies and tactics their clients are planning to deploy.

It would also be logical to conclude that, as just under half of respondents do not feel their team is prepared to meet any crisis that would have an impact on their place brand, this is an unmet need.

An over-arching conclusion, for both the organisations representing governments and private sector funded organisations with a place brand remit, is that there appears to be a general thirst for knowledge exchange, collaboration and development of best practice on a range of topics related to place branding and marketing. City Nation Place, with its mix of plenaries, break-outs and more intimate round table sessions, is designed specifically to facilitate this crucial knowledge sharing and networking.

Finally we conclude that as there seems to be a growing number of respondents representing business-funded organisations with a place brand remit, for the next Place Brand Survey, we should allow a triple comparison to get a sense of how challenges, priorities and budgets are continuing to evolve.

Claire Farrow
Editorial Contributor
City Nation Place

Objectives of Place Branders

In order to get a better understanding of the key challenges facing today's place branders we first had to uncover their objectives.

Interestingly, of those representing government or government funded organisations, over half of respondents are working on city brands, with a fifth indicating that they are focused on nation brands.

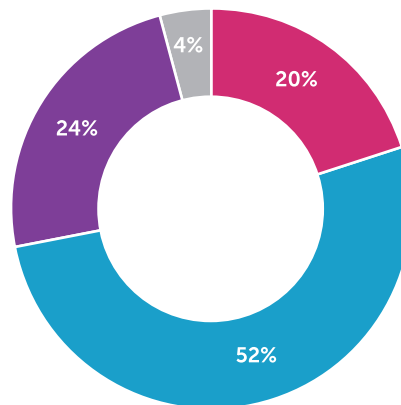
This was echoed by responses from consultancies and agencies, with slightly fewer indicating they are currently working on promoting city brands and slightly more promoting nation brands.

Our consultant respondents are also working on a broader range of place brands, including regional brands and business clusters.



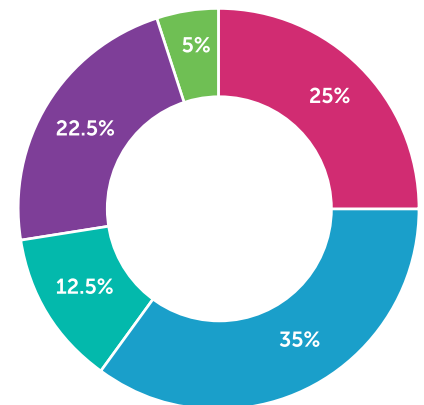
Place brand practitioners
working for government

What are you / is your organisation responsible for?



Place brand
consultants/agencies

Considering your current client profile in the place branding, tourism and FDI promotion sector, which of the following do you work with the most?



KEY

- Developing / managing / promoting a nation brand
- Developing / managing / promoting a city brand
- Developing / managing / promoting a regional brand
- Developing / managing / promoting a tourism destination brand
- Developing / managing / promoting a business "cluster"
- Other

Objectives of Place Branders

The majority of respondents from government/government funded organisations indicated that their primary objectives were promoting tourism, along with building and maintaining the competitive identity of the places they represented. Investment attraction stood out as another key priority.

Almost half of this group of respondents indicated that engaging with citizens is a key objective of their place branding, whilst around a third specified talent attraction as a core goal.

A significant 40% of respondents indicated one of their main objectives was organising an event that will contribute to their place brand. It seems to be a paradox of the digital age that the growth of virtual networking increases, rather than diminishes the demand for live events and experiences.

In terms of objectives, responses from consultants largely echoed the views of the government and government funded organisations. The majority are focused on promoting tourism, engaging citizens and building and managing competitive identity of places. This was followed by attracting investment, with talent attraction and cultural diplomacy lagging a little behind.

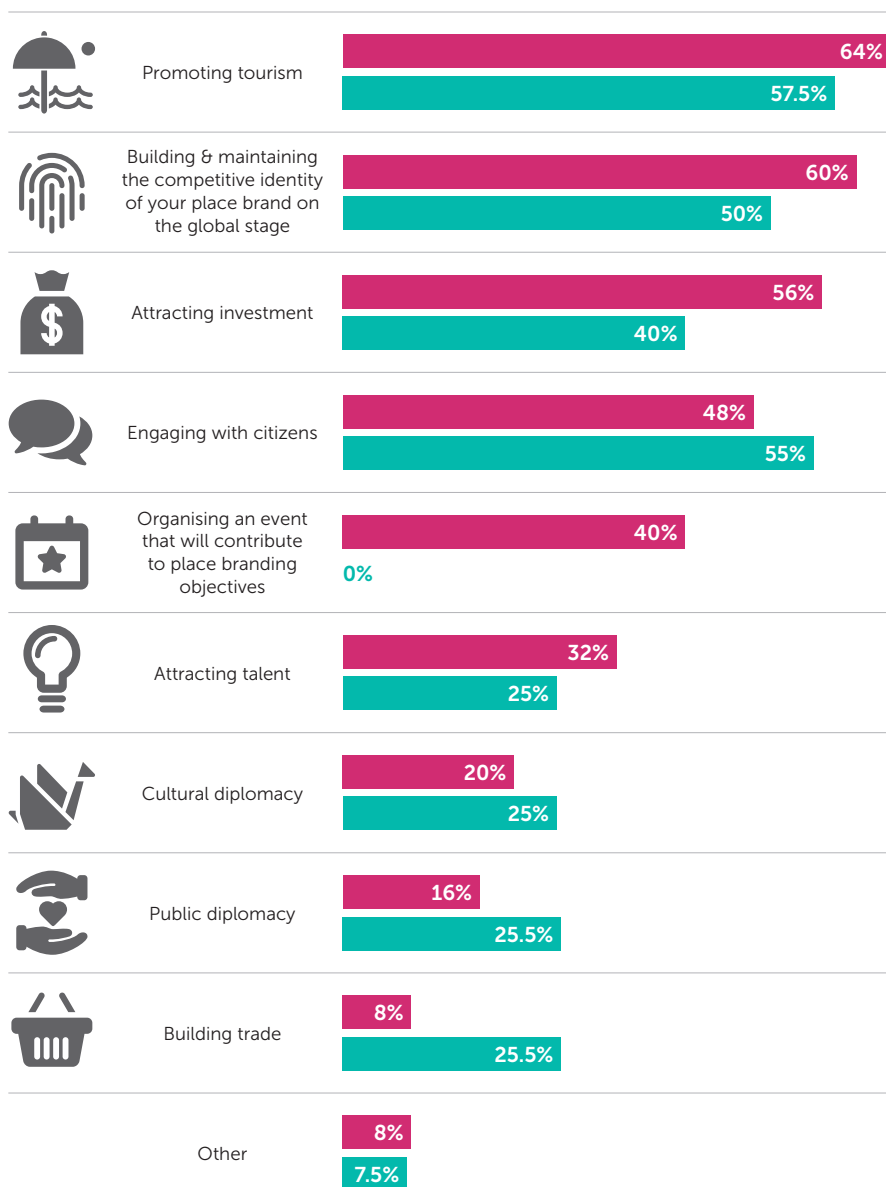
What are the key objectives of your role?



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Place brand
consultants/agencies



Umbrella brand vs. diverse strategies

Next we wanted to get a sense of the proportion of places that have developed umbrella branding strategies, which all departments and stakeholders have adopted to coordinate attraction of tourism, trade and talent.

Responses indicate that a slim majority of government/government funded organisations (56%) have adopted an umbrella strategy.

When we put the same question to consultants, they concurred; indicating 60% of clients have or are developing an umbrella strategy.

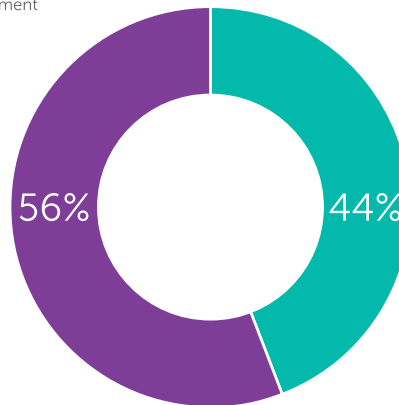
Which of these phrases would most accurately describe your place's approach to place branding?



Place brand practitioners
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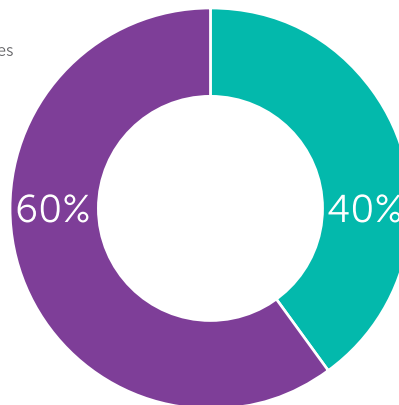
Our place has developed an umbrella branding strategy to promote and coordinate tourism, attract investment or meet other objectives. All departments and stakeholders adopt the umbrella branding to promote common messaging.



Different teams / departments pursue diverse branding strategies to promote and coordinate tourism, attract investment or meet other objectives. All departments and stakeholders adopt different approaches to communicate different offerings.



Place brand
consultants/agencies



Competitive vs. collaborative place branding

Collaboration with other cities, regions or nations also scored highly. 88% of respondents indicated such collaborations are quite or very important in terms of contributing to the success of a place brand strategy and its common objectives. A somewhat smaller percentage of consultants (72%) rated collaboration as either quite or very important.

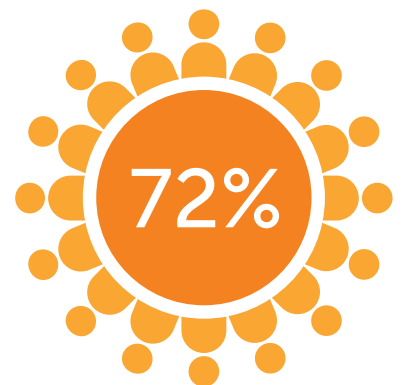
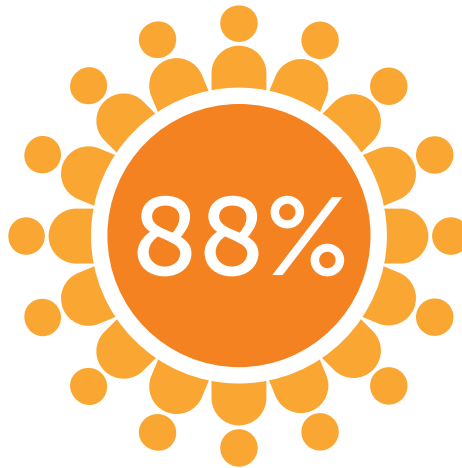
A term sometimes used as synonymous with "place brand" is "competitive identity". We talk about competing with other places for talent, tourism, investment etc. Increasingly however, we also hear that alliances, partnerships and collaboration with other cities, regions or nations - domestically or internationally - is an important factor in a successful place brand strategy. How important do you think such collaborations are in terms of contributing to the success of a place brand strategy and its common objectives?



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Place brand
consultants/agencies



Challenges

When it came to the challenges frequently mentioned by the place branding community, with respondents from government/government funded organisations, all the challenges we had identified, bar one, scored above 4 on a range of 0-5. 5 corresponds to "this is a key challenge, we are prioritising this." The only challenge that scored less than 4 was "Dealing with political cycles and changes of political leadership" which scored just 3.60.

Conversely, the challenge with the highest average rating was "Implementing the strategy with continued momentum."

Linking place making, place management and place branding also scored highly with 45% of respondents scoring the challenge 4 and 33% scoring the challenge 5.

Engaging citizens and businesses in the place branding process, as well as managing partnerships and private sector relationships also stood out as significant challenges.

Notably, when we asked agencies/consultancies to indicate how important the challenges are that they are facing, their responses did not necessarily correlate.

For instance, for the consultants and agencies, "Dealing with political cycles and changes of political leadership" scored as the second most important challenge for consultants, whilst "Setting measurable KPIs" scored as one of the least important challenges.

The respondents from government/government funded organisations perceive "Engaging with social media channels" to be a more significant challenge than the consultants and agencies.

On the other hand, as with government/government funded organisations, the challenge of engaging citizens and businesses in the place brand process was also recognised as a significant challenge by the consultants/agencies who responded to the survey.

Here is a list of challenges frequently mentioned by the place branding community ranked from 1 to 12, with 1 indicating the challenge with the highest priority

Implementing the strategy with continued momentum

Linking place making, place management and place branding strategies and activities

Engaging citizens and businesses in the development and implementation of place brand strategy

Managing partnerships and collaborating with private sector partners

Identifying and communicating your place's brand assets effectively to an international audience - effective storytelling

Setting measurable KPIs to benchmark the performance of strategy

Managing and collaborating with key government stakeholders

Creating successful collaboration between city, region and nation brand strategy

Engaging with social media channels effectively

Making the business case for place branding / securing funding

Balancing long-term objectives with a demand for shorter term gains

Dealing with political cycles and changes of political leadership

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Place brand
consultants/agencies



1

6

2

4

=3

1

=3

5

5

9

6

11

7

3

8

7

9

12

=10

8

=10

10

12

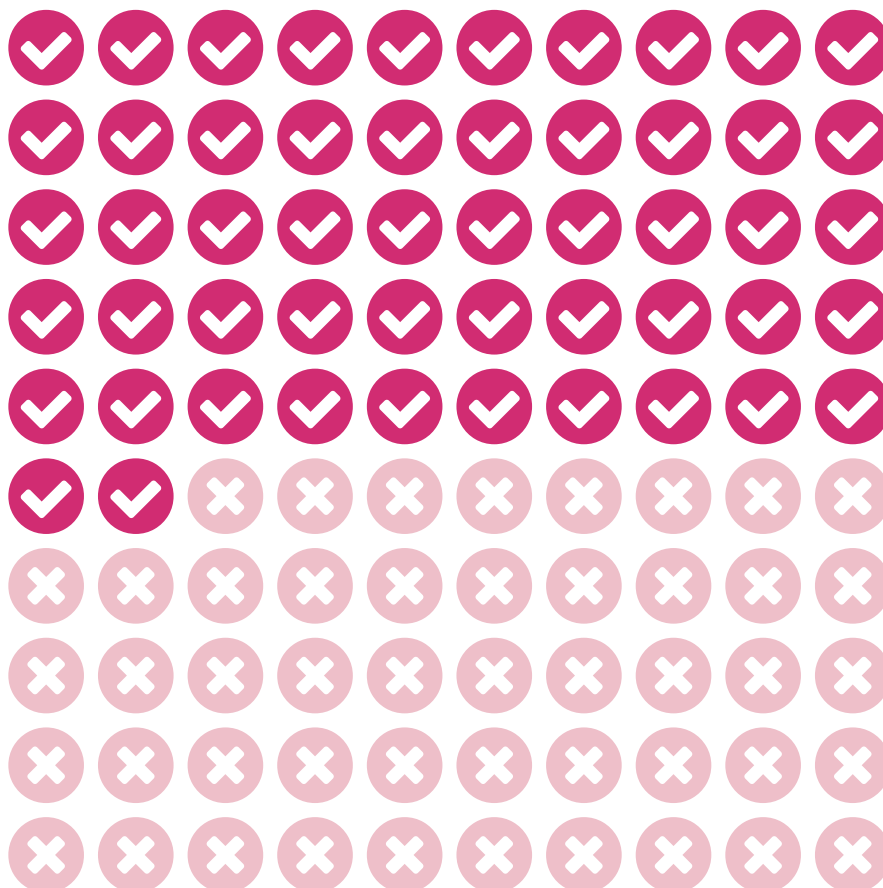
2

Challenges

Crisis management in place brand strategy is not surprisingly high on respondents' agendas, whatever the trigger – from an act of aggression or a natural disaster to negative media attention, fake news or even a Trump Tweet. So it was reassuring to learn that just over half (52%) of respondents feel confident that their team is prepared to meet any crisis that would have an impact on their place brand. However, this still leaves almost half of respondents feeling unprepared.

Are you confident that your team is prepared to meet any crisis that would have an impact upon your place brand and your ability to meet your objectives?

Yes 52%
No 48%



Translating challenges into strategies – developments in agency and consultancy infrastructure

Having gained an insight into the key challenges facing today's place branders, we wanted to understand how this translates to communications strategy and plans to work with consultancies or agencies, both now and over the next 5 years.

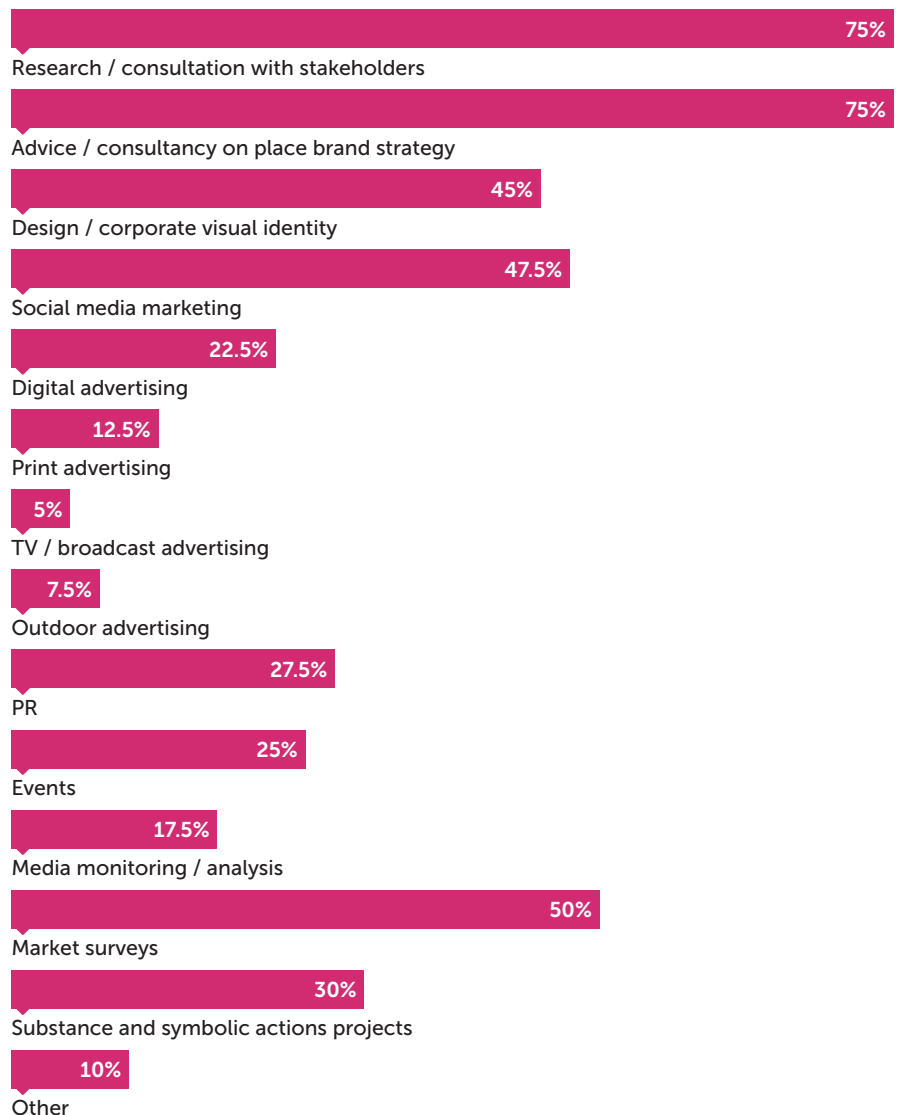
We first asked our agency and consultancy respondents what services they are currently providing.

Consultants and agencies indicated that currently 75% are providing research/consultation with stakeholders and advice/consultancy on place brand strategy. Just under half of our consultant respondents are helping clients with design/visual identity, market surveys and social media marketing. Only 22.5% are helping clients with their digital advertising.

When working with government or government funded organisations on place brand strategy, which areas of place branding and marketing support is your business involved in?



Place brand
consultants/agencies



The buy-side view

We then asked our "buy side" respondents – the government and government-funded organisations – which types of consultancies or agencies they are currently working with and who they expect to be working with in five years' time. The responses suggest that digital is king, with 48% indicating they are currently working with a digital media agency, rising to 56% expecting to be working with a digital media agency in the next 5 years.

Also notable were the positive indicators given by government/government funded organisations regarding working with research agencies and academic institutions.

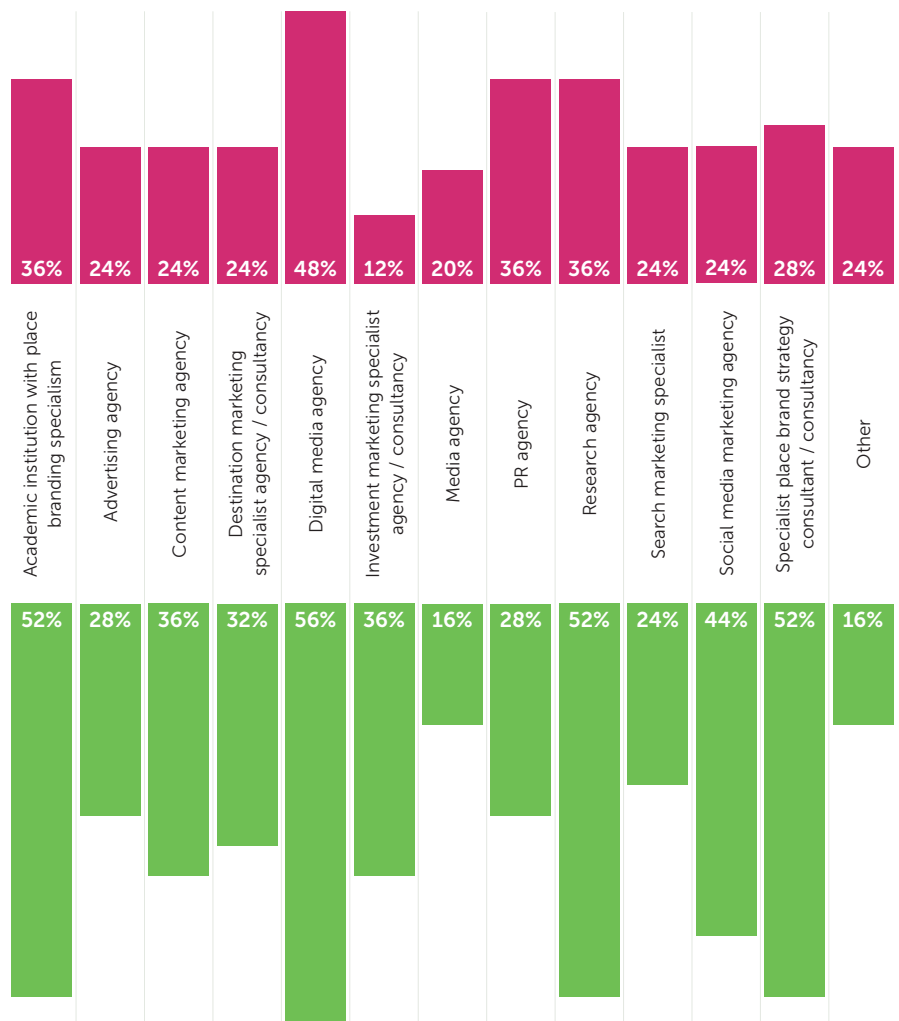
Looking to the future, it was striking that, over the next 5 years, respondents from government/government funded organisations expect the biggest increases in their investment to be with specialist place brand strategy consultants (24% increase), investment marketing specialist agencies (24% increase) and social media marketing agencies (20% increase).

Which of the following types of consultancies or agencies are you currently working with to assist your place branding strategy or elements of activity or communication?



Place brand practitioners
working for government

Now



Over the next 5 years

Investment in place branding: the buy-side view

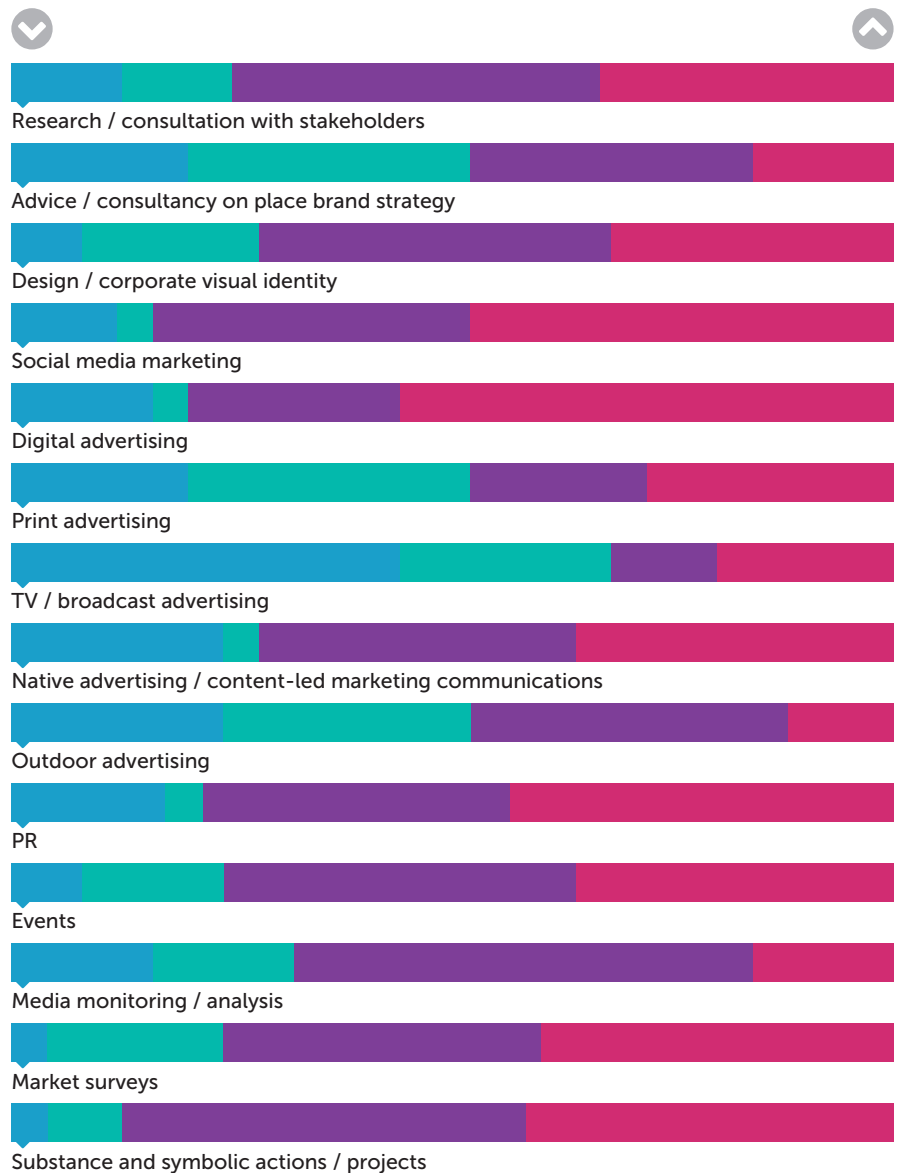
So how does this translate to budgets for implementing and communicating place brands? The biggest anticipated increases in budget are for digital advertising and social media marketing, which contrasts to the lower increases predicted for TV / broadcast and outdoor advertising.

We can see confidence in expected increases in expenditure on market surveys, substance and symbolic actions/ projects and PR. Increases are also expected in expenditure on events, research/consultancy with stakeholders, design/visual identity and native advertising/content-led marketing.

With regards to your budgets for implementing and communication your place brand, do you expect them to increase, decrease or stay the same for the following?

KEY

- N/A or no budget
- Decrease budget
- Budget will stay the same
- Increase budget

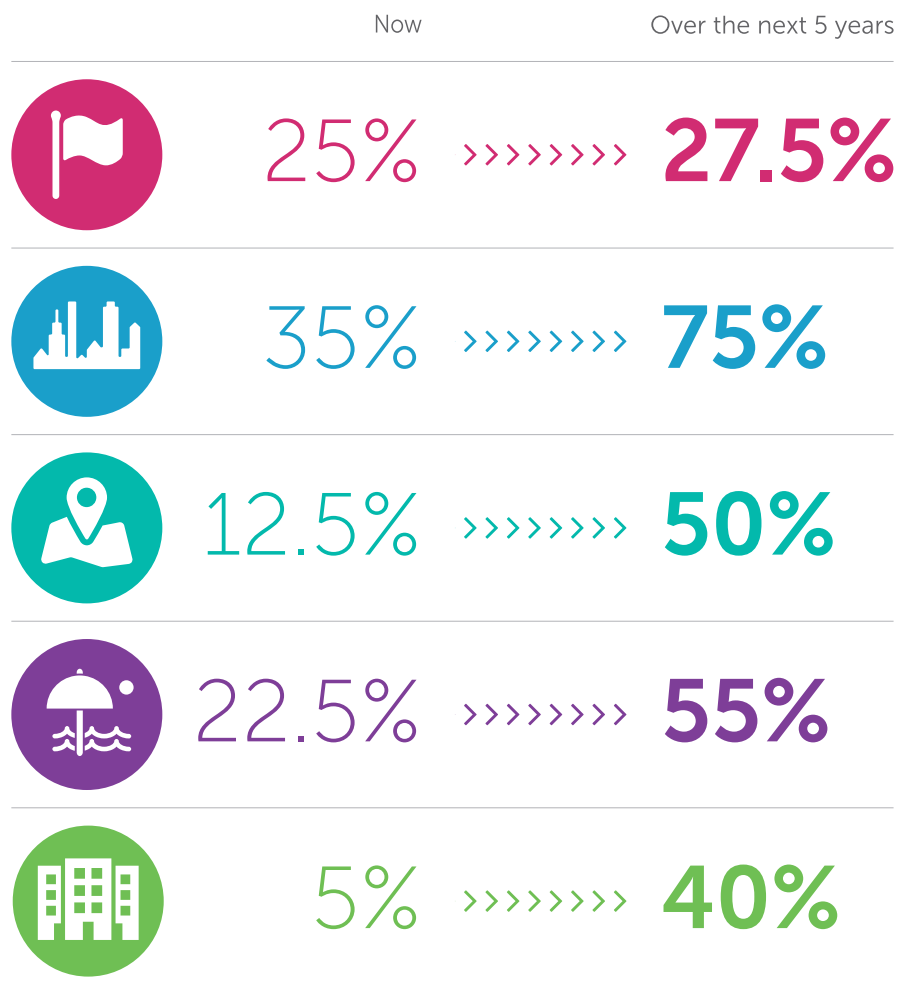


Investment in place branding: the supplier view

Consultant and agency respondents to the Place Branding Survey reflect the confidence of their government and government funded clients. 80% of consultants expect revenues from the place branding sector to increase.

Over the next five years, consultants and agencies expect most work to come from cities and regions. Notably a jump is expected in work from business clusters. Whilst only 5% of consultants indicated that promoting business clusters is currently part of their profile, 40% expect to be working on promoting business clusters over the next five years.

Looking ahead over the next five years, do you expect to work more with cities, regions, nations, tourism destinations or business clusters?



KEY

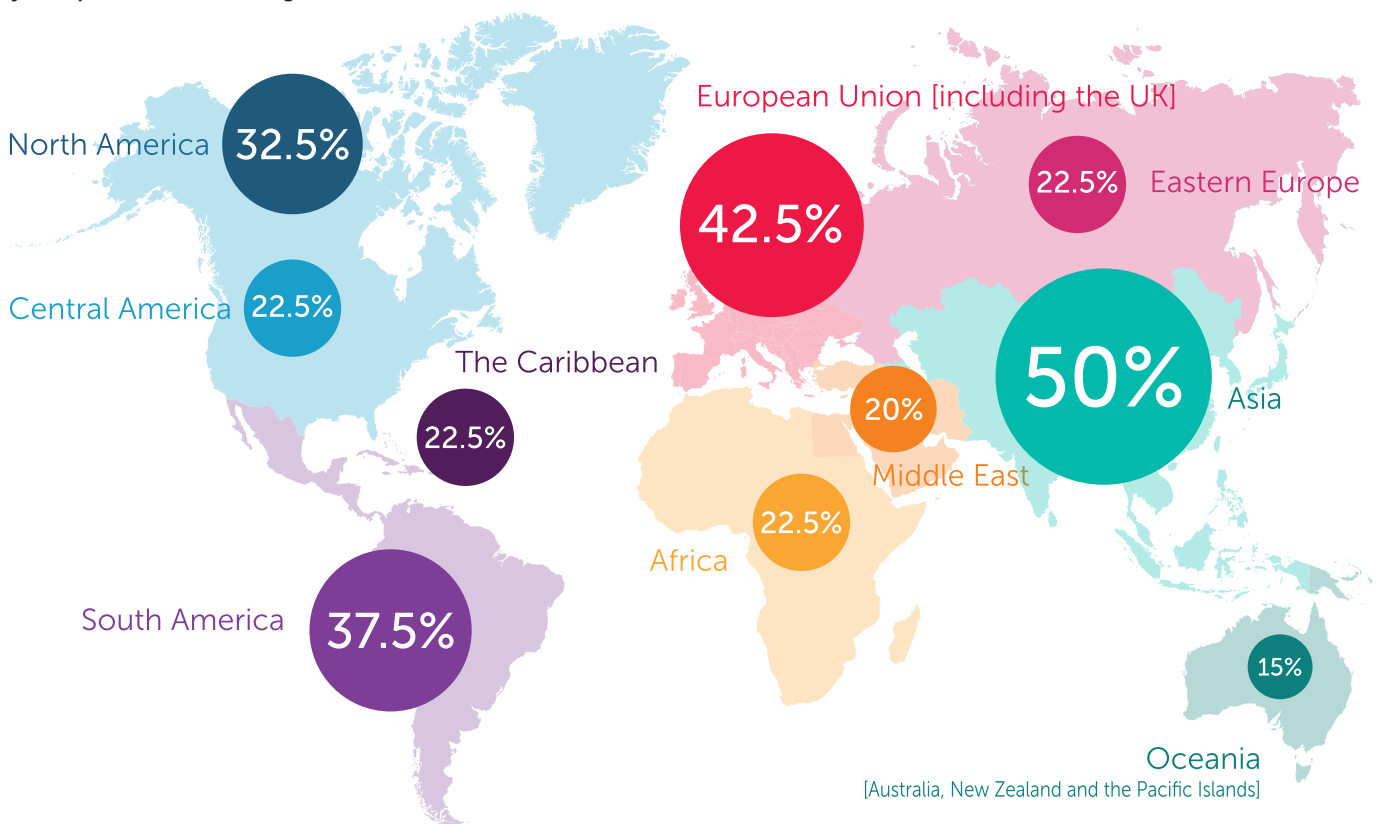
- Developing / managing / promoting a nation brand
- Developing / managing / promoting a city brand
- Developing / managing / promoting a regional brand
- Developing / managing / promoting a tourism destination brand
- Developing / managing / promoting a business "cluster"

Investment in place branding: the supplier view

Taking a global perspective to forecasting the future of place branding, our consultant and agency respondents predict the greatest growth in place branding to be in Asia, with 50% of our respondents expecting to see their own business benefit from more business in that region.

Europe is the second most promising region, with 42.5% of our supply side respondents expecting business growth in that region, closely followed by South America at 37.5% and North America at 32.5%.

In which of the following regions do you expect to see business growth?



What's next?

We wanted to get a sense of the strategies, tactics and ideas that are exciting and inspiring place branders. Respondents were very forthcoming with their suggestions. Some of the most popular suggestions included; social media, new kinds of community and citizen engagement, experiential and influencer marketing.



Most interesting place brand stories

Finally we wondered which place brands our community of place branders would like to hear more about. Responses again were wide-ranging. Places that were mentioned repeatedly include; Singapore, Dubai, Peru and Lisbon.

