

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru / National Assembly for Wales
Pwyllgor Diwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chyfathrebu / Culture, Welsh Language
and Communications Committee
Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer y Pwyllgor / Priorities for the Committee
CWLC(5) PFC06: Ymateb gan Richard Houdmont / Evidence from Richard
Houdmont

I believe the committee should investigate “The Wales Brand”. I appreciate that this is an area of interest to other committees in the Assembly but given that your particular interests include culture; the arts; historic environment; Welsh language; communications; broadcasting and the media, I feel that your committee is best-placed to use “Brand” as an opportunity to discover how we present ourselves not only to the outside world and indeed how we talk to ourselves.

Branding is a much misunderstood topic and place branding is even more complicated. It’s important to say at the outset that a brand is not simply a logo. The Chartered Institute of Marketing’s resource, Marketing Expert, has several definitions of ‘brand’ including ‘The intangible sum of a product’s attributes: its name, packaging, and price, its history, its reputation, and the way it’s advertised’ David Ogilvy. Another less formal definition of brand is “what people say about you when you’re not in the room”. Of course what’s worse is if people don’t have any opinion of you at all, whether you’re in the room or not.

One can argue that culture, “the arts”, historic environment and the Welsh language are an integral part of the Wales ‘product’. How we communicate that ‘product’ to ourselves and others is dependent upon communications, broadcasting and the media. If ‘culture’ is a set of ideas, customs and social behaviour then how can that culture be maintained if the main channels of communication, in particular print news, come from England?

Of course social media is increasingly dominant, although it is still not clear exactly how influential it is. Nevertheless is the growth of social media a threat to Welsh culture and if so, what are we going to do about it? Do businesses see social media as a threat to their brand, and if not, why should Wales? Indeed is it an opportunity? If so, how?

Carwyn Jones has suggested there could a new federal arrangement of the UK nations in the wake of the vote to leave the European Union. The first minister said he wanted to avoid Wales being seen as ‘some sort of annexe to England’. The President of the National Library of Wales recently responded to the First Minister’s statement by saying “Creating a federal state is not only a matter of political routine. All four nations need to

develop and highlight their identity. Arguably, Northern Ireland and Scotland have done this to a far greater extent than Wales. If her distinctiveness is not clear, Wales will be no more than an appendix of England and we will return to the stereotypical description "for Wales see England."

Is 'identity' the same as 'brand' in this context?

Is there a role for the Welsh Government? Has the Welsh Government adequately addressed this issue? What are the implications of the WFG Act? Is it important that we bequeath a healthy brand to future generations and if so, why and how? Who owns (or is responsible for) the Wales brand?

I appreciate that this is normally thought of as a matter for the Economy committee, with an emphasis on tourism and inward investment. However I believe that the Wales brand is a legitimate issue for your committee on the basis that we need to look carefully at internal communication as much as external communication. Businesses fail to deliver 'the brand promise' when their employees don't know (or care) what it is. Do the people of Wales have a shared understanding of 'what is Wales'? If not, why not, and what could/should WG do about it?