The ideology of home ownership has been a central component in shaping policies and practices within Australian society often embodied in the 'Australian dream' in which everyone has the right to purchase their own plot of paradise. Housing tenure has been seen as critical to shaping a person's life chances. Lack of stable housing has been associated with poor health and educational outcomes resulting in lower work participation rates. Originally touted as a solution to 'housing affordability' as far back as the 1950's in Australia, 'strata title' housing has increasingly become a visible form of housing ownership. A growing body of literature has emerged that concentrates on various aspects of the strata mechanism. The sale of strata titled property is often associated with marketing. However in this research, I contend that the sale of properties within large strata schemes, have more to do with place branding than the marketing of individual property, leading to poor governance outcomes for the individual strata schemes. To understand this relationship better, a discussion of both the strata mechanism and branding literature is required, prior to presenting the research results.

The strata mechanism

The strata mechanism refers to the way in which real property is divided up to create individual title to specific parcels of real estate property while maintaining contractually binding ties to other purchasers within a given scheme. Blandy (2010) has described the strata mechanism as creating enforceable legal rights and duties between owners at the point of sale, and in accordance with the developer's instructions. Three major concepts within owner corporation have been identified as collective ownership of common property; creation of rules that govern behaviour within the complex and the creation of a governing body to control administration of the common property. Administrative controls include the ability to raise levies from the owners to undertake maintenance and cover insurance costs. Variations in the way in which the strata mechanism is applied, results in specific marketable products such as master planned estates (MPE's), apartment dwellings, lifestyle villages or retirement villages. A growing number of these complexes and precincts rely on a combination of residential and commercial real property.

The approach taken acknowledges the importance of socio-cultural factors impacting on the growth of this type of real estate product. It also acknowledges that home has traditionally been a site for the construction of identity and meaning (Leonard, Perkins & Thorns 2004; Dupuis & Thorns 1998), in this case shared meaning of the way in which Australians increasingly live. Feeding into these concepts, home as a physical asset has changed in meaning as the ability to access home equity to purchase other lifestyle products has increased. Identities are no longer constructed around what we own, but rather what we can borrow against what we own to fund lifestyle choices. One of the lifestyle choices that are made is where we live. I stress at this point that tenure choice is often a bounded choice. The choice is made within the confines of what we can afford, what we are familiar with, what our perceived needs are, and what we are 'sold'.

Branding place

Creating a strata scheme allows the developer to increase the number of saleable lots in relation to land size. Developers on-sell their product to cover construction costs, and realise profit for new projects. In order to differentiate product between the different apartment building and MPE's on offer, developers may seek to brand their products. Kavaratzis (2009) asserts that place branding is concerned with visual elements such as logo creation, new slogans and design of advertising around these visual elements. It usually refers to branding at nation, country, regional and city levels, though Gertner (2011) found examples of street festival and the branding of economic blocs occurred. Gertner's (2011) review of literature on place branding and place marketing highlights interesting points around the breadth of literature in this area, questioning the conceptual foundations of academic literature. However he does so without clear differentiations between the role of marketing and branding relative to each other. Ind and Bejerke (2007) consider that marketing differs from branding in that marketing is the sale of a specific product as it is represented for sale to a consumer group.

At surface value then, the sale of strata titled properties to consumers falls within the realm of marketing. However a deeper understanding indicates that the sale of strata titled properties are

subject to elements of both place branding and place marketing. This is because place branding has been linked to governance outcomes (Ashworth 2005; Kavaratzis & Hatch 2013) on the one hand, and cities or city spaces on the other (Ashworth & Kavaratzis 2009; Kavaratzis & Hatch 2013; Kavaratzis 2009). While the focus of marketing campaigns is often on sale of individual apartments as a definable product, the product may be inextricably linked to place brand. This occurs when whole precincts are labelled, developed, strata titled and sold with accompanying slogans and logos. Melbourne's Dockland and Victoria Harbour precinct is a case in point, though there are other earlier examples. Blakely and Snyder (1999, p. 27) for example refer to small cities such as Leisure World (22,000 lots) in Laguna Hills as examples of large strata titled, master planned estates. Each of these cities and precincts comes with its own slogan, logo and marketing. Many master planned estates (MPE's) function as small towns providing local goods and services as well as housing. Bajrachari & Khan (2010) for example note the focus of their MPE study will include up to 5000 homes within the estate and contain educational, leisure and shopping precincts.

Thus it is difficult to decouple the sale and marketing of individual properties within each from place branding. Place branding is considered to be in its infancy (Pike et al. 2010) with much of the place branding material aimed at nation, or regional branding (Singleton & McKenzie 2008). The focus has been on tourism (as leisure) and place attachment (Gross, Brien & Brown 2008). Place attachment is an affective bond between people and specific places (Hidalgo & Hernandez 2001). Often this attachment is linked to leisure activities (Dimanche & Havitz 1994) which is why it has become increasingly important for the tourism industry. Place attachment is constructed from place identity or symbolic attachment to place; and place dependence or function attachment to place (Backlund & Williams 2003; Gross, Brien & Brown 2008). Brands position a product, entity or place in a market (Kerr, 2006; Kerr & Balaksishnan 2012). Kavaratzis (2009; Ashworth & Kvaratzis 2009) assert that place branding has more to do with corporate brand strategy than sale and marketing of specific products.Though a sale and marketing strategy may also be used by developers for their constructed place.

Place branding then, may be national, regional or localised branding of place to attract people to place. It focuses on the experience of place, evoking emotional action and reaction. Singleton and McKenzie (2008) provide an excellent description of place branding of regional towns of the Pilbara, an outback area of Australia. Fincher (2007; Fincher & Gooder 2007) note that apartment complexes often contain leisure and shopping facilities. Shopping has been linked to a leisure pursuit within developed economies. Involvement in activities lead to attachment to settings or place (Kyle et al. 2004). The goods and services consumed (including food and beverage) are linked to place identity (DiAmico 2004). How consumers relate to product and place identity is an emotional response (Ponsonby-McCabe & Boyle 2006; Askegaard & Kjeldgaard 2007). Goodman and Douglas (2010) assert that developers tap into the emotion of place in order to sell strata titled properties particularly in MPE settings. Within the Australian context, apartment buildings linked by strata title mechanisms to form precincts are branded as place – for example Melbourne's Dockland precinct lies on this mechanism and is a marketable, branded place to visit for shopping, eating, leisure activities, events and accommodation. Place and attachment to place have been strongly linked in sociological (Ravetze 1995; Altman 1975; Goffman 1963, 1971; Rose 1999) and marketing terms (Patterson et al. 2003; Askegaard & Kjeldgaard 2007). Ryan and Mzerski's (2010) study of New Norcia link place attachment and marketing to place and product identity and discuss the spiritual-ness often associated with attachment. Further, Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013) note that place branding is linked to individual and place identity. Massey's (1995; Massey & Jess 1995) consider that place identity is not static and is influenced by external forces. Place branding and place marketing both constitute external forces. The products, including residential and commercial real property tell us how we view self and our aspirations. Certainly authors such as Rose (1995; Easthope 2004; Tuan 1980) connect our views of self and self-identity through home with ontological security. Real estate choice, particularly the strata sector, is then a consumable, branded product that is linked to the self identify, tapping into an emotional response that is linked to place, self -identity and aspirational identity.

I draw now on studies undertaken in recent years to explain the research gap between the marketing of strata property and place branding. Strata properties as has been outlined, are formed in the development stage, owners are given property rights and one of which is the compulsory belonging to a governing structure which operates the communal property. However Blandy and Lister (2006) undertook a pilot study of a newly built gated community comprising converted stand alone housing and apartment dwellings in England's Sheffield area and found that only two residents were aware of the legal structure of the community they had bought into prior to purchase. Over half the interviewees were confused between the governing resident committee and the professional management company employed by the governing committee. Owners were unclear about their role within the governing structure, their officers and their roles. Some were unaware of governing rules or did not know they had to pay levies in addition to their council rate obligations and mortgage payments. In particular Maxwell (2003) indicates that strangers are often bought together within these communities in a way that is not representative of wider society and without understanding the contractual obligations and ramifications that bind these groups of strangers together. Thus the sales and marking material did not effectively communicate the governing structure of the complex to the purchasers.

This gap in understanding may be understandable given the way in which new off-the-plan developments are marketed. Goodman and Douglas (2010) undertook a content analysis of websites promoting MPE's in Melbourne Australia. They noted that websites are often the first point of contact for prospective purchasers. This is in line with Kavaratzis (2012) who found the on-line world offered considerable opportunity for place branding. Goodman and Douglas's (2010) aim was to understand how much information about the governing structures was provided to prospective purchasers by the developer. In other words, they looked for a specific gap in marketing material. They found that notions of close knit community are often melded with luxurious resort lifestyles and promoted through personal recommendations of those who have recently purchased within complex. Their study found that of the ten 'off the plan' developer sale sites, only two developers referred to a governing body. In one instance the developer referred to the governing body as a

glorified social club that residents could join if they wanted to, thus advertising a gregarious and close knit group of owners. Sense of community was depicted through access to sporting and leisure activities including coffee clubs. The mandatory nature of belonging to a governing body and subject to its rules were mentioned on only web site. The research that I have summarised here is important because it points to why Blandy and Lister (2006) found that so few residents were aware of the governing board, community assets that need to be maintained and the rules that could be imposed on owners within the complex.

Failure to understand the complexity of the new governing regime may impact on the asset value of the estate and hence individually owned property. The maintenance of asset value was seen as a drawcard in Blandy and Lister's (2006) research despite owners failing to understand the nature of the governing body and compulsory nature of belonging. Low (2006) found similarly in her study of gated communities. Using pooled data, Langbein and Spotswood-Bright (2004) found that high levy fees within complexes depressed asset value in comparison to similar properties with lower fees. However the involvement of professional management somewhat mitigated the effect of higher levies on asset value. The question remains how applicable this research is in an environment where owners are not aware of the governing body, nature of belonging, requirement to pay levies or existence of professional management prior to purchase. Maintaining property values and security were significantly more important to most purchasers than ideas of community or governance. It was noted that contact did not necessarily develop into friendship within the closer physical confines of a mixed MPE. Similarly, Walters and Rosenblatt (2008) found in their Brisbane study that while a nostalgic sense of community was appealing to many purchasers, few actively engaged in participative practices. Of greater importance however is the way these weak neighbourhood ties translate to the idea of participative management, and ideas of community. Yet Kavaratzis (2012) notes that it is often this sense of established community of stakeholders that branding of cities and locales seeks to tap.

To develop this theme further I consider the fact that the number of new dwellings that come onto the market in each year while significant, is outnumbered by the sale in previously occupied

housing. That is, only a portion of prospective housing consumers purchase directly from the developer. Moreover, developers of smaller complexes are more likely to mediate sales through real estate representatives or realtors rather than self-advertising or place marketing. The real estate industry then, along with the developer, becomes a key influence in creating notions of how Australians view living within a strata complex whether MPE, gated community or apartment complex. This research probes the link between place branding and place marketing of strata properties for sale through engaging with print media and websites.

Method

Within emergent fields of study academics seeking to consolidate and refocus research are known to attempt meta-analysis of published literature. This was indeed the case with Gertner's (2011) paper on place branding, though in the 1990's Hodge (1996) undertook a similar meta-analysis in relation to the emergent field of outsourcing. A similar attempt was conducted by Altmann (2007) on in-sourcing. What these studies have in common are the reliance on published academic literature. They represent significant moves to shape their respective fields of study. However as Gertner (2011) asserts, meta-analysis literature may include self-case studies and reviews of printed and on-line sources. For example Boyne & Hall (2004) used analysis of web images, Kokosalakis et al. (2010) promotional material and Santos (2004) newspaper articles all to highlight place brand issues. Meta-analysis of non-academic literature likewise represents a valuable tool in shaping the views of academics and fields of study also. Not only has it been used successfully in place branding, but in material studies and identity (Leonard, Perkins & Thorns 2004). As Mills (1959) considers, media is a powerful shaping tool. It is therefore relevant to both the study of place branding, identity, material studies and the home and thus strata title mechanism as it relates to home.

For stage 1 of this study, the data was collected for the period 1 April and 30 April 2008, using a combination of Google and Factiva. It is anticipated new stages of this study will be undertaken at a five year intervals and thus be able to track the relationship between brand and marketing of strata properties. Factiva is an electronic data base that collects all published news

stories on a worldwide basis. The search was limited to the Australian context. Google was used to locate additional information about industry and government websites that may appeal or prove beneficial to the consumer seeking additional information on strata living. Searches were conducted on the following phrases: multi-owned housing; owner corporation; body corporate; strata title; developer; apartment; master planned estate; MPE; gated community; lifestyle village; retirement village; community association; strata manager; strata industry; and building manager. Factiva provided almost five thousand articles. From here the search was modified. Articles that used the word 'developer' in conjunction with other search terms were retained. Duplicate stories were removed. Duplicates appear when an article from a major newspaper is syndicated to smaller regional papers. Further exclusions where relevant were made. For example the word 'apartment' bought up a number of articles that were relevant to various crime scenes. Other articles referenced a drop in sales or interest rate only. Rental stories were included only where they were able to shed light on the governance structure associated with strata title. A decision was made to exclude al articles under 200 words that contained the search list terms in conjunction with the word 'price'. These were mainly real estate sales to small to contain any reasonable explanation of the governance structure. At the end of this exercise 397 articles remained or consideration. To this I added four blog sites, 5 industry sites and 11 government web sites from the Google search. NVivo software was employed to separate out key themes within each article. The articles considered in this section therefore represent a range of views across Australia and are not limited to investigative journalism. Indeed articles deemed to be of journalistic merit were few and far between, and would not present the full range of views available prospective purchasers.

Results

In line with Leonard, Perkins and Thorns (2004), a thematic approach to the data was developed. Acknowledging that logo and slogan presence is central to the notion of place branding, these were also noted and used to differentiate between marketing of product and branding of place. The majority of articles related to real estate sales and marketing. These contained information on both new and pre owned apartments for sale and new developments. This is important since a significant

proportion of property sales are from established real estate. Details of the emergent themes are shown in table 1.

INSERT Table 1 - Thematic breakdown of media and websites

Discussion and Policy Implications

Discussion of governance and stakeholder link to be added.

The study found that there are similarities and differences to Blandy and Listers (2006) and Goodman and Douglas's (2010) work. Blandy and Lister's (2010) study identified that asset values, security, leisure facilities and the notion of community were important to prospective purchasers. It found that in the Australian context, similar properties are sold on the notion of luxurious lifestyles and central location. Luxurious lifestyles include a significant number of leisure facilities, particularly in the over 50's lifestyle villages, but may skimp on other features such as car parking space. Leisure and place identify have been identified as an important part of branding for locales.

Real estate sales of pre-owned property in smaller complexes relied heavily on marketing of individual properties as a product. Real estate sales of pre-owned property in larger complexes that had been branded, such as Melbourne's dockland and Sydney's Circular Key area relied on a combination of product marketing and place branding. Brand slogans were used verbatim and in modified forms, though precinct logos were missing. Strata dwellings that are advertised as affordable or entry level are more likely to be older housing stock requiring significant upgrade. Affordability is spoken about in terms of purchase price only, rather than ongoing ownership costs including maintenance, upgrade and levy costs of the communally held property which may be significantly higher than for freehold property. Retaining asset value is not a key selling point for this type of property, though Low (2006) found that retaining asset value was a key reason or purchasing into gated communities (a type of MPE).

Marketing of property to appeal to different sections of the community is seen as a significant trend, feeding into notions of self segregation identified by Low (2003). Yet it is this segregation that of

people that is often sought, Medway and Warnaby (2008) for example discuss place marketing and place demarketing as strategies for people and place management. Koschnick (1995) asserts that demarketing is used to discourage customers that exceed demand. However it may also be used to reinforce exclusivity of custom, or to encourage specific market segments.

Place and place branding occurs as a collective exercise that defines the meaning of place for collective stakeholders (Kavaratzis 2012). Contrary to Braun et al's (2010) view, Kavaratzis (2012) reports that existing residents are not usually consulted about their place brand. Place brand is developed as a form of public management activity that is decided on by interest groups holding power. Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013, p. 74) assert that 'place brand is devised from intrinsic features and history of place'. Kavaratzis (2004) relates aspects of brand to storytelling that arise from planning, design and infrastructure developments. Rainisto (2003) in particular is concerned with the inter-relatedness of these themes of place development and branding. The brand 'mirrors' place (Kavaratzis & Hatch 2013). However the brand is also used to reflect back and attract market segments to place. This is the case with newly devised cities and precincts that rely heavily on branding to attract residents and businesses to the strata titled properties. Brand under these circumstances is devised by the pubic private partnerships put in place to re-develop key segments of cityscape, often abandoned or semi abandoned inner city industrial zones. This study found that sales of properties within new developments were most often linked to place branding and use of logos. This was very much evident within Melbourne's Dockland precinct. Because sales are largely off-the-plan, place brand is able to take on greater significance than in pre-owned, physically built properties.

Further, any investigation of governance by prospective purchasers of off-the-plan properties within branded precincts, are referred back to either the corporate governance of the development company, or governance of the precinct of the whole. That is governance is talked about in terms of the public-private partnerships set up between developers, construction companies and local or state government authorities, not the governing structure of the strata corporation that individual

properties are aligned to. This fits with Kavaratzis (2009; 2013) comments that place branding is largely non-consultative, sidelining some stakeholders.

The governing structure of the organisation is missing from sale marketing. It is also missing from place branding. Place branding and marketing both work to obscure the governing structure of strata titled mechanism for prospective owners. Prospective owners instead are presented with images and slogans that represent a wider, manufactured experience of home. This mirrors Goodman and Douglas's (2010) findings for off-the-plan developer sale sites, and extends them to include the resale of existing strata property. From the lack of information supplied to new owners about the governing structure of the organisation, it is possible to see purchasers as gullible beings rather than discerning purchasers of a known product. It provides a background understanding as to how both branding and marketing of housing products can manipulate feelings of home ownership and self identity while at the same time threatening issues of identity. This research also extends Leonard, Perkins and Thorns (2004) work on the materiality of home to include notions of the home itself. While it is possible to gain access to information about the governing structure from internet sources, these sources rely on an informed public familiar with key search terms. I question how it is possible for the uninformed prospective purchaser to become familiar with these terms when they are rarely mentioned in the print media or in sale advertisements.

A number of policy implications are forthcoming from this context analysis. Firstly, government websites and blogs which contain the most useful information for prospective purchasers are difficult to find and least accessible relying on prior knowledge of terminology and the strata mechanism. Details of the relevant web sites for each state should be located where prospective purchasers can easily locate them close to the sale advertisements for strata property. Secondly, purchasers would benefit from mandatory information on annual levies payable to the strata corporation being included in all real estate sales for strata property. Thirdly, there are implications for the wider community that relate to the self selection and segregation of specific groups based on age and cultural background. Fourthly, the impartiality of the planning processes were questioned with state and local authorities implicated in wrongdoing. State and local authorities

have a vested interest in the walkable city and their failure to protect the consumer rights of owners presents a conflict of interest where the promotion of the walkable city is at stake. Finally, difficulties resultant from the way developers brand various schemes could be addressed through education aimed at prospective purchasers.

Conclusion

This research has presented content analysis of the strata environment as presented by Australian media, blogs and government and industry web sites. Though a process of elimination, relevant websites and media articles were thematically sorted according to the information they contained. The media generally depicted multi-owned housing as being convenient, luxurious and contemporary, in some cases maintenance free through both marketing and branding exercises. Levies, by-laws and insurance issues appeared rarely, and were primarily limited to websites, rather than the media. The capacity of owners to oversee their contractual obligations, whether with strata managers or with owners in terms of application of by-laws and levies is an important part of building capacity that requires a sound knowledge and skills based approach. However this was not evidenced within the media articles or websites within this phase of the study. These findings differ from Blandy and Lister's (2006) work which found that security and surveillance were important considerations for prospective purchasers.

The overwhelming media context presents complexes set up through a strata mechanism as luxurious, convenient, maintenance free and targeted to specific age and cultural groups rather than as a community which one joins through the contract mechanism at purchase. There is little discussion of the costs involved in strata living with most real estate advertisements refusing to mention these costs. This research fills the gap left between two key studies into how purchasers become aware of their obligations within the strata environment for the period April 2008. A comparison with the present date would assist researchers to understand how change in media reporting has changed during the past five years.

% of included articles	Media & website breakdown	Major themes	Minor themes	Missing commentary	Place Branding/ Marketing
43	Real Estate Sales	*Position, convenience, luxury, views*	*Affordable, target groups*	*Governing body or structure, levies, security, community*	*Marketing*
28	Non classified media stories	*developer activity, investment opportunities, affordability*	*Social housing*	*Governing body or structure, levies, services maintenance, security, community*	*Marketing and Branding*
14	Specific multi owned issues	*Governance, participation, professionalism,*	*Pets, children, conflict*	*Contracts, education, security community*	*Neither*
8	Development applications	*Height, density*	*corruption*	*Governing body or structure, levies, services maintenance, community, security*	*Branding/ participation*
3	Strata Industry Websites	*Professionalism,*	*Lobbying, communication*	*Owners, contracts, community,*	*Neither*
3	Strata Government Websites	*Governing body or structure, levies, maintenance, community*	*Rules, conflict resolution*	*Education, contract management*	*Neither*
1	Strata blog sites	*Governing body or structure, levies, maintenance, community*	*Tenant issues*	*education*	*Neither*

Table 1 Thematic summary of media and websites

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Place branding influences on strata titled property in Australia

Abstract:

Global trends have seen an increase in high density living and the vertical suburb. The governing structure associated with apartment buildings is little understood. This research links branding literature with strata property sale through engaging with print media and websites. The research found that print media does not adequately explain the complex contractual relationship prospective owners are entering into prior to purchase, and that information on the contractual arrangements were difficult to locate. There are policy implications relevant to existing purchase contracts for real estate within these types of complexes.

Key words

Place branding, Marketing, Governance, Conflict of interest, Contractual communities, Media, Australia