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**Cairns' Image as the Arts and Cultural Destination of Northern Australia:
A Place Brand Co-Creation Study with Young Artists**

A thesis by

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Abstract

Nowadays, towns and cities worldwide seem to have aspirations to brand themselves to distinguish from other places. To stay competitive, iconic images have long been instrumental in the promotion of places. However, can a place brand truly capture or reflect the character of a place without restricting it to a series of stereotypical images emphasising geographical and cultural difference? The purpose of this study is to investigate how the image of a city can be re-imagined through co-creation with its residents; in this research, through the perspectives of young artists. Aiming to become the Arts and Cultural Capital of Northern Australia (ACCNA), Cairns is an internationally renowned destination endowed with natural beauty. From a place branding perspective, I explore the idea that the image of Cairns as a popular holiday destination is more than the existing impressions and perceptions of 'reef and rainforest' as it is commonly communicated and perceived. As such, the thesis argues that to capture the attention of different audiences in destination branding, Cairns should encourage and even solicit a multitude of images and identities reflecting and capturing the plurality of the existing residents' place experiences, meanings and articulations. With this in mind, the study unpacks the arts and culture images of Cairns in a *hypothetical* place brand co-creation process with artists through meaning-making dialogues as expressed and manifested via place experiences in interviews and focus groups. The concept of place brand co-creation developed here explores the relations between people, meanings, and the physical characteristics of places as an ongoing, open-ended awareness creation process. In the sense, artists as residents play a critical role in place brand co-creation as they live and interact with the city. This highlights the significance of internal stakeholders such as the residents and stresses that place brands are not solely established through conventional communications but are co-created by people through actions and interactions.

The voices of local artists are crucial in the bottom-up place brand co-creation. By understanding their mental and photographic images provided for this research, the findings revealed that the collective imagery of Cairns' arts and culture characters coalesce under the three themes of *people, environment, and way of life*. These co-created collective imagery and narratives of *people, environment, and way of life* constitute the backbone of artists' *place stories* with place experiences and meanings. As such, it is the stories that originate from the people living in the destination that could be most crucial in influencing visitor perceptions and impacting travel decisions. Hence, the research suggests that these *place stories* shared by the artists could potentially contribute to the foundation of a wider enhanced place brand narrative and place brand image of the Cairns region beyond the current image of 'reef and rainforest'. Place branding should place tourism destinations within socio-cultural contexts and put the residents' place meanings and experience into the production of place.

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Chapter 1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

In a bid to stay vibrant and attractive in an increasingly dynamic global economy, cities often leverage on images to attract investors, tourists and future residents. Common understanding is that to market places as tourism destinations, the essential and unique qualities of that place (be it real or imaginative) must be shaped into imagery that will be attractive to potential tourists. As such, the purpose of place branding is to alter the public image of the location and also to re-frame and re-image the place selectively and attractively so that it stands out in the competitive place-product market (Ooi, 2008). As a prominent tropical international tourist destination, Cairns' image has been re-imagined, re-shaped, and re-positioned by tourism organizations and other related industry stakeholders reflecting trends, preferences, and even tastes of the society in general (Thorp, 2007). Correspondingly, with the objective of diversifying the economy and in generating better employment opportunities in the region, the Cairns region is currently re-positioning itself as an arts and culture hub (as expressed in the Cairns Regional Council's (CRC) *Culture and Arts Strategy 2022* and *Shared Vision 2050*, see CRC, 2022). Tracing the background of this vision, a recent *State of the Arts in Cairns* Report (SoARTS) (2019, p. 20) highlights that "extraordinary artistic experiences are needed to change the perception that the region is ultimately about reef and rainforest". The report argues that "a coordinated approach to the *image of Cairns* by sector leaders" would enhance the place and elevate the position of arts and culture in the region. Cunningham et al. (2019, p. 2) recognise that Cairns, with "more than 10 years of cultural policy focusing on local 'ownership' has led to belief in the 'arts and cultural capital of North Australia' culminating in the opening of Cairns Performing Arts Centre in December 2018". These studies emphasise the importance of exploring beyond the surface of the 'reef and rainforest' image of Cairns as perceived by the public. To a certain extent, offerings or opportunities from arts and culture are believed to be able to fill in the void in future audiences' minds.

Conceptualised as a *hypothetical* place branding study and giving consideration to the CRC's arts and cultural strategic directives and initiatives in the last ten years, this research explores the 'what' and 'where' of Cairns' arts and culture images with the artists living, working and studying in the city. With Cairns aspiring to become the Arts and Cultural Capital of Northern Australia, who better to interview than these young artists about their experiences, perceptions and viewpoints on the image and *imageability* of arts and culture places? Specifically, how does their collective imagery of arts and culture reflect the geographically defined spaces and places within Cairns' urban context? How do artists think about the art and culture places in their minds: their ways of organising it and of feeling about it. Ultimately, what does this mean for the Cairns - arts and culture brand in future?

Researchers explore the role of residents in place branding and recent studies have shown that internal place stakeholders are becoming more important in constructing and communicating a place image than responsible authorities or place promoting agencies (Kavaratzis, 2004). What all of this points to is that, instead of focusing on a top-down-marketing-driven approach, this research argues the need for a bottom-up, resident-as-internal-stakeholders perspective in destination place branding. In this way, residents are the “lifeblood” of place (Hudak, 2019, p. 106) and their voices are the foundation in the positioning of the “people of the place” at the centre of a place branding strategy (Campelo et al., 2014, p. 154). As such, this research adopts a resident orientated approach to place branding (Braun et al., 2013). The study also aims to give voice to Cairns artists as local people in capturing their diverse place narratives and place experiences in the participatory place brand formation process (Lichrou et al., 2014). This study highlights the need for developing a method and framework to appreciate the meanings and experiences of place that different individuals and stakeholders involved in destination place branding bring (Lichrou et al., 2014). It is thus in the realm of “stories and meanings” that place branding seeks to differentiate, through relevance (Boisen et al., 2018, p. 7). As such, the role of residents in place branding and the process is regarded as a co-creation of place’s cultural meanings (Aitken & Campelo, 2011; Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013; Saraniemi, 2011).

1.2 Research Objectives and Questions

Tourist places, like other places, should have a distinct or clear perceptual identity that give rise to strong feelings in the observers. As such, the legibility of places provides a common *visual base* which all observers can interpret (Lynch, 1960). As meanings and values differ widely between various groups in our society; this research focusses on views from young artists. As such, the main objectives for the study are:

- To explore how the arts and culture image of Cairns is represented and interpreted by young artists.
- To explore Cairns' *imageability*, including its arts and culture experiences and meanings, in a participatory co-creation place branding process.

The study argues that place branding is not just about logos, taglines and promotional advertisement claims; instead, it is about those physical, social, cultural, and economic ongoing processes that shape and are reshaped by a place’s identity, character and reputation (Anholt, 2010). This is of the view that place brands are constantly “produced, redefined, and evolving entities” (Kavaratzis & Florek, 2021, p. 31). The study recognises that place brands are dynamic concepts and symbolic constructs meant to add experiences, meanings and values to places involving the full range of stakeholders (Warnaby & Medway, 2013).

Furthermore, the study recognises that any place brand is constantly being re-constituted or recreated through the physical and virtual exchanges of experiences, meanings, ideas, and opinions by its many co-creators living and visiting in the city (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013; Lichrou et al., 2014). From the vantage point of geography, places “do not have single, unique ‘identities’” (Massey, 1994, p. 155) and are never *finished* (Cresswell, 2015). With this in mind, therefore, place brand formation is envisaged as a complex, dynamic, overlapping and constantly evolving process of *meaning always in the making* with stakeholders contributing from bottom-up.

The study adopts a multi-disciplinary approach with the following research questions (RQ):

- RQ1: How do young artists present Cairns as a place of arts and culture?
- RQ2: How can an enhanced image of Cairns as an arts and culture destination be co-created in a place branding process?

1.3 Research Approach

Place branding has long been of interest to a range of disciplines and approached from a variety of perspectives, as the many facets of place branding such as identity, image, promotion or sense of place (Ashworth & Kavaratzis, 2011). Though rooted in the foundations of marketing studies, I draw on the work of several related disciplines to provide the necessary grounding required for place branding research bounded by an interplay of sometimes oppositional and complementary perspectives. While I acknowledge my urban planning and design basis, my research also sits at the convergence of three interrelated disciplinary fields: geography, urban planning & design, and marketing studies. I adopted the multi-disciplinary breadth to capture the advantages of each field’s methodological approaches within place branding settings as the branding process must go beyond “images and marketing speak” (Ooi, 2008, p. 289) . Moreover, most commentators on place branding suggest that it is clearly a multi-disciplinary field (Hankinson, 2010; Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013) and have increasingly called for greater integration of disciplinary concepts within place branding in view of these often-siloed approaches of these fields. This thesis responds to this call by exploring the conceptual links between these disciplines. In particular, I employ the themes of *place*, *image*, and *branding* from the disciplines of human geography, urban planning & design, and marketing studies. Integrating insights from these separate, yet interrelated, fields, I explore a concept (and process) of place brand co-creation.

This thesis uses thematic analysis to analyse a series of interviews conducted with young artists. Such an approach provides insight into different perspectives of visual storytelling. The research provides a foundational framework for understanding arts and culture related place elements and attributes for future city-wide strategic place branding initiatives. Specifically, it starts with the engagement of young artists to understand how they *imagine, see, and experience* Cairns' arts and culture places in mental images and photograph formats with interviews conducted individually. Subsequently, in a focus-group co-creation workshop, it explores the collective themes derived from the interviews with the examination of the existing urban assets, resources, initiatives and other elements that are pivotal in a place's branding process to enhance or even transform its arts and culture appeals and destination status.

Although I have touched on a wide range of topics, there is one specific area where the study is rooted from the many different pathways explored. In particular, the research utilises Lynch's (1960) *imageability* to conceptualise co-created arts and culture imagery of Cairns in a participatory co-creation process with the young artists. As such, I situate my studies on place image co-creation in Cairns as uniquely contextualised within an urban design visual framework. Lynch explores the visual quality and character of the mental image of residents from the three cities of Boston, Los Angeles and Jersey City in New Jersey. The study suggests that a major attribute in the quality of place is legibility or *imageability*.

The term *imageability* is defined as "that quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer" (Lynch, 1960, p. 9). That is, the extent to which the components of the place make a strong impression on the individual. A place with relatively high *imageability* constitutes the five imageable elements of *paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks* that can be mapped mentally by individuals. Places with high *imageability* possess distinctiveness, vividness, and have memorable and recognisable features in the environment.

By gathering perceptual information about these elements, the individual creates both an image and an accumulating knowledge of a place from wider socio-cultural processes. So places come to represent image, memory, meaning and association for individuals, groups and societies (Montgomery, 1998; Relph, 1976). For this research, for example, images of arts and culture places shared and experienced by the artists are then reflected in Cairns' city fabric as an underpinning framework for distilling of the city character in place image branding.

Given this brief overview of the work of Lynch (1960), another focus area of the thesis is the conceptualisation of place experiences and meanings (Florek & Insch, 2020). Place brands are "built experience by experience" which requires synthesis of a city's physical and social environments through interactions (p. 170). This thesis structures these ideas into a participatory approach to place branding. This is achieved by examining the spatial dimensions of the arts and culture places, and through exploring the co-creation of place meanings with the local artists.

In this sense, the thesis explores the following themes:

- Exploring Lynch's (1960) urban design theory of *imageability* and situating it within a framework of place image branding;
- Understanding, interpreting, and integrating images provided by the young artists through a framework of *imageability aspects* (focusing on visual attributes as well as associated meanings and perceptions of Cairns as a creative place);
- Understanding, interpreting, and integrating images provided by the young artists as expressed in place meanings and experiences and manifested in *place stories* representations (Florek & Insch, 2020).

1.4 Chapter Outline

This thesis is organised into 7 chapters including this introductory chapter with an overview of the study. Chapter 2 presents the study area of Cairns with an overview on the physical setting and existing images highlighting arts and culture places in the city and the surrounding region. In Chapter 3, the literature review, I review concepts relating to place image branding and place brand co-creation with stakeholders focusing on a resident-centric approach. This chapter also draws on reviews from geography, marketing and integrated disciplines concerning *place, image* and *branding*. In Chapter 4, I present the methodological approach of the research. I describe my two-stage approach of data collection and employing a multi-method which combines photography-based interviews and a focus-group co-creation workshop. Chapters 5 and 6 discuss the analysis and findings of the research, with Chapter 5 focussing on the Research Question 1 (RQ1) and Chapter 6 on the Research Question 2 (RQ2). In Chapter 5, the findings reveal that the collective imagery of Cairns' arts and culture images coalesce under the three themes of *people, environment, and way of life*. This co-created collective imagery forms the backbone of artists' *place stories* with experiences and meanings reflected in Chapter 6. Hence, the research suggests that these *place stories* shared by the artists could potentially contribute to the foundation of a wider enhanced place brand narrative and place brand image of Cairns region beyond the current image of 'reef and rainforest'. Finally, Chapter 7 provides the summary, conclusion and recommendations of the thesis.

Chapter 2.0 Setting: City of Cairns, QLD

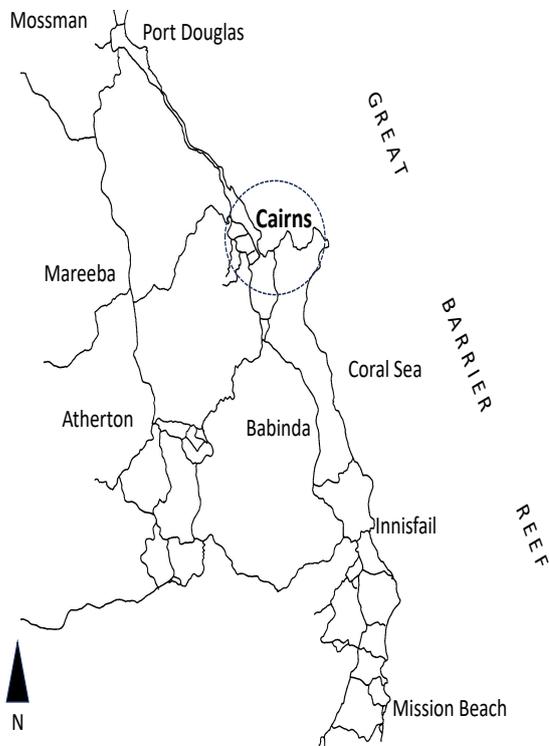
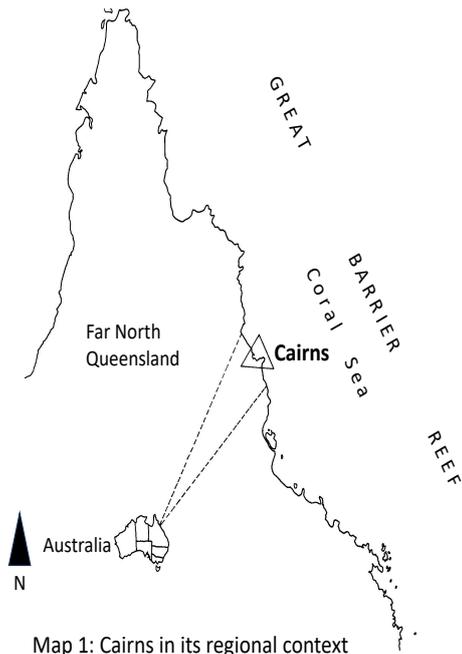
2.1 Overview and General Descriptions

This chapter provides an overview of Cairns, the study area. It starts with a description of the city's physical setting, administrative boundaries and the natural and built environments. I also highlight relevant arts and cultural studies and strategies that have been undertaken in the last twenty years. Particularly, I look at existing arts and cultural assets of Cairns with reference to the comprehensively developed *Arts and Culture Map (the Map)* developed by Cairns Regional Council (CRC) in 2018 (CRC, 2023). After this, I examine strategic catalytic urban initiatives and game-changer projects that have shaped the growth and urban fabric of Cairns. This chapter ends with a deliberation on the existing perceptions and images of Cairns, focusing on views from residents and tourists. These images of Cairns were solicited from the top-of-the-mind exchanges during my stay in Cairns in 2022. Welcome to Cairns:

Welcome to Paradise: Welcome to one of the world's most pristine environments where the air is fresh, the sky is almost always blue, and Mother Nature is at her absolute finest (Passport to Tropical North Queensland, 2022, p. 3).

The opening paragraph from the *Passport* (2022), a welcoming pack I picked up from the Cairns Airport, sums up the existing and projected images of Cairns. In a *Social Indicators Study* conducted by the Tourism & Events Queensland in 2021, 300 residents of Far North Queensland revealed that the first words that come to minds when thinking about their area were "tropical, beautiful and describe the area as paradise" ("*Social*," 2021). Cairns is a gateway city in Far North Queensland with exceptional natural features and attractions. Geographically, Cairns is located on a narrow coastal plain bordered by the Coral Sea and the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area to the east, and the Great Dividing Range within the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area to the west (CRC, 2022; see Map 1: Cairns in Regional Australia Context, Map 2: Cairns and the environs).

Administratively, the Cairns Regional Council local government area encompasses 1687 km² of land. The region is an important gateway to the surrounding Atherton Tablelands, Daintree and Wet Tropics rainforest, and the outback Savannah region beyond the Great Dividing Range. As a regional city of Queensland, Cairns is about 1700 km north of Brisbane CBD, and 350 km north of the Townsville CBD. The estimated residential population of the Cairns region was 169,312 in 2021, with a population density of 100.3 persons per sq.km. The region has experienced an average annual growth rate of 1.9% over the last 10 years (CRC, 2022).



Cairns is fondly known as the place where the 'reef meets rainforest' endowed with spectacular mountains, waterfalls, beaches, lakes, tidal wetlands and mangrove swamps. All these natural features are prominent in this diverse tropical region. As a tropical city, people in the Cairns area are accustomed to living and working in relatively higher temperatures and also with the seasonal monsoon downpours.

However, it could be argued that, as a tourist-dependent city, climate and weather are determinant factors for holiday-makers when making travel plans and choices. In other words, seasonal climatic conditions influence tourism businesses and activities of Cairns with this yearly rhythmic weather patterns. As there is no distinct summer and winter temperature variations like other southern cities of Australia, Cairns' two distinct wet and dry seasons are worth elaborating here as both seasons pose opportunities and challenges for the tourism sector of Cairns. As a destination city, the seasonality of tourism businesses and activities has implications for the physical characteristics of the city in terms of spatiality and temporality in uses. However, for bargain-hunting travellers, the wet season of Cairns offers more affordable accommodation options and also provides ample opportunities to enjoy the mighty flows of rivers and waterfalls with lush vegetation at its most vibrant. However, the not so pleasant experience for travellers during the wet season will probably be the encounters with the deadly jellyfish that appear along the coast on beaches of Cairns. On the other hand, the joy of travelling to Cairns in the peak dry season will be rewarded with cooler temperatures and a perfect way to appreciate and enjoy the tropical lifestyle of Cairns.

2.2 Relevant Arts and Cultural Studies, Policies, and Strategies

Cairns has actively sought to diversify and broaden its tourism opportunities beyond reef and rainforest with the aim of appealing to a wider audience. Tracing the historical roots, such an understanding could possibly be attributable to the Australian Government's *National Long-term Tourism Strategy* conducted in 2011 with Cairns and the regions as one of the key areas of interest. The strategy aims to identify an existing and future "Experience Seeker" in the development of a pilot *Experiences Development Strategy (EDS) for the Cairns-Townsville Tourism Hubs* (AEC Group, 2011, p. ii). The strategy highlighted that:

Cairns and more notably the Cairns CBD is the key destination for the majority of International visitors to the North and Far North Queensland regions. However, Cairns itself is not the key tourism product of interest; rather this is the daytrips and surrounding regions. Tourism products that have developed in Cairns are increasing isolated from locals, their culture, and their activities (p. v).

Looking from this national strategic study in 2011, it is within this context that Cairns has slowly sought to broaden its tourism products and appeal. Specifically, the *Cairns Shared Vision 2050*, is a city strategic plan which highlights the importance of the diversification of the tourism-

dependent economy of Cairns as one of the strategic directives spearheading the growth in future. Similarly, former Cairns Mayor Cr. Bob Manning refers to the local Indigenous culture as the third major asset of the city for future tourists and visitors in addition to the reef and rainforest (CRC, 2020). Cunningham et al., (2019) note “more than 10 years of cultural policy focusing on local ‘ownership’ [that] has led to belief in the ‘arts and cultural capital of North Australia’ culminating in the opening of Cairns Performing Arts Centre in December 2018”. The study further elaborates the possibility of Cairns to explore the relation of culture to tourism in future cultural planning. In one of the priority areas of action, CRC intends to co-develop a branding strategy with Tourism Tropical North Queensland and State Tourism on “Distinctive Cairns Cultural Experience” capturing the potentials of arts and cultural assets of Cairns and the surrounding region.

On the branding of Cairns, *State of the Arts in Cairns Report (SoARTS)* highlights that “extraordinary artistic experiences are needed to change the perception that the region is ultimately about reef and rainforest” (SoARTS, 2019, p. 20). The report recognises feedback from stakeholders suggesting that “a coordinated approach to the ‘image of Cairns’ by sector leaders” would elevate the place and position of arts and culture in the region (ibid).

To better understand the background to arts and culture assets in Cairns, Table 1 tabulates several studies, reports and other supporting frameworks that pertain to Cairns from Year 2010-2022. It includes perspectives from local government, private consultancy practice and academia.

Table 1: CRC Major Arts and Cultural Policies and Strategies (2010-2022)

Policies/Strategies/Studies	Descriptions
Cairns Regional Council Reports	
CRC Strategy for Culture and the Arts 2022 (Adopted 2018)	This strategy was developed through consultations with 84 organizations/ groups and 200 people from nine distinct sectors. It aims to align with CRC’s Corporate Plan 20170-2022, the Cultural Mapping in 2015.
Strategy for Young Creatives	This strategy was developed in partnership with Arts Queensland as part of CRC’s 2018/2019 Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF). Consultants Lenine Bourke and Lia Pa’apa’a were engaged by Council to “determine the trends, issues and expectations that underpin young people’s participation” in the arts and cultural development in Cairns.
Strategy for Public Arts and Creative Place Making	To position “Cairns as a vibrant and contemporary public art city”. This strategy

	referred to the first Public Arts Policy in 2006 and was updated in 2010 and 2017.
Cairns 2050 Shared Vision	Developed in June and August 2018 with 50 attendees in half-day stakeholder engagement workshops. Emphasised the need for a ‘one story with many voices’ approach in the formulation process. The shared vision outlines the future economic and liveability opportunities for Cairns.
Academic Contributions	
Law, Lisa, and Milledge, Russell (2021) <i>State of the Arts in Cairns Report 2020 (SoARTS)</i> . External Commissioned Report. Cairns Regional Council, Cairns, QLD, Australia.	A five-year research project to track the extent to which the arts and culture strategy is achieving its goals under the CRC’s strategy for Culture and the Arts 2022 (CRC 2018)
Private Consultancy Contributions	
Cultural & Creative Activities in the Cairns Region (Estimates of Economic Impact 2/2019)	The report analyses the economic structure and actions to develop the sector from the responses of 112 businesses in Creative and Cultural Activities in the Cairns and immediate region.

Source: Cairns Regional Council (2010-2022)

2.3 Catalytic Urban Initiatives and Projects

As this study focuses on arts and culture images and the imageability of Cairns, here I explore some of these catalytic urban art and culture assets that have shaped the city fabric over the last 10 years. These urban assets range from streetscape improvements and public squares enhancements to the world-class art centres, galleries and performing arts centres. These assets are some of the latest developments in which locals and visitors seek to spend time in. Table 2 below contextualises these developments by navigating the major activities and events from the 1960s in chronological order that had impacted on the physical and image transformations of the city.

Table 2: Moments in Time: Major Events and Development Milestones of Cairns

Year	Major Items
1962	Cairns Festival launched by the CRC
1963	The Cairns Festival was re-named ‘Fun in the Sun’
1968	First passenger Ansett jet air service from Brisbane reaches Cairns 8 th April
1975	Rusty’s Market established
1981	Great Barrier Reef inscribed on World Heritage Convention
1984	Cairns International Airport Opened
1987	Hilton Hotel Cairns

1987	Tjapukai Dance Theatre (at Kuranda)
1988	Wet Tropics inscribed on World Heritage Convention
1989	Shangri-La Hotel Cairns
1989	Sugarworld Waterpark (2011 redeveloped by CRC)
1990	New dedicated Cairns International Airport Terminal
1990	In the early 1990s the Cairns Festival was relaunched as 'Reef Festival'
1995	Skyrail rainforest cableway opens
1995	JCU Cairns Smithfield Campus opens
1995	Cairns Art Gallery (formerly Cairns Regional Gallery) opens
1995	Tanks Arts Centre
1996	New Cairns Convention Centre opened 20 th July
1996	The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park at Smithfield
1996	Fun in the Sun and Dive festivals combine to form Reef Festival
1997	Cairns Central opens on site of former Cairns railway station in McLeod Street
2000	Cairns Convention Centre hosts first major conference
2002	Reincarnated as 'Festival Cairns' in an effort to consolidate all of the city's major events together
2003	Esplanade Lagoon (4800sqm salt water) opened 29 th March in the "Big Splash" event
2010	Cairns Festival under Council's direction, through Council's Cultural Services branch
2010	Cairns Cruise Liner Terminal rebuild completed
2011	Cairns Botanic Gardens Visitor Centre completed
2016	Munro Martin Parklands/new open air entertainment space with lush landscape gardens
	Shields Street Heart Redevelopment
2018	Crystalbrook Collection's first new Cairns hotel opened on 6th November
2018	Cairns Performing Arts Centre opened 15th December
2020	Cairns Court House Gallery opens

Source: Cairns Regional Council (2023); Hudson (2007)

Cairns is a unique destination city in Australia. Having outlined the projects and initiatives in Table 2, I now focus on key game-changers that played pivotal roles in the transformation of Cairns. Notably, with the inscriptions of both the Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics on the World Heritage Convention in 1981 and 1988, the rapid development of Cairns as a major tourism destination was shortly after the opening of the Cairns International Airport in 1984. According to Hudson (2007), the editor of *The Cairns Post* from 1974-1991, the event which had the greatest single impact on Cairns during his lifetime was the opening of Cairns International Airport on Saturday, March 31, 1984, as "it changed Cairns almost overnight from a steadily growing city in the tropics to a world-renowned tourist destination" (p. 117).

Crucially, in 1990, a new separate international terminal was opened with associated aprons and taxiways. This milestone development allows Cairns and the Far North Queensland to claim itself as one of the preferred destinations of Australia besides the established attractions of the major capital cities.

In terms of urban development, Cairns is a city with a global outlook when compared to other regional Australian cities. The city was planned with a gridiron Central Business District (CBD) street layout and the CBD functions as the heart of Cairns and it is also a centre for residents living and working in the area (see Map 3: Cairns CBD Area).



Map 3: Cairns CBD area

Cairns is characterised by a distinctive grid pattern of wide streets with extensive awnings over footpaths protecting pedestrians from tropical sun and rain. Most streets in the CBD were planted with tropical trees that provide shade, character and enhance the streetscape of Cairns. In the *Designing for Density in the Tropics Design Guide*, Cairns strives to achieve a built environment that is characterised by its tropical design and natural surroundings. The relationship between existing buildings, landscape design and open space network is enshrined in the city’s urban design narrative, most notably described as “Tropical Urbanism” (Law & Musso, 2020). These integrating elements of the “rainforest, the reef and the rainwater into the urban landscape is an emerging vision for Cairns” (CRC, 2022). In 2018, the game changer development in the CBD was the opening of Cairns’ first new five-star hotel in over 20 years (see Map 5, p. 25 for all photos described below). The new hotel development kick-started a string of two more hotels by the Crystalbrook Collection (see Photo 1 and 2: Crystalbrook Riley Hotel). From the vantage point of city structure, the Crystalbrook Riley hotel is anchored to the northern edge of the Esplanade with the CRC proposed Cairns Gallery Precinct positioned at the southern edge.



Photo 1: Crystalbrook Riley Hotel



Photo 2: Crystalbrook Riley Hotel



Photo 3: Esplanade Lagoon

The skyline of Cairns' waterfront promenade will be transformed as the Cairns Gallery Precinct, identified as a "project opportunity" within the *Cairns City Centre Masterplan*, consolidates three heritage listed buildings comprising Cairns Art Gallery, the Cairns Court House Gallery and the former Mulgrave Shire Council Chambers in the Cairns CBD (CRC, 2022). The Cairns Gallery Precinct will be another major inflection point for Cairns' arts and culture scenes and it could play a leading role in the "emergence of Cairns as the Arts and Cultural Capital of Northern Australia and be better branded as the creative heart of Cairns" (SoARTS, 2019, p. 31).

The Esplanade Lagoon Parklands are a landmark urban waterfront project along the foreshore which attract residents and tourists to the city. The Cairns Lagoon, with a 4800 square meter salt water pool (see Photo 3: Esplanade Lagoon), is a particularly important magnet and major attractions of Cairns. For some tourists, the image of Cairns is the *Woven Fish* created by Brian Robinson in the Esplanade redevelopment in 2003. As one of the most recognisable collections of public art in Australia, "Brian inadvertently created the visual theme of the Esplanade [...] with the work consist of five 2.5m high x 15m wide stainless steel replicas of the traditional Torres Strait Islander practice of weaving palm leaves into the shape of fish". Equally stunning and as an attractive Instagrammable spot for family portraits is "The Herd" designed by Hew Chee Fong & Loretta Noonan.

The popular sculptures are of a herd heading out to sea. Individually carved from granite the patterning is reminiscent of the mudflats within which the current lagoon is sited (CRC, 2022) (see Photo 4: Woven Fish Sculpture, Photo 5: The Herd, Photo 6: Esplanade Dining Precinct).

Photo 5: The Herd

Photo 6: Esplanade Dining Precinct



Photo 4: Woven Fish Sculpture

Next to the Esplanade Lagoon is the Cairns Esplanade Dining Precinct, a \$28 million fast-tracked project completed in 2020/2021. The overall design of the precinct embraced a tropical landscape theme, with contemporary extended awnings with wider footpaths and uniform appearance throughout while also offering better weather protection. In addition, the layout of the roads and footpath, with improved views to the Esplanade Parklands and increased pedestrian connections, also allows the flexible transformation of the streets into a pedestrian-only space for major public festivals and events. The project was earmarked as one of the five major projects identified in the *Cairns City Centre Master Plan 2019*. From an urban design perspective, the Esplanade Dining Precinct links into Shields Street Mall and completes the interface with the beautifully completed Shields Street Heart project (CRC, 2022) (see Photo 7, 8, 9 : Shields Street Heart).



Photos 7,8,9: Shield Street Heart

The beautiful and unique natural environment of the wet tropics informs and inspires the cultural expression and urban form of Cairns. For better access to all the regional arts and cultural creative treasures, the *Arts and Culture Map* was developed by CRC and launched in 2018 to “underscore the depth and breadth of arts and culture in the region: Discover creative business, cultural organisations, festivals, public art, visual and performing artists, historical

sites” (CRC, 2023). As a one-stop virtual platform assessed through desktop or mobile Apps, the *Map* aims to showcase CRC’s arts and cultural assets and also the Council-owned arts and cultural facilities for hire. In addition, individual artists and creative businesses can create and update their profiles and activities on the *Map*, as well as a promotional platform to showcase their creative works virtually.

Here I elaborate some of the notable arts and cultural places in the city centre for a better appreciation of the contents of the Map. As noted by the SoARTS (2019) report:

“The CBD and the botanic precinct that incorporates Edge Hill. Greenslopes Street and the Tanks Arts Centre are the important ‘hubs’ for creativity in Cairns, with creativity tending to co-locate with scenic natural areas, commercial clusters, prominent venues and tourism traffic” (p. 29).

Most major venues presenting arts and cultural themes in Cairns are located in the Central Business District (CBD) area. First is the Cairns Museum, a CRC’s award-winning redevelopment of the old School of Arts building located at the junction of Shields Street and Lake Street. Situated between the Cairns Central Mall and the Esplanade, Cairns Museum showcases the history of Cairns and the tropics with displays of art pieces of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Cairns Museum is a must-visit place in Cairns for a first-time visitor to the region (see Photo 10: Cairns Arts Gallery, Photo 11: Court House Gallery).



Photo 10: Cairns Art Gallery



Photo 11: Court House Gallery

Right in the CBD and next to the Cairns Arts Gallery is the Court House Gallery, a carefully restored heritage-listed gallery opened in 2020. The performances, events, and exhibitions at Court House Gallery are “experimental in nature, topical and relevant to community and culture” of the Far North region (*Cairns Vibrance*, Apr/May 2023). Court House Gallery is positioned as the window showcasing local creative talents of Cairns to the world. In addition to the galleries, Munro Martin Parklands, opened in 2016, is an outdoor event space located within the Performing Arts Precinct together with the award-winning Cairns Performing Arts Centre (CPAC) which opened in 2018. These combined venues are “key infrastructure that

support arts and culture activities enriching lives of local and regional residents as well as visitors to Cairns and Far North” (SoARTS, 2019, p. 33) (see Photo 12: CPAC, Photo 13: Munro Martin Parklands).



Photo 12: CPAC



Photo 13: Munro Martin Parklands

Next is the Tanks Arts Centre or locally referred as ‘the Tanks’. The Tanks celebrated a double birthday in October 2014 when the Tanks turned 70 (as a fuel storage facilities) and 20 (as an arts centre). The Tanks is an iconic arts centre nestled among lush rainforest at the base of Mt. Whitfield, fringed by the Cairns Botanical Gardens just four kilometres north of the CBD. The centre was reincarnated from the unique history of wartime and it was originally the WWII Royal Australian Navy Fuel Installation depot. Three of the five tanks have been rebuilt and repurposed into a spectacular live music venue and outstanding arts centre.

The Tanks is a unique place and according to the ‘fun facts’ published on the pamphlet:

“[...] An early function held at the Tanks was a party thrown by Marlon Brando in Tank 4, celebrating the end of shooting for the film, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. The film was a box office flop, but the lengthy and extravagant filming brought many creative people to Cairns, some of whom stayed and made a home here” (The Tanks Arts Centre Pamphlet, 2023) (see Photos 14, 15: The Tanks Arts Centre).



Photo 14: The Tanks Arts Centre



Photo 15: The Tanks Arts Centre

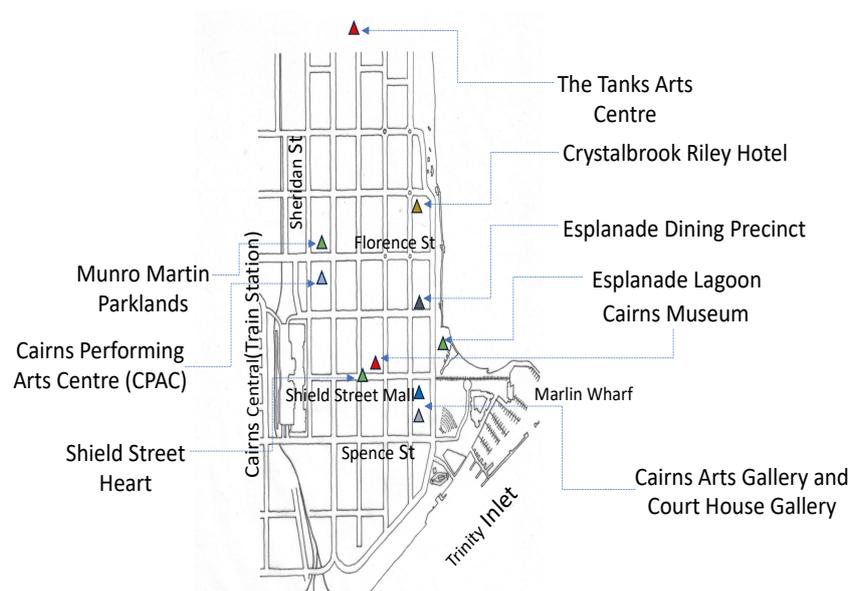


Photo 16: Mosaics of Shield Street Mall



Photo 17: The Shield

The Shields Street Heart redevelopment project showcases the rich Indigenous culture belonging to this region (See Photo 16: Mosaics of Shield Street Mall, Photo 17: The Shield). The integration of public arts includes a substantial indigenous art feature showcasing the diversity and creativity of local and regional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists. Similarly, in the periods from 2016 to 2017, 38 local artists were involved in the installations of the public art in various locations of the Shields Street Heart, between the Grafton and Abbott Street of Cairns. Among the creative pieces, Bernard Singleton’s Gurrabana Gurraminya-djada (Storywater Brothers) in front of the James Cook University’s City Campus, is one of the most ‘instagrammable’ spots in the city centre of Cairns.



Map 5 : Cairns major arts and culture assets

2.4 Existing Perceptions and Images of Cairns

This section looks at Cairns’ existing images. As a tourism-dependent city, the external (visitors, tourists, investors etc) views on Cairns’ image have been shaped and reshaped by tourism organizations and related industry stakeholders (Thorp, 2007). Cairns is positioned as a tropical city with fun-loaded outdoor activities with an abundance of sun, sand and sea. Most visitors come with a premeditated set of impressions, ideas and images of Cairns.

Existing online webpages showcase Cairns with strong visual representations of waterfront, Esplanade lagoon, white sand beaches and the Great Barrier Reef. The first impression of Cairns’ image available online reflects Cairns’ existing identity with the highlights of popular natural attractions as the major tourism offerings for prospective visitors. All these carefully crafted verbal and visual images of Cairns are reflections of and consistent with the historical

tourism promotional paraphernalia emphasising the elements of exotic, adventurous, nature and lifestyles. A study conducted by Thorp (2007) traces the progression of tourism images of Cairns from the periods of 1880s-1970s. Thorp reveals the promotional images of Cairns are rather consistent in visual contents and messaging with themes of nature and adventure. The study identifies the characteristics of Cairns and explores how it was “imagined” and “represented” over time. Tourism developments are evolving with world trends, personal tastes and preferences; which was reflected in the Cairns’ promotional materials. These materials showcased the popular aesthetic tastes or preferences such as “the picturesque, the romantic, the paradisiacal, the exotic, the tropical and the ecological” (Thorp, 2007, p. 107).

In the concluding statement, Thorp (2007, p. 113) highlights that:

The development of the tourism cultural landscape of Cairns was driven by the production of texts and images that portrayed Cairns as a site of exotic physical beauty, safely situated within a modern prosperous economy based on agriculture and mining, despite the inherent conflict between these two images [...] This reclassification and re-imaging is an essential process of tourism, which leads one to question where the ‘authentic’ tourist experience really lives.

Equally relevant to the research in this dissertation is the *Cairns City Image Study*, conducted by the Tract Consultants (2016), commissioned by the Cairns Regional Council (CRC). The city-wide image study illustrates that the relationship between built form, urban planning and landscape is expressed as *Tropical Urbanism* and is the defining characteristic of the Cairns identity. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume, for example, that Cairns’ overall image represented online centred on the nature-adventurous themes; meanwhile, also noticeable is CRC’s focus on the *Tropical Urbanism* theme in the built environment (Law & Musso, 2022). Collectively, these reports provide a foundational framework for the understanding of Cairns’ internal and external perspectives on existing and projected images.

2.5 Top-of-mind responses of image of Cairns

I now turn to what visitors and residents *think* of Cairns by asking for the “top-of-mind responses” to capture spontaneous impressions (Stachow & Hart, 2010, p. 149). When I first arrived in Cairns, being a part of my attempts to get-to-know-the-city, I often asked passers-by this question during my casual walks in the city. What comes to the mind when one thinks of the word Cairns? Almost without any hesitations, most of them responded with quick one-liner answers. What I noticed was that most of these answers were off-the-cuff responses capturing their immediate responses and their understandings and perceptions of the word Cairns. Perhaps these images existed in their minds for years as most of the respondents had no difficulty in retrieving them when asked. Put simply, it was a fun and provocative way to start a conversation as the respondents were more than happy to share their views after I followed

up with a simple question of “why” ? Although most of the answers were from the *typical* views of Cairns; occasionally, I received answers that were way beyond my own imaginations and expectations.

As a destination city, Cairns is a unique regional city in Australia with the two world-heritage sites of the acclaimed reef and the rainforests. Nature or the beauty of the physical landscape is the major appeal for tourists to visit and explore and for residents to live and work in Cairns. Therefore, it is not surprising that images as answers capturing the beauty surrounding the themes of the physical environment are prominently featured in most of my conversations. In the conversations, an interesting point to note is that viewpoints from both residents and tourists vary as both *see* and *experience* the city with different interests and focuses. Pieced together, the subsequent paragraphs sum up my conversations with the question posed to the passers-by during the first six months of my stay in Cairns as a resident and *occasional tourist* living and studying in the city.

These images are:

Lifestyles - Lifestyles of Cairns were frequently cited as the image that popped up from a couple of the local residents. When probed further, one of the respondents elaborated that her response to the image was based upon the tropical lifestyles of Cairns that she treasured most. This particular view was reinforced by a tourist whom he imagined in a retirement planning scenario with a tropical lifestyle of Cairns would fit in well.

Great Barrier Reef - Personally, images of the Great Barrier Reef popped up for me when I was young. This image resonates with the younger age group (backpackers) of tourists I encountered in the city. The Great Barrier Reef is the main draw of their visits. Alternatively, *Reef meets rainforest* was frequently cited by the locals in conversations. This natural feature is the major draw for them to live in Cairns as they enjoyed the outdoor activities offered in this visually stunning environment as backdrop.

Mountains: The image of mountain ranges is frequently cited by locals. As an elevated physical landform that rises above the surrounding landscape, it semi-circled the city. A local from Smithfield shared that this mighty north-south orientated dividing range evoked a strong sense of connection and unforgettable experiences of sublimeness with nature. This desire to be ‘part’ of the mountain was influenced by the romantic-period writing portraying this attractive aspect of Cairns in most tourism marketing and promotional materials. A local (he was from Japan originally), a self-declared nature-loving photographer, expressed that the city is like a *theme park* surrounded by mountains and oceans. It was a thought-provoking comment as he explained Cairns to me as a tourist city resembling a theme park with tourists from both local and international tourists enjoying their stay in the city.

Heat: The tropical heat of Cairns was mentioned as an image of Cairns when I talked to tourists in the CBD. On one of the hottest days in Cairns tourists responded to the heat experienced that afternoon. Another respondent associated the word *hot* with Cairns. However, he further elaborated that the shaded areas with extensive tree canopies within the CBD acted like a shield from the heat and indeed a *sanctuary feel* was rewarded after a perspiring walk under the sun.

Beaches and Palm Trees: Images of beaches and palm trees were frequently mentioned by tourists from Asia. These images were cited by two Japanese tourists whom I met. They shared with me that the images of palm trees framed coastlines of Cairns are highly promoted in the tourism websites of Japan.

Greenery: Greenery of Cairns was another frequently captured image of Cairns. This green image of Cairns was expressed by a local student from NSW. This greenery aspect of Cairns reminded him of the tropics with associative meanings such as sunshine and abundance.

Paradise: Paradise popped up in the conversation when I talked to an Indian tourist. The image of paradise conjures up pristine white-sand beaches, a turquoise ocean fringed by towering palm trees dotted along the coastline.

Magic: As one of the rare responses. Cairns is magic to this lady as she thinks Cairns is endowed with great diversity in environment and people. A magical co-exist place for all.

2.6 Conclusion

The joy Cairns brings to life comes in different ways for different people. To sum up, it appears that this pleasure is the image of Cairns being with the 'beauty of nature filled with outdoor adventurous fun'. This image is the current city brand of Cairns, and has been constructed and communicated successfully by various levels of tourism promotional organisations since the late 19th century. Furthermore, with the inscriptions of both the Great Barrier Reef (1981) and the Wet Tropics (1988), these images of Cairns are further solidly ingrained in the public's minds. However, it could be argued that Cairns has evolved immensely in the last 20 years and change is visible and such transformation is evidenced at the street level. As cities are multi-faceted and these multi-dimensional aspects of the image and identity of Cairns required further deliberation as cities are by nature constantly in a state of change. In comparison with other regional cities of Australia, Cairns is indisputably a unique destination city.

Cairns' brand has developed organically and is currently at the crossroads to explore an enhanced image as cities' images and identities are multi-dimensional and changing with time. Furthermore, it is recognised that Cairns as a city has broadened tourism appeals with the efforts and investment in arts and culture related venues, events, and activities in the last 10

years. Therefore, the current study attempts to unfold some of these evolving images of Cairns focusing on the arts and culture characteristics of the city. This chapter lays the background for the further exploration of the topics with the literature review in the next chapter encompassing concepts of place, image, and branding.

Chapter 3.0 Literature Review of Place Image Branding

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of place branding literature in *marketing*, *geography*, and the integrated *progressive* perspectives. As more places are interested and engaging in place branding, the first section traces the historical roots and the multidisciplinary aspects of it as a research field. Recognising the significance of the image of the city for place branding, and its ability to influence or even shape the city itself, the subsequent section explores how an image is formed, communicated and contextualised in place branding as an actual, material representation or as a socially constructed projection of symbolic images, experiences, and meanings. Residents are frequently cast aside in the place branding process; nonetheless, as place-users living and experiencing a place they are vital stakeholders. One of the goals of place branding is to strengthen the identity of residents with their place and to foster sense of place and civic pride. Next section focuses on resident-orientated co-creation in which local voices are potentially the most effective elements in promoting positive place images and place brands. The chapter concludes by articulating gaps in the literature, highlighting how the research for this thesis contributes to the need for further investigations.

3.2 Overview and Historical Roots of Place Branding

This thesis adopts a multidisciplinary approach to place branding due to the complex and varied way places are conceptualised (Ashworth & Voogd, 1990; Hankinson, 2010; Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005; Lucarelli & Berg, 2011). One of the main challenges which emerge from the literature is the lack of clarity or consensus as to the definition of place branding due to this multidimensional nature (Ashworth & Voogd, 1990; Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005; Lucarelli & Berg, 2011). In the last 30 years, various disciplines have cultivated a concept of place branding from both the academia and practice. However, there is no agreed definition and no consensus as to how place brands are formed (Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015).

The overview provided below focuses on three aspects of place branding and how it has been conceptualised. First, I elaborate the transference of mainstream *marketing dimensions* into place branding in which place manifests as “product”, “branded entity”, and/or “stakeholders groups and their conflicting interests” (Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015; p. 1369). Second, I examine the *geographical dimensions* of place branding (Andersson, 2014). The third section concludes by outlining the integrated *progressive dimensions* of the place branding research in which the synthesising of disciplines is explained (Green et al., 2016).

3.2.1 What is place branding?

Due to the lack of conceptual clarity, diverging definitions and a weak theoretical foundation; place promotion, place marketing, and place branding are used interchangeably in the literature and practice (Boisen et al., 2018; Vuignier, 2017). How is the *branding* of places different from *marketing*? Due to an increasingly competitive environment to attract talents, trades, and tourism dollars, the marketing of places has gained attention, both in practice and academic study (Warnaby, 2013; see also Kavaratzis & Florek, 2021; Kotler et al., 1993). As argued by Hubbard and Hall (1998) in the making of entrepreneurial cities, the main driving factors in place branding have been the desire for industrial cities to re-define or re-imagine themselves. Indeed, the term place branding is sometimes commonly referred as *place marketing, city promotion, destination selling*, etc (see Kavaratzis, 2004; Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005). Hence, place promoting agencies examine multiple dimensions of connecting marketable products to actual physical locations, often using “interchangeable concepts such as *branding* and *marketing*” in their rhetoric (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2008, p. 152). Although these three terms are used synonymously; place promotion, place marketing, and place branding mean different things to different people in different situations. Being a cross-disciplinary field, there is a need to distinguish between the three concepts as argued earlier by Skinner (2008), Hanna and Rowley (2008) and Ashworth et al. (2015).

In considering the expansion of the American and Canadian West in the nineteenth century, during the *boosterism* period, some recognise that the marketing of attractive images of places had been practiced for many years (i.e. Ward, 1998). Towns and cities have the ability to promote or market themselves based on a set of images capturing the character of a place by a specific scene or picture. Such place images have long played crucial roles in the production and fabrication of recognisable and memorable moments for popular consumption (Hankinson, 2004; Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005). Place promotion is about “generating favourable communication”. The key element of place promotion is the use of a visual identity such as logo, slogan in the coordinated promotional effort (Boisen et al., 2018, p. 5). As such, place promotion is viewed as but one of the tools of either place marketing or place branding (see Ashworth & Voogd, 1990; Gold & Ward, 1994; Kavaratzis, 2004; Kotler et al., 1993).

Place marketing is focused on “balancing supply and demand” (Boisen et al., 2018, p. 5); and has been facilitated by theoretical development within the marketing discipline that allowed for an understanding of marketing implications for urban planning, development, and management (Ashworth & Voogd, 1990). In essence, what is suggested is that the place-product like any other products can be marketed with the same logic, tools and methods as most other products in the market. However, due to the increased complexity and the notion that places are not simply physical settings with tangible attributes, the place marketing arena has evolved “a shift of terminology from place marketing to place branding” (Kavaratzis et al., 2018, p. 2). The transition from place marketing to place branding is facilitated not only by the extensive

use and success of product branding, but also by the developed concept of corporate branding (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005).

What is place branding then? According to Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2005, p. 508), “place branding is merely the application of product branding to places”. People encounter and experience places through “perceptions and images” and “branding deals specifically with such mental images” (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005, p. 507). Place branding integrates functional and representational elements (Giovanardi et al., 2013), and by adopting the idea of stakeholder participation and engagement (Kavaratzis et al., 2018). Place branding is mainly about “creating, sustaining, and shaping a favourable place identity” (Boisen et al., 2018, p. 5). Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2005, p. 512) suggest that place branding, like corporate branding “demands treatment of the place brand as the whole entirety of the place product, in order to achieve consistency in the message sent”. Moreover, place branding at the same time is argued to be inherently geographical, since it is situated in and associated with, spaces and places (Pike, 2009). Most contemporary scholars view place branding as a holistic concept. In contrast to place promotion and place marketing, place branding is “identity-driven” and represents an “inside-out” approach in expressing “selected values and narratives” of the place in question (Boisen et al., 2018, p. 7).

Both researchers and practitioners define place branding from multiple perspectives. Tracing the theoretical foundations of place branding research, Lucarelli and Berg (2011, p. 10) note that there is a “mono-disciplinary perspective in a field which is essentially multidisciplinary” (p. 22). This multiplicity of views and perspectives has led to the understanding that there is “no agreement – and perhaps no understanding – as to how place brands are formed” (Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015, p. 1370). In addition, as every place is unique and there are “no one-size-fits-all” branding processes (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013, p. 72).

According to Lucarelli and Berg (2011), scholars approach place branding research from different disciplines, including planning (Ashworth & Voogd, 1990), marketing management (Kotler et al., 1993), urban studies (Kearns & Philo, 1993), and governance and public policy (Hall & Hubbard, 1998; Harvey, 1989). A more recent approach focuses on the “cultural approach to place branding” in which place branding is considered as a fabrication of “cultural meanings” (Kavaratzis & Florek, 2021, p. 27; see also Aitken & Campelo, 2011; Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013; Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015). In addition, Vuignier (2017) in his state-of-the-art review, examines 1172 articles between 1976 and 2016 in place marketing and place branding and confirms the multidisciplinary basis of the field which goes beyond the traditional marketing discipline. Hanna et al. (2021) present a systematic review highlighting the “fragmented and interdisciplinary nature” of the place and destination branding.

Similarly, Green et al. (2016, p. 3), in their review of city branding practice as “attempts to adjust what cities mean to people”, argue there are identifiable evolutionary tracks of city branding research and practice. They identify five waves from practice (primitive attempts to adjust what cities mean to people, boosterish city promotion, entrepreneurial urban governance, formalised city marketing and rhetorical city brand focus) and four waves from the scholarly research (initial possibilities, application and adaptation of existing branding theory, development of a critical lens, progressive approaches with co-creation branding paradigm). The latest waves, referred to as the *progressive* wave from 2010 onwards, highlight the proliferation of participation by multiple stakeholders such as residents, the media, and tourists in the co-creation of city brands (p. 11). Indeed, place branding is increasingly envisioned as a participatory, co-creation meaning-making process involving interaction and dialogue between stakeholders (Aitken & Campelo, 2011; Kalandides, 2011; Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013; Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015; Warnaby, 2009). Emphasis is directed towards the participatory and co-creation aspects in an inclusive place branding process that is more critical and more socially responsible (Kavaratzis et al., 2018). These philosophies and assumptions, as articulated in the progressive wave, align with the current study in which artists participate and co-create in the place brand formation process.

According to Ashworth (2009), people construct their own understandings of places through three key areas of encounter. First are perceptions and images obtained and experienced through accumulated encounters with the places. Second are encounters with multiple place illustrations such as news, movies, media broadcasting, and other publications. Third and finally are design and policy interventions in urban planning and design. Managing place brand therefore involves engaging with these processes. Ashworth (2009) furthermore suggests that there are three planning instruments that allow places engaging in a branding process to create distinctiveness and differentiation in places. These include: 1) personality association such as celebrated individuals drawing from various backgrounds of the society 2) the features of built-environment such as visually stunning landmark buildings or acclaimed flagship districts and; 3) “event hallmarking” where places organised sports, festivals, or cultural events to draw visitors to the cities. He argues that these planning instruments assist in the creation of “association in the mind” of the consumers (residents) and “become the catalysts triggering existing latent processes” (p. 21).

3.2.2 Marketing dimensions of place branding

The domain of marketing, especially place marketing, has attracted substantial academic interests across various disciplines (Ashworth & Voogd, 1990; Govers & Go, 2009; Hankinson, 2004; Kavaratzis, 2004; Lucarelli & Berg, 2011). There is an understanding that places can be branded equivalent to consumer products and services (Freire, 2009; Hankinson, 2001). Within place marketing, concepts and techniques of *product* and *corporate branding* are popular (Kavaratzis, 2007; van Ham, 2008).

Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2005, p. 508) suggest that place branding is the utilisation of “product branding” to places. This notion that places can be branded in a same way as products has been practiced in tourist destinations (Hankinson, 2004), urban contexts (Kavaratzis, 2004) and even countries (Anholt, 2006; Fan, 2006). Treating places and cities as *products* enables the proliferation of marketing collateral such as the design of new logos and/or the utilisation of catchy slogans to capture attention and publicity. One might argue that place branding is a process of “reduction and concentration on core associations” (Zenker et al., 2017, p. 17; see also Anholt, 2009; Keller, 2003) with the objective to reduce the place image an identity into a single representation. Nevertheless, concepts of corporate branding have aided the progress for more refined understanding of place branding (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013).

Although there is a lack of agreement on the definition of place branding, most agree that place branding is not about logos and slogans and places do not suddenly acquire or gain “a new identity” because of them (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005, p. 508). The “identity” or “stories” of places need to be built into place. In this way, places are unique products and therefore place branding a “distinctive form of product branding” and the “city becomes a multitudes of brands” (pp. 512-513). However, the conventional wisdom of conceptualising place branding from the place-product rhetoric that places can be marketed with the same logic, tools, and methods as most other products is “problematic in many ways” (Kavaratzis et al., 2018). Moreover, as places are not simply solid structures in physical setting, the “*reality* of place is largely mental and perceived based on subjective experiences of place” (Kavaratzis et al., 2018, p. 2). This view becomes clearer with the geographical and *progressive* dimensions sections of place branding (Andersson, 2014; Green et al., 2016) discussed below.

3.2.3 Geographical dimensions of place branding

A commonsensical reason for place branding is a response to the anticipated demand for differentiation between places due to inter-place competition and as a critical component of regional development in securing a desired position in the competitive arena (Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015). As such, it is also inherently geographical and there is a need to rethink how place brand is conceptualised since it is “situated in”, and “associated with”, spaces and places (Andersson, 2014, p. 143, see also Pike, 2009, 2011).

Instead of promoting a “simplified perspective of places”, and thus contributing to a multidisciplinary approach to place branding deviating from mainstream corporate marketing, Andersson (2014) introduces a comprehensive spatial-geographical perspective by suggesting that place branding is more than corporate branding theories and approaches.

Table 3 presents an overview of the conceptual development of place branding research from a human geography perspective (see Andersson, 2014, pp. 150-151). In untangling the many layers of places, Andersson’s review uncovers seven research perspectives in the

transformative geographies of place branding after categorising the keywords based upon the analysis. She concludes that a reconceptualization of place branding is progressing well in the context of human geography, in which place branding is the combination of various aspects of “territorial and relational processes” (Andersson, 2015, p. 61). She argues that place branding has progressed beyond the traditional conceptualisation of marketing and corporate branding into a wider appreciation of “interplaying societal, political, spatial and economic structure” (p. 53) or what Vuignier (2017, p. 457) would term “geospatial relationships”. Geographers, by conceptualising place branding using diverse “conceptions of *place*”, are therefore making extraordinary contributions to the multidisciplinary research aspect of place branding (Andersson, 2014, p. 144). This contribution is apparent when marketing scholars present richer and deeper insights from the incorporation of geographical perspectives.

Table 3: Conceptual Development of Place Branding Research in Human Geography

<p>1. Place branding with the intention to “regain <i>place identities</i> and <i>place images</i>” - keywords are “place identity, flagships, regional identities, urban imaginaries and social heritage”. This perspective explores the relationship between space/place and how place identities are conceptualised in relation to place branding.</p>	<p>Harvey (1989a) Lefebvre (1991) Ashworth and Voogd (1990)</p>
<p>2. <i>Entrepreneurial</i> turn in urban governance - keywords are “governance, neoliberal turn, urban entrepreneurialism, social exclusion and undemocratic” This perspective is expressed in various ways and is critical of place branding with the creation of private-public megaprojects, cultural districts and also the effects of globalisation on places and cities.</p>	<p>Harvey (1989b) Zukin (1991) Brenner (1999) Peck (1995,2004)</p>
<p>3. <i>Theoretical relationship</i> between branding and geography - keywords are “cultural economy, globalisation and city competition” with perspective drawn from the fields of marketing and business.</p>	<p>Anholt (2002) Mommaas (2002) Kearns and Philo (1993)</p>
<p>4. Place branding <i>practices</i> - keywords are “best practice, policy recommendation, branding consultants, strategic planning, policy models, worst practice and knowledge sharing”.</p>	<p>Healey (2004) Lorentzen (2013)</p>
<p>5. Place branding as an “undemocratic and <i>socially</i> excluding process” - keywords are “undemocratic, gentrification, heritage and racialisation” and with perspective from theories of gentrification and social polarisation.</p>	<p>Zukin (1991, 1995) Lash and Urry (1994) Urry (2002)</p>
<p>6. Place branding as a key aspect of strategies to construct <i>creative places</i> - keywords are “creative class, networks, creative industry, cluster and policy recommendation”. This work is generally supportive about place branding with its promotional nature.</p>	<p>Florida (2002) Porter (1998) Currid (2009)</p>

<p>7. Place branding is conceptualised in the association between products and the place-specific symbolic qualities of a geographic region where a product is produced (<i>geographical co-branding</i>) - keywords are “consumption, place images used in product branding and private-public partnerships”.</p>	<p>Klein (2000) Jackson (2004)</p>
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Source: Adapted from Andersson (2014)

3.2.4 Progressive dimensions of place branding

Place branding has been the target of rigorous critique, especially within the geography literature, as it taps into selective local identities with conscious manipulation and promotion of city images (Philo & Kearns, 1993; Warnaby, 2013). Most of this research critiques place branding as: lacking local distinctiveness, commodifying place, standardising approaches, and producing quick “off-the-shelf” branding initiatives and solutions (Warnaby, 2013, pp. 346-347; see also Holcomb, 1994; Young & Lever, 1997). For while many cities claim to be unique, their highly publicised and promoted images with superlative texts are much more generic than their realities as too often the images used to market cities are highly selective in presentation (Holcomb, 1994). Place branding scholars tend to agree that a multidisciplinary approach is necessary to illustrate the application of branding to places (Hankinson, 2010; Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013).

The *progressive dimensions* of place branding addressed this critique. From 2010 onwards, scholars note the increased participation of multiple stakeholders such as residents, the media, and tourists in the participatory co-creating of place brand in more fluid and dynamic conceptualisations (Green et al., 2016; Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015). A place brand is different from other commercial product or service brands, and is created by multiple actors (Skinner, 2018). In this sense, places and place brands are not static, and are inherently uncontrollable, complex, and demand more collaborative and participatory approaches (Green et al., 2016; Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015).

Studies from the *progressive dimensions* emphasise the importance of bottom-up, co-creative processes and embrace “multitudinous place imagery and interpretations” in the place branding process allowing greater flexibility that makes places unique (Warnaby & Medway, 2013, p. 358; see also Green et al., 2016; Hudak, 2019). Scholars apply the concept of place brand co-creation to serve as a foundation for more collective and participatory approaches to place brand management (Green et al., 2016; see also Braun et al., 2013; Hudak, 2019; Warnaby & Medway, 2013, 2015). The genuine nature of place branding is anticipated as one of “interaction and dialogue” between stakeholders (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013, p. 69). Kavaratzis and Kalandides (2015) emphasise the “interactional view” of place brand and the creation process begins when people use “place-making elements such as materiality, practices, institutions and representations” to construct mental associations with the place (p. 1368). They further argue that place brands should incorporate “geographic understanding”

(i.e. Massey [1994] and Harvey [1996]), as it is the “social relations that produce places” and the “blend of different trajectories that gives place its specificity and distinctiveness” (p. 1373). Similarly, place branding is understood as “dialogue” between stakeholders because brands emerged out of the “raw materials” of identity in the stakeholders’ engagement and conversation (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013, p. 82).

3.3 Image and Place Branding

Place branding is commonly imagined as a process of “place re-imaging” to construct a “favourable place image” (Kavaratzis & Florek, 2021, p. 33). This section explores what constitutes an image, and how it is formed and communicated.

3.3.1 What is image?

It is widely recognised that “people encounter places through perceptions and images [...] and branding deals specifically with such mental images” (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005, p. 507). Places rely on promotional images to attract tourists, investors, and future residents (Ashworth & Voogd, 1990; Kotler et al., 1993), and images are a ‘bridge’ that links up place users or consumers to the brand (De Chernatony, 1993). Visual images with attentive or focused marketing content are an effective tool to “sell” cities; images of places can promote attractive and conducive living and working environments (Philo & Kearns, 1993). However, image is not an unequivocal concept, as there is a lack of agreement on its definition (Poiesz, 1989, p. 457).

In the field of psychology, *mental images* are “representations similar to those that arise during perception, but they are based on stored information rather than an immediate sensory input” (Kosslyn et al., 2014, p. 277). They further illustrate that “visual mental images lead to the experience of “seeing with the mind’s eye”. Similarly, auditory mental imagery leads to the experience of “hearing with the mind’s ear” (p.277). Therefore, mental imagery is made up of any or all of the senses – smell, taste, sight, sound and touch - as manifested in multisensorial way.

Hence, mental imagery has been defined in the field of psychology “as a distinct way of processing and storing multisensory information in working memory” (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003, p. 39; see also MacInnis & Price, 1987).

Similarly, from a destination image perspective, Son and Pearce (2005) and Huang and Gross (2010) have conducted studies on how “Australians’ multisensory images are stored and interpreted” by tourists. They note memorable tactile images includes things like touching native Australian animals with memorable visual images include Kangaroos, Koalas and the Opera House. These visual images are understood by tourists as “a complex amalgam of experiential and functional attributes” interpreted in a multisensorial setting (Rodrigues et al., 2020, p. 284).

An image may convey a message or idea more effectively and quickly than written words. In this way, the image is a “symbolic knowledge of a place” (Clouse & Dixit, 2017, p. 5). Lynch (1960) expresses that “it is difficult to think of Chicago without picturing Lake Michigan” (p. 66). What is striking is the way Lynch uses the words *think* and *picturing* to demonstrate the relationship between the stored information and image formation. From a marketing perspective, a place’s image is the “sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions” that people have of a place (Kotler et al., 1993, p. 20). As such, people’s attitude and actions towards the place are highly conditioned or influenced by the place’s image. Moreover, According to Kavaratzis (2004), the marketing application of place hinges upon the “construction, communication and management of the city’s [place’s] image, as it is accepted that encounters with the city take place through perceptions and images” (p. 58). Thus, the “object of city marketing is not the city ‘itself’, but its image” (p. 62) and images are perceptions and preferences constructed from the filtration process of individual’s understanding (Ashworth & Voogd, 1990). As places will always mean something to users (consumers), their place images are sometimes based on stereotypes, which are not static but dynamic (Freire, 2009). Therefore, a place marketer’s main challenge is to work with and against stereotypical images of places.

3.3.2 How is image formed?

Burgess (1974) suggests that there are two distinct approaches to place image formation. The first approach explores the physical elements of the mental image formed between an individual and the environment. Lynch (1960) and Downs and Stea (1973) adopt this approach in their study of the mental image. The second approach focuses on the meaning of places to people and less with their reduction to physical built features such as landmark, nodes, districts, edges, and paths in which it concentrates more on the “experiences of the individual and the image”, as a necessary simplification of the place reflects this unique experience (Burgess, 1974, p. 167). This second approach focuses on the “language people use about places [which provides] a valuable insight into this personal experience and the image may be studied through their descriptions” (p. 167).

It is noteworthy that as Relph (1976, p. 59) suggests, place images are not formed “simply in terms of patterns or physical and observable features, nor just as products or attitude, but as an indissociable combination of these”. Therefore, echoing Reynold and Gutman (1984), the image is “a network of meanings stored in memory” (as cited in Poiesz, 1989, p. 463). Basically, place images are the result of individual attributes plus a more holistic image (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Gartner, 1986).

In a study of the place image of three town centres in the English Midlands, Stachow and Hart (2010, p. 149) use five focus groups to examine how participants view the town centre image simply by requesting first-comes-to-mind unprompted responses using participants’ own words. Their findings show that image formation is a dynamic process and made up of a

complex set of impressions with four features “(cognitive, affective, social and physical) embodied within a customer experience” (Stachow & Hart, 2010, p. 145; see also Verhoef et al., 2009). A point to note is that the physical / symbolic element dimension of the image seems to be providing “opportunity for place marketers to differentiate between and add value to the place product” (p. 147, see also Schmitt, 1999).

In the study of the image of the city and the understanding of image formation from everyday citizens, Lynch (1960) examines mental images from the three cities of Boston, L.A., and Jersey in the USA. He suggests that mental image may be analysed into three components of: 1) identity 2) structure, and 3) meaning. These physical characteristics or qualities such as *landmarks, paths, nodes, edges, and districts* lead to the forming attributes of identity and structure in the mental image. This quality of the physical object gives it a high probability of evoking a strong or memorable image and is conceptualised as the “*imageability*” or “*legibility*” of places. From a marketing perspective, Hospers (2010) suggests that people perceive the city as a “built image” made of up Lynch’s (1960) *imageability* elements. He further elaborates that the concept of *imageability* can be utilised as the “picture postcard test” to investigate the relationship between the “city’s built environment and the city’s marketing” in visualizing the brand value of places (p. 2073).

These studies suggest that viewers can capture the character of a place by a specific scene or picture. The conventional postcard representing the cities usually “stress the highlights – the parts that capture the attention, that have high imageability” (Tuan, 1974, p. 204). In a similar way, the confidence with which people perceive the city is determined by the same five “urban image carriers” of *landmarks, paths, nodes, edges, and districts* (see Hospers, 2010, p. 2075; see also Knox & Marston, 2003). As such, the city’s image is formed and constructed based upon the essential quality of places; these attributes are taken and shaped into imagery that will be attractive to tourists, investors, and future residents (Garrod, 2009, p. 346; see also Tasci & Gartner, 2007).

Similarly, these visual experiences or attractions form the distinctiveness of the visual built environment and are *gazes* or *signs* that tourists are searching when travels to places. In short, tourism is understood as the activity in gathering or in “collection of signs” of tourist spots (Urry, 1992, p. 172).

3.3.3 How is image communicated?

Kavaratzis (2004, p. 66) suggests that most contacts with the city happen through “perceptions and images” as the way residents or visitors associate with and experience the city. He further elaborates that the image of the city is communicated through three distinct types of communication; namely, primary, secondary and tertiary. Primary communication relates to the “communicative effects” of city’s actions on four areas such as structure, infrastructure,

landscape and behaviour. These are reflected in examples of the flagship buildings, physical and built environments, and the lifestyles or behaviors of the residents. Secondary communication, as intentional marketing and public relations exercise, is the conventional practices of using outdoor advertising with logo and promotional slogan in communicating messages to the public. Finally, tertiary communication refers to “word of mouth” bolstered by media, competitors, and predominant by the residents themselves. Tertiary communication is outside the control of the conventional marketers as the sources of the communications are undetectable. Kavaratzis further emphasizes that city’s own residents are the most essential audience of place branding and the most important place marketers in communicating messages internally and externally.

In a study of re-imagining initiatives in Barcelona, Spain, Smith (2005) recognises the importance of memorable activities, events or festivals that people recall in a particular city also communicates “synecdochical city images” (Smith, 2005, p. 404). For cities that do not have iconic or flagship buildings, city officials sometimes rely on festivals or events to communicate to targeted audiences as the images of major events or celebrations may also be channeled to represent a destination and thus enhance the *imageability* of places. In such a way, city re-imagining initiatives via memorable events or festivals can transform a city image with the formation of “intended and unintended connotations” which then become connected to a city (Smith, 2005, p. 405). Barcelona has successfully communicated an image change in recent years with the effective making of extraordinary experiences and meanings associated with the construction of new “synecdoches and connotations” with three themes of sporting, heritage and architectural imagery (Smith, 2005, p. 417).

3.4 Co-creation and Place Branding

This section focuses on participatory place brand co-creation in generating place brand experiences, meanings, and narratives by engaging with stakeholders (Braun et al., 2013; Campelo et al., 2014; Florek & Insch, 2020; Hay et al., 2022; Rebelo et al., 2020). Co-creation place branding as a process is based upon the daily experiences or encounters of the place by its various stakeholders as a way of life living in places (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2021). This concept advocates “people of the place” at the heart of a branding strategy (Campelo et al., 2014, p. 154, Freire, 2009), and also by its focus on the “role of the co-creation of meanings and the collective experiences” of the stakeholders in the development of a place brand identity (Aitken & Campelo, 2011, p. 927). Co-creation in place branding is progressively conceived as a process that evolves as an interaction between internal and external stakeholders (Hanna & Rowley, 2011). Residents, as the main stakeholders, have a wide knowledge and experience of the place and could disagree with a streamlined place brand as promoted (Zenker et al., 2017). The section ends with the review of the different roles that residents play in the formation and communication of place brand stories (Hay et al., 2022), and on the role of the

resident as place brand ambassador in the place brand formation process (Braun et al., 2013; Palmer et al., 2013).

3.4.1 Residents as Co-creator in Place Branding

Local residents are important stakeholders in place branding (Braun et al., 2013; Insch, 2011; Freire, 2009). However, as highlighted by Insch (2011), residents are often neglected in the place branding process even though their attitude and attachment to their city might impact the perceptions of visitors (see also Braun et al., 2013). Few scholars examine the role of artist residents on participation in co-creating the place brand. Mittila and Lepisto (2013, p. 150) are the exception and explore the four roles of artists - creating stories, artifacts, atmosphere, and as entrepreneurs - in a rural ironworks village in Finland. Their research indicates that artists are key contributors to the place identity formation. Two of their roles are “indirect, namely stories about the artists and their artifacts”; the other two are more direct, namely “the atmosphere emanating from the communities of artists, and contemporary artists as entrepreneurs, residents”. The study suggests that the local artists were more than the active participants in the place branding process as stakeholders; it was their existence and the “atmosphere emanating from the communities of artists” that helped shape the place brand. In other words, the presence of artists in the community helped create the artistic atmospheric feel of being in the place. Furthermore, the study suggests that the city administrators could possibly identify relevant roles of the artist for future construction of place brand identity with adequate support in cultural infrastructure development.

Closer to home in Australia, Sandbach’s (2022) analysis of the Blue Mountains illustrates a working model of local creatives participating in a place branding process with the creation of *Mtns Made*. *Mtns Made* is a place brand highlighting the creative aspects of the local artists and professionals who had moved to the Blue Mountains. The study discusses authenticity and the role of local creatives in collaborating with “multiple actors [to] co-create meaning *in situ*” and to engage in “culturally produced visual representations” of the Blue Mountains area (p. 161). The findings demonstrate the role of the arts in place branding and why more attention should be paid to local culture and activities to produce meaningful places (Ashworth & Kavaratzis, 2011; Kalandides, 2011). The accumulating evidence of multiple roles played by the artists in the place branding process, as illustrated in both Sandbach (2022) and Mittila and Lepisto (2013), show the importance of giving “voice to local people” in the place brand co-creation process (Lichrou et al., 2014). Furthermore, the “atmosphere emanating from the communities of the artists” (Mittila & Lepisto 2013, p. 150) and place branding that involved the participation of local stakeholders can generate an authentic outcome (Sandbach, 2022).

The local resident of a destination is crucial in the destination branding as they are believed to hold the potential to be a brand’s biggest communicator and promoter (Braun et al., 2013; Freire, 2009; Kavaratzis, 2004). Residents make up an important part of the place, therefore,

interaction between residents and tourists forms a crucial part of the overall visitors' experience (Freire, 2009). As the brand's largest stakeholder, Rebelo et al. (2020) discusses the importance of co-created visual narratives in a place branding process with a group of residents in Carvalhal de Vermilhas, Portugal. The study creates and promotes a more "inclusive representation of place with the considerations of narratives, values and identities" (p. 423).

In developing a place brand for the Chatham Island in New Zealand, Campelo et al. (2014) explore the concept of "sense of place" in relation to a bottom-up co-creation place branding process with the islanders. This is what Tuan's (1975, p. 161) refers to as the "common experiences of life that may add up to a profound sense of place" as places are constructed out of such elements as distinctive odours, textual and visual qualities in the environment. The study investigates how meaning is co-constructed by the community in their daily lives and suggests that place brand is collective co-created experiences in the community with four fundamental elements: time, ancestry, landscape, and community. The interactions between these elements are of fundamental importance to understanding a sense of place; it is the "significance and meanings of each construct that determines the sense of place". They further elaborate that given that "brand meanings are socially constructed and culturally dependent", therefore, a destination branding strategy for places must understand what constitutes sense of place as experienced by local residents (Campelo et al., p. 161).

Place marketers promote places to tourists and residents concurrently with the aim of strengthening resident identification with the place, which can inspire residents to become place brand ambassadors (Braun et al., 2013; Palmer et al., 2013; Zenker & Petersen, 2014). However, Braun et al. (2013) suggest the role of residents is the most neglected aspect of place branding theory. As such, they attempt to establish a "resident orientated" approach to place branding by looking at three different roles played by the residents in the development and management of a place brand.

These are:

- Residents form the major part of the place brand through their way of life i.e. behaviour and characteristics;
- Residents as place "ambassadors" who bestow credibility to all communicated messages from the city;
- Residents as voters and citizens who are crucial for the "legitimisation of place branding" (p. 19)

This approach focuses on the various roles played by residents in the place branding process, not only as a target audience, but also as part of the place. They can be regarded as "both an aim and facilitator" of place branding (Zenker et al., 2017, p. 17) and reflect a strong place

attachment (Zenker & Petersen, 2014). Zenker et al. (2017) suggest this addresses the gap in the place branding literature which tends to emphasise tourists' perspectives more than residents' views. Participation and consultation with residents produces a more "effective and sustainable place branding [...] avoiding the pitfall of developing *artificial* place brands" (Zenker et al., 2017, p. 19). Zenker et al. (2017, p. 4) further argue that the implementation of place branding requires wider support from all stakeholders and communities as residents as the main stakeholders would prefer not to live under "forced brand values" (see also Zenker & Erfgen, 2014). The support and assistance from all stakeholders cannot be taken for granted. Campaigns against official place branding (see King & Crommelin, 2013; Oliveira & Panyik, 2015) demonstrate that residents voices are important as most marketing campaigns tend to focus on specific targeted audiences such as investors, tourists or future residents.

Andersson and Ekman (2009, p. 41) echo similar sentiments, arguing that citizen ambassador networks are not only a "communication channel", but also a "development resources" aiming to enhance the overall competitiveness of the place involved. Most importantly, the residents' role as ambassadors is also seen as potentially raising the local citizen pride. In *Let them do the work: a participatory place branding approach*, Zenker and Erfgen (2014) propose a three-stage participatory place branding approach involving residents. Stage 1 defines place vision with major place attributes; Stage 2 defines framework for participations, and Stage 3 supports place branding projects originated from the residents.

This three-stage approach goes "a step further and allow residents to not only influence the content and goals of branding, but the method and tools of communication, as well" (p. 228). Thus, to "let them do the work", the residents are engaged in multiple dialogue "multilogue" (Aitken & Campelo, 2011, p. 416) between all stakeholders in the process.

3.4.2 Co-creation of place narratives and meanings

Tourism destinations are structured as *products* and *narratives* to be marketed. The conception of place as narrative or story is a relevant conceptual tool in destination branding, highlighting the intangible dimension of place branding's role in the creation of the "place symbolic meanings" (Lichrou et al., 2008, p. 35). By utilising the co-created cultural narratives in places, Horlings et al. (2020) examine urban planning and place branding strategies building on local knowledge and perceived place meanings and images in the Finnish Town of Mantta. The study delves into an art-based method in a co-creation workshop focusing on the transformation of place meaning and identity in Mantta, from an industrial town towards a city of art. The study recognises that branding is a process where an "*inner storyline*" is constructed, reflecting people's stories and perceived images of place, which is then distinguished from an "*outer storyline*", that is communicated as a brand to the outside world (p. 1357). The findings illustrate that place branding is a process of building on the "resources, assets and values" of a place in which all stakeholders co-create collectively (p. 1357).

Gustafson (2001, pp. 5-16), in examining place meanings, suggests that there are variations in the spontaneously attributed meanings of place people expressed (see also Agnew, 1987; Relph, 1976; Canter, 1977;). He argues that the “meanings of a place are situated in the dynamic relationships between self, others and/or environment” in a three-pole triangular model within which various meanings of place could be mapped (see Figure 1, discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6).

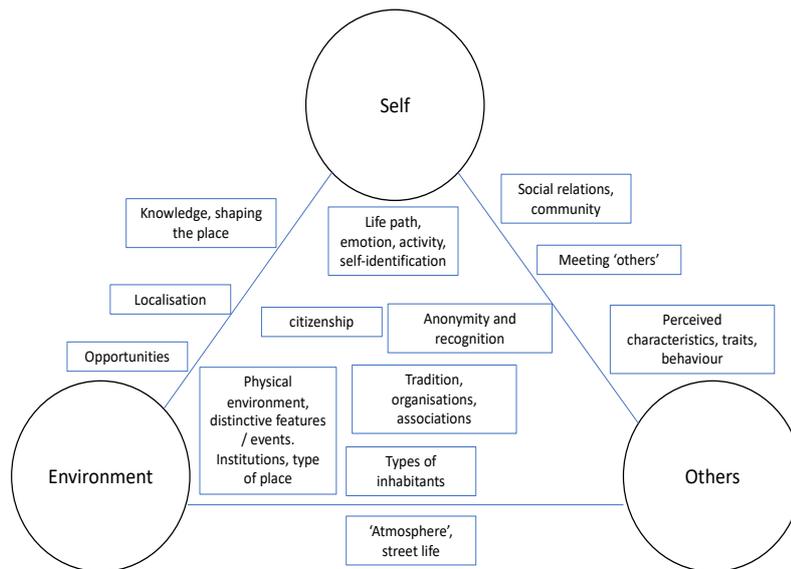


Figure 1: Meanings of place spontaneously attributed by the respondents (Adapted from Gustafson, 2001)

He suggests that places often have immense personal meanings associated with roots, sense of home and sense of community and “not all places mean the same to everybody”. What is useful in Gustafson’s (2001) study is that understanding of these various types of place meanings helps to better conceptualise the nature of tourist places, as meanings attributed to places are dependent on the “orientations” or “perspectives” of particular groups and individuals (Young, 1999, p. 387, see also Sack, 1992).

In the conceptualisation of a co-created city brand meaning-making process, Green et al. (2018), explore three socially constructed nonmarket-controlled elements that express symbolic messages about the city. As part of everyday meaning-making, these elements are: (1) urban reminders, (2) the arts, and (3) residential behaviour that expresses symbolic messages of the city. The study suggests that these “emblematic residential behaviours” express symbolic messages such as “language, food, dance, and dress” from the city that show how a specific group of people view the world and their way of life. Such symbolic messages are residents’ “values, beliefs, and lifestyles, and the city’s broader social environment” (p. 358). To Green et al. (2018), the co-creation meaning-making of place brand stems from “everyday urban life” interacting with the “micro-level” (personal) and “macro-level” (society)

in which various stakeholders co-create city brand meaning as part of sociocultural meaning-making (p. 366). As such, the artists (residents) are the “lifeblood of place brands” and the “voices are the foundation” that transform a place vision into a reality (Hudak, 2019, p. 106).

Residents communicate powerful unintended and intended messages about places and place brands (Braun et al., 2013; Green et al., 2018; Hanna & Rowley, 2011). In recognising this, Lichrou et al. (2014, p. 848) investigate how local people living and working in the touristic island of Santorini, Greece construct a sense of place via local narrative. Acknowledging the crucial role played by the local in co-creating place branding, the study reveals that there are multiple meanings of place and meanings of place are “fluid, contested and inconsistent”.

In the conceptualisation of place experiences and meanings in a dynamic process, Florek and Insch (2020) suggest that place brands are “built experience by experience” which requires synthesis of a city’s physical and social environments through interactions (p. 170). Therefore, from the local administration’s perspective, it is important to focus on how city brands are experienced and at the same time explore a leading role “in designing and assisting users to co-create valuable city brand experiences” (p. 163). Applying the concepts to the City of Helsinki, the study adopts the experiential thinking in the conceptualization of the *experiential approach* model of the city brand (see Figure 2, discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6).

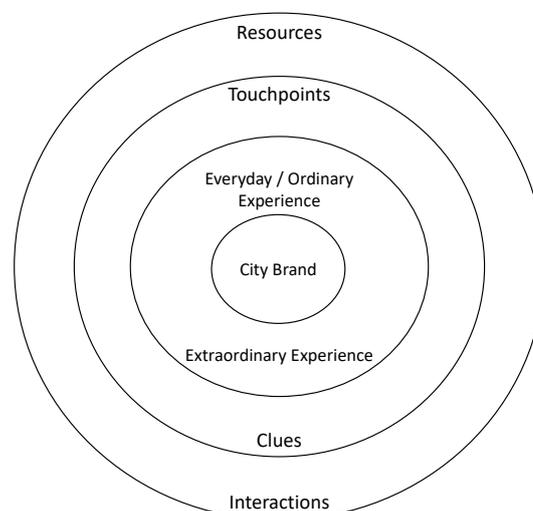


Figure 2: Conceptual Model of the City Brand – Experiential Approach

The four layers of circles represent the process in which the city’s “resources and interactions” within the city form the first contact “clues and touchpoints” that shape the experiences and finally the perception of the city brand (p. 170). In turn, if managed effectively, the “city is perceived (city brand image)” and with both types of experiences – “ordinary and extraordinary” created in the inner layers of the model (p. 170). The model implies, therefore, that “cities are

produced and consumed by people who are involved in a more or less absorbing experience” (p. 171).

According to this experiential approach in place brand formation, efforts to improve the brand experience “at every touchpoint is a way to build a coherent city brand and solidify brand relationships” (p. 170). In this way, place meaning-making has been shown to be a collective process happening through co-creation or co-production (Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

3.5 Gaps in Literature Review & Conclusion

This review provides sometimes differing or even conflicting concepts and perspectives of place branding. The current hypothetical place brand co-creation study attempts to address the following identified gaps in the place branding literature:

- According to Oguztimur & Akturan’s (2015) review from 1988-2014, there is disconnect between theories and approaches in place branding. As such they suggest establishing more commonality between marketing-oriented and planning-oriented approaches. A more “holistic viewpoint” combining these marketing and planning-oriented approaches is required to move away from a superficial, commodified products to incorporate a more physical, social-economic, and cultural aspects of places.
- Scholars have identified the need for more bottom-up participatory approaches in place branding (Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015; Ripoll Gonzales & Gale, 2020; Zenker & Erfgen, 2014). City administrators have focused their place branding efforts on attracting external visitors, investors, and talent to their place (Eshuis et al., 2014; Therkelsen et al., 2010), sometimes to the detriment of the local community (Kavaratzis et al., 2018). As there is no one-size-fits-all formula for place branding, providing a “participatory framework for interaction” is critical to the success of place branding process and place development and management (Ripoll Gonzales & Gale, p. 9).
- To rectify tensions between “place-as-experienced and place-as-marketed” (Hudak, 2019, p. 99), there have been calls for more participatory or co-creating approaches in place branding with residents being the core internal stakeholders playing roles as “co-creators, co-producers, and co-consumers” of brand, and recognising their role as “generators of place identity and authenticity” (Hay et al., 2022, p. 328; see also Campelo et al., 2014; Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013). After all, according to Hudak (2019), “residents influence, and are influenced by, the place brand more than any other stakeholders [...] as residents’ voices are the foundation [...] and, residents are the lifeblood of place brand” (Hudak, 2019, pp. 97-108).

In conclusion, this chapter explored three areas related to place branding: (1) overview and historical roots of place branding; (2) image and place branding; and (3) co-creation and place branding. The overview traced the possibilities of using place branding as an approach to integrate and guide place management conceptualised from the angles of *marketing*, *geography* and the integrated *progressive* approaches. The next section focused on the concept of the image of the city, suggesting image formulation and image communication play crucial roles in place branding as all encounters with the city take place through perceptions and images. Finally, the review explored the concept of stakeholder co-creation and highlighted how place branding is a collective meaning-making co-creation process occurring through stakeholders participation. The gaps in the literature are then revealed, as these areas remain under-studied and lack empirical evidence. Chapter 4 introduces how I intend to contribute to filling these gaps through my research.

Chapter 4.0 Methodology

4.1 Methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the concepts and methods used to develop the methodology: a multi-method exploratory, qualitative visual-based analysis. Specifically, the research uses photo-elicitation, semi-structured interviews and a focus-group co-creation workshop with young artists in Cairns. This multi-method, visual methodology was employed to study the overall research objectives and research questions, which focused on young artists' views, experiences, and meanings of arts and cultural images in the context of place branding. For data collection, I followed the four main sequential steps of place immersion, participant recruitment, photo-elicitation interviews, and a focus-group co-creation workshop. For data analysis, I used thematic analysis to examine the visual and textual data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Table 4 below illustrates the relationship between research questions, concepts, methods, and analysis used to conduct the place-based study. To explain Table 4 in context, I use Figure 3 as a guide to illustrate the overall framework with the concepts and methods utilised in a participatory co-creation place branding process.

Table 4: Relationship between research questions, methods and concepts

Research Questions (RQ1)	Concepts	Data Collection Methods	Data Analysis
RQ1: How do young artists present Cairns as a place of arts and culture?	Guided by Lynch (1960) image of city 'imageability' elements of Paths, Edges, Nodes, Landmarks and Districts	Photo elicitation semi-structured interview	Braun & Clarke's (2022) Thematic Analysis
RQ2: How can an enhanced image of Cairns as an arts and culture destination be co-created in a place branding process?	Florek and Insch's (2020) Conceptual Model of the City Brand: Experiential Approach	Focus Group Workshop	Braun & Clarke's (2022) Thematic Analysis

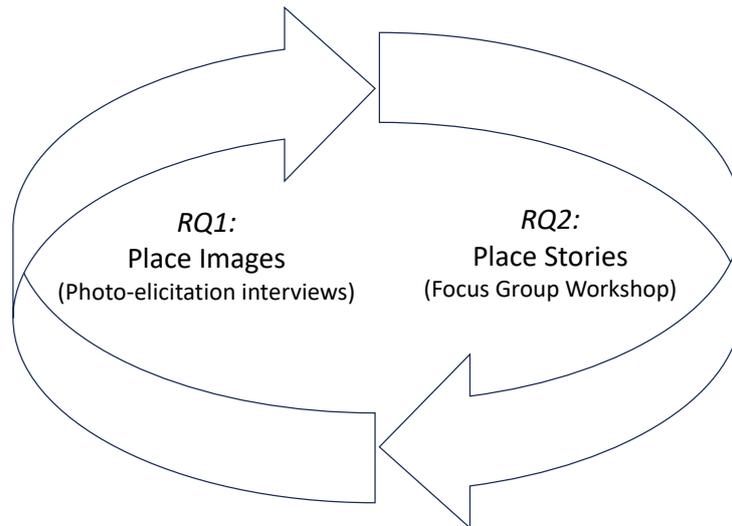


Figure 3: Relationship between RQ1 and RQ2

The study is structured as a multi-method exploratory, visual analysis to understand the meanings young artists ascribe to Cairns' arts and cultural places. In framing the study, I consider place not just as a geographical entity, but also as a result of manifold, dynamic and constantly evolving social interactions with intertwined sets of meanings (Massey, 1994). Ordinary places become unique or special places when they are ascribed meanings and values which appeal to certain groups (Young, 1999; see also Urry, 1990). In this study, I thus adopted an *interpretivist-constructivist* approach to understand place image experiences and meanings (Creswell, 2009, p. 8; see also Mertens, 1999). This helped guide the research where the intention was to understand the images provided by young artists with meanings co-constructed through their interactions with others and the surrounding environment. Ideas of social constructionism are relevant insofar as they emphasise a process of on-going dialogue with different people constructing multiple meanings in different ways even in relation to the same occurrence (Crotty, 1998; Creswell, 2009; Gergen, 2009). Any given place can have numerous sets of perceptions, meanings in accordance with various contexts. The emphasis here is that collectively, my role as a researcher is understood as part of the data production process in co-creating the place meanings with the artists (Braun & Clarke, 2022). I also recognise that my own background shapes my interaction with, and interpretation of, the research in the process of knowledge sharing and co-creation. The data thus reflects meanings co-created by the participants and myself, in a situated context. This process of dialogue and knowledge creation with the young artists shaped collective co-created concepts and meanings of Cairns as the Arts and Cultural Destination of Northern Australia.

- **Concepts Guiding the Research Question 1 (RQ1)**

RQ1 asks: how do young artists present Cairns as a place of arts and culture? To answer this question, the research explores what a mental image is, how it is formed and how the image is projected and communicated. Using ideas of *imageability* from Lynch (1960), I situate my research as evolving from urban design's visual framework. As illustrated in Figure 3, the place images (mental images and photographs) were gathered in a photo-elicitation interview and analysed based on the three place attributes of meanings, settings, and activities (Relph, 1976). The themes generated from the collective imagery helped in the formation of the *place stories* as reflected in RQ2. These *place stories* contribute to the enhanced image of Cairns with arts and cultural characteristics as manifested in various places in the city.

- **Concepts Guiding the Research Question 2 (RQ2)**

To answer RQ2: how can an enhanced image of Cairns as an arts and culture destination be co-created in a place branding process? I utilised Florek and Insch's (2020) conceptual model of the city brand from the *experiential perspective* in a workshop co-creating *place stories* with the young artists (see Figure 2 from Chapter 3, p. 45). Through the exploratory focus group dialogues, this co-created enhanced image of Cairns is manifested via *place stories*.

As discussed in the literature review, Florek and Insch (2020) argue "brands are built experience by experience" and are constantly being re-constituted or re-created through the physical and virtual exchanges of experiences, knowledges, ideas, and opinions by many stakeholders living, visiting, and working in the city. As depicted in Figure 2, these place brand experiences are built on different kinds of experiences people interact with a city, which are built on "clues" and based on city brand "touchpoints" being managed and delivered, which in turn, derive from the city's "resources" and "interactions" within and with the city (p. 170). My own experiences, the young artists' experiences and the combined co-created experiences detailed in later chapters provide clues and touchpoints for the city's future place brand formation purposes. Collectively, these experiences constitute part of the city elements and "any ensuing symbolic messages about the city, form part of sociocultural meaning-making and everyday urban life" (Green et al., 2018).

4.2 Data Collection

4.2.1 Data Collection Stage 1: Place Immersion

Data collection involved various data sources such as (non-audio recorded) informal discussions with tourists and residents, photo-elicitation interviews and a focus group workshop with young artists over a period of one year. In addition, the data collection process spanned a total of four stages as illustrated in Figure 4. Overall 10 interviews were conducted and four participants participated in the co-creation focus group workshop. Next, I explain each stage of the data collection in detail.

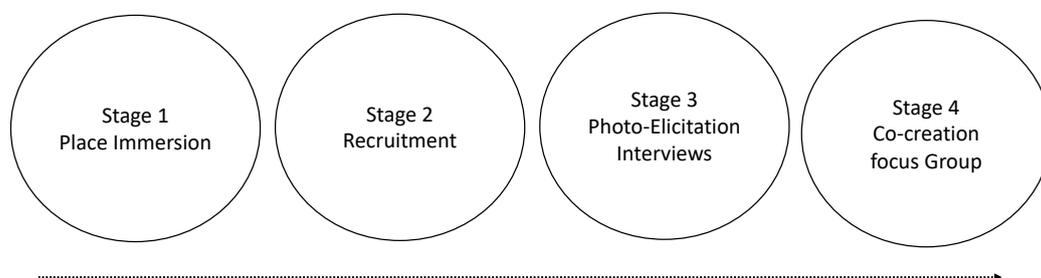


Figure 4: Data Collection

Stage 1, place immersion, aims to gain insights into Cairns' city fabric in general and arts and culture characters in particular. Before moving to Cairns, I first developed a broad understanding of the city by undertaking a desk review to gather information from literature, books, historical documents, newspapers, and also relevant studies and reports from the Cairns Regional Council (CRC). The SoARTS studies are particularly relevant and updated with insightful analysis of Cairns' arts and cultural development.

When in Cairns, the bi-monthly *Cairns Vibrance* (by CRC) and *Tropic* (locally-published) are two publications with *Cairns Vibrance* being the 'arts and cultural events' magazine of Cairns and the *Tropic* covers general topics on business, health, lifestyle, fashion, food, arts, and sport of Cairns. In a nutshell, the *Tropic* magazine has been positioned as the 'lifestyle' magazine of Cairns with 8,000 copies in circulation every two months, distributing to cafes, shops, hotels, the airports and outlets across the region including Cairns, Mission Beach, Mossman and the Tableland (Tropicnow.com.au, 2022). These publications are a valuable bridge to a plethora of virtual weblinks and other locally driven arts and cultural events, activities and happenings

sometimes not distributed or communicated in the conventional channels. This ground information opened up possibilities to connect with the local art scenes and was useful in the preparation for the recruitment drive.

Besides desktop knowledge, I also gained first-hand experiences and serendipitous encounters by attending events, exhibitions and visiting local markets during weekends. This was a refreshing way for a newcomer like me to appreciate or also to 'feel' the tempo of life of the communities in Cairns. Living close to the JCU's campus in Cairns Student Lodge allowed me to stay in touch with events and activities on campus and most importantly, it allowed me to get to know what university students think of life living and studying in Cairns. During this stage, I also conducted regular casual conversations with locals and tourists while in the CBD area to gain first-hand knowledge and impressions of the city.

As this study is focused on the image of Cairns, and to capture the existing local art scenes, my initial perceptions of Cairns were recorded with photographs. The selective images were clearly marked in folders in a research photographic journey album based on themes including people, activities, streetscapes, etc. In addition to visual data, textual data were also collected through informal (not recorded) chats with tourists and residents. The insights gained by interacting with the locals were recorded in research diaries and continuous field notes. Photo-taking and informal casual chats allowed a rich exchange of information that aided the next stage of data collection. Keeping a photographic research journal allowed me to keep track of daily activities with notes reflecting my personal experiences as a research student studying, volunteering and living in Cairns.

The place immersion stage of data collection provided the 'nuts and bolts' for the next stage of recruitment. More importantly, the place immersion stage provided:

- An overview of the city and, in particular, the arts and cultural scenes and places of Cairns;
- Necessary and credible links and personal contacts; and
- Early identification of venues or places for the interviews and focus groups.

4.2.2 Data Collection Stage 2: Recruitment

The recruitment stage involved the identification of participants to take part in the research. This section explains the why and how aspects of the recruitment in detail. The recruitment of the participants commenced after the approval from the JCU's Human Ethics Research Committee in September, 2022 (see Appendix A). Potential participants were told that participation was entirely voluntary, and participants could refuse to answer questions deemed inappropriate. In addition, all prospective recruits were informed that their identities would be kept confidential and they would be identified only by a number or general descriptor

as identifiers for data analysis purposes. All participants were assured that any personal details such as email address and telephone they had provided would not be given to third parties. To show a token of appreciation, all participants were given a \$20 gift voucher for purchase at a locally-run arts and craft shop in the Cairns city centre.

Once the interviewees agreed to participate, they were sent the set of interview questions and the consent forms to participate via emails, and given adequate time to reply. They were informed that the interview would consist of a semi-structured set of interview questions, and respondents were not restricted as to the length or detail of their responses.

To capture a broader range of perspectives and to incorporate variegated creative backgrounds as well as a better mix of age groups, I targeted between 10-15 young artists from a suite of creative backgrounds. I reached saturation point after 10 artists. In terms of sampling of the participants, I use a purposive sampling to select my interviewees. This approach allowed me to select the recruits that make up the sample.

The selection criteria led me to artists that were:

- Referrals from organisations or established artists within a range of artforms;
- Between 18-30 years old; and
- Currently residing, working, or studying in Cairns.

Recruitment was structured as a two-pronged approach. First, I wrote to local arts galleries, arts centres, museums and other relevant creative organizations by email or made a personal visits. Next, I followed-up artists recommended by organisations for possible follow-up recruitments. Key organisations (governments, not-for-profits, companies) included:

- Cairns Regional Council
- Cairns Art Gallery
- The Tanks Art Centre
- The Court House Gallery
- Bulmba-ja Arts Gallery Queensland
- Cairns Museum / Cairns Historical Society
- TAFE Cairns, Queensland
- Cairns Arts Society
- The Kite Gallery
- Golden Orb Studio
- Doongal Aboriginal Arts and Artefacts
- UMI Arts Aboriginal & Torres Straits

It was a rewarding process recruiting participants through local arts organisations and established local artists. The interactive process allowed me to better understand local ways of doing things and how local artists' way of life and practice of arts in the city. For example, participating in local art events enabled me to recruit participants after I shared with the established artists by explaining to them my purpose of the research and my requirements of the recruitments. My attendance at the Cairns Indigenous Arts Fair (CIAF) in 2022 was particularly useful in expanding my appreciation of the vibrancy of Cairns' indigenous creatives as a newcomer to Cairns.

I gained access to my participants through contact information provided by the established artists and organisations. With participant contacts established, I contacted the prospective candidates via emails with introductory notes and information detailing study's objectives and their roles and methods of participation in the study. I explained the data would be used only for the explicit purpose of my thesis document. After their agreement to participate, I organised an *informational session* to share the research objectives, as well as format/guidelines for the interviews. The session was followed with a brief question-and-answer component.

After the informational session and before the one-on-one interview sessions, participants were to conduct the following steps:

- Ponder the *visual mental images* that represent arts and culture in Cairns;
- Survey, verify and to take the photographs of the places or events they imagined; and
- Share their views and reasons why their photographs were representative.

These three points constituted the main points for discussion in the interviews. These photographs, as derived from *visual mental images*, would serve as the 'talking point' in the interview and guide the discussion. In the process, the collective photographs helped contextualise the tangibles and intangibles arts and culture attributes and meanings within the city's fabric. At the end of the interview session, I gathered the understanding and meanings associated with these photographs as provided by the participants in visual and textual narratives. At the end of the recruitment drive, I had recruited a total of ten (10) young artists to take part in the study.

4.2.3 Data Collection Stage 3: Photo-Elicitation Interviews

Rakic and Chambers (2012) identify a growing use of visual methods and the willingness of tourism researchers to explore innovative approaches to research. However, while visual imagery has been analysed in the context of destination image, there is very little in the context of arts and culture themes. The research filled in the gap and was designed to inform our

understanding of the place brand image and the role of image formation agents in a place, especially from the locals, to project an art and culture image of Cairns.

The idea to use photographs in this study has not been shaped in a vacuum. Professionally, I often relied upon photographs and other visual-aided graphical representations to *sell* urban planning ideas and concepts to intended audiences. Of the two methods used, the photo-elicitation method *drives* the research as photograph contents serve as the main *talking points* for the interviews. Photographs can be utilised in a variety of ways in interviews. They “may be used as prompts during in-depth interviews or focus groups with the participants” (Balomenou & Garrod, 2016, p. 335). In addition, “advocates of photo-elicitation, recall, argue that photographs can prompt interviewees to talk about a wide range of things [...] they can produce description, explanation, analysis, emotion, affect, and so on” (Rose, 2022, p. 319). For this research, I deployed Harper’s (2002) definition of photo-elicitation. According to Harper, photo-elicitation is “based on the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview”(p. 13). He further elaborates that, in the context of photo-elicitation, it “enlarges the possibilities of conventional empirical research” as the method also “evokes information, feelings, and memories that are due to the particular form of representation” (p. 13). He concludes that:

“when two or more people discuss the meaning of photographs they try to figure out something together [...] When a photo is made of that shared view, the difference in perception can be defined, compared and eventually understood to be socially constructed by both parties” (p. 21-22).

In addition to being used as prompts, the photographs used in this study were employed to facilitate responses that express concepts, ideas, meanings, and experiences that are beyond textual communication. The photo-elicitation method “evokes information, feelings, and memories that are due to the photograph’s particular form of representation” (Harper, 2002, p. 13). As “places come to represent memory, meaning and association for individuals, groups and societies” (Montgomery, 1998, p. 101), photographs or pictures provide an appropriate avenue for sharing in interviews.

One of the purposes of using photo-elicitation was to enhance the interview process as it presents “a fun, creative and multi-sensory alternative to conventional technique” (Matteucci, 2013, p. 190). Furthermore, the use of photographs as the medium of visual storytelling allows the study to better establish common understanding between the objects or events from the photographs, participants and the researchers. Perhaps the most beneficial point of using photographs is the notion that it is likely easier for the participants to explain or express the objects or events of the photographs with the identifiable spots or locations within the study area. Therefore, with the photographs provided by the artists, I would be able to connect or link the photographs with Lynch’s (1960) imageability framework.

Matteucci (2013) reviews four different types of photo-elicitation in the social science research with visual materials:

- produced by the researcher;
- gathered by the researcher;
- produced by the research participant, or;
- gathered by the research participant (p. 191).

Based on the above categorisations, the visual material being used could possibly be produced (primary data) or gathered (secondary data) by either the researcher or participant in the research. In the field of tourism studies, researchers might use “advertisements, postcards, artifacts and photographs of people, places or cultural events to interpret people’s identity, experiences, motivation, sense of place and meanings” (p. 191). My study involved a mixture of researcher’s produced and participants’ produced and gathered visual materials. Perhaps Matteucci (2013) captures the pros and cons of utilising the different methods of photo-elicitation most succinctly :

“Researcher found images may introduce some positive bias into how informants recollect and present their experiences, and they may lack the narrative power that visual materials assembled by research participants might have. Although limitations are found in other versions of photo elicitation too, respondents’ gathered or produced images may unveil experiences which are more deeply rooted in the respondents’ realities” (p. 196).

In line with the above definitions, this research requested the participants (young artists) to produce and bring along three photographs to the one-on-one interview session. Photo-elicitation works well with interviews. In qualitative research, there are different types of interviews: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. As each has specific guides for a qualitative research framework, I selected methods that would integrate well with the photo-elicitation method as both are intended to be conducted concurrently. In comparing the various interview methods, structured interviews were deemed too rigid in format. Their predetermined structure lacks flexibility and therefore prohibits a more interactive exchange in the interview. I adopted semi-structured interviews as they offer flexibility in terms of response, interaction and exchange between the interviewer and interviewees. I chose this method to fill in the knowledge gap I could not ascertain through existing documents due to the diversity of experiences on perceptions and images.

For the interviews, I organised a process based on a Protocol of Research (see Appendix A) where questions are organised under three topics:

- Creative backgrounds of the artists;
- Overall impressions and top-of-mind mental images of Cairns;
- Images of the arts and cultural scenes of Cairns.

Questions were framed as a dialogue, such as “tell me about your creative background; what do you think is special in your photograph?”. Semi-structured interviews of this nature are more adaptable than more structured techniques such as questionnaires, allowing the researcher to hunt down ideas, and inquire into motives and feelings in a way that questionnaires cannot. Participants could describe, in their own words and images, how to present Cairns as an arts and cultural place.

In total, 10 photo-elicitation semi-structured interviews were completed between November 2022 and March 2023. The interview with each participant lasted approximately thirty minutes and the interviews were audio recorded with the iPhone voice recorder app and the photographs labelled. Interview participants were as follows (see Table 5):

Table 5: Interview participants

No.	Status	Age	Identifiers	Remarks
1	TAFE Student (Visual Artist)	22	Artist E1	Interviewed 19-11-2022
2	TAFE Student (Visual Artist)	22	Artist A2	Interviewed 21-11-2022
3	TAFE Student (Musical Performing Artist)	22	Artist A3	Interviewed 21-11-2022
4	TAFE Student (Musical Performing Artist)	22	Artist I1	Interviewed 21-11-2022
5	Practicing Tattoo Artist & Musician	28	Artist J2	Interviewed 21-11-2022
6	Practicing Tattoo Artist	24	Artist A1	Interviewed 28-11-2022
7	Practicing Artist/Local Arts shop co-founder	27	Artist J1	Interviewed 19-11-2022
8	Senior Student (Visual Artist)	18	Artist G1	Interviewed 10-03-2023
9	Practicing Visual Artist	22	Artist S1	Interviewed 14-03-2023
10	Practicing Multi Artforms Artist	28	Artist J3	Interviewed 17-03-2023

Interviews were conducted at various venues with preferences suggested by the participants. For the visual and musical performing artists from TAFE Queensland, the interviews were conducted in their studios. These settings were ideal as the venues provided a familiar and quiet environment without the presence of others. Prior to the formal interview, I typically engaged in small talk about my professional background and the overall objective of the study. This built a sense of understanding and set the mood for the interview. After interviews were complete, the recorded voice data was transcribed and reviewed line-by-line through the coding process. I describe the details of the data analysis in Chapters 5 and 6.

4.2.4 Data Collection Stage 4 – Focus-Group Co-Creation Workshop

As the last stage of the data collection, I organised a focus group workshop with the young artists to share my analysis and findings. The objective of the focus group workshop was to co-create the place brand based on the themes generated from the findings. Before the focus group session, I conducted the following:

- Explored the venue and time for the workshop;
- Emailed all the participants whom I interviewed earlier to invite them for the workshop with details on date, venue, and durations of the workshop;
- Finalised the first-cut thematic analysis with candidate themes generated from the previously conducted interviews (these findings served as main themes for exploration in the workshop); and
- Printed out the presentation materials for the workshop.

A week before the focus group, in finalising the attendance list, from the total ten (10) emails I sent out for the invitations, I received a total of four (4) confirmed reply to participate, two (2) replied with apologies for unavailability, and four (4) with no reply. From the four (4) confirmed participants, two (2) are practicing artists and two (2) are current students.

After the confirmation for participations, I followed-up with an email based on a Protocol of Research (see Appendix A) in which the content of the workshop was organised with the following topics:

- What is the collective imagery of Cairns as represented in arts and cultural themes?
- What is the unique selling point or distinctive features of this collective imagery?
- What are the main themes from the collective imagery?
- What are the key steps to establish the main themes of the collective imagery?
- How do we present the arts and cultural destination themes of Cairns in a storytelling way?

To start the co-creation workshop, I began with a non-recorded brief self-introduction. This was followed with the participants taking turns to share with the group their creative backgrounds and experiences living, working, and studying in Cairns. I then presented the overall objectives of the workshop and elaborated their roles as co-creators together with me as the researcher in this engagement. Furthermore, I also reiterated that this workshop formed the last leg of the co-creation place branding process in which their views were encapsulated into the three themes of the co-creation workshop. The participants were made to feel like a place 'brander' as if we were engaged in a 'real' process even though it was conceptualised as a hypothetical place branding study.

I allocated about 20 minutes for each theme, with each participant articulating their views and stories related to each. I summarised the key points of each theme after hearing a complete round of articulations from all the participants. The full workshop completed in 90 minutes and it was fully voice-recorded for analysis. The discussions and findings of the workshop are elaborated in Chapters 5 and 6.

4.3 Data Analysis

The photo-elicitation interviews and co-creation focus group workshop generated three sets of data for the study. These are interlinked-components and I refer to these components as *visual-textual datasets* in the analysis. To better reflect the nature of my study, I explored the kind of methods of data collection that are most pertinent to the study of place images which combined visual and textual contents. In the literature on place branding, most studies are predominantly textual-based and rarely incorporate images due to various considerations, such as time constraints, costs and other factors. However, content analysis of images generated by users from social media platforms are more readily available in the tourism studies' literature (Acuti et al., 2018; Skinner, 2018). These studies apply a content analysis of visual information (pictures) and textual information (hashtags#) available on social networks to analyse or reconstruct the place and brand image of cities. Notably, these studies rely on a relatively higher quantity of the number of images to study and generate place brand image and identity.

Considering this research has been contextualised within Cairns and with young artists as the sole participants, the analysis was more manageable when comparing with the higher quantity of the type of user-generated images which required a more sophisticated software to assist in the analysis. In view of this, I referred to Braun and Clarke's (2022) latest version of the *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide* for the content analysis and interpretation. This latest version of their highly cited approach allows "a lot of flexibility around dataset composition" (p. 27). Notably, datasets such as diary entries, interviews transcripts, and focus groups data types are all "amenable for analysis with reflexive thematic analysis" (p. 27). Furthermore, in the thematic analysis, the researcher is essentially a sculptor and not an archaeologist as themes do not passively derive from data but are actively developed by the researcher through their methodical interaction with the datasets. The interpretation of data is itself a "sense-making activity" as well as "meaning-making" (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 199).

For my visual data analysis, I incorporated Rose's (2022) visual image framework to complete the full analysis of the images collected. Before the analysis of the dataset, I prepared and compiled the dataset systematically.

In particular, I followed this framework:

- Transcription of all audio data (from the interviews and focus group) into a textual content for analysis;
- Categorisation of visual data (photographs collected) into identifiable files linked to the participants;
- Printed and arranged the photographs into an A-4 booklet for the analysis of the codes, themes in a visual thematic mapping format.

Specifically, sets of data were extracted from the (33) photographs collected. First, I marked the locations of these photographs into Cairns' street map with markers pinpointing the exact locations within the city framework. This step allowed me to conduct subsequent analysis with the study of the five themed elements of Lynch's (1960) imageability concept of paths, edges, nodes, landmarks and districts. After this step, I then analysed the visual contents of the photographs following Rose's (2022) framework.

More specifically, I asked a series of questions for each image:

- What is being shown? What are the components of the image? How are they arranged?
- Is it one of a series?
- Where is the viewer's eye drawn to in the image? and why?
- What is the vantage point of the image?
- What relationships are established between the components of the image visually?
- What use is made of colour?
- What do the different components of an image signify?
- Is more than one interpretation of the image possible?
- How do different audiences interpret this image? (p. 346)

After the completion of the visual analysis, I analysed the *textual* dataset from the ten (10) interviews (following Braun and Clarke's [2020]). Table 6 depicts the phases of the process in which I performed a combined visual and textual analysis incorporating the coding system as specified under Phase 2 of the Braun & Clarke's (2022) analysis.

Table 6: Six Phases of Thematic Analysis adopted for Data Analysis

Phases	Descriptions
<p><u>Phase 1:</u> Familiarising with the dataset</p>	<p>Familiarising with the content of dataset, according to Braun and Clarke (2022), is a “process of immersion” and it involves reading and re-reading with the transcripts of data (p. 35). In fact, besides reading and re-reading, I made brief notes on fresh ideas or insights from the textual data and visual data. In addition, during this stage, I attempted to make sense from the visual and textual data even before the commencement of the next coding phase. In addition, to verify some of the features from the photographs, I made site familiarisation trips to verify and understand the significance of the photographs in relation to the city framework.</p>
<p><u>Phase 2:</u> Coding</p>	<p>As coding is specific at “capturing single meanings or concepts” on the data, therefore, I systematically worked through the dataset from a range of levels to uncover the “latent” meanings in the coding of data (p. 35).</p>
<p><u>Phase 3:</u> Generating initial themes</p>	<p>The aim of this stage is “to start identifying shared patterned meaning across the dataset [...] where codes typically capture a specific or a particular meaning, themes describe broader, shared meanings” (p. 35).</p> <p>According to Braun and Clarke (2022), Phase 3 used to be referred to as the “searching for themes” phase back in 2006 when they first published the research paper. As the thoughts evolved, they changed the word from “searching” to “generating” themes. This is more appropriate as the “process is not like an excavation, where meaning is lying there”. Rather, theme development “is an active process; themes are constructed by the researcher” (p.35). Therefore, themes are constructed based upon my positionality, knowledge and insights, the dataset and research questions. In this phase, I generated six (6) “candidate themes” in the process.</p>
<p><u>Phase 4:</u> Developing and reviewing themes</p>	<p>Themes are predominately conceptualised in two different ways: as topic summaries or as patterns or shared meaning underpinned by a central organising concept. In my view, this is the most crucial phase of the analysis as “radical revision” is possible. In fact, when I started to examine closer the relationship between the candidate themes and the wider context of the research, I decided to consolidate a few candidate themes from the last phase to better reflect the pattern and shared meaning related to the dataset.</p>

Phase 5: Refining, defining and naming themes	This is a fine-tuning phase in which each theme is clearly demarcated, and is built around a strong “core concept or essence” (p.36). Phase 5 emphasises the importance of each theme being built around a strong core concept. To phrase it another way, “What story does this theme tell?” and also “How does this theme fit into [the] overall story about the data?” (p. 36).
Phase 6: Writing up	The essence of this phase is to “start writing early on” (p.36).

Adapted from Braun & Clarke (2022 pp. 35-36)

After the completion of the visual-textual analysis, I generated three main themes from the contents and these themes were utilised collectively in the co-creation workshop. After the full transcription of the data, I proceeded to analyse the contents following the framework provided by Florek and Insch’s (2020) *conceptual model of the city brand from the experiential perspective* (see Figure 2, Chapter 3, p. 45). These are:

- Analysed and identified the resources and interactions in the city;
- Analysed and identified the clues and touchpoints in the city;
- Analysed and identified both extraordinary and everyday experiences in the city.

As the city brand is built on the place’s resources and interactions of different stakeholders, the young artists’ experiences in the research and the branding process contributed to the Cairns’ city brand. In this way, the artists play a critical role in the co-creation and provided useful foundational bedrock for future stakeholder-driven place brand formation. A full discussion of the analysis and findings are in Chapter 5 for RQ1 and Chapter 6 for RQ2.

4.4 Conclusion

A destination brand derived its uniqueness from the place’s physical and social attributes, and is ultimately used and supported by the local residents, business operators and overall communities. Conceptualised as a resident-driven study on Cairns’ arts and culture image, the phot-elicitation interviews opening up a space for the artists living in Cairns to reflect and share the social and cultural meanings that they attached to their arts and culture places. Partly due to my own interest in photographs, I’ve found deep pleasure in the employment of photo-elicitation as a method in the research. I resonate with Harper’s (2002) view that “photo elicitation mines deeper shafts into a different part of human consciousness than do words-alone interviews” (pp. 22-23). By combining photo-elicitation interviews with a focus-group co-creation workshop, this study strives to provide a more thorough understanding of the concept of place image and also the potential of artists in becoming the key drivers of Cairns’ place brand.

Despite the importance of the visual in tourism (Urry, 1990), their utilisation by researchers still remain marginal but have realised the enormous advantages of using photographs in qualitative studies (Rakic & Chambers, 2010). Therefore, the utilisation of photo-elicitation in the current research is potentially a very valuable strategy in the place branding co-creation process as it empowers participants to express concepts and feelings that would not ordinary be possible using verbal interview techniques. Moreover, when expressing on experience, connections, and perceptions people have of their place, it is more revealing to ask the participants, through their photographs, to elaborate and share key messages that are most critical to them, than having the researcher make assumptions to understand those points raised (Balomenou & Garrod, 2010). Place branding unlike other commercial products or service brands is actually created by multiple actors (Skinner, 2018). Photo-elicitation, in its various forms, should be embraced by researchers as a “fun, creative and multi-sensory alternatives” to conventional approaches in place branding research (Matteucci, 2013, p. 196). This is because the images revealed by the artists are associated with experiences and meanings, which are more deeply rooted in the participant’s realities. In addition, photo-elicitation allows a favourably extend a conversation by stimulating dialogue when two or more persons discuss the meaning of images they try to understand together (Harper, 2002). In the process, it allows the participants to convey multiple subjective meanings, which may be articulated in the viewing process (Matteucci, 2013). In the next chapter, I shall present the analysis and findings springing from this journey in a co-creation way utilising the multi-method approach in the study.

Chapter 5.0 Research Question 1 (The Collective Imagery of Cairns): Discussions and Findings

5.1 Overview

This chapter answers Research Question 1 (RQ1) and focuses on the collective imagery of Cairns. Chapter 6 then explores the co-created *place stories* with the artists using themes generated from RQ1 (see Figure 3, Chapter 4, p. 49). As a reminder of these RQs, they are:

- RQ1: How do young artists present Cairns as a place of arts and culture? (Chapter 5).
- RQ2: How can an enhanced image of Cairns as an arts and culture destination be co-created in a place branding process? (Chapter 6).

In this chapter, three themes were generated from the analysis of mental and photographic images provided by young artists. *People, environment, and way of life* emerged as three themes representing Cairns' arts and culture images. These images as narrated through storytelling can play a role in building an enhanced image of Cairns in an interactive way as a "shared identity, dynamically constructed through social interaction" (Aitken & Campelo, 2011, p. 915) (discussed in Chapter 6). As such, when someone hears or reads these place stories via either written or spoken media, a new place *narrative* of Cairns' image might emerge in reflecting the arts and culture characteristics of places (Lichrou et al., 2008).

In what follows below I present the analysis of imagery in a format similar to a photo-album with the aim of distilling insights and commentaries from the participants as well as my own observations and interpretations. By utilising visual thematic mapping to generate themes and connections around patterned meanings, I present the analysis in a systematic framework that captures the essence of arts and culture places collectively (Braun & Clarke, 2022). I also reflect on and critically assess the efficacy of my methods in answering my research objectives and questions.

5.2 The Collective Imagery of Cairns

The first research question seeks to unravel:

RQ1: How do young artists present Cairns as a place of arts and culture?

As reflected in Figure 5, the collective imagery is made up of the analysis of Step 1 (off-the-cuff mental Images) and Step 2 (visual elements of the photographs). This collective imagery of Cairns’ arts and cultural places was generated by consolidating the mental and photographic images collected in the interviews. For the analysis, evaluating attributes such as the *locations, activities, settings, and features* were utilised to ‘read’ and understand the mental and visual elements of these images (Lynch, 1960). Three (3) themes were generated in the analysis of the mental and photographic images from the visual thematic coding process. Subsequently, in Step 4 and 5, these three themes were employed to understand and interpret the transcribed textual contents of the photographs, and followed with a focus-group co-creation workshop in the forming of *place stories*. Figure 5 illustrates the overall theme generation process in the five-step process.

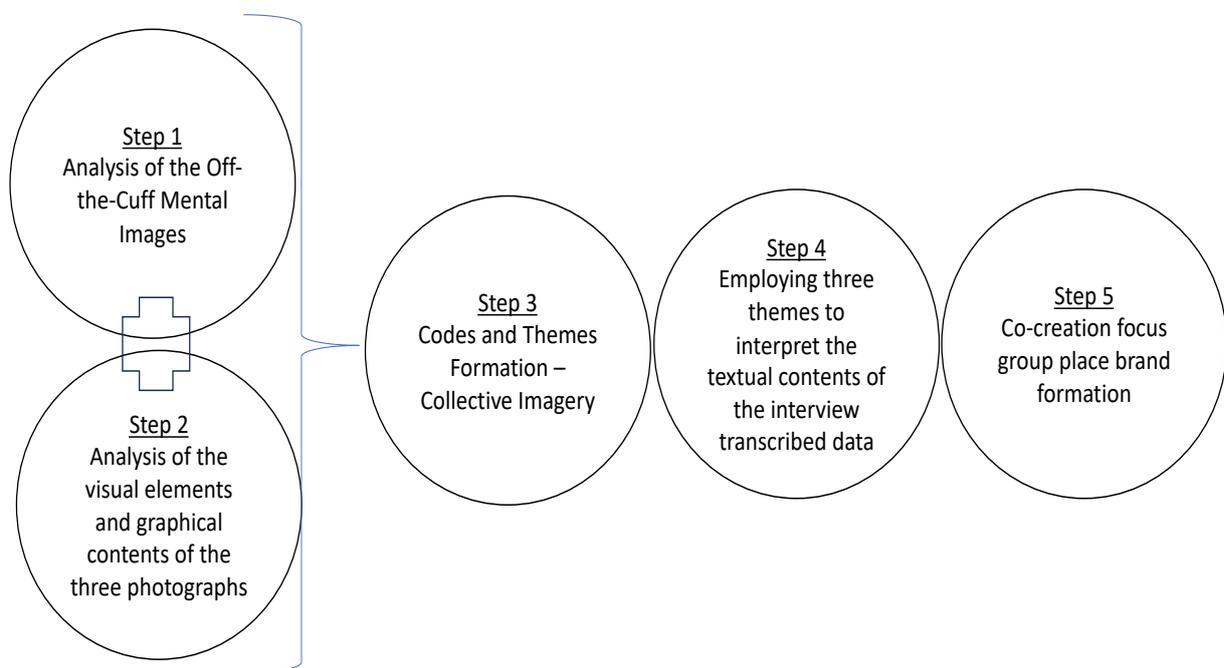


Figure 5: Collective Imagery and Themes Generation

5.2.1 Mental Images Analysis and Findings

One of the main components of the interviews was to ask young artists what first comes to mind when they think of Cairns in their own words. These off-the-cuff mental images of Cairns shared among the artists are tabulated in Table 7 below. In all, these mental images are made up of components of what Echtner and Ritchie (1991) refer to as the overall mental picture of destination places and can be considered as the functional (more tangible), and psychological (more abstract) components associated with “unique features, events, feelings or auras” (p. 46). As such, the artists’ mental images of Cairns are comprised of a complex set of experiences, perceptions or impressions of Cairns and the meanings that they represent.

These images contain a richness of information, which includes their intricate interactions with the wider urban fabric of Cairns and with elements of personal living experiences (Stachow & Hart, 2010).

Table 7: Mental Images of Young Artists

Artists Interviewed	Mental Images of <i>what comes to minds when one thinks of Cairns</i>
Artist A1	People, Culture, Palm Trees, Tropical Life
Artist A2	Tropical Nature, Hot, Beaches, Rainforests
Artist A3	Tropical, Great Barrier Reef, Friendly Faces, Tourism, Nature
Artist J1	Home, Tropical, Mountains, Creeks, Rainforests, Fruits (Coconuts), Community, Rain, Monsoon
Artist J2	Holiday Destination
Artist J3	Home, Lush Greenery Space
Artist E1	Mountains, Humidity, Small City
Artist G1	Home, Holiday, Escape, Free, Freedom, Warm, Colour
Artists I1	Deceiving, Diversity, Beautiful
Artist S1	Home, People, Weather

To elaborate the snapshots of mental images shared among the artists, I provide a few direct quotes to better understand the images shared. As a local practicing artist, Artist J1’s mental image of Cairns is expressed as:

First of all home comes to mind. Second of all tropical, mountains, creeks, rainforests, fruits (coconut) [...] Community comes to mind with Cairns. Rain and Monsoon [...] Feeling like belonging to a place [...] connected to the people connected to the land and the nature but also the people [...] the smell of rain and smell of the fruit. There is a sensory feeling of home and comfort.

These mental images reflect the psychological (more abstract) aspects of the image (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991) with unique feelings and expressions drawing from the sensory/affective level of the images. The expressions also support the notion that mental images are not formed “simply in terms of physical and observable features, nor just as a products of attitudes, but as an indissociable combination of these” (Relph, 1976, p. 59).

Coming from the small, northern town of Weipa, Artist A1 suggests Cairns as:

A lot of people, people come to mind. A constant flow of people, and culture. So many different cultures and one thing I love about moving to Cairns from a small town [...] It was an eye-opener [...] Their way of life, I wish I had the patience to learn a lot of languages to understand their way of life more. It is intriguing.

Meanwhile, Artist I1 claims:

I never know how to answer that. I want to say diversity. But with Cairns, unfortunately, it's more. A lot of it looks good [...] It is a lot of masking of what is actually going on. It is almost the word I think of is like deceiving Cairns, Cairns can be a little bit deceiving. It is beautiful [...] One of the safest places on earth.

In the interviews, four (4) out of the ten (10) artists' off-the-cuff images were *home*; the *people* of Cairns were brought up from three (3) out of the ten (10) participants. Not surprisingly, almost eight (8) out of the ten (10) shared mental images of *tropical, nature, greenery, weather (rain, monsoon, hot, warm)*, and *rainforest*. Additional images included *tourism, holiday destination, escape, and freedom*.

These "mental images" (Boulding, 1956; Lynch, 1960) are the "construction, in the mind, of a simplified version of reality" (Jenkins & Walmsley, 1993, p. 233) of Cairns. Some could be labelled as "stereotyped images" of Cairns as they "represents an oversimplification" of the experiences shared in the interviews (Burgess, 1974, p. 168). These mental images of Cairns reflect the simplification of the city's overall impressions as visualised and represented by the individual artists living in the city as the off-the-cuff images at a "higher abstraction" city level (Tuan, 1974). As such, these mental images are often the popular images utilised by the existing place promotion agencies in capturing the representative images of Cairns.

As an Asian growing up in Malaysia and Singapore, for example, my top-of-the-mind spontaneous mental image of Cairns was the Great Barrier Reef in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The only mention of the Great Barrier Reef in the interview was from Artist A3, and his images included *friendly faces* and tourism activities of Cairns. Similarly, Artist J2's mental image of Cairns was a *holiday destination* as he was born outside of Cairns, and his mental image was similar to Artist G1 because Cairns was always a family holiday get-a-way destination to escape the winter cold. It is worth noting that the nature of the environment confronting an individual is important in the development of their "mental map" of a place (Jenkins & Walmsley, 1993, p. 234). The off-the-cuff mental images described in this section are crucial components in understanding the city's *imageability* (Lynch, 1960). As discussed in Chapter 3, *imageability* is the extent to which the environment makes a strong impression on the individual. In the mental images shared by the artists, the beauty and the vastness of the physical landscape of Cairns has a strong visual impressions and impacts them. The artists' mental images demonstrate a strong link between their city's image and the beauty of the physical environment. This link unsurprisingly has potential for the purposes of place branding and place promotional activities commonly practiced among the place marketing promoters (Hospers, 2010).

The dominant mental image for most artists is the beauty of the physical environment. The “landmark” characteristic (Lynch, 1960) of the mountain ranges surrounding the city also functions as a point-of-reference that weaves other parts, features, and assets into an integrated city fabric shared by residents and visitors. Place is a “centre of meaning constructed by experience,” and experience takes time because to know a place well requires long residence and deep involvement with the environment (Tuan, 1975, pp. 151-165). Several artists had deep personal attachments to places shared in their mental images and, not surprisingly, the image of *home* appeared prominently. This feeling of home is best exemplified by Artist J1:

I have this feeling of Cairns, because there are mountains all around, we are kind of a cradle of life. There is this kind of feeling of comfort in that protection.

This feeling and meaning of *home* in Cairns is imprinted on the artists’ minds and reflected in their arts and culture images and this is the psychological (or more abstract) component of the mental image (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). The mental image of *home* here also reflects Gustafson’s (2001) notion of the meanings of place concerning the relationship of the “environment-self” comparison based on the artists’ knowledge and lived experiences of the place. All artists are well aware and appreciative of the tropical environment of Cairns and value the familiarity and are at ease with their lived-in physical environment. In addition, this concept of *home* as shared by the artists underlining that places are often attributed meaning in comparison with other places and people (Gustafson, 2001). For some of the artists, the instant image of Cairns as *home* was partly due to the time they spent away from Cairns. Such comparisons between Cairns and other places through elaborating similarities and differences reflects an understanding of places as relational (Agnew, 1987), often with a temporal dimension. As such, place and meanings of place can be understood as an ongoing process where places become connected to the “life path” of the individual through “origin, length of residence, important events or life stages” (Gustafson, 2001, p. 13).

In conclusion, *home* and the beauty of the Cairns’ *environment* are two prominent mental images shared among the artists. These mental images represents what young artists know and imagine about Cairns. Also, these shared images among the artists illustrate that not all places mean the same thing to everybody and places often have highly personal meanings as expressed in terms of emotion, experiences and memories (Gustafson, 2001). In effect, most images shared are based upon more impersonal characteristics observed such as humidity, friendly faces, lifestyle, and other atmospheric expressions or feelings of Cairns (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). Next, I look at how artists use photographic images to represent their understanding of Cairns arts and culture places.

5.2.2 Photograph Visual Elements Analysis and Findings

This section provides an analysis of the visual elements of the three photographs provided by the artists. Each participant provided three (3) photographs, and I personally provided three (3) photographs of my own, so a total of 33 photographs were collected. For presentation and analysis purposes, the photographs were classified and coded. I summarise the definitions for each of the evaluating attributes as follows:

- **Locations** - The locations of the photographs pinpoint or trace the exact positions of each image. These identifications are represented by either the street names, or identifiable markers if proper street names are not available. Distinctions are also made to identify whether these photographs are situated within the Cairns' city centre or the surrounding regions of Cairns. The identification of the locations of the photographs helps interpret Lynch's (1960) *imageability* elements as explained in previous chapters.
- **Activities**: Activities are explained in the context of the different kinds of interactions or the types and numbers of peoples in and around the street, the uptake of facilities or the presence of other forms of people-environment interactions within the city (Montgomery, 1998; Relph, 1976). Not only that, activities in the photographs should also relate and reflect the concepts of "vitality and diversity" and whether it shows the extent to which a place feels alive or lively (Montgomery, 1998, p. 97). Equally important is whether these activities are "cultural activities" such as the cultural production of making objects, goods, products, and providing services as well as cultural consumption, such as people going to musical shows, movies, or visiting venues and galleries (Montgomery, 2003, p. 296).
- **Settings**: Settings are physical backgrounds or any specific events or activities 'behind' the physical environment. Similarly, the settings serve as the backdrop of an activity, event, or even a stationary view from a reference location where the photograph was taken. Furthermore, the settings of the events or activities could either be outdoors or indoors, with the latter providing and encouraging more active street life. The setting sets the stage for events and activities to take place and the setting of place is also where the five *imageability* elements anchored in the environment (Lynch, 1960).
- **Features**: Features are associated with the easily recognisable special characteristics or noticeable traits of the photographs. For example, whether the photograph shows predominantly natural or man-made features. Also, whether the photograph highlights certain elements that are unique or distinctive to the specific places or events. These features can be referred to as an individual, an object, or an event that are unique or memorable as captured from the photographs.

Using Rose’s (2022) *Visual Methodologies*, I systematically captured recurring patterns and themes in the forms and visual elements of the photographs. I reviewed the photographs repeatedly and noted potential themes and the features of the photographs that reflected or evoked themes. Notably, such assessment allowed me to evaluate whether certain codes and themes could be clustered together forming higher order themes later contributing to the formation of central organising themes.

Plates 1-10 below tabulates the findings and details of the photographs capturing the locations, activities, settings, and features as shared. Please note that images from Artist J3 and Artist I1 are omitted due to the artists’ requests to respect the privacy of the participants in the photographs. As such, I explain the photographs in words to compensate this shortcoming in terms of presentation of the findings.

Plate 1: Artist A1

Photograph Index	Location	Activities	Physical Settings	Features
1. Artist A1-P1	Outside City Centre (Exact location not specified)	-	Sunrises	Golden display of sunrise emerging from the horizon
2 Artist A1-P2	City Centre (Exact location not specified)	-	Display of Māori’s theme tattoo in a city setting	Māori motifs display of tattoo
3. Artist A1-P3	Tinaroo Dam	Camping Site	Campsites with tents and park-like environment as background	Greenery as main feature at the campsite



Artist A1 P1



Artist A1 P2



Artist A1 P3

Plate 2: Artist A2

Photograph Index	Location	Activities	Physical Settings	Features
4. Artist A2-P1	Kuranda Town	-	Panoramic mountain range views from Kuranda back to Cairns' direction	Sweeping rainforest green look
5. Artist A2-P2	Court House Gallery, City Centre	-	Upper end façade view of the main entrance of the Court House Gallery	White colonnade façade of the Court House Gallery with the emblem
6. Artist A2-P3	(Location not specified)	-	An art piece	Artist A2's own creative art piece showcasing 'chronic illness through nature' with birds, human arm co-existing



Artist A2 P1



Artist A2 P2



Artist A2 P3

Plate 3: Artist A3

Photograph Index	Location	Activities	Physical Settings	Features
7. Artist A3-P1	Elixir Bar, City Centre	A musician performing solo on-stage	A musician performing on-stage inside a corner of a locally-run bar in the city centre.	Colourful interior decorations inside a local bar
8. Artist A3-P2	TAFE, Cairns, QLD	-	A painting on the wall displaying aboriginal arts	An aboriginal artwork featuring local animals
9. Artist A3-P3	Centenary Lake, Cairns Botanical Garden	-	Walking path with pedestrian bridge next to the lake in the Botanical Garden's setting	Water lilies in full displays



Artist A3 P1



Artist A3 P2



Artist A3 P3

Plate 4: Artist J1

Photograph Index	Location	Activities	Physical Settings	Features
10. Artist J1-P1	The Tanks (City Centre)	-	The Tanks Arts Centre with backdrop of Tanks 4 amidst rainforest setting	Front Gate of the Tanks with Tank 4 as background
11. Artist J1-P2	Rusty Market (City Centre)	Peoples within market shopping and mingling	Picture shows a scene inside the Rusty Market	Displays of colourful tropical fruits and vegetables
12. Artist J1-P3	Kuranda Roots Festival (Outside of City Centre, Emerald Creek Falls)	Peoples attending festival next to waterfalls	Festival in rainforest setting with waterfalls next to it	"The Coconut man" as highlights of the picture



Artist J1 P1



Artist J1 P2



Artist J1 P3

Plate 5: Artist J2

Photograph Index	Location	Activities	Physical Settings	Features
13. Artist J2-P1	Yungaburra, Tablelands Region	A person taking the photograph of the giant heritage-listed fig tree with the extensive aerial roots drop 15m to the forest floor forming a curtain-like orientation	A boardwalk leading to the giant fig tree in the rainforests	The Curtain Fig Tree is approximately 50m (160 ft) in height and with a trunk circumference of 39m (128 ft)
14. Artist J2-P2	Cairns Showgrounds, Severin Street	-	Street Art (Mural) at the main walls of Cairns Showgrounds	Black and White mural created by Cracked-Ink with environmental conservation messages
15. Artist J2-P3	Smithfield	-	A tattoo studio displaying graphical shop name	Glassy shopfront



Artist J2 P1



Artist J2 P2



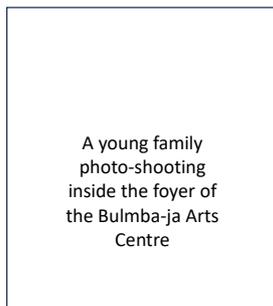
Artist J2 P3

Plate 6: Artist J3

Photograph Index	Location	Activities	Physical Settings	Features
16. Artist J3-P1	Bulmba-ja Arts Centre	Young artists participating in a mentorship session organised by elders	Inside a seminar room of Bulmba-ja Arts Centre	Group activity inside a seminar room of Bulmba-ja Arts Centre
17. Artist J3-P2	Bulmba-ja Arts Centre	A family portrait shooting inside the Bulmba-ja Arts Centre	Photo shooting at the foyer of the newly opened Bulmba-ja Arts Centre	Tastefully staged family portrait at the Bulmba-ja Arts Centre
18. Artist J3-P3	Cairns Convention Centre	People inside the Cairns Convention Centre attending the CIAF	CIAF inside the Cairns Convention Centre with rows of kiosks	Colourful displays of kiosks



Artist J3 P1



Artist J3 P2



Artist J3P3

Plate 7: Artist E1

Photograph Index	Location	Activities	Physical Settings	Features
19. Artist E1-P1	Fogarty Park, City Centre	Peoples in multicultural festival standing beside each other	People representing different cultures groups on-stage in a city park setting	Colourful multicultural fashions
20. Artist E1-P2	Fogarty Park, City Centre	First Nation Peoples at CIAF	First Nation Peoples at CIAF with park as physical background	Colourful representation of First Nation Peoples from regional Cairns congregating at a spot in the city centre
21. Artist E1-P3	Outside City Centre. Exact location not specified)	First Nations Models posing for photo-shooting of CIAF Fashion Shows	Mountains as background for the photo-shooting	First Nations Models colourful displays of locally designed dresses



Artist E1 P1



Artist E1 P2



Artist E1 P3

Plate 8: Artist G1

Photograph Index	Location	Activities	Physical Settings	Features
22. Artist G1-P1	Freshwater	-	Mural on toilet Box	Colourful creatives
23. Artist G1-P2	Freshwater	-	Mural on toilet Box	Colourful creatives
24. Artist G1-P3	Cairns Showgrounds	-	Mural on Cairns Showgrounds	Colourful creatives



Artist G1 P1



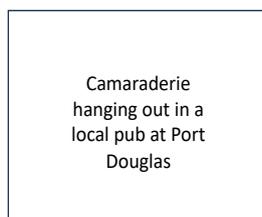
Artist G1 P2



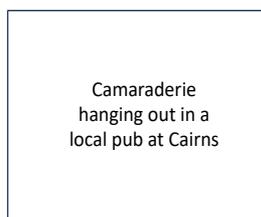
Artist G1 P3

Plate 9: Artist I1

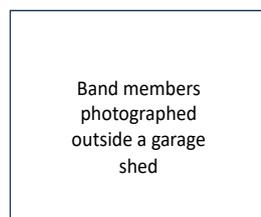
Photograph Index	Location	Activities	Physical Settings	Features
25. Artist I1-P1	Port Douglas	Camaraderie hanging out in a local pub	Inside a local pub	Peoples congregating in a local pub
26. Artist I1-P2	Wolf Lane, Cairns City Centre	Camaraderie hanging out in a local pub	Inside a local pub	Peoples congregating in a local pub
27. Artist I1-P3	Suburb of Cairns (Exact location not specified)	Band Group Photo outside a shed	Outside a shed door in an outdoor setting	Group portrait of a band



Artist I1 P1



Artist I1 P2



Artist I1 P3

Plate 10: Artist S1

Photograph Index	Location	Activities	Physical Settings	Features
28. Artist S1-P1	Exact location not specified	-	Artist's own creative painting	Colourful creatives
29. Artist S1-P2	Exact location not specified	-	Artist's own creative painting	Colourful creatives
30. Artist S1-P3	Exact location not specified	-	Artist's own creative painting	Colourful creatives



Artist S1 P1



Artist S1 P2



Artist S1 P3

Plate 11: Researcher

Photograph Index	Location	Activities	Physical Settings	Features
31. Researcher-P1	Esplanade	A local sharing his views on the Esplanade Lagoon with tourists	Woven Fish sculptures at Esplanade waterfront setting	Sunny day water fun activities
32. Researcher-P2	The Tanks	-	The Tanks Arts Centre with backdrop of Tanks 4 amidst rainforest setting	Front Gate of the Tanks with Tank 4 as background
33. Researcher-P3	Shields Street Mall	Sculptures of the (Storywater Brothers) at the Shields Street Mall	A pair of sculptures (Gurrabana Gurraminya-djada) in the middle of a landscaped mall in the city centre	Colourful Storywater brothers display.



Researcher P1



Researcher P2

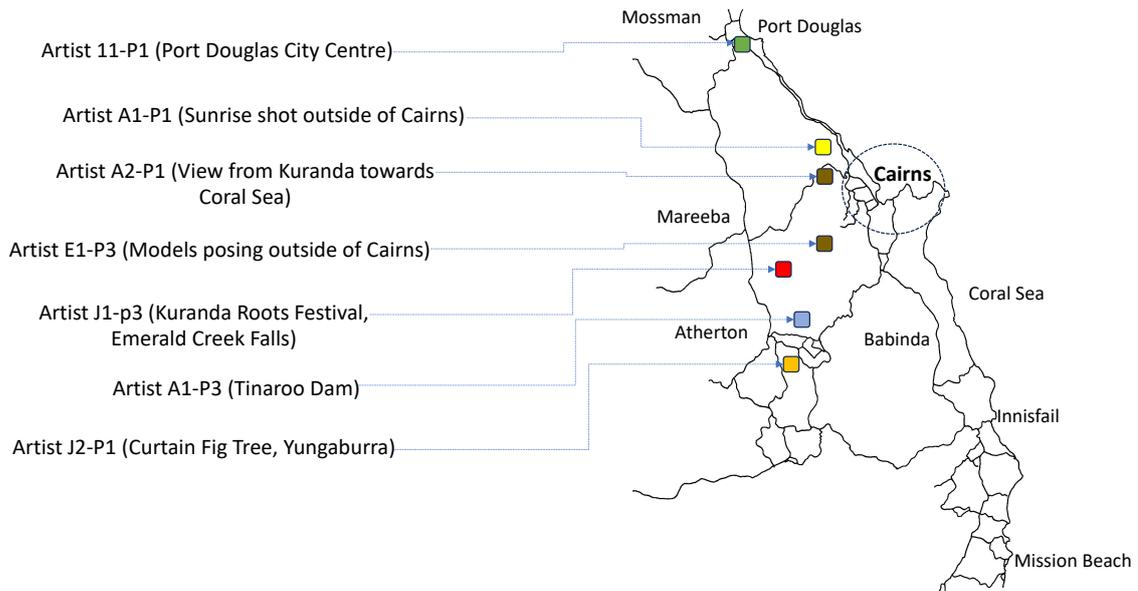


Researcher P3

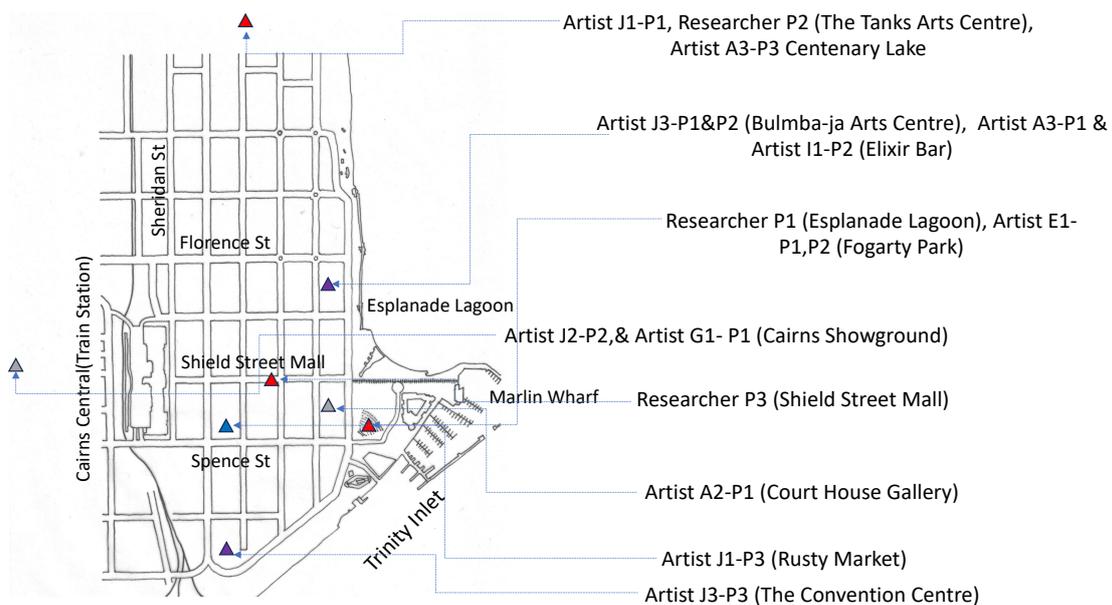
Having coded and classified the photographs accordingly, these observations are made (see Map 4a and Map 4b for details).

- On Locations

One would assume it should be relatively easy to describe the locations of places. However, it was harder than imagined. The photographs cover a wide range of locations (see Map 4a & Map 4b) which depicts the locations of the photographs collected with identifications marked).



Map 4a : Photographs Location (Outside Cairns City Centre)



Map 4b : Photographs Location (Cairns City Centre)

However, it is worth noting that not all locations from the photographs can be easily identified. For example, some of these photographs might not have locations assigned to them as these photographs were art works created by the artists as their ways to capture the arts and culture places of Cairns. These images are not photographs per se but an art piece created individually. Accordingly, the creative art works were inspired or drawn from various sites within Cairns collectively. Therefore, I omitted the locations of these types of photographs from both maps. Also, exact locations are not assigned to a set of mural paintings provided by another artist as these photographs were taken earlier and the exact locations were difficult to pinpoint. Therefore, I assigned only an approximate location to each of these photographs so that the locations are marked accordingly. Of all the 33 photographs collected, 12 are easily identifiable locations within the city centre as these are shown as buildings or places with proper names assigned (see Map 4b). These locations are: The Esplanade Lagoon, Shields Street Mall (Junction of Lake Street), Wolf Lane, Elixir Bar, The Tanks Arts Centre, Court House Gallery, Bulmba-ja Arts Centre, Cairns Convention Centre, Cairns Showgrounds, Centenary Lake (Cairns Botanical Garden), Rusty's Market, and Fogarty Park next to the waterfront. Among all the locations identified within the city centre, The Tanks Art Centre, Bulmba-Ja Arts Centre, and Cairns Showgrounds were featured twice from the photographs provided.

In contrast, photographs outside of Cairns City Centre are distributed more sparsely across the region covering a greater geographic area (see Map 4a). These examples are 'conventional' tourist attractions favoured by locals and tourists such as Emerald Falls, Yungaburra (location of Curtain Fig Tree), Tablelands Region, Tinaroo Dam, Kuranda area, and Port Douglas. It is also interesting point to note that sometimes the location of the photograph was inside the cable car heading down from Kuranda to Smithfield in an eastward direction. Another hard to locate spot is the location of an old fig tree amidst an ancient rainforest, or a popular campground at the Tinaroo Dam. These types of locations can only be identified with the associations of a larger geographic area such as within the national park or a popular tourist area. I will describe in detail these types of locations in the context of activities, settings, and features below.

- On Activities

People featured prominently and engaged in all forms of activities in most of the photographs (See Plate 1-10). Different types of meeting places are in the photographs, capturing activities happening in these locations. Montgomery (1998) refers to these places as "transaction bases" and provides for active social and cultural transactions. Accordingly, these places should be as complex or diverse as possible. For example, these photographs show people having fun at the Esplanade Lagoon, people shopping at Rusty's Market, and people attending arts fairs in the city centre. Note that these photographs show a good mix of locals and tourists at the same spots enjoying the activities in the city.

On group activities, one of the photographs highlights a group of young artists attending a creative mentorship workshop organised by elders at a local arts centre. Similarly, another photograph shows a locally formed band in front of a garage after a jamming session in which the group meets to practice and write songs together. Among all the photographs, the weekend market at Rusty's is a favourite with many activities and where locals and tourists mingle (see Photo 18).

Photo 18: Rusty's Market



- On Setting

The physical settings of the photographs are made up of a mixture of man-made and natural settings. Relph (1976) and Canter (1977) emphasise physical settings or physical attributes are one of the three main elements of places. Successful urban places must combine quality in three essential elements of “physical space, the sensory experience and activity” (Montgomery, 1998, p. 96). The focus here is the elaboration of the physical settings as reflected on the photographs.

Of all the photographs, a rich tapestry of physical settings across different spatial scales is observed. This is what Tuan (1975) refers to as the physical setting of place and is at all scales from the armchair to the nation. As reflected in the photographs, these physical settings are in varying scales and physical forms such as the mountain ranges, interior spaces of art centres, performing spaces inside a local pub and outdoor sculpture located in the city centre. In addition, the spaciousness of city parks and the waterfront esplanade are other physical settings that are appealing to both locals and tourists featured in the photographs.

Inside the city centre, the street mural paintings on building walls are other types of physical settings artists expressed. Two artists used street art to represent their impressions of arts and culture places of Cairns. I made a few trips to visit these sites to better comprehend the overall physical settings and meanings behind such expressions. The most prominent display was the long wall created on the Cairns Showgrounds (at the Severin Street side). This extensive mural art features a black and white illustrative cartoonish style capturing and transmitting environmental conservation messages by an international-based artist called Cracked Ink from New Zealand. Notably, this permanent display was installed as part of the *2018 Sea Walls Festival* in Cairns. Another physical setting I noticed was the mural arts featured on the public toilet ‘boxes’ along a less prominent street with one of the artists shared in the interview. When studying these photographs in their actual physical settings, I noticed that they are located at the less noticeable spots of the city fringes and therefore, messages conveyed are less noticeable and effective (see Photo 19).

Photo 19: Mural Toilet Box



One impactful or a memorable physical setting for me is the image showing the main gate of the Tanks Arts Centre at the Cairns Botanic Gardens. This is one of my favourite physical settings among the arts and culture places in Cairns. The juxtaposition of man-made concrete arts centre with the curated rainforest settings is a sensory masterpiece. The physical setting, the form, and the activities around and inside the Tanks Arts Centre interrelate with each other and this image best captured the ‘sense’ of arts and cultural places of Cairns from my own perspective (Lynch, 1960). The Tanks is probably what Lynch (1960) refers as “more than the eye can see, more than the ear can hear, a setting or a view waiting to be explored” (p. 1).

An equally appealing photograph that demonstrated the importance of the physical setting of places is best illustrated by the layout of the Rusty’s Market in the city centre. The layout of this popular market allows the patrons to explore all colourful stalls in patterns of movement

that are either zig-zagging or in a more orderly manner. As a local icon with over 30 years of establishment, the Rusty's Market showcases a unique blend of local and regional smaller producers of fruits, flowers, and vegetables and it is the heart of Cairns and the region.

In a more elaborate scale of physical setting, a distant panoramic view of mountain ranges captured my imagination in one of the images. The long-range view forces the viewer to gaze into the landscape with no identifiable objects. It is the vastness and greenery that is prominent in the presentation. The artist who captured this mountain view was captivated by the notion of the idea of the painting as a window. In our case here, the photograph is a window. This photograph resembles a painting, presenting a window onto Cairns in a broader perspective. This photograph tells me what the artist means, and what I, the viewer, feel.

- On Features

The features related to the photographs focusing on interesting, distinctive, or special characteristics. For example, the murals on street walls are examples of colourful displays in which the creations were sourced locally within Cairns. Interesting to note are the environmental messages of these murals with trending topics such as climate change and marine conservations in the region (see Photo 20).

Photo 20: Mural on the wall



Photos also displayed unique, vibrant and colourful events celebrating local characteristics of the First Nations and Torres Straits Islander Peoples. These included costumes worn by local models in the CIAF fashion shows and the dresses of different ethnic groups participating in the multicultural festivals. Equally stunning displays of colours included the lively Rusty's Market where tropical fruits, vegetables, seasonal flowers and people interact vivaciously. In

addition, the sculptures and mosaics along the Shield Street Mall are also splendid displays of colours in the carefully designed car-free environment.

Public art along the Esplanade and Shield Street Mall is an important contributor to *sense of place* among locals and as landmarks for tourists navigating in the city centre. The presence of these public art pieces in the city centre enhances the overall quality of the built environment. Furthermore, these public art such as sculpture and murals also function as points of reference for meeting places and talking points in the city centre. Specifically, the Storywater Brothers sculptures in front of the James Cook University's City Campus is an example of where tourists perform the *tourist gaze* (Urry, 1990) shot while locals enjoying in the public square under the giant fig tree. Another stunning colourful display is from the creative art pieces by one of the artists. These artworks are strongly influenced by the beauty of Cairns and the Far North Queensland.

In conclusion, these images are what Bianchini and Ghilardi (2007) would call the "cultural resources" of Cairns. They are part of the broader "urban mindscape" of Cairns which "exists between the physical landscape of a city and people's visual and cultural perceptions of it". These images are an "urban image bank" for future place image building and other place promotional initiatives (p.2).

5.2.2.1 Themes Generation

A total of 33 photographs were collected from the participants and researcher (see Table 8). These photographs were printed and arranged in an A-4 size exercise book for analysis. All photographs were coded and classified with various code labels such as: *people, colour, arts gallery, mural arts, nature, festivals, environment, lifestyle, home, everyday life* etc. These classifications reflect the visual elements of the photographs. Having analysed the visual elements of the photographs, 8 classifications were established. These included:

- People
- Murals Street Art
- Festivals and Events
- Buildings (Gallery, Art Centre)
- Nature
- Landscape
- Environment
- Colours

Table 8: Compilation of Mental Images and Photographic Images

Artists Interviewed	Mental Images of What comes to minds when one think of Cairns	Three Images of Arts and Cultural Scenes of Cairns
Artist A1	People, Culture, Palm Trees, Tropical Life	Sunrise, Tattoo, Nature (Camp site next to lake)
Artist A2	Tropical Nature, Hot, Beaches, Rainforests	Sweeping Mountain View, Court House Gallery Façade, Own Nature-Inspired Artwork
Artist A3	Tropical, Great Barrier Reef, Friendly Faces, Tourism, Nature	Aboriginal Painting, Centenary Lake, Elixir Bar
Artist J1	Home, Tropical, Mountains, Creeks, Rainforests, Fruits (Coconuts), Community, Rain, Monsoon	The Tanks Arts Centre, Rusty Market, Kuranda Roots Festival
Artist J2	Holiday Destination	Curtain Fig Tree, Mural at Cairns Showground, Shopfront of a Tattoo Studio
Artist J3	Home, Lush Greenery, Space	Bulmba-Ja Arts Centre (Seminar Session), Bulmba-Ja Arts Centre Foyer (Family Photo shooting), CIAF Convention Centre
Artist E1	Mountains, Humidity, Small City	Fogarty Park (Multicultural Festival), Fogarty Park (CIAF), First Nations Models with Mountain as backdrop
Artist G1	Home, Holiday, Escape, Free, Freedom, Warm, Colour	3 Murals on toilet boxes
Artists I1	Deceiving, Diversity, Beautiful	People in Local Pub, People in Local Café, Group Band Photo
Artist S1	Home, People, Weather	3 Nature-inspired Own Artworks

From these eight (8) classifications, two (2) categories were generated. The first category is what I refer to as the *typical*, and the second category is the *atypical* types of representations. The *typical* images are made up of the *people, murals, festivals* and *events* and *buildings*. In other words, the images fit into my own understanding or interpretation of what arts and culture images are typically represented. This group of images are not contradictory, and most viewers would likely to interpret them in a similar fashion (Rose, 2022). Perhaps the most interesting point about the *typical* type of image is that most participants had little difficulty retrieving these photographs of Cairns that best represented the arts and culture places. As reflected in some of the images, these arts and culture places are the centre of meanings constructed by experience (Tuan, 1975, p.152).

I refer to the second cluster of images as the *atypical* type. This cluster of photographs illustrates ideas of the *nature, landscape, environment, and the colour* characteristics of Cairns. Some viewers might interpret this cluster differently (Rose, 2022) as it is not the ‘stereotypical’ type of image of the arts and culture scenes (Burgess, 1974). Coincidentally, *atypical* images shares similar features with reference to the mental images the artists provided earlier (a

response to the question what comes to mind when one thinks of Cairns?). Combining the earlier findings with the 33 photographs, I interpreted the three broad themes of *People*, *Environment*, and *Way of Life* as the collective imagery of the arts and culture places of Cairns.

Next, I *make sense* of the textural contents of the photographs with the three themes in which I will elaborate in the next section.

- People: Self and Others
- Environment: Nature and Landscape
- Way of Life: Everyday Experiences

5.2.3 Textual Contents Analysis and Findings

Some catalytic moments in the data analysis process are worth detailing here. The most impactful moments happened when I attempted to analyse the visual elements and textual contents of the datasets. In the process of code labelling, I noticed a concentration of codes tagged with the label *place comparisons* from the transcribed contents. In the interviews, there are multiple examples of comparison with, or distinction through, the association of similarities and differences between the artists, other people, and other places. Frequently expressed were the concepts of here / there, locals (us) / tourists (them), small town / big city, authentic / artificial, friendly people / faceless people, busy life / well-paced life, and hot / cold and so forth. These comparisons were attempts to draw boundaries between similarities as well as differences in covering dimensions such as place characteristics, city scales, distinctive natural features, and other general observations of Cairns in comparison to other places in Australia and beyond. Places are “relational” (Agnew, 1987) and the distinction or comparison of places is often attributed meanings in comparison with other places through the definition of “similarities and differences” (Gustafson, 2001, p. 14). In a nutshell, the artists attempted to *define* the arts and culture places of Cairns with meaning or identity of these places through images provided.

Below I elaborate the findings with reference to Gustafson’s (2001) *three-pole triangular model* of “self, others and environment” within which various meanings of place are mapped (see Figure 1, Chapter 3, p. 44). In the presentation of the findings, I start with the *people* theme, followed by the themes of *environment* and *way of life*. Even though the analysis follows the sequence of *people*, *environment*, and *way of life*, there are overlapping themes. As shown below, the characters and meanings of arts and culture places expressed by the participants were often located in the relationship between the artists themselves and with the *people*,

environment, and *way of life* interacting with one another, rather than belonging to just one of these themes (Gustafson, 2001).

5.2.3.1 People in Images

Under the *people* theme, my focus is examining how young artists relate to art and culture experiences with other people and through past encounters and daily experiences. I use Gustafson's (2001) "self", "self-others", and "others" meaning-making mechanism to do so. In the "self" dimension, places often have personal meanings, emotion, activity, and self-identification. Places are associated with the life path, roots and continuity. For example, the life path is often related to important "life stages – childhood, adolescence, parenthood – and expressed in terms of experience and memories" (p. 9).

In the "self-other" relation, places often become meaningful because of the artists' relations with people living, working, and visiting there, such as friends, acquaintances (tourists), relatives - and the "sense of community" that social relations create (p. 9). In the "others" dimension, places are attributed meaning through the "perceived characteristics, traits and behaviours" of their inhabitants (p. 10). The "others" in place meaning is often based on the explicit comparisons between "us / here" and "them / there".

When relating to the "people-other" relation, Artist A1 was overwhelmed with her experiences practicing in the city centre of Cairns. Being a young tattoo artist with close to 5 years of apprenticeship with an established tattoo design studio, she shared her experiences working with different people in Cairns. In terms of career development, the city provides ample opportunities for her to grow as a young artist. Her interactions with "others" in the city are meaningful through her creative practice.

Tattoos give people:

Something that they [remember] their whole journey [...] a little memory on something [...] they go home happy.

All three photographs from Artist I1 are people-centric featuring group activities. As a performing art student working part-time and studying full-time at TAFE, Artist I1 shared that Cairns is a safe and diverse place for people of all sexualities and lifestyle preferences. Her "self-others" relation was meaningful as "people are fantastic" here, as Cairns is a place where they can hang out and enjoy band-life with like-minded young people. Specifically:

I think the forefront of Cairns that people see is the lagoon and the reef and the rainforest. But the people are fantastic here. And I think that's not shown off. That's not highlighted enough. We get a lot of inspiration from other local bands in Cairns that

are doing the same thing. We all have the same sort of values. We're writing music about global warming. We're writing music about sexual identity and you're writing music about things that [are] typically ... old Cairns and old school Cairns. They wouldn't swing, you know?

Growing up in a creative family (her mum in film productions), Artist I1 was exposed to the creative community of Cairns and when asked on the vision of Cairns being the arts and cultural capital, she commented that:

I've heard that a lot [...] not from the magazines, I've just heard it from individuals. Who want that to be the future [...] especially with the populations growing here, and because everyone wants to live up here.

In terms of community in the analysis, Artist E1's image illustrates the diverse multicultural dimensions of Cairns and the surrounding regions (see Photo 21). To her, Cairns is unique as her photograph shows:

The theme of multiculturalism, and the festival where the different cultures come together, I picked it because it was a photo of the multicultural event in Cairns [...] Cairns is kind of, we celebrate all of them in this one spot. And they come here and they dance and they sing, and they share [...] and I think the art scenes of Cairns are made up of those people from the surrounding communities.

Photo 21: Multicultural Events



As a visual art student with TAFE, Cairns and working part-time with the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair (CIAF), Artist E1's relation of "self-others" was developed based on her active engagement with the communities as she was part of the organisation in the preparation of the event such as CIAF in the city. A sense of being recognised and recognising others in the community.

Artist J3 mentioned that besides being home and family, it is because of the people of Cairns that she decided to relocate back to Cairns from Sydney.

I have always known someone here. You walk down the street, there is at least one person you know. Sydney is not like that. You walk past a million people and they wouldn't know your face. So, it is very different. People are important. Even though we are a small town, Cairns does have a particular spark. No obvious racism; kind, welcoming, hardworking, and quite strong people. We go through cyclones and the attitudes of Cairns are slow paced, relaxed, business still happening. Working in communal networking is important here.

She further elaborates with her two photographs centred on people aspects in her working environment at the Northside Arts Gallery. These photographs illustrate a design workshop in which she was the design coordinator on behalf of the Indigenous Design Lab. In the photograph, it shows MECCA, a skin care and beauty company from Melbourne that gave a design workshop to a group of young creatives from Cairns.

They came to Cairns for us. It was the beginning [...] Keen on our arts and open the doors for the artists. The image represents the fact that there is a big thing happening in this little town. For those that get it they get it. More big companies to come up is fantastic. They have a big contract with Apple. Our goal is to work with Apple. Our goal here is to make companies come to this little town.

She also highlights the importance of the transferring of skills to people from the perspective of First Nation Peoples. She experienced the same process of learning when she was a young artist living in Cairns.

It is all about multigenerational things and knowledge sharing. Knowledge about multiple different things [...] We don't have a teacher we have a mentor.

Her other photograph illustrates a young lady who contacted her via her gallery's social media site for a professional family photoshoot for their baby:

First time I've seen a family in public. Really embracing the arts as part of their family narrative. They like the idea. I looked up from the internet, hired the photographer and walked around the space.

For her as a little girl growing up in Cairns:

Art was quite a distance unless you are an artsy person, creative person. You wouldn't step foot in a gallery. You have family to come in to take portraits. Arts and culture scenes of Cairns are changing.

When analysed J3's "self" and "self-others" meaning-making mechanism, Cairns is special for her. As a Tjapukai person, she was born in Cairns and her great-great grandfather was the first person to drive the cart up the Kuranda Range from the bush. Cairns is loaded with personal meanings associated with memories, roots and continuity. She never dreamt of a family portrait session in a gallery and family portrait at a local mall. To her, back then, art was quite a distance and "you have to know someone to be part of it". But the arts and culture scene of Cairns is changing, and she reckons that now there is "no more wall between arts, people and culture" in Cairns. In her another illustration, the arts scene of Cairns is growing and changing as she noticed that CIAF has elevated from the communal, grassroot type to the indoor convention centre setting. All these are "telling examples of how Cairns is growing".

Similarly, Artist J1 expresses that one of her main reasons to move back to Cairns from Melbourne after studying and working there for eight years was her own personal connection with Cairns. Similar to Artist J3, personal memories, roots, and communities relate to her life path of being born in Cairns, growing up and participating actively in the arts scene since high school were meaningful experiences.

She states:

Connected to the people, connected to the land and the nature but also the people. Everything that comes with it, like the food that grows here and it's the seasons and everything. The smell of it, the smell of the rain and smell of the fruit. Yes, there's a sensory feeling of home and comfort.

People featured strongly in one of her photographs showing Rusty's Market in Cairns.

Every fruit has its own spirit and has its own energy. Different seasons with different fruits and different colours. It's constantly changing, evolving. Same with the people coming through there and it's nourishing everyone. I think of it as a hub, like arts, I think just the beauty of the fruits and the people is interesting. But at the same time, it's a place where a lot of creative people and a lot of local people just congregate and feel a sense of community. For me, like I said, it's the heartbeat, the lifeblood of the community. I think it is really a melting pot of the community. Tourists and people who are passing through can experience it as well. I think they can kind of feel that there's a hub there.

Her third photograph shows the Kuranda Roots Festival at Kuranda, Cairns featuring live dub and reggae music in a tropical rainforest setting by the base of the breathtaking Emerald Creek Falls. A dry festival with no alcohol for local artists and musicians to play and be heard with music just emanating through the forest. According to Artist J1, the festival was organised and run by a local from Kuranda who now lives in Brisbane with strong connections to the whole area of Cairns and people.

When I think of Cairns, I think of grassroots when I think about culture. Specifically in this image I chose because you've got the coconut man. For me, it was very iconic of any event. You go to festival things, there's always the coconut man. He nourishes everyone. You've got the trees, and then you've got the stage as well. I think that's one of the local indigenous elders speaking and it is just a community coming together. That's definitely what I think of when I think of culture.

For Artist J1, experiences and meanings derived from the arts and cultural places are not forced into three discrete categories but “mapped around and between the three poles of self, others and environment” (Gustafson, 2001, p. 12). Her example using The Tanks encapsulated the meanings of place besides being distinctive, identifiable. In addition, the meanings of place often involve a temporal dimension.

She shared that:

The Tanks have been a big win. For me, Tanks was the first thing that came to mind when I think of arts and cultural places in Cairns. I grew up around there in the same suburb [...], they exhibited my art when I was not even 10.

Artist J2, a local musician and tattoo artist working in Smithfield, Cairns elaborates that people in Cairns are exposed to different art mediums:

Cairns is such a beautiful place. There is a lot of diversity in Cairns. When it comes to art, whether it's traditional indigenous art to sculpting arts, there's just so much variety in Cairns. There is something for everyone. Also, whether you are a musician, performance artist, visual artist. I feel that there is something for everyone. There is inspiration for everyone here.

Using his work at the studio, Artist J2 expresses that working with different people in Cairns influenced his art style and career development. He reckons that “Cairns in general has a huge tattoo scene” and Cairns allows him to “make a career” out of the art. Working in his current studio:

Has played a huge part in developing myself as an artist in exploring new genres of art and character development [...] working with different types of people challenged me as an artist. I will try to keep my art form, art style very versatile to cater to multitudes of people. It helped me grow as an artist in general.

Artist A3, a performing art student at TAFE, Cairns shared a photograph of a local bar called the Elixir at Abbott Street, Cairns. What drew him to this locally owned and run place was the vibes and the relaxed atmosphere of it.

I played there for practice. Seeing other people play. It is quite a nice little, little environment just for anyone. It is cool to see all the different varieties of artists that played there [...] They have open mic. Basically, an open mic allows you come along, get up and play. It is not structured and random people come up to play.

On how music and festivals can draw people together, Artist A3 shows an Indigenous painting and touches on the Indigenous culture of Cairns. He was part of the organising team and involved in the setting up of the Indigenous music festival at Fogarty Park in Cairns in 2022.

It is just the turnout and the vibe that everyone gives off. It is always local and the amount of people that turned out for these things. A lot of local bands can play as well [...] up and coming artists.

Another interesting remark by Artist A3 is that it is “hard to encapsulate the Indigenous culture in one image. Even any culture”. He is using an Indigenous painting to illustrate how art and culture can unite or link people together. As part of the organising team for the Indigenous music festival, he was lucky to be able to contribute to this locally driven event in Cairns.

When asked on the vision of Cairns being the arts and cultural capital, Artist G1 said that:

I’m surprised it hasn’t been done yet. I don’t think Cairns would be a bad place to have an art hub. Because I know heaps of creative people up here.

Artist A2 echoed that she wasn’t surprised when she heard of this vision as she knows the arts in Cairns is growing by looking at the growing numbers of the art galleries in the city.

Artist S1 uses her three paintings to share with me her concepts of arts and cultural scenes of Cairns. In one of the three photographs, the second image illustrates a group of people enjoying their time right next to the waterfall. She elaborates that people in Cairns are friendly as compared to a bigger city like Sydney where she lived previously for a few years.

I was in Sydney to go to school there. And just to see what it is like. But I hated living there. Just too expensive and crowded. It is like a 'ghost town' as people walk around faceless [...] People in Cairns are so friendly. That was like home to me.

Artist A2 thinks that Council's vision to become the Arts and Cultural Capital of Northern Australia would help to break the stereotypes of Cairns as being just beaches and rainforests:

It's not just pretty pictures in which a lot of people don't really seem to know if you're not living here [...] But, it's really diverse in arts and culture... there's so many different elements that people are exploring. For example, I know artists that are doing industrial metal works and, you know, making comments on society and emotions...I know the arts in Cairns are growing.

In conclusion, the findings as reflected in the *people* theme, suggest that place brands unlike other commercial product or service brands is "created by multiple actors". Collectively, all performed the role of co-creator in the place image formation process (Skinner, 2018, p. 22). Applying the interactional view, the formation of place brands involves are "dependence on the interactions between actors and stakeholders" with experiences shared and co-created with meanings (Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015, p. 1378).

5.2.3.2 Environment in Images

In the *environment* theme, I include both the natural and built environment as presented in the findings. The *environment* theme takes into account distinctive features such as the colours of Cairns, festivals and events associated with a place in the city.

Artist A2 shares a stunning image of the view of Cairns looking eastward from Kuranda while she was on a cable car ride up (see Photo 22). On answering my question regarding why she picked this picture she elaborated:

I don't know how to put it into words. It captures the feeling of Cairns, on the outskirts of Cairns. I would say, I'm not so much focused on the city because I live outside of the city. I think it captures the essence of Cairns. And I think it's a source of inspiration for many artists as well.

Photo 22: Mountain View



To understand the meaning behind Artist A2 remarks on the photograph, Rodaway's (1994, p. 125) notes shed light on this as:

“Vision is not presented with a picture of a totality to view at leisure, to explore methodically like a work of art, but rather visual experiences flow past us, we catch glimpses of this and that, identify and linger on this or that, and so build up a collection of images and changes in our minds, that is, we compose a view. In remembering experience, and tend to reduce the flow of visual experiences to specific images or scenes, that is to moments, to snapshots”

What Artist A2 shared was that the essence of Cairns is its natural environment and the beauty of the surrounding landscape. Many artists in Cairns are influenced by the beauty of the city's surroundings and the vastness of views of the whole environment.

Furthermore, utilising nature or landscape as symbolism, Artist A2 relates her own experiences of living with chronic pain in her body of creative works to generate awareness. To elaborate further, her third photograph shows her own creative work which was inspired by the natural environment around Cairns. The picture shows a human form with connection to nature.

This was inspired by chronic illness [...] illustrating that through nature, natural elements [...] I took a lot of inspiration from the mountains and forest around Cairns. Especially the fungus as well. I think that really can be a very strong illustrative element. For people to understand that it is something that grows with you.

Artist G1 shows me three photographs featuring street murals she captured. These include toilet boxes in less noticeable spots in Cairns. To her, these toilet boxes have a new lease on

life with the mural paintings on them. In the interview, she elaborated three times that she likes the colours of Cairns. Her image of Cairns when she moved from Tasmania when she was 10 was freedom, warmth and also the colours of sunset at the esplanade. Specifically, the colour on the Rusty's Market:

I love going to Rusty Market. All these fruits, like dragon fruits, are so pink and the yellow oranges. I love looking at what people are wearing and how they wear different colours of clothes. I love going there because it is a place with noise, sound, and colours.

Artist S1 used her own art works to illustrate her image of the arts and culture places of Cairns. One of the images she shared with me was the nature-filled painting of a group of people enjoying nature out at the waterfall. In all her paintings, nature and people are two elements that are prominent and she uses colour creatively to 'bind' these two elements together. On the painting:

And this one just makes me feel really happy [...] I don't know why I just like waterfalls. Just this mixing I feel like I'm at home in Cairns [...] Sometimes, it comes to my head [...] It's just flowing [...] Emotion and the time. It is a feeling.

Artist A3 shows the image of Centenary Lakes at Cairns Botanic Gardens (see Photo 23).

It is the water and it is peaceful [...] where they have all the music events [...] and even I am not sure what kind of Asian culture [...] I really liked [...] you know, it brings something new to Cairns. Even for tourists, when they come here, you know, we get a lot of Asian tourists. It makes them feel like home.

Photo 23: The Botanical Gardens



Artist J1's image of Kuranda Roots Festival shows the beauty of the natural environment around the waterfall. She expresses in the interview that a strength for her and the art is always to come back to "inspiration from the nature" and "there's always been a common thread" for her throughout her creative journey. The location of the festival is captivating.

It was my first time at this location (Emerald Creek Falls), which is a beautiful, sacred location with a beautiful waterfall and crystal waters. The festival is at the base and right on the creek in a beautiful rainforest location.

Artist J2 shares with me that the image of a *holiday destination* comes to mind when he thinks of Cairns. As a tattoo artist, he notices:

A lot of people come up here for the beauty in nature [...] and Cairns is a very beautiful place to look at [...] Cairns is a very art driven town. I believe the beauty of the Far North contributes to that. And because Cairns is such a visually stunning place, I feel that it inspires a lot of artists, especially the visual artists to create.

He uses a picture of a curtain fig tree as a representation of art and Cairns through that picture. The picture depicts the heritage-listed tree at Yungaburra, in the Tablelands Region. It is one of the largest trees in Tropical North Queensland and one of the best-known local attractions on the Atherton Tableland.

I feel it shows age [...] it's extremely old [...] I feel like it goes to show that even from when that tree was a sapling, it has always been art in Cairns [...] It gave me a sense of how ancient the rainforests are [...] I feel it perfectly represents Cairns because it is a rainforest tree. Everything in Cairns is based around the rainforest.

On issues related to environmental awareness, Artist J2 uses the photo of a large mural wall at Cairns Showground by a group called Cracked Ink. His reason for sharing this picture is that:

It does touch on a lot of issues that we have in the Far North. Such as the coral bleaching, as you can see here, and it goes over a lot of pollution issues. And a lot of it is mainly about saving the reef. Because obviously the reef is a huge part of our ecosystem up here [...] the identity. Again, comes back to the tourist industry. If there was no reef, there would be a lot less tourists. Things to happen here. So, it's a very delicate balance.

Artist A1 shares two nature-focused pictures. Her images of Cairns are tropical life and palm trees. The first picture is a sunrise.

This is the sun. It is more about my spare time, everything about water. It is one thing I surround myself with. My therapy. Being around water, being around sun [...] Water is

a healing property. I spent my life swimming. It has been healing after a long week of working. My therapy.

Artist A1's second photo shows a camping site at Tinaroo Dam. I asked her what is so special about this place. She elaborated:

I guess not necessarily the place, I guess what we do there more often is another therapy moment as well. Just checking out the world. Forgetting about work, forgetting about all other issues. Staying away from people. I guess enjoying the simple things.

To Artist E1, Cairns' image is the mountain. She always had images of Cairns by the mountains as she was born in Cairns. She further elaborates that:

We have the raintrees and flowers and the beaches. However, when you are in the city the mountains are everywhere; even when you go to the beach or you go out. If you are driving down the main road, when you look up and see mountains.

In addition, when she thinks of Cairns, she thinks of the tropical colours of Cairns. Inevitably, these colours are drawn from the warm natural environment of the tropics. Tropical colours are dazzling, vibrant, bright and reflecting the sun, sand and sea of the environments. Turquoise blue brings to mind warm tropical waters and calm sea breezes. Most importantly, the colours also represent the dynamic, lively cultures that have emerged in the tropics.

I guess when you think of other cities, you might think of all corporate colours or even Melbourne, I think it is like a neutral grey tone. However, Cairns is very much colourful when you think of it. I think I'll call ourselves green but I also think that when it comes to the cultural art aspect it's very colour saturated.

Subsequently, she demonstrates her notion of Cairns' colour with a photograph of the CIAF fashion shows.

It has the mountain in the background. It has the water, so it's very noticeably Cairns in the background. And the dresses itself so as the artwork in Cairns is quite different to other States. If you look closely into the dresses, which probably can't in this photo, there are symbols that are very distinct to the Torres Straits. The headdress here is like a figure, and it's all over. And it has painting marks that are very distinct to a northern community from around this area. The artworks relate to this region particularly. And the scenery is very much this place. That's why I afford this fitted arts culture for this location.

In conclusion, images of the *environment* theme support Tuan's (1974, p. 141) concept of *topophilia* that human beings can develop a love of place in many different ways. It is the "affective bond" developed between young artists and Cairns' environment that are directly experienced and filled with meanings. Similarly, the beauty of the Cairns' physical environment as manifested in the *sense of place* developed by the artists in the context of living and growing up in Cairns are displays of strong emotional attachments to localities (Rose, 2022)

5.2.3.3 Way of Life in Images

Engaging in local culture has always been my way of understanding the world through local ways of life. It was a valuable experience to engage with the artists, with them sharing their experiences of living, working or studying in Cairns. As famously defined by Williams (1958), culture is the whole way of life of a particular group in a society. However, to explicitly focus on the 'culture' of everyday life is a real challenge as "everyday life is the life that most of us lead most of the time" (Relph, 1976, p.132). To me, talking and exchanging ideas with locals is a rewarding experience, as such exposure and interaction allowed to appreciate the local ways of life.

One recurring theme in the interviews was ideas of people and community. The artists recognised that being part of an active and healthy art community helped them to stay connected and build confidence in their creative pursuits. This is reflected in the fact that community is a way of life that is lived. As a newcomer to Cairns, as part of my journey to get to know the local artists' way of life, I've had opportunities to engage with Cairns' arts community in various ways. The objective of such engagement was to acquire an overview of perceptions, attitudes and the opinions from the community. Taking the time and effort to understand the art community in Cairns well before embarking on the research solidifies my subsequent engagement with the young artists. It was a perfect way for me to gain a comprehensive overview of the arts and culture ecology of the community – what it is now, what it's been in the past, and what it could be in the future. The subsequent paragraphs illustrate my attempts to interpret the artists' ways of life in the study.

Rusty's Market is a perfect place in Cairns to appreciate the local way of life, even though the market only opens on Fridays-Sundays every week. One of the images Artist J1 showed in the interview was Rusty's Market where:

[...] the locals go hang out, especially in town [...] it is a place of communing. You know, all the people we know meet at Rusty. I think Rusty's is kind of the heart – heartbeat of Cairns especially in the city.

Another major point Artist J1 highlighted was that Rusty's Market:

[...] It's colourful, warm [...] it's just something that's special [...] tourists and people who are passing through can experience it as well. And I think they can kind of feel that there's a hub here.

I resonated with Artist J1. In fact, I bumped into her once at the market and that was the catalytic moment for me as she mentioned the market is the "heart" and "heartbeat of Cairns" especially for locals. Interestingly, she also thinks that the Esplanade Lagoon might be the heartbeat of Cairns for the tourists.

Besides Rusty's Market, Artist J1's other image was the Tanks Arts Centre within the Cairns Botanical Gardens precinct (see Photo 25). According to Artist J1, the Tanks was the first image that came to her mind when I asked her about the images of the arts and cultural scenes of Cairns. The Tanks were close to her heart because she exhibited her art works there while in school. Personally, she thinks the photo shows:

[...] In particular, the facade of the Tanks [...] is like a steampunk kind of rustic silhouette. That just represents space so well [...] Beautiful fig tree with the roots [...] For me, I think, like the natural environment up here is strong, and it influences everything. I couldn't represent art and culture in Cairns without that at the same time. I think it's so unique.



Photo 24: The Tanks Arts Centre

As a young artist growing up in Cairns and with a strong attachment with this place, Artist J1 feels that the Tanks is unique because:

There are a lot of big raintrees around. They are really special. I spent the whole night last night just looking at the canopy of the raintrees. They feel very encompassing and warm. They are like a mother tree that is protecting. It is like a good representation of what I was saying about that feeling of home and community.

As an artist working with the NorthSite Contemporary Arts gallery, Artist J3 notices the arts and cultural scene of Cairns is changing and growing. In the interview at her workplace, she used her three photographs to illustrate what she observed as a young Tjapukai person growing up in Cairns and now as a young artist living and working in the city.

Her first photograph shows a group of young artists in a design studio organised by NorthSite Contemporary Arts with a company called MECCA from Melbourne. MECCA is a skin and beauty care company interested in working with young artists in Cairns. Such an interest from MECCA will “open the doors for the young artists” and most importantly the image represents “the fact that there is big thing happening in this little town”.

Her second photograph shows that a young family in Cairns took their baby for a family portrait photoshoot with a professional photographer in the Northsite Arts Gallery where she works. For her, as a little girl growing up in Cairns, shooting a family portrait in an art gallery is something unheard of. Through an internet social media site, the young family approached her for the shoot. “Art was quite a distance unless you are an arty, creative person. You wouldn’t step foot into a gallery”. She thinks the “arts and culture scene of Cairns is changing” as a family had taken a photograph in the gallery, it shows that they “really embracing the arts as part of their family narrative” and “no more wall between arts, people, and culture”.

Her third photograph shows that “CIAF is very different from the imagery of what CIAF used to be”. As CIAF was very grassroot and communal as it has now transformed from an outdoor exhibition space into the Cairns Convention Centre. It speaks towards how Cairns is growing in the arts and culture scene.

Artist A1 shared that her rewarding moment working as a young tattoo artist in Cairns was to:

give them (tourists) something (tattoo) that they remembered on their whole journey and they go home happy.

According to Artist A1, most of the motifs requested from the tourists are nature-riven and strongly reflect the beauty of Cairns and the regions. Particular requests are Cairns’ local flora and fauna such as frangipani flowers, palm trees, turtles, curlew birds, green frogs, and Australian White Ibis aka ‘bin chicken’. She feels privileged that:

You see, backpackers got their first tattoo. I have done so many getting their first tattoo from Australia. I got to do their first tattoo; it is just a privilege. Privilege to be able to be there.

Artist A3 enjoyed the Cairns Botanical Garden and the esplanade where both locals and tourists treasured these places. He shared that it was good to:

get some fresh air walk along in the esplanade, it is obviously quite muddy, but it is still beautiful.

The above examples demonstrate that, despite being a touristic city, the local artists living in Cairns are appreciating and enjoying the local attractions and amenities at the same time. Artist A2's image of Cairns looking eastward from the Kuranda Skyrail is another perfect example of how a local enjoys the convenience of tourist intended facilities such as the Skyrail cable car in Cairns.

As a young artist living and studying in Cairns, Artist A2 once exhibited at the Court House Gallery in Cairns. Court House Gallery, a refurbished historic Court House building, is now an art gallery and performance space run by the Cairns Regional Council. She uses the image of the Court House Gallery to illustrate that the place is:

[...] the entryway for people outside of Cairns coming into Cairns to view artists. I agree that the Tanks would be a good one but I think the Tanks is more a local gallery in some way because it's out. I think the Court House Gallery represents a lot of the local artists. A lot of emerging artists as well as sometimes high school students. People visit the Cairns Art Gallery for the established artists and then right next to it is the Court House Gallery. It is the gateway for tourists and other people to view the art world in Cairns.

Artist I1's three people-centric images encapsulate the essence of the way of life in Cairns as a young artist living in Cairns:

Cairns is so small. It's really cool to think of ideas that are bigger than Cairns. It's kind of nice. Like where you have this dream as a band to be like, to be big. But you just sort of in Cairns, you just sort of like this little fish in this big pond. And it's really nice with Cairns. Although it's a little pond, you still can find the little spots that are really accepting. It's really nice.

For her, Cairns offers opportunity for everyone:

[...] There are opportunities and there are groups for everyone. It is like everyone's able to fit into that group [...] That's absolutely exactly what that is.

In conclusion, the images of *way of life* theme reflect that it is not a straightforward task to select a single image to represent a place in the place branding process. The findings suggest that "richness and complexity are valuable image attributes" for places and these are reflected in the *way of life* images shared among the young artists (Anholt, 2010, p. 38). Therefore, place promotional agencies should exercise a high level of sensitivity considering the complex nature of places when faced in the creation of the *correct* image of a place (Young & Lever, 1996). As such, it is crucial for the place promotional organisations to explore the broad spectrum of experiences, opinions, and perceptions of the residents and other stakeholders when tasked in the place image conceptualisation assignment for places.

5.3 Imageability Attributes Analysis and Findings

Some cities are more easily recognised or remembered than others when we try to recall them through images in our minds. However, it is broadly agreed that cities are extremely complex entities, but some are fortunate and clearly tagged by a single image such as the New York's skyline, San Francisco's streetcar, and the Eiffel Tower in Paris (Tuan, 1974). Similarly, if a city does not have "imageable and photogenic" features, or using the current term of *Instagrammable* places, it will be relatively difficult to communicate and to 'sell' it to the world (Hospers, 2009, p. 226). Attempts to capture the unique feature of a place or the efforts in mitigating the complexity of urban places into simplified representations by a specific scene or picture is a managerial view that positions place branding as a powerful and persuasive tool with a single image or identity (Kavaratzis & Florek, 2021). However, this thesis argues that to capture and raise the attention of different audiences in destination branding, Cairns should encourage and even solicit a multitude of images and identities reflecting existing residents' place experiences, meanings and articulations. In the study of the "Re-imaging of Barcelona", Smith (2005) demonstrated that urban places with high *imageability* can simultaneously construct a range of recognisable compatible synecdoches and do not have to rely on one synecdochical image. As such, the concept of *imageability* may provide the mechanism through which one can develop synecdochical qualities (Smith, 2005). For the present study, I intended to link the arts and culture image of Cairns with the *imageability* framework as suggested by Lynch (1960) in the study of the perceptual form of Cairns as provided by the artists. As such, the analysis of the arts and culture *imageability* attributes of Cairns is based upon the compilation of the mental images and photographic images shared among the artists as illustrated in Table 8 (see Chapter 5, p. 81).

For the analysis, besides Lynch's (1960) five (5) *imageability* physical elements of paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks, I also drew upon Tuan's (1974) notion of a similar concept in which a city is often known at two levels with one at the "high abstraction" and another of "specific experience" (Tuan, 1974, p. 224). The high abstraction level is represented as a symbol or image such as captured in a postcard or a slogan /catch phrase. At the other end is the "specific experience" level in which it is the intimately experienced neighbourhood level with the rich images that the person acquires from the course of daily living. As such, I link the concept of *imageability* beyond visual or the perceptual and touch upon other aspects such as the experiential aspects of the attributes relating to the non-spatial concepts and values as it is in the interaction between person and place (Lynch, 1960; Relph, 1974; Tuan, 1960) that the *imageability* of a place become significant. Places become meaningful and with a "sense of place" when people "acquire meaning through a combination of usage, emotional attachment, and symbolism" (Jenkins & Walmsley, 1993, p. 235; see also Pocock & Hudson, 1978; Tuan, 1974). In other words, the "meaning attributed to place is dependent on the orientations" of individuals and particular groups (Young, 1999, p. 387).

As the recognisability of these attributes varies from person to person, therefore, by looking at Lynch's (1960) *imageability* physical elements of "landmark" and at the "high abstraction" level of Tuan's (1974), Cairns' is represented by the image of *mountains (tropic and nature)* from 'off the cuff' mental images solicited from the artists. However, when looking at the "specific experience" level (Tuan, 1974), the "landmark" or "nodes" reflected in the artists' images are the Tanks Arts Centre, Bulmba-Ja Arts Centre, Court House Gallery, and the Rusty's Market. Other than the Tanks Arts Centre which is outside of the city centre, the Bulmba-Ja Arts Centre, Court House Gallery, and the Rusty's Market are within a "district" of Cairns' city centre. Lastly, the other "nodes" are the pubs, cafes, and parks that "gain their importance from being the condensation of some use or physical character" as reflected in the photographs. These "nodes" are the focus and epitome of a "district" and they stand as a "symbol" of places (Lynch, 1960, pp. 47-48). From an urban design perspective, one of the most legible structures in Cairns' CBD is undoubtedly the most photographed *Woven Fish Sculptures* located in the Esplanade Lagoon waterfront. This iconic landmark has not been nominated as one of the images representing the arts and culture image of Cairns from the young artists' perspective. The *Woven Fish Sculptures* fit the *imageability* framework of Lynch's (1960) perceptual image of a city with the "landmark" attribute in which anxious tourists and knowledgeable locals can relate to. Notably, images of the Tanks Arts Centre, Rusty's Market, festivals and events at the Esplanade Lagoon as shared by the artists contribute to the overall *imageability* of Cairns. This knowledge of arts and culture images of Cairns, according to Lynch (1960, 1981) is a function of the *imageability* of the urban environment: that is, these images made a strong impression on the artists. It is important to recognise that successful or memorable places tend to have a more active and recognisable public realm. Esplanade Lagoon, the Tanks Arts Centre, and Rusty's Market are such places in which meeting of people, movement and exchange of activities are possible. These places symbolise shared experiences,

memories, traditions, and practices of the artists living, studying, and working in Cairns representing meanings and values created through ongoing interactions between the place and its residents and visitors. As such, images of people associated with events, festivals, and activities as shared by the artists formed part and parcel of the *imageability* attributes of Cairns. The Tanks Arts Centre, Rusty's Market, and the festivals and events at the Esplanade waterfront are illustrations that best exemplify the *atmospheric* aspect of places in Cairns at the neighbourhood level where events and activities are shared among locals and tourists.

I intended to relate the arts and culture image of Cairns with the *imageability* framework as suggested by Lynch (1960) in the study of the perceptual form of Cairns as provided by the artists. However, the findings revealed that some of the more readily identifiable arts and culture objects/structures of Cairns are not part of the images identified among the artists. Perhaps one likely explanation is that images vary among observers, partly due to factors such as class, gender, age, role, familiarity and other such factors (Lynch, 1960). As the current study mainly focuses on the views from the young artists, perhaps future studies could include a wider representation of different stakeholders so that the connection between *imageability* and the arts and culture image of Cairns could be more revealing and informative for future application.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter explores how young artists represent the imagery of arts and culture places of Cairns. As highlighted by Echtner and Ritchie (1991), most studies of tourism images have tended to focus on the functional components of destination image, such as climate, beautiful scenery, attractions, facilities and amenities. By emphasising the tangible physical attributes of places, these studies neglect the psychological aspects in which meanings and experiences of affective response have been ignored (Young, 1999, p. 373; see also Walmsley & Young, 1998). Yet, these components are crucial for the social construction of places in tourism destinations (Young, 1999). Young artists' mental images of Cairns and Cairns' arts and culture images are represented in a multitude of places in a myriad of forms. Within this frame, it is undoubtedly a challenging task for place marketers to decide what image attributes can be developed into a tourism offering in the selection and differentiation process. Places have socio-cultural meanings and these meanings can be consumed (Urry, 1992). Therefore, how such arts and culture places valued and experienced by artists are crucial and would complement the perceived attractiveness of places besides the visual quality of these places. In the next chapter, I explain how these images of the artists' as individually experienced are narrated in the *place stories* in a focus-group co-creation workshop.

Chapter 6.0 Research Question 2 (Co-created Place Stories) : Discussions and Findings

6.1 Overview

A diverse set of approaches have been adopted in the literature to conceptualise a place's brand (Kavaratzis & Florek, 2021). This study builds on existing academic discussion on the relational nature and interactive formation of place brands and the need to foster more participatory approaches to place branding (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013; Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015; Zenker & Erfgen, 2014). One such approach is through an inclusive branding process of embracing residents' *place stories* (Hay et al., 2020) as local narratives (Lichrou et al., 2014). Within this frame, destinations are not merely made up of physical attributes or place elements but also as sets of experiences and meanings provided locally for place consumption. This chapter uses the role of place stories, as narrated by the artists, in conceptualising how place brand is formed. In illustrating how place stories provide multiple meanings co-constructed around the diverse experiences and interactions, this chapter presents artists' place stories using Florek and Insch's (2020) *conceptual experiential model* of city brand formation in a co-creation process. It answers the second research question for the thesis - RQ2: How to co-create an enhanced image of Cairns as the arts and cultural destination in a place branding process?

From a place experience perspective, and with reference to the dynamic and interactive process that co-creates city brand experience, Florek and Insch (2020, p. 170) suggest the importance of peculiar characteristics of cities. Place brands are built through direct or indirect experiences with places, which requires the amalgamation of a city's physical and social environments through interactive exchanges and integrations. These exchanges construct all forms of experiences and different versions of the same place. By embracing a place brand co-creation participatory approach, this chapter suggests that place stories – that is, the collective construction of the meaning of place emerging from the focus-group co-creation workshop – could potentially play a role in enhancing the arts and culture image of Cairns (see Figure 3, Chapter 3, p. 49). In this way, when someone hears or reads these place stories via either written or spoken media, a new place *narrative* of Cairns' image might emerge (Lichrou et al., 2008). Collectively, these narratives can present a compelling and “coherent place story” which then becomes the place brand itself (Kavaratzis & Florek, 2021, p. 33).

The chapter also explores how to incorporate the artists' experiential way of place storytelling using the three themes of *people*, *environment*, and *way of life*. As there are multiple ways to select the place stories presented by the artists, I played the role of co-creator in nominating place stories that are 'compelling' and relevant to the three themes mentioned. From a place branding perspective, these themes construe different facets of Cairns' place character and

identity and can appeal to and connect with different audiences in a more “emotional and memorable way” (Hay et al., 2022, p. 210; see also Lichrou et al., 2014). Place stories, as narratives, are a means through which places are socially constructed (Lichrou et al., 2008; see also Stokowski, 2002). As such, place stories construct powerful narratives and new meanings contributing to the future visual image of Cairns beyond the existing prominent imagery of ‘reef and rainforest’. Through these co-constructed place stories, local artists can simultaneously be viewed and positioned as “producers and products” of the place (Lichrou et al., 2014, p. 834).

6.2 Enhanced Image of Cairns Arts and Culture Characters via Place Stories

In an increasingly dynamic and fluid world, one of the challenges for marketers is the incorporation of competing and shifting narratives of place in the branding process to present a place’s attractiveness (Lichrou et al., 2014). As active users of arts and culture places in Cairns, young artists use multiple place elements and assets to form interactive associations and meanings of their interpretations of arts and culture places (Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015). Artists, as residents living in Cairns, draw upon “socially constructed knowledge” conveying more “personal place representation” in their daily urban lives (Green et al., 2018, p. 357; see also Braun et al., 2013; Hudak, 2019). Although the imagery of Cairns started out as individual perceptions, the impressions of the arts and culture places took a new shape when comparable perceptions and understandings were shared across among the participants. As one of the purposes of place branding is to shape people’s experiences of the location (Ooi, 2008), the analysis of the interviews revealed multiple meanings of arts and culture places in Cairns and artists’ identifications revolve around the experience of living, working, and studying in Cairns (Gustafson, 2001; Relph, 1976).

Following Florek and Insch (2020), the collective imagery was deliberated theme by theme in a focus-group co-creation workshop using the *conceptual experiential model* of the formation of the place brand (see Figure 2, Chapter 3, p. 45). The three themes of *people, environment, and way of life* traverse across the three concentric circles and navigate between elements within zones. While the three themes are presented independently for ease of explanation, it should be noted that they overlap and are interlinked as the city is evolving, changing, and interacting constantly, and so are its physical and social environments (Florek & Insch, 2020). Furthermore, these three themes – which can be distributed respectively among the layers of the model – eventually influence how the place evolves and is shaped. The future integration and coordination of these elements is crucial as the city brand is co-created and then experienced via the combination of all of them.

To encourage more diverse views, experiences, and personalised stories in capturing the “essence” of the place brand of Cairns (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013), the focus-group co-creation workshop touched upon the artists’ creative backgrounds and also whether they were informed of the latest developments of Cairns, such as the CRC’s vision to become the Arts and Cultural Capital of Northern Australia. Table 9 summarises the responses to this question. Responses from the participants revealed that 4 out of the 10 participants had heard about this vision, although 6 out of 10 artists were not fully aware. It is worth noting that all participating artists in the interviews responded positively and enthusiastically to this idea and vision in the interviews; their participation in the *hypothetical* place branding process (as focus-group co-creation workshop format) thus increases the chance of them becoming place brand ambassadors in future (Braun et al., 2013). As such, their involvement in the focus-group co-creation workshop can lead to “increased ownership of the brand” with more sense of responsibility for its development (Braun et al., 2013, p. 21) and thus contribute through positive word of mouth (WOM) (Kemp et al., 2012) and becoming owners of the place brand (Hakala et al., 2020).

Table 9: Comments on the Vision of Cairns as the Arts and Cultural Capital of Northern Australia

Artists Interviewed	Yes / No	Remarks
Artist A1	No	A general answer is no. That would make sense. When you look around what is here. It got so much within just this space right here (Note: Artist A1 referred to the square in front of JCU city campus)
Artist A2	Yes	I’ve heard of it. I haven’t had much [...] I know that it’s been proposed and I think it would be interesting. It would help break the stereotypes of Cairns [...] But it’s really a diverse arts culture [...] there’s so many different elements that people are exploring [...] So it’s not just pretty pictures, which a lot of people don’t really seem to know if you’re not living here [...] I wasn’t surprised when I heard of it.
Artist A3	No	I hadn’t heard about it before
Artist J1	Yes	Only very vaguely. I think I may have seen one article from Facebook that mentioned that [...] And I think that’s a good goal [...] We need that, for me, I think a lot of people know that being a local for so long, it has only been catered to tourists. Arts and cultural things that can be much more connected to community and local
Artist J2	No	I haven’t. Myself, but I understand why Cairns would and possibly be the visual arts capital of Northern Australia [...] Cairns is such a beautiful place. There is a lot of diversity in Cairns [...] There’s just so much variety in Cairns
Artist J3	Yes	[...] Heard that the objective is to develop Cairns as the Arts and Cultural base [...] Desire to become the pinpoint of arts and culture
Artist E1	No	But I think through being aware of something that’s going up, it does make sense

Artist G1	No	I'm surprised it hasn't been done yet. I don't think Cairns would be a bad place to have an art hub [...] It is something they want to do and they haven't done it yet
Artists I1	Yes	I've heard a lot of that [...] I think I've just heard it from individuals, who want that to be the future
Artist S1	No	I've never heard of it [...] I'm excited about it

Next, in the section below, I elaborate snippets of artists' place stories using the three themes of *people*, *environment*, and *way of life*. Artist G1 shares the potentialities of place narratives by suggesting making a visually-inspired way of an artist's life in Cairns:

I believe that someone could make a movie about an artist from a city. Come to Cairns to rediscover themselves, connect back with themselves. I think that would be such an easy movie to make.

6.2.1 People in Place Stories

This section focuses on the *people* theme. Young local creatives play a meaningful role in the formation of place brand and the "practice of creating, curating or producing aesthetic ephemera and experiences" can contribute to the making of memorable and attractive places (Sandbach, 2022, p. 152). In their daily *interactions* with the *resources* (i.e. people and the environment), along with their own emotional and socio-cultural connections, they presented varying images of what Cairns' arts and culture places mean to them. Their involvement allowed them to reflect, recollect and share the way individuals or groups identify with a place. These shared place impressions paved the way for the forming of a place brand from their perspectives.

Residents' voices are the foundation and lifeblood of place brand. Their understanding of place-as-experienced versus place-as-marketed (Hudak, 2019) is crucial, and there is growing interest in participatory and co-creation place branding processes with residents and other key stakeholders (Braun et al., 2013; Campelo et al., 2014). Braun et al. (2013, p. 20) argue that residents are the "bread and butter" of places and their interactions with each other and with visitors form the "social milieu" of a given place. Indeed, the views and experiences of residents can even be the "very reason tourism exists" (Hay et al., 2022, p. 320; Merrilees et al., 2007). Below are excerpts of how young artists interacting with people, and their differing experiences of place in general and of arts and culture places in particular. In the context of *people* in place branding, As Artist J1 expresses that:

When you talk about branding, I feel it is also very important to mention, culturally, the people here. It is different in every place. For example, in Melbourne, certain suburbs had more Vietnamese influence or more Greek [...] We are famous for being multicultural [...] That is really unique to this place and worth mentioning when it comes to people in Cairns.

This multicultural character of Cairns fits expediently in the *experiential conceptual model*. Considering the outer concentric ring of the model with the elements of *interactions* and *resources*, people are constituted as one of the key *resources* with different backgrounds enabling multiple *interactions* in the city. In this sense, Cairns is unique with its mix of diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. Specifically, Artist J1 further elaborates that:

Living is different up here. On the community level, you see people from different cultures interacting [...] Billy the Coffee, this big heart of Billy from the Rusty's Market is like the head of the community.

According to Artist G1, compared to Brisbane, people in Cairns are warmer and friendlier.

I think the locals I've met have been friendly and I think tourists, if they come from Melbourne or Sydney and they are on holiday, I think by the end of it, they relax and they are friendly as well [...] because of the environment or the environment of Cairns that makes them become relaxed and loosen up and [become] friendly. It works upon people like disease.

In the above extracts, the friendliness of the locals serves as the *clue* and, specifically, a local community leader like Billy performs the function or role of a *touchpoint* of a place in the model. Thus the place culture of Cairns “as a way of life as this is experienced and created by the *people that live in a place*” (italic my emphasis, Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013, p. 78). It is essential for city administrators to assess and determine which *clues* might be turned into manageable “brand touchpoints”; and how to use them to create “ordinary and extraordinary experiences” (Florek & Insch, 2020, p. 170). My own experience with Billy the Coffee, as the place brand's *touchpoint*, started off as an *ordinary experience* (the inner circle of the model) when I approached Billy for advice on arts and culture scenes of Cairns. Unexpectedly, the experience turned out and has become *extraordinary experience* after a few encounters. I resonated with Artist J1 that Billy is a local character with a big heart and this example serves as a reminder of the importance of the contribution of local people to the city brand (e.g. Braun et al., 2013, Freire, 2009, Kalandides, 2011). In addition, in the course of city daily life and through everyday behaviour, the particular dynamics of how residents “emit symbolic messages” convey more personal place representations (Green et al., 2018, p. 357). Billy conveys the message that Cairns is a friendly city for both locals and tourists.

Besides being an artist, together with a few young artists as business partners, Artist J1 opened a boutique arts and craft shop in the city centre. In potentially playing the role as a place brand ambassador, she noticed that:

[tourists] don't really know where they are going [...] I see it being in the shop here, the people who come off the boat, particularly the big cruise ships, always look lost. They always stop in here and ask where Cairns Central is.

Like Billy the Coffee's role, Artist J1's friendly gesture is an example of a *touchpoint* in the *conceptual experiential model*. Crucially, she plays the role of artist and entrepreneur and, at the same time, an amicable resident of Cairns with her *interactions* with tourists and in some way assumes the place brand ambassador role as well (Braun et al., 2013; Mittila & Lepisto, 2013). All 10 participants in the study welcome the idea of assuming the role of place brand ambassador either via physical or online interactions in future (Braun et al., 2013).

Leadership is another pivotal *touchpoint* from a place branding perspective. Artist J3 realised that the art and culture scene of Cairns has changed in the last 10 years and by the time she reaches the age of 50, Cairns could achieve the status as the Arts and Cultural Capital of Northern Australia. She also credited Mayor Valerie Schier (2008-2012) for being a persistent and dedicated city leader in promoting and elevating the arts and culture development of Cairns while in office.

The above examples support the roles of residents (people) in place branding and help establish the foundations of a "resident-orientated" approach to place branding as attempted by Braun et al. (2013) and Campelo et al. (2014). Importantly, the study acknowledges artists' roles in four different ways: as "stories, artifacts and atmosphere as well as entrepreneurs" in the place branding process (Mittila & Lepisto, 2013, p. 143). Table 10 below explains the four roles of artists suggested and with reference to the young artists.

Table 10: Four roles of artists as suggested by Mittila and Lepisto (2013)

Artists' roles	Definitions	Examples from the Young Artists
Stories	Captivating stories about lives, personal histories and achievements of local artists practicing in the village	Stories of returnee-artist such as Artist J1 and Artist J3.
Artifacts	Artworks created by the artists and as displayed in museums or galleries for consumption	Stories of Artist J1, Artist A3, and Artist S1 creative artwork exhibited in local galleries and museum
Atmosphere	Workshops and other creative places in the communities	Stories of Artist J1 and Artist A1 practicing creative art in the city centre
Entrepreneurs	Creating and offering their creative products to customers	Stories of Artist J1 and Artist E1 creating and offering their creative products online and offline

In conclusion, the friendliness of the local people (residents) and different roles played by the artists are critical *resources* of Cairns. City administrators could help coordinate the overall city's physical, social and symbolic elements in a framework that allows the current and potential place users "into the experiences" and without losing the "authenticity of a place" in the process (Florek & Insch, 2020, p. 174). Moreover, and in concert with Sandbach (2022, p. 161) it is important to remember that "a place brand is not always something that can be completely controlled"; a model for place branding where the brand is "living and breathing *in situ*" is necessary. Inevitably, as a tourist-centric city, Cairns' art scene is changing and growing. It will be unrealistic to 'control' all the *interactions* and *resources* that will happen in the city. Therefore, the early identification and cultivation of potential *clues* and *touchpoints* is critical according to the *conceptual experiential model*. People and artists of Cairns potentially can be employed as these to create *ordinary* and *extraordinary experiences* for both residents and visitors.

6.2.2 Environment in Place Stories

Cairns is full of sensory delights and is an extraordinary place for visual consumption (Urry, 1992). Mountains, seashores, lakes, and park-like landscapes are some of the "special sensory qualities" of places (Lynch, 1981, p. 363). The beauty of the landscape is the primary content or ingredient for the narrative construction of Cairns as an arts and culture place. Cairns is endowed with the beauty of the natural environment which is recognised as one of the important *resources* of Cairns. People of Cairns are actively and passively in constant *interactions* with this physical environment. These two elements of *resources* and *interactions* from the outer ring of the Florek and Insch's (2020) *conceptual experiential model* provide *everyday ordinary* and *extraordinary experiences* for both residents and visitors of Cairns.

Lynch (1960, p. 1) highlights that every citizen has long associations with some part of their city, and their "image is soaked in memories and meanings". The beauty of the physical environment was highlighted as a unique feature of Cairns that is full of meanings and memories from all ten (10) participants. The attractiveness of the mountains and ocean encircling Cairns becomes a meaningful physical and social construction interlinking people, land, and nature (Campelo et al., 2014). In the *conceptual experiential model*, the beauty of the environment of Cairns provides various sensory *clues* for visitors and tourists to the city. Specifically, the *clues* are reflected in geography (mountain and ocean), climate (seasonal monsoons), colours and the fabric of the city. On the contrary, some places are unique or peculiar not because of their physical attributes, but because of the events that took place in them which have symbolic meaning. Therefore, "events can also have identity; this is the 'sense of occasion'" (Lynch, 1981, p. 132). Extracts below are examples of place stories of how young artists describe unique features of the environment comparing Cairns with other places.

According to Artist J1:

[...] Cairns is unique as [...] a tropical region. That itself is unique, Australia has its own kind of view, most people think of red earth desert kangaroos. We are so different up here [...] the warmth and the humidity and all the things that contribute to the people and the art that comes out of it, the colours.

Elaborating further the notion of colours of Cairns, she states:

I think of green, obviously. We don't get a lot of cottagey flowers that you get down south. We have our own unique colours that are different and the bushes of different colours. We are so green [...] I think maybe because when there is colour, because everything is so green, you really notice it. Like it is the contrast.

Similarly, Artist E1 elaborates:

Wherever you go, it is with a very saturated green and it is the art that comes out of hands. I just noticed all the colours; we tend to be quite vibrant.

Referring to Florek and Insch's (2020) *conceptual experiential model*, the beauty of the physical environment of Cairns evokes an *extraordinary experience* for first-timers. Artists A1 and J1 shared the same impressions of the beauty of the physical landscape of Cairns with specific reference to the mountains:

[...] It's just a different feeling; but mountains, it's not very flat or rigid or everything's circular or flowing or, when you are in other places you get that expansiveness of the horizon. We get that when you look at the ocean, but with the mountains, I have this feeling of Cairns, because there are mountains all around, we are kind of like a cradle. There's this kind of feeling of comfort in that protection [...] like a crevice of suffering, like things growing.

On how the physical environment impacts arts and creativity, Artist J1 suggests:

For me, it is when I am out, particularly at the creek. It is when I find my inspiration for my art, usually. It is the insects and the butterflies that come past. It heavily influences.

Similarly, Artist S1 expressed that her family moved from Sydney to Cairns a few years ago. Such relocation from a metropolis to a regional city totally changed her life:

In Sydney, I didn't feel like home at all [...] There is just more nature around here that helps me to express more and to use that in my head when I am here. I didn't get that when I was in Sydney [...] I think the mountains and oceans are really important.

These meanings and experiences emerge as a result of the interplay between people and their environment (Cresswell, 2015). Being residents of Cairns, the artists actively and passively immerse their lives into places that are with "distinctiveness and unique characteristics" which become "symbolic of the resident's social experience" (Rodrigues et al., 2020, p. 276). These *everyday ordinary experiences* could potentially become *extraordinary experiences* for newcomers to Cairns. The landscape *resources* of the Cairns environment are already actively branded by existing city administrators as the landscape is "a significant element that distinguish one place from the others" (Vela et al., 2017, p. 38).

More significantly, by utilising the physical environment as the backdrop, landscape visual branding reiterates the importance of experience and underlines the "symbolic value of the landscape" (Vela et al., 2017, p. 39).

Regarding the urban built form and design of Cairns with reference to the mountains and ocean, Artist G1 shares that:

[...] Cairns is easy to walk around. I find Cairns probably the easier place to navigate because there are those mountains that you can see and you know the ocean is there [...] Like in Kuranda where they've built around the trees. I think it is big, from the planning and architectural perspectives, with the integration of the environment into living, into the way of life.

In the discussions of Cairns' urban fabric, the Esplanade waterfront is probably the favourite among the locals and tourists. For Artist J1, the Esplanade gives the feeling of:

[...] expansiveness. I love looking at the sunset and the sky that turns purple. It used to be a lot more, but all the bats came out and the sounds of birds. I like dusk time on the Esplanade.

The development and success of the Esplanade lagoon demonstrates "how brands and space mutually [shape] each other" (Lucarelli & Berg, 2011, p. 22). Besides being a landmark of Cairns, the Esplanade lagoon is marked and positioned as a stunning setting for the early events, such as the hosting of the Cairns Festival where locals and visitors interact in "multiple place experience touchpoints" (Rodrigues et.al., 2020, p. 277).

In this context, the Esplanade lagoon is an iconic cultural city asset, and sits prominently within the inner ring of the *conceptual experiential model* in which *extraordinary experiences* emerge.

In sum, the beauty of the physical environment (as the background setting) is actively being consumed and enjoyed by those living in Cairns. The mountains and oceans are the *resources* that provide the overall setting for various *interactions* that take place between locals and visitors. In the example here, the Esplanade lagoon and the Tanks Arts Centre are *touchpoints* that give places their interactional “specificity and distinctiveness” (Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015, p. 1373). And in this process of co-creating place-based narratives, there is a possibility to link urban planning and place branding strategies through “cultural narratives” (Grenni et al., 2020, p. 1355).

6.2.3 Way of Life in Place Stories

Places are not static; they evolve and mean different things to different people. By engaging and interacting with young artists, I realised their everyday *ordinary experiences* might be, to a certain extent, something *extraordinary* to someone else since, the same place does not necessarily mean the same thing to everybody (Massey, 1994; Cresswell, 2015; Gustafson, 2001). According to Lichrou et al. (2014), the local way of life is recognised “as an important (yet neglected) dimension” of place marketing as local narratives of places provide “multiple meanings constructed around the diverse and contested experiences” of living and earned a livelihood in a place (pp. 832-833). For some places, a way of life could mean something as simple as the daily pleasures of walking on convivial streets or sitting around in public places. However, in the course of urban life, residents “emit symbolic messages” and these daily *ordinary experiences* are socially constructed and “nonmarketer-controlled” aspects of city elements (Green et al., 2018, p. 357). Against this background, this section explores some of these “nonmarketer-controlled” *resources* of city elements of young artists, expressing and communicating how they live their lives as artists and residents of Cairns. As such, it could be argued that, these “nonmarketer-controlled” *resources* could potentially be identified as *clues* in the *interactions* and become manageable *touchpoints* in place brand formation.

Similarly, being a touristic city, Cairns is unique with its distinctive visual environment offering exceptional visual sensations for residents and visitors. Urry (1992, p. 172) in his attempt to bring out the “fundamentally visual nature of the tourist experience” put it succinctly that, “it is the distinctiveness of the visual that gives to all sorts of activities a special or unique character”. Therefore, the most mundane of activities “such as shopping, strolling, sitting, having a drink, or swimming, appear special when conducted against a striking visual backcloth”.

With the allowance of such natural assets, there is a local saying that when in Cairns, you are always in a holiday mood. According to Artist G1:

I think a lot of people, even backpackers, people that come here for holidays, there is like a current of freeness running through them when they are here.

Artists suggest these warm and relaxed feelings, as well as the sense of freedom, are hard to experience in other Australia cities from the shared conversations. From the *conceptual experiential model*, the *way of life* of normal *ordinary experience* could possibly become an *extraordinary experience* for newcomers to a city. For example, a family having ice-cream walking along the Esplanade lagoon might appear as an *ordinary experience* for a Cairns local. However, when the majority of the people are having ice-cream along the Esplanade, this might lead to “a sense of atmosphere or a sense of carnival” to the place (Urry, 1992, p. 173).

Tourist attractions derive from different kinds of *gazes* (Urry, 1992). However, the prioritisation of visual experiences in cities is challenged by some scholars as cities are places of multi-sensory human experiences (Adams & Guy, 2007; Law, 2001; Low, 2005; Rodrigues et al., 2020). As argued by Low (2015), the sensuality of a city and city life is made up “everyday rhythms, events, routines and multiple un(expected) urban encounters that bombard our senses” (As cited by Rodrigues et al., 2020, p. 281).

Similarly, newcomers to a place who interact with locals displaying emblematic everyday behaviour may use the “symbolic messages ... to draw conclusions about resident’s values, beliefs, and lifestyles” (Green et al., 2018, p. 358). The messages emitted by these behaviours are potential *clues* that might be changed into manageable brand *touchpoints*. Next, I explain some of the *ordinary everyday experiences* of young artists that are “real and natural experiences of a place” that are relevant in the place brand formation (Florek & Insch, 2020, p. 169).

On the pace of life in Cairns, Artist E1 suggests:

I feel the pace of Cairns allows you to reflect and connect to yourself a bit more and then that comes from creating art. Art comes from within you and if you are reflecting on your thoughts and feelings or whatever you are paying attention to [...] you start to create things.

Similarly, she further shares that:

I feel like in my workplace [...] we have this level of freedom that I don’t think is usual [...] It is like the level of pace that you can listen to yourself. As long as you do your job, you are allowed to listen to yourself, and that is not always given.

Artist E1 reflected on her *everyday ordinary experience* in the inner circle of the conceptual experiential model, and this reflection is echoed by Artist J1:

We still work and do all the things people in other cities do and life gets busy. However, there is more space to breathe, there is the slow pace of it [...] other cities are over stimulating and there's too much going on, too many cars, people, energy, businesses.

Artist G1 thinks that:

Cairns works its way on people. You are going to mellow and chill [...] You are going to assimilate into the mellowness [...] I am talking about the environment, the weather, all of that, but then also the people. It is contagious.

On the life of living and working in regional city like Cairns, Artist J1 shares that:

You do find joy in the small town. And I think it's just about where you are in life. You feel like you need to branch out because the influence of the community can be quite restricted. But community can also be a good thing [...] In the long run, what I've come to realise is that I would rather be connected and find my own freedom in that than be disconnected and find the freedom from not having people around. It is a different stage of life.

Artist J1 is a returnee-artist who studied in Cairns and Melbourne and had a creative career in Melbourne but returned to Cairns in 2019. She elaborates that:

Most people I know who are creative in high school usually go to the cities, either Brisbane or Melbourne. There was a big crew of us in Melbourne that were all from Cairns [...] Everyone connected down there because the kind of association of Cairns people feel comfortable [...] And a lot of people I know have also since returned back and appreciated the way of life here a lot more.

On a lighter note, Artist J1 shared that one of the *clues* of being a local is the notion that "everyone knows how to cook with the coconut". This *ordinary experience* of locals could potentially be transformed into an *extraordinary experience* for newcomers to Cairns. Learning to cook curry with fresh coconut milk adds a sweetness and counteracts the spice of the curry, a memorable experience for curry lovers who never explored this way of cooking. As Green et al. (2018, pp. 17-23) suggest "habits, assumption, and routines" (e.g. cooking, clothing, talking) communicate messages and meanings about how a particular group of people see the world.

Another example of the *everyday ordinary experience* in Cairns that becomes an *extraordinary experience* is the concept of healthy living. Cairns hosts Ironman Cairns, for example, as well as numerous other outdoor sporting events that visitors travel long distances to partake in. Artist E1 shares that:

[...] the people that I meet in everyday life, tend to put the effort to do core weight fitness into their life [...] Most people like going for runs or [go to] the gym.

These *ordinary experiences* are inevitably *extraordinary experiences* for Cairns Ironman participants; it is dubbed the 'race in paradise'. The stunning physical environment of Cairns serves as the backdrop for the co-creation of the place brand experience; more importantly, *touchpoints* such as hosting events create unique and memorable brand experiences for both locals and visitors.

Cairns is a favourite place for southerners to escape the cold, and it is a preferred holiday spot for many. On the notion of escapism, Artist G1 elaborates:

[...] I think probably a reason why people come to escape to Cairns is trying to get back to who they are or who they think they are trying to return to some kind of equilibrium.

On volunteering in the community, Artist S1 mentioned that besides doing art, she volunteers at the CRC's Green Space programme. Similarly, Artist G1 shares that:

I try to find every spare moment to do art [...] I volunteer at the Cairns Multicultural Radio Station [...] I am willing to strike up a conversation with anyone. I think meeting people, especially here, gives you a lot of different opportunities. I think a lot of the stuff I do is trying to find ways to be involved in the community.

By means of working, studying and volunteering, the young artists attained strong and deep community bonds with other people living in Cairns. Being a multicultural city with a constant flow of domestic and international visitors, Cairns is unique in this dimension where local and tourists interact continually. Places often become meaningful because of participants' relations with other people living there. For example, by interacting with other artists, friends, acquaintances, relatives, and the "sense of community" that such social relations create (Gustafson, 2001, p. 9).

6.3 Conclusion

In sum, there is no agreement and perhaps no understanding as to how place brands are formed (Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015), as every place is unique. There are “no ‘one-size-fits-all’ branding processes” (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013, p. 72). In this study, I adopted an approach that is through an inclusive branding process of embracing residents’ place stories (Hay et al., 2022) or as local narratives in answering RQ2 (Lichrou et al., 2014). Utilising Florek & Insch’s (2020) *conceptual experiential model* and the place brand focus-group co-creation workshop, we explored the collective imagery of *people, environment, and way of life* as manifested in artists’ place stories. The framing of places as narratives highlights their dynamic, fluid nature as constantly constructed and reconstructed by means of shared language and symbolic meanings through dialogue in the interactional ways (Lichrou et al., 2008; see also Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013). Establishing alternative images and place narratives with stories that originate from the people living in the destination could be very impactful in altering visitor perceptions and influencing travel decisions (Hay et al., 2022). These artists’ place stories provide a foundational framework for future destination brand identity formation as well as to legitimise a “participatory form of urban governance” in which other stakeholders can co-create in the interactive place brand formation process (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2015, p. 1379).

In this way and with the aim of Cairns positioning itself as an arts and cultural destination, the place brand captures the artists’ lived experiences and represents the “place’s authentic identity”, rather than allowing outsiders’ perception to drive or influence brand formulation. This would offer a more genuine form of representation and experience through which the destination brand can be reinforced and re-created (Hay et al., 2022, p. 328).

Chapter 7.0 Conclusion

7.1 Overview

This study adopted a bottom-up participatory approach in a place brand co-creation process with young artists in Cairns. Through place images, the artists shared their place experiences, meanings, and stories in a co-created way reflecting their lives living, studying, and working in the city. By reviewing place branding concepts from *marketing*, *geography*, and integrative *progressive* approaches, I situated my study of place brand co-creation as a response to and reflection on Cairns' unique arts and culture characteristics. For the study, I utilised a multi-method approach with the following Research Objectives (RO) and Research Questions (RQ):

- RO1: To explore how the image of arts and culture characteristics of Cairns is represented and interpreted by young artists.
- RO2: To explore Cairns' imageability, and arts and culture experiences and meanings in a participatory co-creation place branding process.
- RQ1: How do young artists present Cairns as a place of arts and culture?
- RQ2: How can an enhanced image of Cairns as an arts and culture destination be co-created in a place branding process?

In recent year, scholars have called for a re-conceptualisation of place branding. Due to the increased complexity of places, the involvement of multiple stakeholders, especially the residents, is crucial. This thesis contributed to the emerging literature relating to participatory co-creation place branding, particularly residents' involvement in destination brand development and communication. A fundamental understanding of the relationships between people and place is necessary to underpin the development of a place brand as the dynamics of a particular place will shape the realities of how place branding processes work in practice. This research suggests that the integrative and inclusive nature of co-creation will lead to authenticity and brand sustainability in the context of place branding.

In contrast to most studies and practices of place branding, this research is based on the assumption that place branding is not solely about identifying the essence of a place, but about understanding and capturing the plurality of the local images and narratives that create meanings. This work stimulated the co-creation of collective agency to consider arts and culture images, narratives and identities for creating and promoting a more inclusive representation of Cairns in a hypothetical branding exercise. In this study, I have detailed a conceptually and methodologically rigorous approach to developing effective participatory

inclusive place branding with the young artists in Cairns. The approach used demonstrated important long term impacts on the artists' reflections and articulations of their places. Collectively, it opened up the opportunities of: residents as citizens; residents as an integral part of the place brand; and resident as the place brand ambassadors for places (Braun et al., 2013). With many tourism destination find themselves in a position where the place's internal stakeholder, particularly residents, feel alienated and disengaged from the destination's created brand identity; Cairns is unique in the sense that the insights from these artists shown that there is a symbiotic relationships between locals/tourists and arts/nature that expressed in the images and narratives with the observation that the 'reef and rainforest' brand does actually align with some of the key values locals identify.

In answering RQ1 and recognising the multifaceted and interdisciplinary nature of place branding, the findings revealed that the arts and culture images of Cairns can be summarised as *people, environment, and way of life*. This collective imagery is a composition of the people of Cairns, the physical attributes of the place, and the artists' lived experience with the perceived image they have of Cairns' arts and culture places. This collective imagery could be a frame of reference for city administrators and/or place brand marketers for the collective conceptualisation and construction of Cairns' enhanced destination image. In this way, place branding aims to connect place image and place identity through memorable experiences, meanings and stories as narrated collectively.

In answering the RQ2, the findings revealed an enhanced image of Cairns can be co-created and manifested in *place stories* shared among artists through conversations and interactions. Unlike the branding of products or other consumer services, place brands are different in that they are much more complex with many participants or stakeholders who have interest in the place's success. In this study, place branding is envisaged as a socially constructed process that is shaped by the participation of internal stakeholders (the artists) and their *place stories* are part of the narratives of a larger community fabric. In this sense, the artists' *place stories* are the actualisation of their experiences with meanings and could potentially form a crucial part of the enhanced image of Cairns in developing and communicating a destination brand in future. More importantly, place brand co-creation as demonstrated here provides an opportunity for wider stakeholder engagement and inclusiveness while at the same time giving the residents a sense of belonging to place and also brand ownership. As residents contribute to the delivery of brand promise, place brand marketers need to understand how the multiple voices of the local community can be accommodated in the destination branding process. These residents (artists) are the main drivers of a place brand and future place brand ambassadors of Cairns.

7.2 Research Contributions

The study provides a foundation and framework for future place brand co-creation studies focusing on place image and place stories as experienced by young artists in a co-created way. It also makes a contribution to our understanding of place branding by emphasising the role of residents (artists) in the co-creation of images, meanings and stories. Place stories that originate from the people living in the destination can be most impactful in influencing place brands. Conceptualised as a resident-driven study on Cairns' arts and culture image, the photo-elicitation interviews open up a space for the artists living in Cairns to reflect and share the social and cultural meanings that they attach to their arts and culture places. In addition, the utilisation of photo-elicitation in the current research is potentially a very valuable strategy in the place branding co-creation process as it empowers participants to express concepts and feelings that would not ordinarily be possible using verbal interview techniques.

This study fills three gaps in the literature presented in Chapter 3:

- *Adopting a more spatially aware reading of place branding by incorporating marketing-oriented and planning-oriented approaches*

This study argues place branding is an important interdisciplinary research field that combines theories and practices from marketing, geography and urban planning. By employing the concept of imageability (Lynch, 1960), the study moreover argues the need to align place branding with place-specific qualities and relevant spatial development plans in conceptualising the desirable future of the place with multiple stakeholders. Integrating urban planning with place branding through cultural narratives built on local knowledge and the perceived meanings and images of place is an effective approach and powerful process (Grenni et al., 2020).

- *Adopting resident-oriented bottom-up participatory place brand formation approach*

Although often neglected in place branding activities, the views and attitudes of people living in the place are vital as residents are the "lifeblood of place brand" (Hudak, 2019, p. 106). A place brand created via a top-down approach is less desirable as an entity built through active and passive actions/interactions of multiple stakeholders of a city in a participatory process. As in Kavaratzis' and Kalandides' (2015) *interactional view* of place brands, they should be dependent on the interactions between local stakeholders who co-construct them. The place brand formation process starts when stakeholders use placemaking elements (materiality, practices, institutions and representations) to form mental associations with the place.

- *Adopting a “place-as-experienced” vs “place-as-marketed” approach*

Despite frequent criticisms of place brand management (Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015), there is evidence in the literature that place brand managers are interested and immersed in exploring innovative place branding approaches to differentiate places from each other. This study adopted the “place-as-experienced” approach and perhaps the findings may be applicable to other similar size cities or localities (Hudak, 2019, p. 99). The findings present a possible rethinking of how place administrators engage with residents and stakeholders continuously to ensure various local voices are better reflected and represented. The study also reinforces the notion that in participatory forms of place brand co-creation, the role of stakeholders is key, since stakeholders co-construct, and share experiences, meanings, and stories of a place (Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015).

7.3 Limitations & Future Research

In an increasingly dynamic world with competing and shifting narratives of place, the experience of place and its meaning can be diverse for people with different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. This needs to be addressed by further research with a larger study with the inclusion of multiple stakeholders’ perspectives and experiences. In addition, future research could elaborate other forms of resident engagement and participation that can be used in the process. Researchers should address the idea that the destination should stimulate genuine involvement from residents in the co-creation of the destination’s brand identity. This final part of the thesis aims to address its limitations and share opportunities for future researchers who may wish to develop or expand the research approach and suggested themes. Although not an exhaustive list, the following are some of the limitations of this study:

- Wider Multiple Stakeholder Participation

The findings present a possible approach for how future place brand managers might engage with residents and stakeholders continuously, using multi-methods such as photo-elicitation interviews and focus-group co-creation workshops. This approach supports more inclusive place management and governance so that greater local voices are reflected and represented in the process. This study is only focused on viewpoints of young artists, although the findings suggest the perspective of this group of artists as reflected in their meanings, experiences, and stories are significant to rethinking Cairns as an arts and culture destination. Future research could engage a wider representation of stakeholders so that substantially more local voices are represented to create diversity and foster a feeling of inclusiveness in the destination branding process. Future studies could also explore roles and inter-relations of multiple stakeholders in the imaged-based co-creation process reflecting greater participation

from other stakeholders such as established artists, creative professionals, tourism representatives, businesses, and also representatives from the wider communities. The inclusion of wider stakeholders in the co-creation process will better reflect and incorporate residents' future desires and aspirations of their place.

- Residents' perceptions and attitudes in place branding

The literature highlights there is limited empirical research exploring the role of residents in place branding. Understanding the perceptions and attitudes of residents is time-consuming and is often done through surveys, ethnographies and other often time intensive approaches. Future study could explore the residents' perceptions and attitudes of place branding through social media relating to their views as users generated contents (UGCs) on engagement in the place brand formation process. As such, their collective viewpoints could better facilitate place brand managers in practice to establish a more reflective participatory approach to place branding. At the same time, the research could focus on clarifying and elaborating the roles of residents as co-creators in the place branding process.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Approved Consent Forms for Interview/Focus Group and Information Sheets



INFORMED CONSENT FORM (INTERVIEW)

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INFORMED CONSENT FORM (FOCUS GROUP)

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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (INTERVIEW)

PROJECT TITLE: Cairns' Image as the Arts and Cultural Destination of Northern Australia: From the Vantage Point of Young Artists

You are invited to take part in a research project about the study of *Cairns' image as the arts and cultural destination of Northern Australia in a place branding process*. The study is being conducted by **Yee Mun Loong** and will contribute to the degree of Master of Philosophy at James Cook University.

If you agree to be involved in the study, you will be invited to be interviewed. First, please bring along three photographs that best represent Cairns' image as the arts and cultural destination of Northern Australia. Second, please share with me your thinking/selection process of the photographs. Third, your reasons behind the selection of these photographs.

The interview, with your consent, will be audio-taped, and should only take approximately 30 minutes of your time. The interview will be conducted either at the Tanks, JCU or a venue of your choice.

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary and you can stop taking part in the study at any time without explanation or prejudice.

Your responses and contact details will be strictly confidential. The data from the study will be used in research publications in the form of thesis. You will not be identified in any way in these publications.

Your participation in the study will be confidential, no personally identifying information will be collected. The data from the study will be used in in the form of thesis. You will not be identified in any way in these publications.

To show my appreciation, a \$20 art-themed gift voucher will be provided for participating in the study.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact –

Principal Investigator:

Name: Yee Mun Loong

College: TUD Lab, College of Science and Engineering
James Cook University

Phone:

Email: yeemun.loong@my.jcu.edu.au

Supervisor:

Name: A/Prof Lisa Law

College: TUD Lab, College of Science and Engineering
James Cook University

Phone:

Email: lisa.law@jcu.edu.au

*If you have any concerns regarding the ethical conduct of the study, please contact:
Human Ethics, Research Office
James Cook University, Townsville, Qld, 4811
Phone: (07) 4781 5011 (ethics@jcu.edu.au)*



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (FOCUS GROUP)

PROJECT TITLE: Cairns' Image as the Arts and Cultural Destination of Northern Australia: From the Vantage Point of Young Artists

You are invited to take part in a research project about the study of *Cairns' image as the arts and cultural destination of Northern Australia in a place branding process*. The study is being conducted by **Yee Mun Loong** and will contribute to the degree of Master of Philosophy at James Cook University.

If you agree to be involved in the study, you will be invited to take part in a co-creation place branding focus group. The focus group workshop will be conducted indoor either at the Tanks or JCU with a total time of not more than 2 hours in duration. Due to the nature of the focus group, the confidentiality cannot be assured.

In an interactive co-creation setting, possible focus group questions to be explored are:

- What is the collective imagery of Cairns as represented in arts and cultural themes?
- What is the unique selling point or distinctive feature of this collective imagery?
- What are main themes from the collective imagery?
- What are the key steps to establish the main themes of the collective imagery?
- How do we present the arts and cultural destination themes of Cairns in a storytelling way?

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary and you can stop taking part in the study at any time without explanation or prejudice.

No personally identifying information will be collected for this study. The data from this study will be used in the form of a thesis. You will not be identified in any way in these publications. Please be advised that although the researchers will take every precaution to maintain confidentiality of the data, the nature of focus groups prevents the researchers from guaranteeing confidentiality.

To show my appreciation, light refreshments will be provided in the focus group workshop.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact -

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If you have any concerns regarding the ethical conduct of the study, please contact:

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