Impact of multilateral place dimensions on corporate brand attractiveness and identification in higher education: Business school insights

John M.T. Balmer[a,*], Rudiana Mahmoud[b], Weifeng Chen[a]

[a] Brunel Business School, Brunel University London, London UB8 3PH, United Kingdom
[b] The Business School, University of Damscus, Syria

ABSTRACT

This study scrutinizes how places meaningfully burnish corporate brand attractiveness and identification. To date, extant research adopts a mono-lateral, rather than multi-lateral perspective. Marshalling the corporate brand identification theoretical perspective, the findings make a theoretical advance by explicating how a nascent corporate brand can be enhanced through its positive associations with places. The research setting for this study was a newly-established business school and the research focused on international postgraduate students who are a key business school constituency. In this study, the tripartite place associations which meaningfully enhanced customer corporate brand attractiveness and identification were found to be country, city, and corporate locale.

1. Introduction

Place is often narrowly conceived in unidimensional rather than in multilateral terms. Consequently, this study adopts a multi-place perspective in showing how places (country, city, and corporate locale) enhance corporate brand attractiveness and identification of a newly established corporate brand. Specifically, the study took place within a recently established business school and focused on the cognitions of a key business school student constituency: international postgraduate students. The study draws on the psychological theory of social identity (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1985; Turner, 1987), and more specifically its branch theory of corporate brand identification (Balmer & Liao, 2007), to explain how multilateral place dimensions, among others, meaningfully enhance corporate brand attractiveness. Moreover, it reveals how multiple corporate brand place associations are significant in fostering a postgraduate student's sense of identification with a business school corporate brand whereby the self is, in part, defined by reference to the business school brand.

The realization that places, and not just place, have the potential to meaningfully enhance a corporate brand's attractiveness and identification represents a further broadening of scholarship on place branding and addresses the cri de coeur of Herstein (2012) who argued that panoptic perspectives should characterize the place branding canon. In addition, this study addresses the observations of Goi, Goi, and Wong (2014) that there is a paucity of empirical insight in terms of HEI

corporate brand initiatives by explaining the significance of places apropos newly-established HEIs corporate brands. The research advances the corporate brand identification theoretical perspective (Balmer & Liao, 2007) by showing the importance of places to a corporate brand's social identity. It also addresses the repeated calls by scholars for more empirical studies on corporate brand identification within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and, in particular, business schools (Balmer & Liao, 2007; Palmer, Koenig-Lewis, & Asaad, 2016; Stephenson & Yerger, 2014). As such, this study answers this by examining not only corporate brand attractiveness but, significantly, corporate brand identification too. Moreover, the study addresses the repeated calls of scholars for research to focus not only on top business schools but also on middle and lower-ranking business schools (Balmer & Liao, 2007; Balmer & Wang, 2016a, b; Catcheside, 2012). Furthermore, this empirical enquiry, which focuses on international postgraduate business school students' cognitions of business school corporate brand attractiveness, responds to the conclusions of Soo and Elliott (2010) and Zheng (2014) who counselled that empirical research was required to explicate the rationales for international student inflows to UK business schools.

The article continues by placing this study in the context of the literature on corporate brand identification, place branding and university corporate brands. It then proceeds with an articulation of hypotheses and introduction of a conceptual framework. This is followed by an explication of the methodology employed and an overview of the

research findings. Finally, the article details the conclusions and management implication flowing from the research and theoretical insights and also enumerates the limitations of the study along with avenues for further research.

2. Corporate brand identification

Over recent years, social identity/self-categorization theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1985; Turner, 1987) has been utilized by management scholars to explain, in psychological terms, how employees define themselves in the context of their work organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Bartels, Douwes, de Jong, & Pruyn, 2006; Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). In an analogous vein, the customer-company identification notion in marketing considers how consumers define themselves in the context of an organization's corporate identity and/or its products and services (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Balmer, 2008; Carlson, Donavan, & Cumiskey, 2009; Curras-Perez, Bigne-Alcaniz, & Alvarado-Herrera, 2009; Lam, Ahearne, Hu, & Schillewaert, 2010, 2012; Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar, & Sen, 2012; Marín & de Maya, 2013; Tuškej, Golob, & Podnar, 2013; Tuškej & Podnar, 2018). With the formal introduction of the corporate brand concept (Balmer, 1995, 2001a, b), and subsequent scholarly interest in corporate brands (Balmer & Gray, 2003; Burt & Sparks, 2002; Hatch & Schultz, 2001; Ind, 1997, 1998; Knox & Bickerton, 2003) - which continues to the present (Mohan, Voss, Jiménez, & Bashar, 2018; Sevel, Abratt, & Kleyn, 2018; Stuart, 2018; Törmälä & Saraniemi, 2018) - it was not long before there was a formal articulation of the corporate brand identification theoretical notion (Balmer & Liao, 2006, 2007). As such, the introduction of the corporate brand identification theoretical perspective represents a logical development, and advance of social identity theory within the marketing discipline. Consequently, there was a realization that consumers (along with stakeholders generally) were able to define themselves not only in relation to an organization's corporate identity (customer-company identification) but also in terms of an organization's corporate brand (corporate brand identification). Therefore, customers may derive a social identity via cognitive links with a corporate brand (Balmer & Liao, 2007; Marín & de Maya, 2013). Since 2007 a distinct stream of scholarship has emerged on the corproate brand identification theoretical notion (Balaji, Roy, & Sadeque, 2016; Balmer, Liao, & Wang, 2010; De Roeck, Maon, & Lejeune, 2013; Elbedweihy, Jayawardhena, Elsharnouby, & Elsharnouby, 2016; Kuenzel & Halliday, 2008; Papista & Dimitriadis, 2012; Podnar, 2015; Tildesley & Coote, 2009; Tuškej et al., 2013; Tuškej & Podnar, 2018).

Corporate brand identification denotes a psychological state of perceiving, feeling, and valuing a sense of oneness with a corporate brand (Lam et al., 2010, 2012; Tuškej et al., 2013; Tuškej & Podnar, 2018). As such, a consumer's perceived self-image will be in alignment with the corporate brand image (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Balmer et al., 2010; Balmer & Liao, 2007; Carlson et al., 2009; Donavan, Janda, & Suh, 2006; Lam et al., 2010, 2012; Tuškej et al., 2013; Tuškej & Podnar, 2018). Therefore, a customer can have a meaningful psychological attachment to a corporate brand (Donavan et al., 2006; Balmer & Liao, 2007; Balmer et al., 2010; Balmer, 2011a, b; He & Li, 2011; He, Li, & Harris, 2012; Johnson, Morgeson, & Hekman, 2012; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986a, b). This identification can result in strong and sustainable relationships with a corporate brand (Curras-Perez et al., 2009; Marín & de Maya, 2013). For instance, positive corporate brand identification can engender greater customer engagement and loyalty (Ahearne, Bhattacharya, & Gruen, 2005; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Brown, Barry, Dacin, & Gunst, 2005; Donavan et al., 2006). Moreover, corporate brand identification can lead to a consumer perceiving as a corporate brand owner (Balmer, 2005; Balmer, 2012), corporate brand member, or supporter (Balmer & Liao, 2007). Not all identification is positive: there can be negative corporate brand identification and dis-

identification as well (Balmer, 2005, 2010). More broadly, the social identification with a corporate brand can be at both the individual as well as the group level (Podnar, 2015; Tuškej & Podnar, 2018).

Corporate brand identification is selective and volitional in character (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). A pre-requisite of corporate brand identification is the fulfilment of at least one self-definitional need, such as self-continuity, self-distinctiveness, or self-esteem. Corporate brand attachment and corporate brand attractiveness are key precursors for corporate brand identification (Balmer & Liao, 2007; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Marín & de Maya, 2013).

3. Multilateral place branding

Place branding now attracts considerable attention both within marketing and beyond (Ashworth & Kavaratzis, 2009; Gilboa, Jaffe, Vianelli, Pastore, & Herstain, 2015; Green, Grace, & Perkins, 2018; Hankinson, 2007; Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013; Kerr, 2006; Merrilees, Miller, Ge, & Tan, 2018; Powell, 2016; Sevin, 2014; Wang, Li, Barnes, & Anh, 2012; Wang, Shen, & Chung, 2015). This being noted, the literature is still in its adolescence and, typically, adopts a uni-lateral approach to place, with the focus primarily being given to cities. This study advances the territory with its multi-lateral place branding perspective.

While place branding/marketing has a well-established provenance (Kotler, Haider, & Rein, 1993; Ward, 1998; Warnaby, 2009), the last two decades have seen an exponential rise in scholarship in this area. As such, a distinct, albeit multi-faceted, strand of literature - albeit one with a complex terminology (Hanna & Rowley, 2007) - has emerged on the territory (Dinnie, 2004; Oguztimur & Akturan, 2015). For us, place branding is a portmanteau term and can apply to countries, regions, cities, and locales. Significantly, they can meaningfully endorse - and thereby enhance - corporate brands with which they are associated. For instance, place brands can be redolent with positive meanings for consumers and can be a force for good (Merrilees et al., 2018). As argued by Chernatony and McDonald (1992), place brands often have relevant, unique, and sustainable added values which consumers find attractive. For the most part, place branding is informed by a uni-lateral perspective (by focusing on either country or city brands) yet, as argued in a conceptual article by Herstein (2012), a panoptic approach should characterize place branding. Therefore, this study develops the conceptual arguments of Herstein (2012) by adopting a multilateral perspective on place branding by considering the trilateral importance of country, city, and corporate locale.

Furthermore, to date, the importance of corporate locale in place branding terms has not received much attention. Typically, the place branding canon operates at the meta-level and focuses on nation/ country brands (Dinnie, Melewar, Seidenfuss, & Musa, 2010; Fan, 2006; Norbani, Nguyen, Yahya, Melewar, & Chen, 2015) or city brands per se (Dinnie, 2011; Henshaw, Medway, & Warnaby, 2015; Merrilees et al., 2018; Merrilees, Miller, & Herington, 2009; Merrilees, Miller, Herington, & Smith, 2007; Zenker & Beckman, 2013a, b; Zhao, 2015). Rarely are place brands scrutinized at the micro level (corporate locales for instance), although there are exceptions (Dennis, Michon, & Newman, 2010).

While recognizing that different categories of place branding are different in terms of their components, and in terms of their management, they are also similar in many regards (Caldwell & Friere, 2004). One of these similarities is the recognition that place brands are, in effect, corporate brands (Caldwell & Friere, 2004; Dinnie, 2004, 2011; Hankinson, 2007; Merrilees, Miller, & Herington, 2012, 2013; Trueman, Cornelius, & Killingbeck-Widdup, 2007; Trueman, Cornelius, & Wallace, 2012). The literature recognizes that there can be a synergistic relationship between a place brand and a corporate brand; often there can be a bilateral relationship and effect (Balakrishnan, 2009; Cheshire, 2006; Fan, 2006). Within the place branding literature, it has been shown how a positive and attractive city brand can give a

competitive advantage to a metropolitan area (Kavaratzis, 2004; Porter, 1995).

4. University corporate brands

Increasingly, from the 1980s and 1990s onwards, higher education institutions (HEIs) have embraced a student-focused marketing orientation (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2010; Asaad, Melewar, Cohen, & Balmer, 2013). Concomitant with the above, HEIs have acquired strong and favorable corporate identities and corporate brands. Consequently, scholars have explicated the nature and importance of higher education corporate brands (Balmer et al., 2010; Balmer & Liao, 2007; Hemsley-Brown & Goonawardana, 2007), and corporate identities (Melewar & Akel, 2005). From these foundations, a distinct type of literature has emerged in this area and, as the recent literature attests there has been an upsurge of interest in HIE corporate branding in particular (Curtis, Abratt, & Minor, 2009; Asaad et al., 2013; Watkins & Gozenbach, 2013; Asaad, Melewar, & Cohen, 2014; Balaji et al., 2016; Balmer & Wang, 2016a, b; Dean, Arroyo-Gamez, Punjaisri, & Pich, 2016; Dennis, Papagiannidis, Alamanos, & Bourlakis, 2016; Hemsley-Brown, Melewar, Nguyen, & Wilson, 2016; Ng, 2016; Palmer et al., 2016; Frandsen et al., 2018). However, among the gaps in knowledge is a lack of empirical insight relating to the outcomes of HEI corporate brand initiatives (Goi et al., 2014). Therefore, this study addresses this by examining not only corporate brand attractiveness but, significantly, corporate brand identification too.

Seemingly, the ascendancy of corporate branding within UK HIEs was a response to significant environmental forces which characterized the late 20th century (Balmer & Gray, 2003). Two of these environmental forces were marketization (privatization programmes and the liberalization of markets) and globalization (Balmer & Gray, 2003). The marketization of HEIs in the United Kingdom (UK) had its origins in the laissez-faire policies of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s and 1990s. Consequently, numerous state-entities were privatized, industries were liberalized, and both became subject to market forces. Emulated in other countries, the marketization of industries accentuated the need for corporate brand and identity building (Balmer & Gray, 2003). HEIs were not immune from these winds of change. The liberalization of the UK Higher Education (HE) led to the establishment of new Universities and the introduction of new University names and marques. Consequently, the expansion of the UK university sector, coupled with the reduction in financial support from the state (Ng, 2016), meant that HEIs vied with each other to attract students and, significantly, income. Therefore, it became a strategic imperative for HEIs to seek to acquire attractive, and differentiated, corporate brands and identities (Joseph, Mullen, & Spake, 2012; Boch, Poole, & Joseph, 2014; Dennis et al., 2016).

Globalization - and the concomitant concern of global competition - was (and remains) another highly significant environmental force (Balmer & Gray, 2003). HEIs were not immune from its effects, as Universities competed for students on the international stage (Balmer & Liao, 2007; Bennell & Pearce, 2003; Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Hemsley-Brown & Goonawardana, 2007). Globalization also led to an increase in international student mobility (Bennell & Pearce, 2003; Zammuto, 2008; Zheng, 2014). Moreover, UK Universities became increasingly reliant on overseas students for income generation (Ryan, 2011; Zheng, 2014). For the UK, international students are of particular importance, since the UK is the most sought-after destination for international students, after the US, and is particularly attractive for business school students (Balmer & Liao, 2007; Zheng, 2014). Given that Universities are often reliant on the high tuition fees of international business school students (Ryan, 2011; Zheng, 2014; Alwi & Kitchen, 2014; Naidoo & Pringle, 2014), this study, with international postgraduate business school students as its focus, is of particular importance.

4.1. Business school corporate brands

While there are comparatively few studies on HIE corporate brands per se (Palmer et al., 2016), there is an even greater paucity of empirical research on HE business school corporate brands per se. This is an oversight, given the role of business schools in generating income for universities. Given the lack of empirical insight, there is an additional problem in that extant business school research routinely prioritises well-established and highly-ranked schools (Balmer & Liao, 2007; Balmer & Wang, 2016a, b; Catcheside, 2012; Coughlan, 2013; Hunt, 2012; Leunig, 2013). Thus, extant studies typically focus on the 'top' business schools. As such, the focus, invariably, is on the top 100 schools offering the best MBA programmes as evidenced by the influential Financial Times (FT) business school rankings (Wedlin, 2007; Devinney, Dowling, & Perm-Ajchariyawong, 2008; Dichev, 2008; Davies & Thomas, 2009; Balmer et al., 2010; Sun & Richardson, 2012). However, a focus on such schools represents a distorted mirror because the overwhelming number of business schools are non-elite institutions and, in many instances, have newly-established corporate brands. While Balmer and Liao (2007) in their foundational study of business school corporate brand identification argued for research to also embrace middle and lower-ranked business schools, to date, there remains little research on the aforementioned. Therefore, in response to this, it is notable that the setting for this study is a newly-established and non-elite business school corporate brand.

To date, although limited in scope, extant empirical studies of business school corporate brands have respectively focused on student corporate brand identification (Balmer & Liao, 2007), corporate brand management (Balmer et al., 2010; Balmer & Liao, 2007; Balmer & Wang, 2016a, b; Frandsen et al., 2018), and on student corporate brand image, (Alwi & Kitchen, 2014). While a number of studies have explained overseas business school student selection of UK business schools (Balmer & Liao, 2007; Alwi & Kitchen, 2014), existing research has not addressed the corporate brand attractiveness dimensions which underpin corporate brand identification of international postgraduate students. As such, this study also addresses the gap enumerated by Soo and Elliott (2010) and Zheng (2014) who respectively advocated that research is required to explicate the reasons for international student inflows to UK business schools.

5. Hypotheses and conceptual framework

The theoretical framework (see Fig. 1) conceptualizes that international students will identify with a newly established business school's corporate brand where they find key corporate brand features to be attractive. These are: brand similarity, brand distinctiveness, metropolitan city brand, higher education country brand, campus locale, and tuition fees.

5.1. Newly established business schools corporate brand attractiveness

The attractiveness of a brand is based on the extent to which a customer has a favorable evaluation of its characteristics (Ahearne et al., 2005). These are brand characteristics which customers view as being central, enduring, and distinctive. A review of the literature reveals that attractiveness is a precursor to customer identification (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Curras-Perez et al., 2009; Marín & de Maya, 2007, 2013). Extant studies revealed a direct and positive effect of brand attractiveness and customer brand identification apropos, for example, cosmetic and toiletries brands (Curras-Perez et al., 2009), and cellular brands (Kim, Han, & Park, 2001). In the context of this study, it can be proposed that international postgraduate business students are more likely to identify with a newly established business school's corporate brand if it is attractive to them (Kim et al., 2001; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Marín & de Maya, 2007, 2013; Curras-Perez et al., 2009). Therefore, the following hypothesis can be stated:
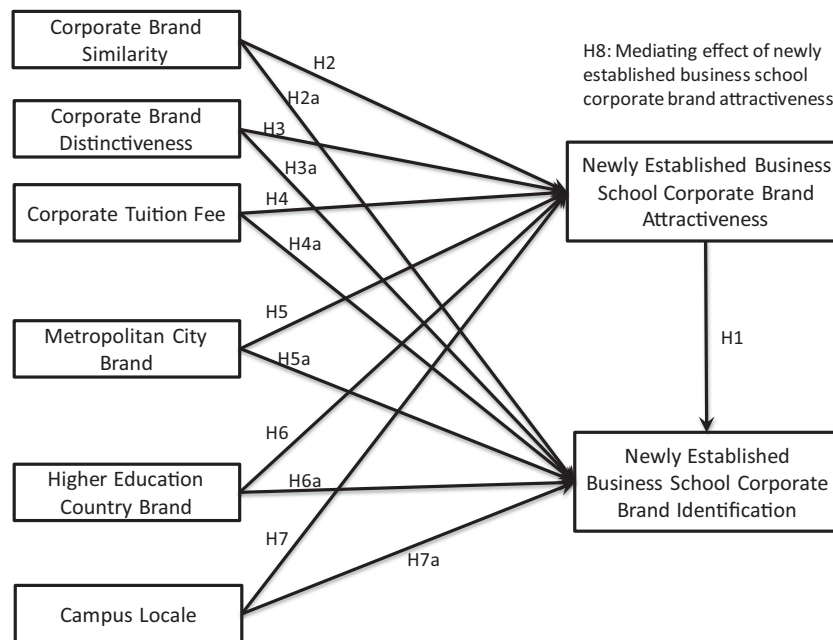
Fig. 1. A theoretical framework - International Postgraduate Business School Students' identification with a newly-established business school's corporate brand.

H1. Newly established business schools' corporate brand attractiveness has a direct and positive effect on international postgraduate business students' identification with a newly established business school's corporate brand.

H2a. Corporate brand similarity has a direct positive effect on international postgraduate business students' identification with a newly established business school's corporate brand.

5.2. Corporate brand similarity

Previous studies have showed that identity similarity is related to identity attractiveness (Berscheid & Walster, 1969; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Karaosmanoglu, Ayse Banu, & Zhang, 2011). The similarity-attraction paradigm proposes that similarity is the main driver of attraction. Individuals are attracted to social groups that are similar to themselves (Berscheid & Walster, 1969; Karaosmanoglu et al., 2011). The extant literature also shows that identity similarity is related to customer identification with an institution (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Donavan et al., 2006; Kuenzel & Halliday, 2008; Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) concluded that where consumers perceive a company identity to be similar to their own, the more attractive they will find the company identity. Moreover, as noted by Donavan et al. (2006), individuals not only build affiliations with those that are similar but also demonstrate a distinction from those who are different and who represent an out-group. Several empirical studies have emphasized the importance of identity similarity and brand similarity to customer identification in different sectors including mobile services (He & Li, 2011) and the care sector (Kuenzel & Halliday, 2008). However, to date, the relationship between corporate brand similarity and corporate brand attractiveness and customer identification has not been empirically researched in the context of newly established business schools' corporate brands. Mindful of Balmer and Liao's (2007) work, this research study investigates international postgraduate business school students' evaluation of a newly-established business school corporate brand's attractiveness and their identification with the brand. Moreover, informed by Bhattacharya and Sen (2003), Balmer and Liao (2007), and Stokburger-Sauer et al. (2012), it explores whether students perceive a similarity between themselves and the newly-established business school corporate brand.

Hence, the following hypotheses can be stated:

H2. Corporate brand similarity has a direct positive effect on newly established business schools' corporate brand attractiveness.

5.3. Corporate brand distinctiveness

Corporate brand distinctiveness relates to those key dimensions of a corporate brand to which customers attach value (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Thus, the more distinctive these elements are, the greater the value customers accord to them. The extant literature shows that corporate brand distinctiveness is related to brand attractiveness (Balmer & Liao, 2007; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Curras-Perez et al., 2009). There are also several empirical studies that confirm the direct, and positive relationships between brand distinctiveness and brand attractiveness (Curras-Perez et al., 2009; Kim et al., 2001). Moreover, distinctiveness and differentiation are key requisites of corporate branding in higher education (Jevons, 2006).

The literature also shows that corporate brand distinctiveness is related to customer identification with a company/brand (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1985), and the branch theoretical notions of company-customer identification (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003), and corporate brand identification (Balmer & Liao, 2007), an individual's identity can be shaped by an association with a social group (Tajfel & Turner, 1985), as well as a corporate identity (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003), and corporate brand (Balmer & Liao, 2007). Moreover, identification with a social group, organization, or corporate brand entails differentiation and distinctiveness apropos other groups, organizations, and corporate brands (Balmer et al., 2010; Balmer & Liao, 2007; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Donavan et al., 2006; Tajfel & Turner, 1985). Moreover, customers who believe a company has distinctive characteristics are more likely to find it attractive and therefore, are more predisposed towards identification with it (Ahearne et al., 2005). Empirical evidence from the higher education sector (Balmer & Liao, 2007), found the distinctiveness of a corporate brand community is an important platform for students' identification. However, the relationship between corporate brand distinctiveness, corporate brand attractiveness, and customer identification has not been examined in the context of a newly established business school's corporate brand. Therefore, it can be argued that the

more distinctive international business school postgraduates perceive a newly established business school's corporate brand to be, the more attractive the business school's corporate brand is for them. Moreover, because of this, there is a greater likelihood of identification with the corporate brand.

Thus, the following hypotheses can be stated:

H3. Corporate brand distinctiveness has a direct positive effect on a newly established business school's corporate brand attractiveness.

H3a. Corporate brand distinctiveness has a direct positive effect on international postgraduate business students' identification with a newly established business school's corporate brand.

5.4. Business school tuition fee (price)

Price can be defined as the amount an organization charges for its products and services, including the goodwill element in the valuation of its corporate and product brands (Balmer, 2011a, b). In a UK university context, price typically denotes a tuition fee. This relates to the annual financial charge levied on a student by an HEI for a course of study and is a requisite for enrolment (Ivy, 2008). The literature on student attractiveness in an HE context reveals that attractiveness is, in part, related to tuition fees (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Naidoo, 2007). Naidoo (2007) assumed that there is an inverse relationship between the flow of international students to the UK and the country's level of tuition fees. This finding corroborates findings from earlier empirical studies (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

From a brand perspective, it has been shown that price-perception positively influences customers' satisfaction towards a brand (Voss, Parasuraman, & Grewal, 1998). Therefore, a favorable price perception will increase customers' satisfaction with a brand. Consequently, price may enhance identification. Overall, the strength of student identification with a corporate brand increases when the price paid is deemed to be favorable. However, only a few studies have examined the relationship between tuition fees and corporate brand attractiveness and customer identification (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Naidoo, 2007; Voss et al., 1998). Notably, the aforementioned has not been examined in a business school context. Mindful of previous studies it can be inferred that international postgraduate business students are more likely to perceive a newly-established business school's corporate brand as attractive if the school's tuition fees are decreased/lower.

Therefore, the following hypotheses can be stated:

H4. Tuition fees have a negative effect on newly-established business schools' corporate brand attractiveness.

H4a. Tuition fees have a negative effect on international postgraduate business students' identification with a newly-established business school's corporate brand.

5.5. Metropolitan city place brand

A city brand is an assembly of tangible and intangible assets that differentiate a city from others and includes the natural environment, historical features, culture, attributes, personality, and values (Yoon, 2010). The literature on higher education shows that where a city place brand is linked to an HEI brand this can have a material impact on the brand's attractiveness (Chapleo, 2005; Peluso & Guido, 2012). An HEI's brand's distinctiveness and attractiveness can be enhanced when a city brand (with a positive corporate brand image) is linked/co-joined with an HEI brand (Peluso & Guido, 2012). Favorable city brands do good by creating a platform for positive brand experiences and can impact on the day-to-day lifestyle (Merrilees et al., 2018). However, consideration has not been given to the material impacts of multi-dimensional place branding on an HEI where a metropolitan city place brand is scrutinized

along with other place dimensions. The literature of identification reveals there is a link between a city brand and an individual's identification. For example, it has been found that people–place relationships engender identification with institutions (Donavan et al., 2006). More particularly, a city brand can engender, and confers identity on those living or working within a city's boundaries (Lappegard, 2007: Kemp, Childers, & Williams, 2012). Furthermore, the greater the positive attitudes towards a city's place brand, the greater the likelihood of positive identification (Kemp et al., 2012). Accordingly, a person's concept of the self can be meaningfully informed from a city place brand to which they are connected (Kemp et al., 2012; Lappegard, 2007). The aforementioned is in accordance with the insights marshalled from social identity, and company-customer and corporate brand identification theories (Balmer & Liao, 2007; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Donavan et al., 2006; Tajfel & Turner, 1985).

Therefore, where a metropolitan city brand is appealing, the attractiveness of a newly-established business school brand located within a city's parameters can be burnished. Given this, a favorable metropolitan city brand can enhance a business student's concept of the self and can engender greater identification with a newly-established business school corporate brand. More specifically, mindful of the context of this study, the extant literature shows that the metropolitan London area is considered among the most attractive cities in the UK for students because of its culture, history, night-life, shopping, infrastructure, housing, business, and transportation (Anholt, 2006). A former Mayor of London (2003) acknowledged how London is an attractive destination for overseas students owing to its extensive social, entertainment, and cultural amenities (Mayor of London, 2003, cited in Ali-Choudhury, Bennett, & Savani, 2009).

To date, the relationship between a metropolitan city place brand and corporate brand attractiveness and customer identification of a newly-established business school's corporate brand has not been empirically studied. Therefore, in the context of this study, it can be assumed, based on previous research findings (Chapleo, 2005; Kemp et al., 2012; Lappegard, 2007; Peluso & Guido, 2012), that international business postgraduate students are more likely to perceive a newly established business school's corporate brand as attractive (and to identify with it) where it is associated with a favorable metropolitan city brand.

Therefore, the following hypotheses can be stated:

H5. A metropolitan city brand has a direct positive effect on newly-established business schools' corporate brand attractiveness.

H5a. A metropolitan city brand has a direct positive effect on international postgraduate business students' identification with a newly-established business school's corporate brand.

5.6. Higher education country place brand

Previous studies have revealed a strong link between a higher education country place brand and a corporate brand attractiveness originating from the aforesaid (Đorđević, 2008; Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009). The customer identification literature explains how country of origin can influence customer identification with a corporate identity (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Moreover, a country place brand has a significant influence on customers' behavior (Dinnie, 2004) and can shape an individual's sense of self-identity (Lappegard, 2007; Wigger-Ross, Bonaiuto, & Breakwell, 2003). Furthermore, a country brand can enhance a corporate brand and therefore, a country brand can be considered as a strategic resource and capability for organizations and can give a competitive advantage to organizations operating in international markets (Suter et al., 2018). According to social identity theory, an individual's self-concept is, in part, based on the place to which a person is attached, and a country of origin brand is therefore significant in terms of identification (Lappegard, 2007; Moilanen &

Rainisto, 2009).

Extant studies have established how the HEIs of the UK are attractive to international students, in part, because of the country brand (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; The Economist, 2010; Usher & Savino, 2007). Moreover, a degree from a UK-based HE corporate brand can confer both prestige and status on students owing to the country's heritage of university education (Balmer & Liao, 2007). In explaining the above, scholars have detailed how the UK has significant pulling dimensions for students because of the English language, the UK's international credentials and, moreover, its historic erstwhile colonial links and, significantly, its contemporary Commonwealth links (Zheng, 2014; Mazzarol & Soutar, 1999). Significantly, the Commonwealth - of which H.M. Queen Elizabeth is its titular head - embraces 2.3 billion people in 53 nations which approximates to a third of the world's population who share similarities of culture, history, and language, and who espouse kindred values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law (Balmer, 2011b; www.http://thecommonwealth.org/about-us). To date, however, there is an absence of empirical work on the HEI brand of a country and its impact on corporate brand attractiveness and customer identification (particularly in relation to a newly-established business school's corporate brand). Therefore, mindful of extant scholarship, (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Đorđević, 2008; Lappegard, 2007; Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009; Wigger-Ross et al., 2003), it is proposed that international students are more likely to perceive a newly established business school's corporate brand as attractive and have a meaningful sense of identification with it if it is associated with a country place brand (the UK).

Therefore, the following hypotheses can be stated:

H6. The higher education country brand of a country has a direct positive effect on newly-established business schools' corporate brand attractiveness.

H6a. The higher education country brand of a country has a direct positive effect on international business students' identification with a newly-established business school's corporate brand.

5.7. Corporate place brand: a university's campus locale

A university's corporate locale, and in particular its campus, can engender a positive atmosphere for students. The components of a campus locale encompass, among other things, buildings, architectural style, facilities, location, setting, and general atmosphere (Eckert, 2012; Ivy, 2008). The University's corporate locale can be fundamental to corporate brand attractiveness since it creates memorable first impressions in students' consciousness (Bennett & Ali-Choudhury, 2009; Elliott & Healy, 2001; Padlee, Kamaruddin, & Baharun, 2010; Strange & Banning, 2000). Moreover, an attractive campus locale promotes a sense of belonging and identification (Curras-Perez et al., 2009; Eckert, 2012; Lappegard, 2007; Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009; Sturner, 1972). The existence of an appealing campus locale can burnish a newly-established business school brand in the estimation of students. Therefore, university buildings and aesthetics can be of foundational importance for an HEI corporate brand (Ng, 2016); this is because a university campus locale can meaningfully communicate a corporate brand image

(Strange & Banning, 2000). Furthermore, an endearing campus locale can induce a behavioral response so there is an alignment between an individual and an environment with an individual perceiving themselves to be part of a corporate place locale (Strange & Banning, 2000). Mindful of extant scholarship (Bennett & Ali-Choudhury, 2009; Eckert, 2012; Strange & Banning, 2000; Sturner, 1972), this study's scrutiny of multi-lateral place perspectives considers the impact of a university's campus locale on international postgraduate students' attractiveness towards a newly established business school brand. Therefore, the following hypotheses can be stated:

H7. Campus locale has a direct positive effect on the newly established business school's corporate brand attractiveness.

H7a. Campus locale has a direct positive effect on international postgraduate business school students' identification with a newly established business school's corporate brand.

5.8. The mediating role of newly established business schools' corporate brand attractiveness

There are persuasive arguments which point towards brand similarity, brand distinctiveness, tuition fees, metropolitan city brand, country higher education brand, and campus locale, contributing to corporate brand attractiveness (Ali-Choudhury et al., 2009; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Curras-Perez et al., 2009; Đorđević, 2008; Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009; Peluso & Guido, 2012; Strange & Banning, 2000). Moreover, corporate brand attractiveness engenders international postgraduate business school students' identification with a newly-established business school's corporate brand. Based on the logic of mediation (Baron & Kenny, 1986) and mindful of the above discussion, the following hypothesis recommends itself to this study:

H8. Newly established business schools' corporate brand attractiveness mediates the effects of (a) corporate brand similarity, (b) corporate brand distinctiveness, (c) corporate tuition fees, (d) metropolitan city brand, (e) higher education country brand, and (f) campus locale on international business school student identification with a newly-established business school's corporate brand.

Fig. 1 below presents the conceptual model of this study developed from our literature review.

6. Method

A mixed method design (Byman, 2016) informs this study. Triangulation was achieved via findings from focus group discussions and from data from both the pilot and main surveys. Account was also given to the insights derived from a review of the literature. Triangulation is valuable since it neutralizes any limitations and biases which can be a characteristic of a methodology reliant on one method (Creswell, 2003). Table 1 shows the data collection process.

The first stage of the study consisted of focus group discussions with two groups: international postgraduate business students and business school managers/administrators involved in corporate brand

Table 1
Survey development and data collection methods.

Research stages	Methods	Description
Stage 1	Focus group discussion	Focus group discussions were conducted with international postgraduate business school students and academic staff (faculty and administrative) within newly established business schools.
Stage 2	Pilot survey	A pilot survey was further distributed to 60 international students in the business schools to examine the reliability and internal consistency of measurement scales.
Stage 3	Survey questionnaire	450 questionnaires were distributed randomly to international postgraduate students in the selected business schools, with 255 valid responses.

management. A review of the literature was also undertaken. Research norms, focus group insights and those from the literature resulted in a substantive discernment of the research questions and phenomenon (Maxwell, 1996; Zikmund, 2013). Moreover, this formative data and review of the literature assisted with the shaping of the questionnaire design and the validation of measurement scales. In the second stage of the study a pilot survey was undertaken. The pilot survey enabled the reliability and internal consistency of the measurement scales to be scrutinized. Furthermore, the research questions were discussed with two marketing experts within the business school as recommended by Churchill (1979) and Zikmund (2013) and account was taken of their suggestions. By these means there was an improved face validity of the questionnaire. In stage three of the study, 450 questionnaires were distributed randomly to international postgraduate business school students in London. Of these, 65 questionnaires were not returned, and 130 questionnaires were excluded. Of these, 43 questionnaires were uncompleted and 52 were filled in by UK students. In total, 255 valid questionnaires were obtained for analysis, with an acceptable response rate of 56%. Appendix 1 provides a list of the students. Latent constructs were measured using a five-point Likert-type scale (strongly disagree = 1, disagree = 2, neutral = 3, agree = 4, strongly agree = 5) because it is one of the most popular ways of measuring attitudes (Wilson, 2006).

The measurements of all constructs were developed by adapting measures used in previous empirical studies. Appendix 2 provides a list of the scale items. Content validity, examination of the reliability and internal consistency, and verification of the measurement scales measured the latent constructs detailed in the conceptual model (Churchill, 1979).

7. Data analysis

In adherence to Malhotra and Birks (2006), the response rate was deemed to be satisfactory. Malhotra and Birks (2006), argue that a response rate of 15% is common. With reference to Kline (2010), the sample was adequate to run the required analyses, including descriptive analysis, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural equation modeling (SEM). Kline (2010) noted that where SEM is used the typical sample size is around 200 cases.

This study used a two-step structural equation modeling (SEM) approach as recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), to evaluate the construct validity and test the developed hypotheses. The results of CFA showed that the measurement model fits the data reasonably well, where the fit indices satisfy the minimum level required for good model fit [$X^2/df = 1.665$ ($p \leq 0.05$), RMSEA = 0.051, RMR = 0.056, CFI = 0.922, TLI = 0.911].

The assessment of convergent validity showed that the three main conditions necessary for an acceptable convergent validity were met. The results also revealed that the factor loadings of all variables exceeded the minimum required value, which is 0.5. The AVE of each latent construct was above 0.5 and the construct reliability for each latent construct was also more than the minimum required level of 0.7. This provides adequate evidence that the constructs have acceptable convergent validity (see Appendix 2 for more details). The assessment of discriminant validity found all latent constructs have acceptable discriminant validity, as the AVE of all constructs is higher than the squared correlation estimate SIC (see Table 2).

Structural equation modeling was employed in the second step to test the developed hypotheses. The results (see Table 3) reveal how newly-established business schools' corporate brand attractiveness had a significant positive effect on international postgraduate business school students' identification towards the business school's corporate brand ($\beta = 0.443$, $p \leq 0.001$) and H1 was accepted. The results also showed that corporate brand similarity ($\beta = 0.113$, $p \leq 0.1$), corporate brand distinctiveness ($\beta = 0.172$, $p \leq 0.05$), association with a metropolitan city brand ($\beta = 0.410$, $p \leq 0.001$), country higher education

brand ($\beta = 0.195$, $p \leq 0.05$), and campus locale ($\beta = 0.135$, $p \leq 0.05$) all had statistically significant and positive effects on newly established business schools' corporate brand attractiveness. This is in support of H2, H3, H4, H5, and H6. However, the path coefficient of tuition fees on newly established business schools' corporate brand attractiveness was insignificant ($\beta = -0.056$, $p > 0.05$) and H7 was rejected.

8. Results

The results showed that brand similarity ($\beta = -0.131$, $p \leq 0.1$), brand distinctiveness ($\beta = 0.116$, $p \leq 0.1$), national brand ($\beta = 0.240$, $p \leq 0.05$), and tuition fees ($\beta = -0.108$, $p \leq 0.1$) had a significant effect on international postgraduate business school students' identification with a newly established business school's corporate brand. Despite its statistical significance, the relationship between tuition fees and international students' corporate brand identification was the opposite of the hypothesized direction. Therefore, H3a, H4a, H5a, and H6a were supported, whereas H2a was rejected. Results further showed that campus locale ($\beta = 0.040$, $p > 0.1$) did not influence international postgraduate business students' corporate brand identification; hence H7a was rejected.

8.1. Examining the mediating effect of newly established business schools' corporate brand attractiveness

This study examined the mediating effect of newly established business schools' corporate brand attractiveness, represented by hypotheses H8a, H8b, H8c, H8d, H8e, and H8f. The study followed the three-step regression procedure recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986). Model 1 represents the relationship between independent variables and newly established business schools' corporate brand attractiveness.

Notably, the results showed that corporate brand distinctiveness, metropolitan city brand, higher education country brand, and campus locale have a significant relationship with newly established business schools' corporate brand attractiveness in a two-tailed test ($\beta = 0.172$, 0.409, 0.197, 0.135, respectively, $p \leq 0.05$). Moreover, the relationship between brand similarity and newly established business schools' corporate brand attractiveness is meaningful in a one-tailed test ($\beta = 0.114$, $p \leq 0.1$).

However, the relationship between tuition fees and newly established business schools' corporate brand attractiveness was not significant ($\beta = -0.053$, $p > 0.1$). Model 2 represents the direct relationship between independent variables and the dependent variable without the existence of the mediator.

The results revealed how the relationships between corporate brand distinctiveness ($\beta = 0.195$, $p < 0.05$), metropolitan city brand ($\beta = 0.157$, $p < 0.1$), higher education country brand ($\beta = 0.324$, $p < 0.01$), tuition fees ($\beta = -0.135$, $p \leq 0.05$), and international students corporate brand identification were all significant.

However, the direct relationships between both corporate brand similarity ($\beta = 0.078$, $p > 0.05$) and campus locale ($\beta = 0.040$, $p > 0.05$), and international postgraduate business school students' corporate brand identification were insignificant. The inclusion of newly established business schools' corporate brand attractiveness as a mediator (model 3) leads to a slight decrease in the effect of brand distinctiveness (from 0.195 to 0.116) and higher education country brand (from 0.324 to 0.240), but the relationships remain significant ($p \leq 0.05$), suggesting partial mediation. This is in support of H8b and H8d. The direct relationship between city brand and international postgraduate business school corporate brand identification with the existence of the mediator was not significant ($\beta = -0.028$, $p > 0.05$), suggesting full mediation. This is in support of H8c (see Table 3).

The effects of corporate brand similarity and the campus locale on international postgraduate student identification were insignificant in model 2, so Baron and Kenny's (1986) second test condition was

Table 2
AVE and SIC of each two latent constructs.

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Corporate brand Identification	**0.545**							
Corporate brand Attractiveness	0.277	**0.527**						
Corporate brand similarity	0.008	0.157	**0.515**					
Corporate brand distinctiveness	0.078	0.121	0.042	**0.545**				
Metropolitan city brand	0.123	0.446	0.165	0.042	**0.519**			
Higher education country brand	0.212	0.324	0.053	0.097	0.332	**0.641**		
Campus locale	0.063	0.252	0.114	0.031	0.285	0.226	**0.554**	
Tuition Fee	0.001	0.012	0.022	0.072	0.017	0.009	0.051	**0.582**
Mean	3.732	3.532	3.393	3.269	3.540	3.728	3.509	2.915
SD	0.678	0.696	0.596	0.632	0.701	0.589	0.664	0.657

Note: AVE is the diagonal of the table in bold. Values below the diagonal are squared correlations (SIC). Values above the diagonal are correlation estimates.

violated. However, scholars such as De Luca & Atuahene-Gima (2007, p. 103) have argued that this constraint may be relaxed without hampering the validity of the mediation analysis. Specifically, Sobel's (1982) test enables the investigation of indirect effects of independent variables, regardless of the significance of their total effects on the dependent variable. Sobel's (1982) test indicated that the indirect effect of brand similarity and the campus locale on international postgraduate business school students' identification was significant in a one-tailed test (β = 0.050, 0.060, respectively, p ≤ 0.1), suggesting an indirect effect. This is in support of H8a and H8e. Therefore, corporate brand similarity and the campus locale each has an indirect effect on international students' identification through the mediating effect of newly established business schools' corporate brand attractiveness. However, the results showed that the indirect relationship between tuition fees and international postgraduate student identification was not significant (β = −0.025, p > 0.1), suggesting no mediation effect. Thus, H8f was rejected.

9. Conclusions and implications

The research findings resulted in the formal introduction of a substantive theoretical framework relating to international postgraduate business school student identification with a newly established business school's corporate brand. In general terms, the theoretical framework revealed five attractiveness dimensions to be significant: corporate brand similarity, corporate brand distinctiveness, metropolitan city brand, higher education country brand, and campus/corporate locale. Moreover, these attractiveness dimensions formed the bases for positive identification with the business school corporate brand. In place branding terms, the findings were of additional foundational

importance with regard to theory building. This is because the study revealed the multidimensional and multifaceted value of place in terms of corporate brand attractiveness and identification. Significantly, half of the attractiveness dimensions relate to place. Therefore, there was a trilateral place branding impact on the business school brand in attractiveness and identification terms with country, city, and campus locale being deemed to be significant in the estimation of international postgraduate students. As such, the research revealed how *places* and not just a place can be meaningful dimensions of a corporate brand and in particular, to a newly-established and non-elite brand. Accordingly, the effect of place on a corporate brand, appears to have been narrowly conceived in extant studies since places and not just place can be meaningful. Hence, the importance of place to a corporate brand should not only be examined through a mono-lateral place perspective but should also be considered via multiple place perspectives; the efficacy of this being demonstrated in this study which uncovered how place could have a tripartite quality. Moreover, while the research confirmed the significance of place at the micro level apropos a campus (corporate) locale to corporate brand attractiveness and identification, the data also revealed that the largest impact on the aforementioned came from the other place dimensions scrutinized in this study, namely, a metropolitan city brand and a higher education country brand. Consequently, these findings are not only of theoretical but also of instrumental significance too.

9.1. Managerial implications

This study has revealed that places are significant, sometimes inimitable, corporate brand assets. Often, they are redolent with positive associations for a corporate brand. Consequently, managers should

Table 3
Results of regression analysis: standardised path coefficient (*t*-value).

Independent variables	Newly-established business schools' corporate brand attractiveness	Internal stakeholder identification with a newly-established business school's corporate brand	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Main effect			
Corporate brand similarity	H2: 0.114 (1.776)*	H2a: 0.078 (0.992)ns	H8a: 0.131 (1.700)*
Corporate brand distinctiveness	H3: 0.172 (2.691)**	H3a: 0.195 (2.457)**	H8b: 0.116 (1.504)*
Corporate tuition fees	H4: −0.053 (−0.938)ns	H4a: −0.135 (−1.870)*	H8c: −0.108 (−1.573)*
Metropolitan city brand	H5: 0.409 (4.961)***	H5a: 0.157 (1.628)*	H8d: −0.028 (−0.276)ns
Higher education country brand	H6: 0.197 (2.669)**	H6a: 0.324 (3.432)***	H8e: 0.240 (2.665)**
Campus locale	H7: 0.135 (1.927)**	H7a: 0.040 (0.467)	H8f: −0.021 (−0.254)ns
Mediating effect			
Newly-established business schools' corporate brand attractiveness			H1: 0.443 (4.138)***

Notes:
* p ≤ 0.1.
** p ≤ 0.05.
*** p ≤ 0.01.

show strategic cognizance and sensibility of the importance of *places, and not simply place*, as important constituents for corporate brand attractiveness and identification. Accordingly, managers should be appraised of the multiplier effect of places in burnishing a corporate brand. As such, orchestrating the attractiveness dimensions of places so that they form a meaningful corporate brand gestalt can, prospectively, have a real utility in corporate brand management terms. Moreover, where an organization has a newly-established and non-elite corporate brand (or similar), there should be managerial attentiveness to the corporate brand's positive associations with places - and not just place - in further burnishing a corporate brand's desirability for consumers. In addition, consideration could also be given to the attributes of continent, region, country, district, heritage area, and even a building or distinctive landmark in enhancing a brand's desirability. Furthermore, there should be mindfulness of how positive associations with multiple places has the potential to compensate for weaknesses with a corporate brand's distinctiveness and desirability. Therefore, managers should be apprised of the repertoire of a corporate brand's place associations and the latent potential in strengthening corporate brand attractiveness. As such, in addition to country, city, and corporate locale dimensions, as evidenced by this study, a catholic approach should be afforded to places, with managers showing mindfulness of places at the macro and micro levels. Moreover, managers should be aware of the potential of *places* in informing the corporate brand covenant, positioning, and corporate brand communications stratagems. For example, references to places might be emphasized or referenced in a corporate brand name and/or corporate brand marque. Consideration could be given to making symbolic associations with places in corporate brand communications. In terms of establishing a new corporate brand, consideration should be given to its associations with places and how these can be utilized in explicit and implicit modes in order to enhance corporate brand attractiveness.

9.2. Management implications for business schools

This study has revealed how the positive place associations of a newly established business school can meaningfully engender student attractiveness and identification. Deans, therefore, should be mindful that a corporate brand's associations with places can be meaningful, distinctive, and appealing in branding terms, and may, potentially, constitute a newly-established business school's most important collective asset. Places, consequently, can be deployed to endorse, burnish, and compensate for a nebulous and luck lustre business school brand and therefore compensate for deficits in brand distinctiveness and desirability. Importantly, places can be a meaningful part of a newly-established business school's corporate brand covenant or promise. Consequently, there needs to be a broader conceptualization of the potential significance of places. Therefore, consideration should be accorded to places where Deans undertake stratagems to maintain, burnish, define, and moreover, communicate a school's corporate brand covenant, and as such, should regularly comprehend the places with which their school is associated. Hence, a broader conceptualization that encompasses corporate brand associations, particularly in relation to places, may be efficacious. However, while they should consider the efficacy of emphasizing positive place associations, they should also be mindful of the potential need to de-emphasize, or neutralize, of negative place associations. As such, they need to be alert to the potential of negative place associations resulting in corporate brand negativity and dis-identification. Since the key tenants of corporate brand management are brand custodianship, the credibility of the brand covenant, and the dynamic calibration between the corporate identity and the corporate brand (Balmer, 2012), where substantive unfavorable place associations exist, cannot be entirely suppressed. However, the above considerations may not be so important for business schools (even newly established business schools) which are a constituent part of a prestigious and well-known University with an enviable corporate

heritage. In these instances, the business school brand marque and name will, invariably, be closely calibrated with the strength and attractiveness dimensions and heritage of the University's corporate brand. However, this is not to say that their association with places is entirely redundant in brand enhancement terms. Rather that the brand attractiveness of the school's brand will significantly be derived from the university's corporate heritage brand.

Potentially, positive place associations can be impactful in formulating templates for corporate brand communication plans for newly-established business schools. In particular, the positive associations with places can inform corporate communications platforms and therefore have a utility in positioning, differentiating, and articulating a business school's corporate brand covenant. In some instances, referents to places may usefully be incorporated as part of the corporate brand name (the city/district) and even be symbolically incorporated as part of the brand marque (iconic university building). Consideration, too, could be given to places as corporate brand endorsers where in addition to the business school name, and/or marque, reference is made to the city and/or country. Where a particular place dimension has negative connotations then other positive place associations should be considered such as district, corporate locale, or even, where appropriate, the business school building. Moreover, as part of corporate brand strategy formulation and preparation Deans should periodically commission research on their business school's corporate brand image and reputation, taking into account the significance of places to this. Finally, University Vice Chancellors, Deans, and other senior university managers should be mindful of the positive effects of place apropos the campus environment, architecture, and artefacts in terms of student attractiveness. Given that international postgraduate students are often important for business schools and provide important income streams for universities, the requisite of undertaking research on the above would appear to be irrefutable. More expansively, business school Deans should also be apprised of the corporate brand attractiveness dimensions of their major stakeholders groups. This not only includes students (consumers) but also parents (customers) who often have a role in selecting HE institutions and, importantly, in paying for courses. In addition, assessments on the importance of corporate brand place associations for would-be faculty and for administrative staff should be also be undertaken.

9.3. Limitations and future research

While the empirical findings have revealed the importance of places in burnishing corporate brand attractiveness and identification in HE, with particular reference to a newly-established business school corporate brand, this research has a number of limitations. This is because the study is characterized by its foci on newly established HEI corporate brands and scrutinizes the impact on two well-known country and place brands, namely the UK and London. Moreover, the study particularly focused on international postgraduate students with regard to its application of the theoretical notion of corporate brand identification. Given the aforesaid, the insights from the study would be deemed to be specious if it is claimed the findings are generalizable to all corporate brands or to all HE and business school brands and to their corporate brand constituencies. We make no claim apropos this in our study. Moreover, while this empirical study showed the positive multilateral impact of places on corporate brand attractiveness and identification no claim is made that all places will have this meaningful impact given the particularities of the trilateral place dimensions underpinning this inquiry. This being said, the findings may be analytically generalizable and represent a latent theoretical contribution of the middle range (Byman, 2016).

In terms of further research and given the nascent of this field of study apropos places, the significance of multilateral place impact on corporate brand attractiveness and identification merits further investigation among different constituencies and among different HEI

corporate brands. More widely, the impact of multilateral place dimensions on corporate brand attractiveness and identification could be the focus of analogous research undertaken in different sectors. Given that this study adopted a trilateral place perspective there is also advantage in considering the phenomenon via narrower and broader place lenses. Therefore, the efficacy of scrutinizing multilateral and quadrilateral place associations vis-à-vis corporate brand attractiveness and identification would appear to be irrefutable. In addition, the downsides of the impact of negative place associations on corporate brand attractiveness and identification is an area which is laden with possibilities. Moreover, multiple place associations are unlikely to always be homogeneous in terms of their positivity and negativity apropos corporate brand enhancement. Consequently, there is a logic for further studies to explicate heterogeneous place associations that are positive, negative, and perhaps those that are neutral as well. Such studies might consider corporate brand identification via a wider lens by considering corporate brand unattractiveness and dis-identification as well as corporate brand attractiveness and identification. Moreover, different place mixes other than country, city, and corporate locale could be explored. Furthermore, there is also advantage in examining the effect of places on employees via a corporate brand identification theoretical perspective. Consequently, research might explore the same in terms of recruitment and staff-retention/loyalty.

With specific reference to business schools, there is merit in considering the impact of places, both positive and negative, to non-metropolitan business schools in different contexts including top, metropolitan-based business schools; to business schools having a corporate heritage brand; and to the lowest ranked business schools, or those with a distinct corporate heritage brand. In addition, there is scope to broaden empirical insights on the territory by investigating conceptualizations of corporate brand place associations on corporate brand identification from the perspective of other student groups such as home students. Faculty and administrative staff perspectives on the aforesaid represent other modes of enquiry. Since many students are consumers rather than customers, the efficacy of considering the above from a parental perspective might also have utility in research terms. Furthermore, while this study focused on the main determinants (antecedents) of international students' identification with a newly established business school's corporate brand, the consequences of international students' corporate brand identification are worthy of investigation. Additional, empirical enquiries might consider examining additional attractiveness dimensions beyond those scrutinized in this study and their impacts on student identification in newly-established and in other categories of business school.

Finally, by revealing the importance of multilateral place associations in burnishing corporate brand attractiveness and identification, this study has shown how corporate brand/place associations have, to date, been narrowly conceived in both theoretical and instrumental terms.

Appendix 1. Respondents details

Respondents' details	Category	N	Percent
Country of respondent	Africa	37	14.5
	Asia	114	44.7
	Europe	38	14.9
	Middle East	66	25.9
Study level	Master	171	67.1
	Doctorate	84	32.9
Course study	MSc. Brand Management	17	6.7
	MSc. Supply Chain Management	8	3.1
	MSc. Human Resource Management	19	7.5
	MSc. Human Resource and Employment Relations	7	2.7
	MSc. International Business	17	6.7
	MSc. Management	34	13.3
	MSc. Marketing	51	20.0
	MBA	18	7.1
	PhD	84	32.9
Age	20–25	90	35.3
	26–30	77	30.2
	31–35	47	18.4
	36–40	28	11.0
	Over 40 years	13	5.1
Gender	Female	140	54.9
	Male	115	45.1
Funding	Sponsored	96	37.6
	Self-funding	138	54.1
	Partial	21	8.2
Study status	A full time student	244	95.7
	A part time student	11	4.3

Appendix 2. Latent constructs, indicators' description, factors loading, construct reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Cronbach's alpha

Latent constructs	Indicators	Factor Loading
Internal stakeholders' identification with a newly established Business school corporate brand, AVE = 0.545, CR = 0.823, α = 0.806 (Balmer & Liao, 2007; Palmer et al., 2016; Stephenson & Yerger, 2014)	The business school brand's successes are my successes.	0.685
	I am interested in what people think about the Business School brand.	0.810
	When someone praises the Business School brand, I feel happy.	0.875
	When someone criticises the Business School brand, I feel sad.	0.536
Newly established business school corporate brand attractiveness	The Business School brand is one of the attractive business school brands in London.	0.738
	The Business School has an attractive brand name.	0.795

AVE = 0.527, CR = 0.899, α = 0.90	The Business School offers attractive and high quality degrees.	0.833
(Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Naidoo, 2007)	The Business School offers high quality teaching.	0.662
	The Business School has a high quality academic staff.	0.685
	The Business School atmosphere is lively and attractive.	0.666
	The Business School's support student is attractive.	0.747
	The Business School provides interesting courses.	0.663
Corporate Brand similarity	My perception is that the students of the Business School are similar to me in terms of social status.	0.572
AVE = 0.515, CR = 0.807, α = 0.823	My perception is that the students of the Business School are similar to me in terms of character.	0.760
(Berscheid & Walster, 1969; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Karaosmanoglu et al., 2011)	My perception is that the students of the Business school are similar to me in terms of background.	0.805
	My perception is the students of the Business School are similar to me in terms of interests.	0.712
Corporate Brand distinctiveness	The Business School brand is different from lower ranking business school brands.	0.709
AVE = 0.545, CR = 0.782, α = 0.779	The business school ranking as mentioned in, for example, the Financial Times, the Economist and the Guardian, is important when making the choice of the Business School brand.	0.755
(Balmer & Liao, 2007; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Curras-Perez et al., 2009)	The Business School brand has distinctive characteristics (identity).	0.749
Tuition fees	I think that the course tuition fees at the Business School are low.	0.500
AVE = 0.582, CR = 0.798, α = 0.772	I think that the course tuition fees at the Business School are reasonable.	0.830
(Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Naidoo, 2007)	I think that the course tuition fees at the Business School are acceptable (satisfactory).	0.900
Metropolitan City brand	The city where the Business School is located provides high educational qualification.	0.712
AVE = 0.519, CR = 0.840, α = 0.828	It is easy to find a job in the city where the Business School is located.	0.507
(Chapleo, 2005; Kemp et al., 2012; Lappegard, 2007; Peluso & Guido, 2012)	The city where the Business School is located is a good location (good transportation, airport).	0.755
	The city where the Business School is located has a pleasant social environment (e.g. sports, facilities, amenities, clubs, shops, theatres, health facilities and friendly people).	0.714
	The city where the Business School is located is attractive.	0.867
Higher Education Country Brand	I think that the country where the Business School is located has a long tradition and heritage in terms of the higher education.	0.773
AVE = 0.641, CR = 0.877, α = 0.87	I think that the country where the Business School is located provides high quality qualifications.	0.864
(Dinnie et al., 2010; Fan, 2006; Norbani et al., 2015)	I think that the country where the Business School is located is innovative in higher education.	0.774
	I think that the country where the Business School is located is associated with a sense of prestige in terms of the higher education services.	0.787
Campus Locale	I like the University campus because of its London atmosphere.	0.688
AVE = 0.554, CR = 0.829, α = 0.811	I like the University campus because it is in the UK.	0.818
(Bennett & Ali-Choudhury, 2009; Padlee et al., 2010; Strange & Banning, 2000)	I like the University campus because it is in England.	0.868
	The University campus provides many attractive facilities and entertainments.	0.565

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John M.T. Balmer holds a personal chair as Professor of Corporate Marketing at Brunel Business School, Brunel University London, where he is also Director of the Marketing & Corporate Brand Research Group. He is *quondam Professor of Corporate Brand/Identity Management* at Bradford School of Management UK. Sometimes regarded as the "*Father*" of the *corporate brand concept* (1995), he also *pioneered the corporate marketing, corporate heritage identity, total corporate communications and monarchical marketing notions* and, penned the first academic articles in these aforementioned areas. Also *co-conceived the corporate heritage brand/corporate brand with a heritage* notions. He has published in many leading journals including *California Management Review, European Journal of Marketing, Journal of Marketing Management, Journal of Business Research, Journal of General Management, Long Range Planning, British Journal of Management, Marketing Theory, International Studies of Management and Organization, Information Technology and People* etc.

Rudaina Mahmoud is a Syrian marketing academic. Her research interests encompass Higher Education brand management and International Marketing. She was a former member of the Marketing & Corporate Brand Research Group at Brunel Business School, Brunel University London from where she was awarded her PhD.

Weifeng Chen is a senior lecturer at Brunel Business School, Brunel University London, and is a member of the Marketing & Corporate Brand Research Group. He specialises in international innovation management strategy. Dr. Chen has a particular research interest in China with regards to the innovation and corporate brand strategy management of Chinese MNEs. More broadly, his research focuses on international business strategies. Dr. Chen has published in *Regional Studies, the Journal of Organizational Change Management, the International Journal of Production Economics, European Journal of Marketing, the Journal of Information System Management, Advances in Information Systems Management and the International Journal of Knowledge Management Studies*, among others.