Key messages and practical recommendations from the TACTICS project

1. Using clusters to address emerging industries and services
   - Focus on the capacity of clusters/cluster organizations – namely
     - Better cluster policies and tools for implementation

2. Channelling RDI funding through clusters
   - Impact evaluation of cluster-based policies

3. Where the cluster winds are blowing in Europe
   - TACTICS gives a fresh outlook on trends in cluster policy and provides a tool for setting up an evaluation process of cluster-based policies

4. Cluster marketing and branding
   - Marketing and promotion strategies, namely
     - Veneto Innovazione
     - OSEO, the French national organization (IT)
     - Upper Austria (PL)

5. Cluster internationalisation
   - Partnerships and external experts
   - Contributions to the State Aid rules consultation for clusters

6. Where innovation through clusters, supporting cluster marketing and branding, improve the performance of the innovation support system
   - Engage SMEs in research and innovation support programmes

TACTICS aims at supporting and further expanding the EU initiatives under the Commission’s Competitiveness and Innovation (INNOVATION) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Framework Programmes

Further information:
- www.ECA-TACTICS.eu
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- www.venetoinnovazione.it
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For its covers, TACTICS series of publications gets inspiration from several works of art or uses digital pictures recalling the positivist and optimistic vision of pictorial movements flourished between the XIX and XX century. Each image can be given an interpretation according to the main message of the publication. The works were chosen because their subject and the use of the light and the colours can be easily associated with the idea of innovation, movement and progress embodied by the clusters.

Cover credits: StudioLanza.
The image of an orange umbrella standing out of a set of identical umbrellas conveys the idea that marketing and branding can be used as an effective tool for differentiating a cluster among many other clusters with similar goals and targets.

This publication is released with no commercial purposes. The cover image, inspired by the above-mentioned work, has been freely reworked by the authors.
Supporting cluster marketing and branding
TACTICS (Transnational Alliance of Clusters Towards Improved Cooperation Support) aims at supporting and further expanding the European Cluster Alliance, and contributes to the development of better cluster policies and practical tools for implementation in Europe. The project is one of the three INNO-Nets within the PRO INNO Europe initiative under the Commission’s Competitiveness and Innovation Programme from DG Enterprise and Industry.

TACTICS, coordinated by OSEO, the French national organisation supporting SMEs and mid-caps development, brings together seven of Europe’s leading national and regional innovation and cluster policy organizations – namely VINNOVA (SE), TMG Upper Austria (AT), Manchester Metropolitan University (UK), IWT Flanders’ Innovation Agency (BE), Veneto Innovazione (IT), and PARP (PL). The partners, committed to improving policy cooperation and with a track record of experience with clusters, have been assisted by a Reflection Group of external cluster policy experts.

Six task forces discussed actual or proposed policy actions, coming up with concrete policy recommendations on the following topics relevant to cluster policy: fostering international cluster cooperation, channelling RDI funding through excellent clusters, fostering user-driven innovation through clusters, supporting cluster marketing and branding, evaluating impact of cluster-based policies, using excellent clusters to address emerging industries (including innovative services).

TACTICS gives a fresh outlook on trends in cluster policy and provides a toolbox to policy makers and practitioners on how to better use clusters for economic development, through a set of documents:

- **Key messages and practical recommendations from the TACTICS project** highlights three key messages for policy makers with recommendations on concrete actions and implementation. The document is based on cluster trends in Europe and conclusions from TACTICS’ six task forces.
- **Cluster internationalisation**
  The handbook provides a practical guide, illustrated with tools and case studies, for policy makers and cluster managers to address the “Why?” for internationalisation and to progress through the ten steps of the Internationalisation Journey.
- **Cluster marketing and branding**
  The handbook examines different cases of cluster branding strategies with a view to draw useful recommendations for policy makers, bringing about concrete suggestions for the improvement of cluster policies.
- **Impact evaluation of cluster-based policies**
  The guide suggests concrete steps for setting up an evaluation process of cluster-based policies. The document, targeting policy makers and other cluster stakeholders, is a practical guide supported and explained by several cases.

TACTICS claims that cluster initiatives can
- improve the performance of the innovation support system
- leverage the renewal of European industry
- engage SMEs in research and innovation support programmes
- play an important role within smart specialization strategies
- gain competitive advantage by internationalising, boosting their visibility and attractiveness, and involving users in innovation processes.

You can download TACTICS publications at: [www.ECA-TACTICS.eu](http://www.ECA-TACTICS.eu)
Better cluster policies and tools for implementation

Cluster internationalisation
tactics
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Better cluster policies and tools for implementation

Cluster marketing and branding
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Impact evaluation of cluster-based policies
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Key messages and practical recommendations from the TACTICS project
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Better cluster policies and tools for implementation
This work has been coordinated by Veneto Innovazione SpA, with the contributions of TACTICS partners and Reflection Group members.

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*Keep your eyes on the stars and your feet on the ground.*
Franklin D. Roosevelt

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F. EXTERNAL CONTRIBUTIONS
Experts and practitioners are debating on the future of cluster policies in Europe, with a view to substantially raise the bar of clusters’ performance. Most of them share the idea that a well-structured and consistent communication strategy definitely helps clusters to perform better. This is even more evident if one thinks of the plethora of clusters composing the European scenario. Clusters striving for excellence need to stand out as a point of reference in their field. This is why they need to brand and market themselves.

This handbook provides evidence for clusters and for policy makers to support cluster marketing and branding. Clusters will stick out and be recognized for their uniqueness, they will be able to attract external interest and resources such as skilled people and capital, and to mobilise local actors and potential members around a common vision and strategy. On the other hand, the image of the place and the perception of the quality of life/quality of place in the mind of citizens and communities can be enhanced, and policy makers can use cluster marketing and branding as a powerful tool to attract skilled workforce, investors, resources and to support the strategic development of the territory.

The handbook also clarifies how to place the marketing and branding strategy within a comprehensive process which requires a strong analytical effort and the involvement of key stakeholders. As a first step, it is necessary to understand where the cluster is positioned in relation to the market and to the surrounding ecosystem (local institutions, business associations, innovation actors, other clusters). Secondly, a strategic and forward-looking approach has to be adopted with a view to define where the cluster and its members are heading to, clearly setting the mission, values and goals cluster members can easily identify with. Reaching a consensus on this point is a valuable result to better build a regional branding strategy and to enlarge the participatory process to key stakeholders.

Whether the inward-looking (cluster membership) or the outward-looking (potential clients, internationalisation activities) perspective is considered, the cluster’s reputation can be strengthened only if a sense of ownership from the cluster members and from the institutions/organisations supporting the cluster is fostered.

It is important to clarify who leads the process, in order to carry it out in a structured way, and to make sure to have the right tools to manage it. Once agreed how the cluster has to be perceived, it is important to develop a communication strategy accordingly to the messages to convey and to the target groups and use the suitable set of communication tools to reach the planned objectives.

Finally, the handbook provides an overview of existing policies supporting cluster marketing and branding and draws useful recommendations for policy makers willing to undertake the process. On the whole, it is suggested to smartly allocate resources on cluster marketing and branding, valorise territorial branding, ensure a broad participatory process and sense of ownership from the community around the cluster and promote the use of a new generation of communication tools.
ANALYSE YOUR KEY ASSETS

- Deepen the cluster potentialities (SWOT/thematic focus/geographical scope/governance)
- Analyse your internal and external image (member views and expectations/cluster competitors)
- Examine your territorial context (heritage/culture/history/regional strategies)

CREATE YOUR POSITIONING

- Involve members and key stakeholders into a participatory process
- Define your vision (what you aim to achieve)
- Define your core values
- Define your unique value proposition

PLAN AND IMPLEMENT YOUR TOOLS

- Set up your marketing strategy (target, messages, time, budget, channels)
- Create your visual identity (logo, themes, colors, coordinated image)
- Develop your communication tools and spread through the proper channels (social media, fairs, web)

COMMUNICATE CONSISTENTLY WITH YOUR BRAND AND YOUR PLAN!
Introduction

What are the benefits of marketing and branding? How can marketing and branding foster regional and cluster development? How can cluster initiatives/organizations use the identified brand and marketing strategy to increase visibility in the global market, attractiveness and inter-cluster linkages? What is the cluster organization’s (or other intermediary’s) role in the definition of a shared cluster identity/brand? What is the role for policy action in this area? These questions are commonly raised and discussed in international fora on the future of cluster policies, and these are the questions this handbook aims to address.

Purpose The Handbook examines different cases of cluster branding strategies with a view to draw useful recommendations for policy makers, bringing about concrete suggestions for the improvement of programmes and funding schemes. The handbook does not represent a guide to steer clusters to build their brands or to better focus their marketing actions; it is indeed addressed to policy makers who have to set up or to update cluster policies. For this reason, it presents cases and examples showing different approaches related to different aims, contexts and visions so that the policy makers can, at the same time, have an overview of existing situations, improve their knowledge about the matter and find a support in the decision making process.

Target groups The Handbook addresses in particular policy makers and all those stakeholders who are involved in the decision-making process, with the aim to increase their awareness on this emerging topic. To a larger extent, due to the actuality of contents, the handbook can provide interesting inputs for a wider audience of cluster managers, experts and practitioners.

Methodology The Handbook gathers contributions and inputs from different sources. A seminarial activity was carried out by a task force of experts, who were asked to present different cases of cluster branding and to generate ideas in brainstorming sessions. Cluster managers of the selected cases provided a feedback on the content concerning their cluster. The relevant primary literature and electronic sources were looked up. Finally, useful comments and recommendations have been collected during the dissemination events held throughout the project lifetime.

Structure The Handbook consists of three main sections. The first part (ch. 1-2) reflects upon the relevance of branding and marketing activities for clusters and policy makers in a social and economic context rapidly changing. The second part (ch. 3-4) illustrates the process leading to the identification of a cluster marketing and branding strategy, analyzing different cases of cluster branding strategies and actions at policy level and highlighting suggestive cases and best practices. The final part draws a set of recommendations for policy makers, aggregating the key messages and considerations from the cases. The recommendations aim to increase the awareness of policy makers on the topic of marketing and branding and shall be used as an input to planning future programmes at national and regional level.
cluster
companies
strategy
branding
1. Why branding for clusters

Globalisation has dramatically increased the need for specialization and excellence. Clusters are often a remarkable lever to foster and accelerate this process as they speed up innovation, boost the cooperation among actors and contribute to the territorial economic development. Nowadays, no territory or cluster can think of itself as self-contained and sufficiently endowed of resources and competences to operate in international markets and world-scale value chains. Local actors and territories should define their position within global value chains and re-think their functions within a global space.

However, in Europe thousands of clusters, and the cluster organisations that lead most of them, are striving to be recognized as the most competitive and excellent within a particular field and trying to communicate their superiority and uniqueness. In this competitive and dynamic environment, it is important for these clusters to differentiate themselves, and this is the reason why many of them are now putting a more strategic focus on developing a branding and marketing strategy.

In order to be an internationally competitive cluster (world class cluster), it is necessary to be able to attract external interest and resources such as skilled people and capital. At the same time there is the need to attract the internal actors to join the cluster and to mobilise around a common vision and strategy. Marketing and branding are therefore key issues for the long term growth and future competitiveness of clusters.

Branding strategies have to be developed by cluster organisations in order to plan and realize cooperative interventions and strategic actions, uniting more realities under a unique image.

This increases opportunities and visibility. Powerful brands can enable:
- Stronger and more profitable collaborations;
- Better visibility outside the parent organisation;
- More effective outreach;
- Shortened time to technology transfer;
- More consistent and swift application of research results;
- Lower cost of licensing;
- Stronger partner loyalty;
- Competitive platforms for market impact;
- An effective means for greater, faster and more reliable funding;
- Lower costs of funding campaigns and capital;
- Hiring of top talents.

Other benefits for SMEs include the cut in communication costs and the higher degree of perceived quality.

For Regions and Countries, visible and excellent clusters and a successful cluster marketing strategy bring several benefits. For instance it is possible to enhance the image of the territory and to establish linkages between the cluster itself and the place where it is located.
One possible goal in supporting cluster branding is to link the branding strategy of a region/country to its strong and well known clusters.

Helping clusters to increase their awareness brings relevant benefits for the whole area: a well performing cluster, with a reliable and consolidated image, is a powerful tool to attract talents, companies and investors since it acts as multiplier and catalyst of opportunities and resources.

It consolidates a virtuous cycle that avoids the emigration of talented people and contributes to the increased perception of the “quality of life/quality of place” in the minds of citizens and communities.

Policy makers have to take into account that creating a brand and structuring a branding strategy requires launching a complex and comprehensive process to analyse the strengths and the potentialities of the cluster, the goals that the cluster aims to achieve and the strategy to reach these goals effectively.

The public support for branding activities should therefore not be limited to initiatives supporting clusters’ promotion but could become a tool to sustain their innovative development.

Supporting branding means supporting the strategic development of clusters and thereby the economic development of the areas where they are located.
The Paper Province was formed in 1999. It is a cluster organisation for the pulp and paper industry in the Swedish region of Värmland and surrounding areas. The cluster organisation is owned and managed by around 100 member companies, representing the entire value chain and associated services, active in more than 100 countries.

In 2007 The Paper Province identified a need to make the member companies more visible and to secure long-term public investments. With a rather small marketing budget, public relations were chosen as the main communication tool for the cluster. Marketing and branding through public relations was perceived as a quick, cost-effective and trustworthy way to reach many people within the different target groups (existing and potential member companies and public investors).

After identifying a vision and once stated the goals, The Paper Province moved on to creating messages as well as an action plan in order to increase their awareness as much as possible. The main strategy was to promote the excellence of the cluster, focusing on the good effects and results for the member companies, as well as the contribution to regional and national attraction, competitiveness and economic development.

Independent surveys are carried out each year to measure the performance of the organisation and its impact on member companies. Seven out of ten member companies confirm being part of The Paper Province will lead to new products and services. More than one in three companies considers that sales have risen, while one in five says that membership has led to the recruitment of new staff. These positive signs are strengthened by the fact that the pulp and paper industry has invested an average of 100 million Euros per year in the region over the past decade.

The Paper Province sought publicity in order to get media attention. Through a consistent work sticking to messages supporting the main strategy, The Paper Province used different tools to build the desired image of its brand via media, such as direct contacts with journalists, press releases and debate articles.

When getting positive publicity, The Paper Province used press clippings to get even more out of the media coverage, amongst others by sending them directly to persons within the target groups. This made it easy for others to speak positively about the cluster organisation in their networks.
In 2005-2010 period the number of press clippings in Swedish newspapers increased by more than 1300% (from 33 in 2005 to 442 in 2009). The interest from Swedish and international pulp and paper magazines has also grown, and overall awareness on the cluster and its activities has increased. The Paper Province has frequently been described in terms like “The Hollywood of the pulp and paper industry”, comparing it with the film industry in California, a region gathering a large number of key players in an industry and making it a profitable business.

The successful media coverage has had a number of positive effects and has contributed to increasing the benefits for pulp and paper companies involved in The Paper Province. This has been translated into an escalation in number of member companies (from 7 in 1999 to 91 ten years later), international interest, contacts and visits as well as long-term public investments.

As a result, by actively planning for and seeking publicity The Paper Province successfully used strategic communication and PR to increase the competitiveness of the cluster and of member companies, thus contributing to the development of the regional economy.

For more information on this case:
www.paperprovince.com - info@paperprovince.com

CONSIDER THAT:

- It is important creating a branding strategy coherent with the development strategy of the cluster;
- Marketing actions have to be planned to promote the brand;
- Visible clusters attract new companies, investments and resources;
- Branding supports the local economic development;
- It is possible to strongly connect the image of a brand to a specific geographical area (e.g. Province).
2. How to include new cluster trends in marketing and branding

1. High fragmentation of the value chain (global networks):
   Some clusters have lost their physical connection to a specific territory. The value chain is nowadays often part of global networks, and cooperation linkages among the cluster members are not necessarily based on the physical co-location.
   From the marketing point of view, this means that
   1. Cluster organisations need to communicate even more professionally their positioning, their core competences and features and how they can integrate with other cluster organisations and, in case it is feasible, with the territory they are from;
   2. The marketing strategy of the cluster organisation should be planned carefully in order to take into account global markets and a plurality of competitors.

   POLICY MAKERS HAVE TO KNOW THAT CLUSTER BRANDING AND MARKETING STRATEGIES REQUIRE A STRONG FOCUS ON THE CULTURAL DIMENSION OF GLOBALIZATION AND OF ITS ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES.

2. Cultural complexity:
   Clusters which seek to be recognized as world-class clusters are moving in a multicultural and global environment. Europe is no longer the only market to focus on and countries like Brazil, China, India, Korea are emerging as interesting prospect markets that have to be deeply understood to target the marketing concept and strategies effectively. One of the most evident characteristics of the current scenario is the variety and heterogeneity of cultural elements that must be taken into account when designing a strategy for the valorization and promotion of territorial resources. The communication of the image, reputation and values of a cluster through a brand needs to take into consideration cultural distances and differences, in order to effectively valorize and capitalize the assets of European clusters.

   POLICY MAKERS SHOULD CONSIDER DEVELOPING A NOVEL CONCEPT TO LINK CLUSTERS WITH THE TERRITORY.

3. Communication Redundancy:
   Since more and more cluster organisations have understood the importance of branding and communication, the expectation of the audience (both industrial clients as well as consumers) requires the professional management of communication tools and channels. Simply attending a fair or producing a brochure is not enough to be recognized and to capture attention. New media and novel forms of communication are now essential to attract and engage the audience.

   PROFESSIONALISM, STRATEGIC ACTIONS, NEW MEDIA AND TOOLS HAVE TO BE TESTED IN THE CLUSTER’S BRANDING PROCESS.
The Veneto region, in the North-East of Italy, is characterised by a strong specialization in mature industries and it is home to a number of clusters such as those of furniture, shoe manufacturing, textiles, ceramics, mechanics. In terms of perception among the general public, both in Italy and outside, the region has become the epitome of widespread industrialisation. The clusters are based on a fabric of small manufacturing enterprises whose competences and skills create innovation rather than research and development, which has allowed them to respond to the requests coming from several foreign markets such as the North America, Europe, Asia.

The region hosts a number of innovative companies that succeeded in focusing on innovation, design, product development, branding and marketing in the very same industries, and the emergence of an advanced service sector. Nevertheless the image of the region remained strongly anchored to the traditional stereotype of the manufacturing region, whose competitiveness is increasingly being questioned by players in emerging economies.

The entrepreneurial fabric of the region is undergoing a process of transformation. Existing firms in traditional industries are increasingly investing in marketing, design and information technologies, thus shifting their focus from manufacturing to “intangible” processes and phases. The outcomes of these processes of upgrading need to be communicated and promoted.

The answer to such a demand came out of the self-organisation and emergent process of identity construction of the most dynamic firms and associations of the region. INNOVeTION Valley (where INNOVeTION constitutes a conjunction between innovation and Vena as Venice, the capital of the region), is a bottom-up initiative that aims at communicating adequately the transition of the economic structure of the region from manufacturing to creative industries. Started in 2008 by Fuoribiennale, an association of artists and creative professionals gravitating around the Biennale of contemporary art of Venice, INNOVeTION Valley is based on a Manifesto that was signed by firms, institutions, research centres and universities. The idea behind is to re-brand the North-East of Italy as a creative hub, far from the traditional manufacturing image.

The conceptual operation connects the typical specialisations of the region in mature industries with its artistic and creative liveliness. Palladio, Tiepolo, and many other relevant artists of the Italian Renaissance were from Veneto or worked in the Region, while Venice
is one of the eminent hubs of contemporary and modern art in the world, technological innovation, design and fashion. The entire region is characterized by the existence of:

- Creative hubs, e.g. Venice;
- Technological hubs, e.g. scientific and technological parks in Venice and Padova;
- Numerous emerging small firms in tertiary activities, e.g. communication, marketing, IT;
- A changing population of firms operating in the design, manufacturing and commercialization of a variety of Made in Italy products.

These elements need to be connected coherently in order to communicate a new identity of the region to the relevant constituencies in Italy and on foreign markets. INNOVeTION Valley aims at creating this shared identity – Veneto as the area with the highest degree of creativity in the world, as the payoff of the initiative reads – and promoting it internationally.

As far as the communication and marketing levers are concerned, the initiative aimed at promoting the new identity of the region through the following initiatives:

1. INNOVeTION Valley magazine, distributed monthly nationally and internationally. The magazine, graphically elaborated and structured as a high-end lifestyle publication, mixes a variety of contents whose objective is that of giving visibility to examples of creativity in the Region: firms, artists, institutions, stories, emerging cultures;

2. Events: given the substantial proximity of the initiative to the world of contemporary art, Fuori-biennale, in collaboration with the actors that subscribed the Manifesto, organised a series of national and international events in the most important places of contemporary art. Events were designed as art exhibitions, where artists, entrepreneurs and professionals explained and made visible the creativity of their products and work. These events are usually very interactive and aim at creating a conversation on issues such as fashion cultures, the intersection between contemporary art and industry, sustainability and the like.

3. Internet: both the magazine and the events organised are communicated through a series of specialised websites, where materials prepared for the events as well as multimedia contents related to the events is uploaded, discussed and commented. The websites are also integrated with major social networking tools, such as Facebook, where the initiative started a group participated by hundreds of entrepreneurs and subscribers of the Manifesto. The objective of the web initiatives is to keep the conversations started through the magazine or the events alive and to consolidate relationships among the members of the initiatives.

INNOVeTION Valley represents an original cluster branding initiative for several reasons. First, it is an emergent project, started by actors gravitating around the world of contemporary art, who wanted to explicitly describe and communicate the cross-fertilization among typical
Made in Italy industries and professionals in the creative industries. Another element is the geography of the initiative. The project aims at communicating the complex transformation of the regional economy through the explication and the clear narration of dynamics involving the world of art and creativity and firms in traditional industries. Such dynamics are happening at the intersection of many clusters. While clusters are clearly recognisable and one of the strengths of the regional economy, INNOvETION Valley clearly states that there is an inter-cluster space within which cross-fertilization and renewal is happening. The space is a metropolitan area that comprises major centres such as Venice, Treviso, Padova, Vicenza and many small towns in the region. The geography of the creative dynamics is neither stable nor fixed. It is the adherence to the objective of the initiative to determine the boundaries of the Valley and its geography varies in time.

The levers and strategies used for communication and promotion are a third element of originality of the initiative. Instead of the traditional levers of territorial and cluster marketing, e.g. industry events, technical publications oriented to professionals and practitioners, the initiative aims at constructing a creative identity for the region through events held in the places of art and creativity, e.g. museums. It uses an evocative register of communication that aims at raising awareness not only among practitioners but also among the general public. The magazine and the events are strongly influenced, in terms of their structure, objectives, visual styles and the like, by publications on the fashion industry: a strong reliance on graphics, vivid and creative accounts of economic facts, detailed presentations of firms and entrepreneurs as if they were artists and ateliers. This initiative was launched to valorise the existing skills and competences of those manufacturing firms which were already very strong in design and communication (even though their core business is manufacturing) and the investment was directed to increase the awareness of such competences, link together and connect them also to the research institutes specialized in the area. In this framework, the purpose of the policy support is enabling a bottom-up initiative that aims at communicating adequately the transition of the economic structure of the region from manufacturing to creative industries.

For more information on this case: www.innovetionvalley.com

CONSIDER THAT:

- Clusters represent very fluid phenomena: new networks and new aggregations can appear quickly modifying radically the previous structure;
- If it is up to the business level to catch the change and adapt, it is within the duties of policy makers to have a role in branding these initiatives;
- Clusters can determine the landscape of a territory economic evolution;
- Policy makers have to intercept the evolution of the territory to create and consolidate regional branding strategies connected to the clusters’ ones.
Branding, marketing and promotion are concepts that are often mixed and confused. You cannot organize any promotional action if you have not planned what you would like to promote and why.

Through marketing you will set the goals and the actions according to the different targets you have defined as strategic but on the top you need to have in mind the value and the position of your brand to identify what you are, how you are perceived and what you strive to achieve for in the future.

### 3.1. Developing the Brand

The starting point to create a successful brand is defining the identity (core attributes and unique value proposition) you would like to link strongly with the cluster. Through the brand you will position the cluster in the minds of its most relevant target groups and stakeholders. The brand sums up the image that is perceived internally by the members and externally by the clients, the community, and the other stakeholders. It is therefore important that the brand building process involves the joint perspectives of those key groups. The cluster members have to be involved especially to ensure that they feel that their needs, views and concerns have been heard and are included in the identity and in the values of the cluster. This is relevant for two main reasons. The first is that the brand is designed and built through the input of the members themselves and, secondly, to consolidate and reinforce a brand, a consistent and committed action of all the members is required.

From a marketing point of view, a brand is “a name, term, sign, symbol or a combination of these that identifies the maker or seller of the product” (Philip Kotler). Simply put, a brand is a promise. By identifying and authenticating a product or service it delivers a pledge of satisfaction and quality (Walter Landor).

The brand includes some key elements:
- **Core values and attributes:** The integration into business and brand strategy, as well as any interaction.
- **Value Proposition:** The unique selling proposition.
- **Personality:** Attributes and Associations.
- **Visual System:** This is the mark, logotype, typographic system. Colour palette and imagery.

However, it is important to underline that even if the first purpose of a brand is to distinguish one thing from another, it represents much more than just names or logos. It is a mixture of tangible and intangible attributes displayed in a trademark that creates influence and generates value. This value is called **Brand Equity** and is based on the extent to which the brand has high loyalty, name awareness, perceived quality and strong product associations. It permits to create a long-lasting relationship with the clients, who are often guided by brands during their purchase decisions. The positive feelings consumers accumulate about a particular brand are what makes the brand a valuable asset for the company that owns it.
Working to the definition of a brand allows the cluster organisation to: create a common vision, clearly define what the cluster has to offer, how it approaches its targets and how it aims to develop in the future.

Once an identity has been established, it is important to relate this to an emotional context – giving “personality” to the brand and explaining the message that the brand should convey.

Since clusters are embedded in their respective territories and often supported by public administrations, the branding process should take into account also the branding strategy of the “place” in which they are located.

More and more often countries, regions and territorial entities have or are developing strategies to brand themselves to communicate their excellences and their quality as place to live in, in order to attract new companies or investors and reinforce the community’s “self-awareness”.

In this case the branding strategy of the clusters and of the territorial area in which they are located should be harmonized to avoid confused messages and to dilute reciprocally the respective brands.

Branding is a strategic process that should include not only the view of the cluster organization and its members but also the perspective of the stakeholders (including policy makers). It has to take into account the economical context in which the cluster is located. It is also relevant to decide how to proceed to include these wide and multi-faced views and goals.
The Saxony case presents an example of layering of different branding strategies worked out at different times. “Silicon Saxony e.V.”, a network associating nearly 300 commercial enterprises and research institutions, is the world’s fifth largest cluster in the microelectronics industry. Silicon Saxony’s members employ 40,000 people, 20,000 of which work in Saxony. The term was coined by a reporter at TIME magazine in April 1998 after a visit to AMD (Advanced Micro Devices, Inc.), a company that was just setting up its first microprocessor factory in Dresden. The reporter was impressed by the highly motivated and qualified specialists available in Saxony and used a term which made a plain allusion to San Francisco’s “Silicon Valley”.

In 2000 the association “Silicon Saxony” was created. The brand was borrowed from the TIME article profiting from the parallelism with “Silicon Valley” and the media popularity already gained, instead of elaborating its own branding strategy.

In 2008 “Saxony Economic Development Corporation”, the governmental agency for economic promotion, adopted a new corporate branding strategy to present business location Saxony under one umbrella brand. The identified strategy was built around the regional economy fast-growing trend and the driving hi-tech sectors. The logo “Saxony! A place in motion” emphasizes the name of the region and reminds of the white/green colour of the region’s flag, with the apiary evoking the industriousness of Saxon people.

Further to the introduction of this new branding strategy at Saxony level, the communication materials of the “Silicon Saxony” cluster included both visual identity images in the attempt to preserve the messages behind them. The Silicon Saxony and the Saxony! brands were presented along with in the same materials. As a result, the “MICRO! location” concept, consistent with the Saxony! corporate identity, co-existed with the “Silicon Saxony – My Favorite Place” logo.
In the same year (2008) the Silicon Saxony Management GmbH corporation was created with the aim to submit the Spitzencluster proposal for “Cool Silicon – Energy Efficiency Innovations from Silicon Saxony”, and later on to manage it. The company used the existing network of the Silicon Saxony e.V. association to gather research and private actors around the activities of the Cool Silicon cluster. The close interactions between the two clusters were not translated in the visual identity of Cool Silicon, for whom a brand new communication strategy was elaborated.

For more information on this case:
www.silicon-saxony.de; info@silicon-saxony.de

**CONSIDER THAT:**

- It is smart taking advantage of the image/slogans created by media if this is in line with the cluster identity and vision;
- The idea of visualising the cluster (with a map) is worth because it helps the audience to understand better the potentiality of the cluster;
- Clusters branding strategies should be harmonised with the regions branding strategies;
- The activity of revamping a brand should be carefully carried on;
- Different brand layered in time for the same cluster, too many visual identities, overlapping of branding strategies produce a confused message for the audience.
An interesting example of cluster branding successfully associated to territorial branding is the Hamburg Aviation cluster case. The “Hamburg Marketing GmbH” (HMG) was established on the initiative of Hamburg political leaders in early 2000s. The HMG was responsible to develop a branding strategy to create a coordinated image of Hamburg. The goal of this branding strategy was to enhance the reputation of the Hamburg region as a dynamic economically growing region at international level.

The branding strategy and the corporate design of the city were based on the positive images and opinions the people had on Hamburg. Those positive ideas on the city were subsequently used in all communication materials of city authorities and public-owned companies. The HGM decided to focus on the strengths of the city as such, instead of including specific strategic elements.

Also the newly-created Aviation Cluster (“Luftfahrtstandort Hamburg”) embraced the unified coordinated branding strategy. It has to be noted that the Hamburg Airport, one of the core members of the cluster, and partner of the HMG, adopted itself the new design. The Aviation Cluster in Hamburg, winner of the national “Leading-Edge Cluster competition”, was established in 2011 as a public-private partnership. Its main goal is reinforcing Hamburg on a national and international scale as one of the world’s leading locations for civil aviation, offering outstanding prospects for companies and employees in North Germany.

The cluster aims to achieve international visibility to enlarge its networking and trading activities and to promote itself in Germany, with the twofold purpose to get to the hearts of the people and to attract the best talents.

The communication strategy of the Aviation Spitzencluster builds on the branding strategy created by the City of Hamburg in the first place. The red bow and blue background on communication materi-
als and the logo created by HMG constitute the core image of the cluster communication materials. Not only the name of the city is included in most of the communication tools (“Hamburg” has been conceived by the marketing planners as a brand itself), but also its main symbols – the rivers, the ships, the harbor – are recurrent elements in the visual identity of the cluster. Thus, paradoxically, the maritime character of Hamburg city is a distinctive feature of the aviation cluster! The choice to give the location a special relevance in all communication materials combines different elements: Hamburg as a destination for tourists, as an attracting pool for companies working in the civil aviation sector, as the place to be for all young people aspiring to a successful career.

The city of Hamburg is, since the Middle Ages, renowned as the “gateway to the world” because of its trading tradition linked to the prominent role of the port. Aviation tradition in Hamburg is relatively young as it dates back to 1911. Nowadays, the Hamburg Airport is the world’s longest-serving airport from its original location. In only one century the aviation industry was able to expand to one of the world’s three largest civil aviation centres.

The aviation cluster successfully exploits the conflicting images appearing in the main theme of the corporate visual identity of Hamburg: sea and sky, water and clouds, boats and planes. Clashing images go along with an antithetic “new tradition”, made for playing with viewers’ imagination.

In addition, the cluster prominently looks at the future uniting most of the relevant activities in the aviation industry from aircraft design and production, to aircraft lifecycle maintenance, repair and overhaul services, to air transportation.

It has earned international recognition in the aviation community as a centre of special competence for aircraft cabins and cabin systems. Several initiatives have been put in place in order to increase awareness among young people, attract talent and enhance competitiveness in the sector:

- The “Fascination of Technology” club, which originated from the lecture series “The Fascination of Flying – Technology for Children”. It offers awareness-raising events addressed to children and young people. Junior students can attend lectures held by professors at the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences (HAW Hamburg); afterwards, they have the opportunity to put their newly acquired knowledge to work in companies and laboratories;
- The “Qualification Initiative Aviation Industry”, consisting in a network in which universities and training facilities which exchange expertise with Hamburg’s aviation companies jointly develop new ways of recruiting talent;
- The “Crystal Cabin Award”, the only international award for innovative aircraft, promoting the continuous improvement of passenger comfort by inspiring new economic and environmentally friendly solutions.

For more information on this case: www.luftfahrtstandort-hamburg.de; info@luftfahrtstandort-hamburg.de
CONSIDER THAT:

- Cluster marketing and branding can be a powerful communication tool if it is in line with the regional innovation strategy for smart specialisation;

- The synergic branding and marketing initiatives of cluster organisations, cluster members and public authorities reinforce reciprocally their identities;

- Using elements taken from the tradition to promote clusters connected to technology and innovation is original and appealing;

- Organising promotional initiatives targeted to the community (museums, awards, events for children, training...) is important to consolidate the image of the cluster internally (in “place” where the cluster is located).

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3.2. THE BRAND BUILDING PROCESS

Although cluster branding and promotion are perceived as relevant issues by practitioners, the available literature is very poor; concepts and methodologies have therefore to be taken from business branding and adapted to the cluster approach. This “adjustment” however is not simple at all because while branding and marketing of products and services are managed by a unique organization, managing the marketing and the branding of clusters implies to include the view and the commitment of a variety of actors that might have or prefer their own marketing and branding strategy.

In some way the same issue is handled by global companies which have to decide which strategy to pursue to sustain their corporate brand and simultaneously to expand the brand value and identity for their multiple product lines. Clusters are facing a similar problem because they need to find a sound compromise to make the brands of the members visible and to sustain the brand of the cluster itself on the other hand. This issue is quite critical because clusters have the goal to boost the development and the innovation of the companies and the members which could be competing in the same market.

This is the reason why sometimes, especially when there are well known and strong companies, it is preferred to put emphasis on the brands of the companies themselves. The cluster is then seen as the framework or the “label” the companies use to increase the level of their visibility. This strategy might be risky for clusters because if the brand of the cluster loses its importance, it loses also its role.

BRANDED HOUSE AND HOUSE OF BRANDS

The issue is also called the dilemma of “Branded House” vs “House of Brands”. In the first case the company is the brand. All products and services within that company are subsets of the primary brand. Although many product lines exist, their marketing strategy has to be consistent and encompass the branding strategy of the “house”.

This strategy has the benefit to allow scale economy, lowering the costs of brand building for all the lines and focusing only to build and sustain the image and the values of the primary brand. In the mind of consumers the brand value so built is automatically transferred to all the products.

A good example of a branded house is Sony.

The “House of Brands” strategy instead goes around the multiple sub-brands. Each brand has its own strategy, brand positioning and marketing while the primary brand is less known and low attention is given to increase its awareness.

A good example of this strategy is Procter & Gamble.
and its capacity to attract new members will decay. On the contrary, when the members of the cluster are mainly small and local companies, the cluster often opts toward a strategy that valorizes the brand of the cluster itself. In this case, the companies’ brands benefit indirectly from the reputation of the cluster brand and from being part of the same branding strategy. A good balance should be to integrate the two strategies so that, at the same time, the cluster can be strong enough to attract new qualified members and the visibility of the members brands contribute and reinforce the whole strategy. For instance it is worth to clarify and visualize the positioning and the added value that each member brings to the cluster. Anyway it has to be taken into account that while for global companies the strategy is decided at the top management level and then consistently applied for the whole corporation, for clusters there is the need to build the strategy upon a strong commitment.
Åre, a territory located in the mountains near the Norwegian border, has been known since the nineteenth century for the pure air and the charming landscape. Nonetheless, it was only recently that Åre gained popularity as tourist destination and top ski resort.

In this area and under the umbrella brand of Åre, several SMEs operating not only in the tourism sector (for instance design, the outdoor and sports equipments) and the local public administrations joined their effort in order to promote the area. The process started in the 1991 with the name of “Färdledaren”¹ and it continued in 2001 when a strategy group was set up to design the Vision Åre 2011. The group included the Åre municipality, the local business associations and several key players, representatives of the different local businesses. The members shared the same goals and they had the possibility to ensure that decisions could be taken on a collective level. The overall aim of such a group was to synchronize the initiatives to avoid anything falling between two stools in terms of the commitment of the local authority and the business sector.

In 2006 the process was then enlarged to include more people (with a bottom-up approach) and the analysis was directed to focus on the future direction of the Åre project².

Working groups discussed different issues adopting a broad vision, beyond tourism only, to assure the sustainable development of the local area. The Åre brand and the strategy launched and jointly sustained has achieved several goals: the region hosts now big events that attract high numbers of visitors, such as the Alpine World Championships in 2007, the alpine World Cup, one of Scandinavia’s largest music festivals, and competitions in mountain bike, multisport, snowboard and dog teams.

Moreover the mobilisation of actors, resources and ideas have also enabled the creation of a cluster in Outdoor Equipment³ which integrates the research potential through the involvement of the local research centres. As a consequence of the local economic revitalization, a wide supply of related services such as design, marketing and media flourished, with the cluster acting as a driver for new services and activities to develop. For more information on this case: www.peakinnovation.se; info@peakinnovation.
CONSIDER THAT:

To build consensus on the brand strategy you need:

- Shared vision and identity;
- Supportive institutional framework;
- Close collaboration among the actors (with a strong leadership from the private side);
- Broad community involvement;
- Formal and informal flows of information.

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3 Peak Innovation, one of the eleven Vinnväxt clusters, is located in the region. The aim of the cluster is to stimulate research and business development in the areas of tourism, sports and the outdoors. Peak Innovation is funded by Vinnova and Vinnväxt since 2005 but started a long time before that and is a result of several years' work with mobilisation of the actors and the skills in the region.
In 2005 plastics engineering was already one of the six main areas in R&D and economy in Upper Austria. The commitment of global player Borealis to settle its innovation headquarter in Upper Austria and to concentrate its R&D activities in Linz was more or less the starting point of the project “Plastics Location Upper Austria”. Upper Austria recognized that this was an opportunity to strengthen all Upper Austrian enterprises through branding the Plastics Location Upper Austria.

Borealis – a leading, innovative provider of plastics solutions based on polyethylene (PE) and polypropylene (PP) – wanted to centralize the activities of its four European Borealis Innovation Centres (BIC). The site in Linz and the Upper Austrian Government were invited to participate in the location competition between the four existing European BICs. In the course of negotiations Borealis committed itself to the location Upper Austria and to increase its numbers of high qualified employees from 120 to at least 215 and to invest about 20 million Euros. In return the Government of Upper Austria had to commit itself as well to fulfill certain preconditions as follows:

• Further development of the R&D and education infrastructure – especially in the field of polymers;
• National and international branding of the “Plastics location Upper Austria” as a region with high innovation potential;
• Starting an information and image building initiative to attract young people for an education in the plastics sector;
• Starting an information and image building initiative for the material plastic;
• Improvement of living conditions for international high skilled employees and researchers.

The participatory process which took place can be represented as follows:
The participatory process was carried out under the coordination of TMG Upper Austria. From the beginning of the project there has been a regular communication between all project partners and information flow to all relevant stakeholders (politicians, companies, media, researcher community, etc). This mix of top down and bottom up approach created broad acceptance, commitment from all involved parties as well as a very high identification with the project.

TMG Upper Austria and Plastics Cluster especially worked in the field of location branding and strengthening the image of the material plastic and education possibilities.

The goals of further development of R&D and educational infrastructure as well as branding Upper Austria as the business location for plastics were achieved with the following results:

• The establishment of four Plastic Technology Institutes and four Polymer Science Institutes as well as the creation of two bachelor and one master study programs at the Johannes Kepler University in Linz;
• The organization of a workshop for leading companies of the plastics sector in Upper Austria to define common marketing and branding activities and to gain commitment for cooperation between the companies;
• The development of a common design (logo, presentation materials, etc.) for the project, location information folder in German and English, roll ups and the website www.kunststoffstandort.at;
• Organization of local and international press conferences (eg. at the plastics fair ‘K’ in Düsseldorf, NPE 2009 in Chicago);
• Editing of a project-newspaper “Plastic Region Upper Austria” by TMG Upper Austria;
• Organization of the “Polymer Congress” by the Plastics Cluster as a get-together of the plastic branch every two years in Linz;
• Publication of two different folders targeting young people of different age classes (from 14 – 18 years and older than 18) and the website www.kunststoffkarriere.at with information about education possibilities in the area of plastics;
• Training sessions for teachers to support them informing their pupils (between 10-18 years) about the material plastics and career opportunities;
• Improvement of location attractiveness of Upper Austria especially for international (i.e. installation of an international nursery and kindergarten, establishment of an international elementary school, set up of a new service center to support international em-
ployees and their families settling in). In addition the pocket guide “Well, come2Linz in Upper Austria”, a three-part book set (live, enjoy, understand) and the website www.come2upperaustria.com inform international employees about daily life in Upper Austria.

In the year 2011 the project was evaluated in cooperation with an external consultant on the basis of key data (2005 – 2010). About 65 million Euros, thereof 25,5 million from the Government of Upper Austria, were invested in the plastics sector by public authorities. About 37 percent of these 65 million were invested in education, research and structural development and the remaining 63 percent as support for companies. On the other hand, the number of companies in the sector rose by 14 percent to 250 companies. In spite of turbulent times caused by the financial and economic crisis, the number of employees in the plastic sector rose by 3 percent to 33.465 in 2010. Turnover of the companies was about 7,62 billion Euros in 2010, the 32 biggest companies invested 454 million Euros between 2005 – 2010. R&D quota rose from 4,23 to 4,5 percent.

For more information on this case: www.kunststoffstandort.at; info@tmg.at

**CONSIDER THAT:**

- Clear definition of goals, responsibilities, milestones and timelines help to implement the project. Professional project management and clear responsibilities are necessary;
- A successful branding campaign requires
  - Consistency – repetition of a clear story over multiple years
  - Dissemination – delivering the right message to the right markets
  - Organisation – an entity responsible for sustaining the message (and the quality of the experience) over a long term
  - Continuous dialogue of politicians, public authorities, economy, researcher community, education organisations and intermediates creates broad acceptance for the project.
3.3. VISION AND IDENTITIES CONSOLIDATION
The process to define the brand usually starts with the elaboration of a “statement” in which the key elements are included:
1. Vision: the image you would like to transmit to your key audience: it is also a perspective toward the future;
2. Mission: what you are doing; the purpose and the standards against which you assess and balance your initiatives;
3. Values: the attitude and the key issues around which the strategy is built.

For instance, the concept of “Valley” is used in many cluster logos because it is easily connected to the “Silicon Valley” example. This association gives to the cluster a sort of “reputation”. Besides the idea of the “valley”, a strong emphasis is put on the territorial contiguity; it suggests that a critical mass of specialized companies is located in a geographical specific area as well as (like in the Silicon Valley) the innovation milieu is particularly positive and attractive.

To create their identities, several clusters have used the strategy to replicate consolidated templates and mimic well-established and known cases.

Since the “valleys” are proliferated year by year it is now quite challenging to communicate their uniqueness and distinctive features, thus other words should be chosen to create a positive identity.
More than 350 optics firms located in Southern Arizona, the majority of them in Tucson, form the worldwide known Optics Valley. The term dates back to 1992, year of creation of the cluster leading association AOIA (Arizona Optics Industry Association). Arizona optics companies employ around 25,000 people, with a total annual revenue of $2.3 billion, which has increased almost ten times until 2006.

In 2001, AOIA launched a major marketing campaign targeting residents and visitors. The campaign was supported by a $26,000 grant from the Arizona Department of Commerce.

The main objective of the campaign was to achieve important results for the local economy by exploiting the “Optics Valley” brand, in particular creating jobs, fostering venture capital and a high-tech friendly climate and promoting the University of Arizona Optical Sciences Center.

Several marketing tools were displayed at different levels:
- Use of catchphrases like “Tucson’s Future, Optics Valley” and “Arizona is Optics Valley”;
- frequent coverage in local media;
- big promotion in business publications, airline magazines and national newspapers;
- cluster advertised in different settings and key points of the city (street posters, airport, magazines, local trade publications);
- updated and accessible website;
- solid professional community nurtured by frequent conferences and meetings and the presence of remarkable speakers;
- community job bank established and membership directories circulated.

Key elements of the cluster branding have been based on:
- The focalization of the message on a specific industry (optics) and region (Tucson-Arizona);
- The explicit comparison with the most famous “Silicon Valley” (emphasizing on the lower costs needed to settle and buy premises, attracting cost of living and quality of life standards);
- The personal commitment of some charismatic entrepreneurs in a vast international promotion activity;
- The establishment of an international network with other optics clusters around the world.

Unfortunately, the good results from the efforts made in supporting the “Optics Valley” brand at the beginning of 2000s went wasted in recent years because of the declining support of public authorities, the multiplication of optics clusters and the increased international competition in the optics sector.

For more information on this case: www.aoia.org
IN OTHER CASES, CLUSTERS PREFER TO OPT FOR THE “MADE IN” STRATEGY, STRESSING THE PLACE THEY ARE FROM AS A “TRADEMARK” OR AS A LABEL OF QUALITY.

Even though the cluster can brand itself as part of a region/country without putting a specific reference in the logo, the association among the technology/sector and geographical area often brings reciprocal advantages: it valorizes the perception of quality deriving from the “made in” and, at the same time, it promotes the image of the territory itself. It is clear that, in order to promote the place, the place has to be recognizable.

CONSIDER THAT:

- The brand of the Valley was built starting with a strong commitment and partnership with the local stakeholders (banks, airport, business community);
- The reference to the “Silicon Valley” was used smartly to underline the differences and possible competitive advantages;
- The durable visibility of a cluster requires a consistent marketing activity and it needs to keep updating the branding strategy;
- The lessening of the cluster reputation could have been prevented if a branding strategy was refreshed and kept evolving along with the sectorial development in the following years.
The jewelry cluster in Valenza, located in the North-West of Italy, has a long tradition in goldsmith’s art. It stands out for being at the forefront of jewelry design, for its capability to innovate, for the presence of technical know-how and specialized workforce. The cluster has a strong propensity for internationalisation as two thirds of the production is exported, representing 13.8% of the Italian exports in the sector. Gathering more than 300 firms, with 6.7 workers per firm on average, the cluster mainly consists of micro-companies. In recent times, the cluster and its companies had to face the emergence of organized retail systems and the rising of big brands in the industry. The goldsmith artisans were not able to face competition, being too focused on the product and not enough investing in marketing. The challenge consisted in creating a strategy for strengthening the commercialization of products in order to renovate the relation with the customers on a new basis.

Under the lead of several territorial actors (the Municipality, the Province, the Region, the Chamber of Commerce and several bank foundations) and with the involvement of all interested stakeholders, the initiative was taken to work out a strategy for the development of the Valenza jewelry cluster. The goal was to valorize the strengths of the cluster and to provide solutions for its main weaknesses (poor promotion and lack of visual identification of the cluster with the territory). In 2007, the consortium for the cluster brand (“Consorzio per il Marchio”) and the “DIVALENZA” brand were created.

The DIVALENZA (“Made in Valenza”) brand aims to promote the originality and superior quality of jewels created by the associated companies. The cluster brand has made it possible to create a network of jewel sellers that agree on prices and take care of the product image. The brand is engraved on every object produced in the cluster and guarantees that the jewel is not imported or made with imported components. The local big companies show no interest in the cluster brand, as it is conceived as an asset to defend image and price in the independent retail system, the most important channel for the industry. At this level of implementation, the cluster brand mechanism is not conflicting with the strategy of the local bigger producers that have their own brands and are already integrated in the large-scale retail trade.

The local small producers, instead, need a tool to communicate values at international level and to keep an effective dialogue with retailers and other partners. In order to make it more valuable when presented at international level, the brand is enriched with a catchphrase emphasizing the “Made in Italy” origin of the products. The brand still successfully maintains the idea of preservation of the product’s origin in the eyes of the customers, playing on the high reputation of the “Made in Italy” brand.
A cluster brand should include also a system of values conveying to the audience the intangible and tangible attributes of the brand. The values can be clearly pointed out in the communication materials but often they are communicated through stories or images that set off emotions into the audience.

It is advisable to link the values of a cluster with the values of the place where the cluster is located. In this way both the region/country and the cluster itself get benefit from the communication actions. It is strongly recommended anyway that the core values which are communicated are coherent with both the cluster and regional strategies.

CONSIDER THAT:

- The consolidation of a strong and renowned brand of the cluster is useful especially for small companies that have not the resources to afford a brand building process on their own;

- In this case, the “made in strategy” is conducted at a double level: a trademark (DIVALENZA) for the promotion at national level and one (Made in Italy) for the international promotion;

- The “made in strategy” is useful especially for clusters that address the “quality” as a core value;

- Since in the “made in strategy” the place of origin is clearly referred and mentioned, a selection process to assess the quality of the cluster has to be planned.
The Glass Valley is the French world-class cluster of luxury glass bottles for perfumes and spirits. Its history dates back to 1999, when a local productive system was created (système productif local), and later on 2001 when the association « District de la Vallée de la Bresle » was established with the aim to promote exchanges between the glass companies, to support them in gaining productivity and to help them valorizing their know-how. The cluster, gathering 65 companies and more than 7,000 specialized employees, produces approximately 75% to 80% of the world production of luxury bottling, thus being an indisputable world leader in the sector.

The Valley is located in the north-east of France between two regions (High Normandy and Picardy), whose economic development has been relevantly supported by the glass industry. Many of the companies belonging to the cluster have lined the Bresle river since the Middle Ages and they are mostly located between Le Tréport and Feuquières but also around Dieppe and Abbeville. This is the reason why the cluster is also known as the Bresle Valley. The first glass-makers extracted the fluvial sand, recognized for its high pureness, to fuse it into glass and used the surrounding forest of Eu to get the wood for stocking the ovens.

The companies represented in the Glass Valley belong to the whole value chain: model and pattern makers, foundries, mold makers, glassmakers, sorters, decorators, accessories, filling and packaging, services to companies, artists and craftsmen, heritage promotion, designers. The existence of a common tradition and history is the main feature of the Valley, with all companies sharing the same values and having the same ideas on the innovation and growth strategy of the cluster. Another distinctive feature of the cluster is that companies in it possess complementary skills: this is not only a gluing element for the cluster but it also provides an added value in front of end consumers.

The branding strategy of the cluster has been relying on its histori-
cal roots, thus promoting a strong relation with the territory where the companies are located. In fact, among its major partners are the Regions of High Normandy and Picardy which, together with the state, have sustained both politically and financially the development programmes of the cluster (VICTOR programme and “Glass Innov” triennial plan of action), but have also intervened to support the sector in a slump period.

Several elements make part of the branding strategy of the Glass Valley:

- **The broad use of the storytelling techniques**
  The cluster’s website proposes a catchy and popular story of the creation and consolidation of the glass industry in the Bresle Valley, starting from the Middle Ages.
  “…On the eve of the French Revolution, several glassmakers worked in the valley of Bresle: Varimpré, Le Courval, La Grande Vallée, Rétonval, Val d'Aulnoy, Romesnil, Sainte-Catherine and Le Cornet. Glass factories began as little workshops, which had throne pot ovens in the middle. The work was often painful for the 8-10 year old children who came from Brittany, Spain, Portugal or Italy. They had to open and close molds and transport objects in the arc. Often near the house of the head-glassmaker, was a small castle, like the Glass factory of La Grande Vallée. On the “Paris road”, close to the glassworks and the castle, there was a grocer’s shop, pub, bakery, etc. Here the glassmakers could live by themselves”.

- **The promotion of the historical heritage of the cluster**
  Two museums devoted to the glass industry are open to the public at Eu (musée “Traditions verrières”) and at Blangy-sur-Bresle (at the manoir de Fontaine).

**STORY TELLING AND CLUSTERS**

The storytelling is a technique able to expand and strengthen the process of brand building: copy strategy, storyboards, and claims are nothing more than the ingredients of the narrative of a brand. Also clusters may refer to their historical origin, to their founders or tell the culture and identity that have led to the development. What matters is that it is consistent with the strategy and values of the cluster.

Storytelling supports the brand because is a way to differentiate themselves and to engage more directly their stakeholders and clients: the stories are memorable, exciting, evocative, credible, empathetic, viral.

Stories and storytelling are a central part of organizational life. Traditionally has been referred to storytelling as a tool to form the corporate culture and influence behavior of people at work. However, recently it was recognized that storytelling can also perform other functions: drive in solving problems and making decisions, generating commitment to change and then can become the means of sharing knowledge.

The telling of a story should not be seen only as a narration written to define the imagery representing the cluster’s values: the evocative power of words should be interpreted and repeated across all elements of the communication strategy such as a video, a postcard, a newspaper page or a web page.
They show the history of glass and bottle-making, the different stages of the process (from the base materials through to packaging), the tools and modern machines, the collections of perfume bottles and demonstrations of glass-blowing by experts and they are a not to be missed stop in a touristic trip of the area.

The Glass Valley is also a partner of the “Manoir de la Fontaine”, a dynamic non-profit association which animates a rich programme of cultural activities and promotes diverse demonstrations such as temporary exhibitions and the organization of the “Feast of the glass” taking place every year, the second weekend of August.

The heritage promotion is also ensured by the collection of historical postcards of the glass factories of the Valley. With this strategy, the cluster wants to keep the focus on the small and medium sized companies, which form the largest part of it, encouraging them to look for new markets and to diversify their customer portfolios. The traditional end customers are French perfumers, who already have massive visibility in the international markets, but Bresle Valley glassmakers have the ambition to diversify their markets and they are willing to conquer emerging markets, such as the Asian and the Middle East ones.

Thus the Glass Valley is represented, jointly with several members of the cluster, in the most important international fairs of luxury, in particular in Monaco and Dubai. In order to increase the visibility of the companies located in the Bresle Valley, all companies represented in the fairs are recognizable through the presence of the cluster’s logo next to the company’s logo.

For more information on this case: www.la-glass-vallee.com

CONSIDER THAT:

- It is sometimes possible to create a cluster brand that is located in two different regions;
- The “storytelling technique” is useful to catch the imagination of the audience and communicate intangible values;
- This is a good example to show that it is possible to balance the visibility of the cluster and that of the companies;
- If the cluster opts to structure its brand strategy on values linked with the tradition and the history of its “place”, it is worth to support the preservation of such a heritage through ad hoc initiatives (creation of museums, visual instruments, dissemination events).
The cluster of Prosecco in Conegliano Valdobbiadene is a real self-contained economic system. Thanks to the wine production that is the core business of the cluster, many related activities have started up, so as to create a veritable value chain. For instance, member of the cluster are the companies that design and manufacture winemaking machinery together with some of the most important firms producing technology for vineyards and wineries around the world, as well as laboratories providing analyses and companies supplying winemaking products and services. Also of great importance is the role played by the scientific institutions, which each year train young professionals, and by the local institutions, which defend and promote the identity of the area. The Prosecco cluster includes also the main players in the hospitality and accommodation sector, including restaurants, wine shops, trattorie and agriturismi, “where a glass of fragrant, bubbly wine provides an excellent welcome”.

This territorial system, made up of heterogeneous actors, was recognized in 2003 as the First Sparkling Wine District of Italy, a designation that has opened up possibilities for developing economic and scientific research projects as well as promotional programmes. The core focus in the cluster brand strategy is the territory, which is recognized as the catalyst of the business and as viable tool to increase the awareness of the Prosecco cluster brand itself.

“At a previous time the nobles met in the halls of castles and villas, in the area around Conegliano-Valdobbiadene to celebrate, to socialize and enjoy the pleasures of hospitality. Nowadays we invite people into a great hall: the territory of Conegliano and Valdobbiadene in which the typical product is not just Prosecco but the territory, the tradition and the culture”.

The brand value is also focused on the quality of the product (due
also to the long tradition and the certified labellization). Besides, emphasis is given to the association of this sparkling wine with the suggestion of luxury, in the sense of pleasure and wellbeing, the heritage of noble castles, the colourful and charming landscape where the Prosecco has been produced for centuries.

Since the brand is so strictly connected to the territory, the marketing actions are therefore directed to preserve and promote the area itself (that now is in the tentative World Heritage List). For instance, in 2003 “the Prosecco wine road” was established, going through the whole area and driving the guest along the routes to discover the historic and artistic sights, as well as the most prestigious cellars.

For more information on this case: www.prosecco.it; info@prosecco.it

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*Prosecco is a sparkling wine produced in a very defined area in Veneto.*

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**CONSIDER THAT:**

- For some clusters, especially those anchored to the values of their territory, it is strategic to promote the “place” in order to reinforce their brand. This is a win-win situation because also the public administration can count on a positive impact in terms of tourist presence, increase in attractiveness etc.;

- A cluster brand that is based on the territory implies a strong commitment of all the actors, private and public, and a strong self awareness of the community.
3.4. MAKING USE OF THE BRAND

Once the brand (as well as its identity and the core values) is conceptualized and shared among the members and the stakeholders and the strategy is well developed, it is worth to plan the activities needed to make use of it.

It is important to start with a marketing plan in order to plan and synchronize the activities to promote and consolidate the brand.

The marketing plan is a strategic approach to define the goals, the key target groups, the channels and the promotional activities. It is also a tool to manage and monitor the budget as well as the timing of the activities.

Target groups can include: existing cluster members, potential cluster members, financiers (including government on different levels), owners, policy stakeholders, the press, as well as potential employees/human resources or partners (including those located outside of the region).

For each target group, the objectives of the communication activities need to be agreed to guide the choice of tools and channels (e.g. web, print, events, etc.) and the timing of the marketing activities.

Clusters can use the identified brands and marketing strategy for a number of purposes:

- to strengthen interest, commitment and engagement within the cluster;
- to further anchor and clarify/cement the cluster initiative’s strategy;
- to recruit new members to the cluster;
- to increase visibility in the global market;
- to increase attractiveness (i.e. attract human resources, partners, investors, etc.); and
- to foster inter-cluster linkages.

It is important that the marketing plan follows and interacts with the strategic plan and the branding strategy – otherwise the marketing and branding can be a total failure (for instance the brand consolidation toward members has to be done before you try to reach external actors.)

Several marketing levers and promotional actions can be used, in fact, but they should be selected accordingly to the branding strategy. In general, clusters firstly work on a visual coordinated image of the cluster (logo, brochures, posters, roll-up videos etc.) but indeed many novel channels and tools need to be used to increase the visibility of the cluster and to consolidate their brand images.
The Estonian timber construction cluster is a typical example of a small and recently established cluster which needs a strategic brand design in order to differentiate itself from the plethora of similar clusters in the same geographic area. In fact, timber clusters are a constant element in North European countries. Moreover, the cluster operates in the framework of a small country, Estonia, which is itself striving for gaining external recognition but also national self-awareness (one concept of the “I love Estonia” brand is rootedness).

The cluster aims at promoting the partners and their products/services on export markets and at enhancing the image of the wood as building material on the domestic market. In fact, the use of timber for building purposes in Estonia is not as common as it is in other Northern countries (i.e. Sweden or Finland) and the need to conquer the internal market is as pressing as it is penetrating the external market.

The country carried out the Brand Estonia project in early 2000s, producing the Estonia Style brandbook. The main concepts included in it have been embraced by the Timber construction cluster, in particular:
- Clear communication;
- Rootedness (history, language, indigenous culture, natural, heroic, romantic, traditions, heritage, civilization);
- Nordic influence (clean, northern, purity, freshness, quality, strength, clarity, nature, elegance, simplicity);
- Progress (first, fast, infrastructure, business environment, adaptability, creativity, modernity, resourcefulness).

Location matters and the image of the cluster focus on it with a photo- and video story. The idea is quite simple: the business environment is based on unique natural resources, competence and common values. The branding strategy deliberately avoids to use
long written descriptions (words could tell the same story for several other countries or regions in Northern Europe), but it aims to capture the attention of the receiver with pictures conveying positive emotions.

As a consequence, the belonging to the Nordic area is communicated as a positive and adding-value element, which concurs to consolidate the role of Estonia as a timber constructions’ producer. What is more, the cluster focuses on personalized and specifically targeted products. Wood is considered in terms of furniture, log houses, architecture and design connection.

At the same time, the internal market is addressed. Wood is the resource of the future: sustainable, renewable, environmental-friendly and handy.

For more information on this case:
www.estoniantimber.ee ; info@empl.ee
Design District Helsinki was created in 2005 with the intent to bring together local actors of the creative industries. The cluster of creative businesses located around 25 streets in the heart of Helsinki aims to make the Helsinki’s design area known worldwide as a creativity hub and to reinforce Helsinki’s role as a design city.

The distinctive feature of Design District Helsinki is the extensive range of activities carried out by its members, from interior & design to clothing, jewelry, design shops, antiques, art galleries, museums, hotels, restaurants and more. The cluster is thus an aggregation of heterogeneous neighbouring shops and producers that benefit from the rising role of Helsinki as a city of design. A major value embraced by the city of Helsinki and embodied by the design district is the concept of “embedded design”, where design acts as a connector between different disciplines, developing innovations suitable for use.

- **In the forefront of new technologies**
  Since the beginning of its activities the district has been very dynamic in social networks and web marketing activities. As a step further to the publication pinpointing all district members on a map, a Design District Helsinki mobile application has been created, marking a Helsinki map with over 160 tips presented in main design categories.

- **Careful attention to public involvement initiatives**
  In order to increase the visibility of the district, several existing or brand new events drawing in practitioners, experts, residents and tourists and livening up city life take place regularly. Just to mention a few: Design District Week, Late Night Shopping days, The Night of the Arts, Helsinki Design Week...

  Moreover World Design Capital Helsinki 2012, a project selected in the framework of the initiatives of the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design, will comprise a wide range of events and projects related to design and its manifestations. WDC is at a time a recognition of the city as a location where innovation and design meet for the sake of social and economic development and a vitrine for the cluster achievements on the international forum.

- **Linkage design/tourism**
  The main aim of the design district being to increase the popularity of Helsinki as a creativity and design pole, its activities have been conceived as interdependent on the touristic attractiveness of the city. This is why the district has launched a close collaboration with different tourism organizations, becoming one of the most popular tourist attractions in Helsinki. As an example, Design Walking Tours for specific groups and sightseeing visits are organized for tourists and residents, who are encouraged to experience shopping, dining and accommodation in design-related centres.

  Individual visitors can also choose walking tours by theme.

  For more information on this case: www.designdistrict.fi
bwcon is a business initiative promoting Baden-Württemberg as a high-tech location. The network has a regional geographic scope, with a branding strategy principally aimed at increasing the member base. Its aim is to facilitate networking among the members, more than 460 companies and research institutes, via innovative web tools.

bwcon has focused its marketing strategy on the social media, sharing information and interacting dynamically with the followers. Whereas Twitter is used as a platform to spread news about new members, upcoming events, etc., the Facebook page represents a platform for bwcon to get into dialogue with its members. Furthermore, via the Flickr image stream and YouTube videos, members and external viewers get updated on events and general activities of the network.

For more information on this case: www.bwcon.de; info@nbwcon.de
3.5. BRANDING GOES “TRANSNATIONAL”: SOME TIPS

Transnational collaboration between clusters has emerged as the new edge for upgrading innovation for SMEs. So far, transnational cluster networks and partnership have been fostered mainly through European programmes, which have shown the added value of such collaborations in terms of exploitation of global value chains, mutual policy learning, joint development of tools related to cluster policies and programmes, sharing of specialised research infrastructures. Overall, transnational collaboration between clusters contributes to increased competitiveness of the region as well as to its attractiveness to foreign investors, expanding the network of partners and enhancing cross-border cooperation in many respects.

Also, clusters located in cross-border regions sharing strong geographical, historical and/or cultural ties (i.e. the Baltic Sea Region, the Alpine Space, Visegrad Region), tend to be more receptive towards transnational collaborations. Several cases show that transnational clusters and transnational cluster networks put emphasis on their branding strategy for several reasons, in particular because it acts as a gluing factor for the partnership and it allows establishing a position in the regional/global scene so as to reach a relevant critical mass. Nonetheless, influential factors for branding “transnational” can be the need to satisfy the instances of several actors and to build up a common identity or to reconcile different identities. In most cases, a common brand platform is the chosen solution.
Medicon Valley, spanning the Greater Copenhagen area in Denmark and the Skåne region of southern Sweden, is the “transnational cluster” case by definition. It was established in the mid-1990s with the aim to make of it the most attractive bioregion in Europe. Public authorities were highly involved in the process, together with the life science industry, because the cluster was historically rooted and it was deemed to bring enormous advantages to the Oresund Region in both Swedish and Danish sides, especially after the building of the Oresund bridge which connects the two countries. The branding strategy of Medicon Valley builds up on the common heritage of the Swedish area of Skåne and the Danish area of Zealand, testified by the belonging to the Oresund Region. Nonetheless, as it addresses companies and researchers from all over the world, it prioritizes the valorization of the Scandinavian core values, while minimizing the cultural and geographical differences between the two countries. In communication materials, Medicon Valley is presented in terms of uniqueness and uniformity, as “the Scandinavia’s life centre”, “a powerful region for life science”, “a Danish-Swedish life science cluster”, “region of the future”, “business-friendly region”, “world-class bio-region”. Moreover, the key strengths of the Scandinavian countries are highlighted: modern infrastructures and facilities, high education standards, great attention to outdoor activities. The branding strategy of Medicon Valley also addresses one of its key problems: the decreasing availability of highly qualified personnel to research and work in companies. Medicon Valley presents itself as “the place to develop your business”, with a “highly educated workforce” and granting “a perfect work/life balance”, as a means to attract capital and talent in the region.

For more information on this case:
www.mediconvalley.com ; info@mediconvalley.com
Baltfood network was born as a project under the Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007-2013 with the aim to establish the food industry in the Baltic region as a source of affordable, high-quality products mainly for the regional market. Bringing together partners representing business, research and public bodies from six countries, Baltfood wants to enhance the competitiveness of the food industry in an increasingly competitive market with some 80 million consumers. The network engages in research and analysis activities useful to quickly recognize trends in the food sector, and advises SMEs in the realization of marketable products for the international markets. The forward-looking studies and services provided by Baltfood are complemented by a special attention paid to the development of a joint place branding concept for the transnational food cluster, in order to increase the awareness on the potential outcomes of such synergy. This place branding concept takes into account the common belonging of the partners to the Baltic region and the sharing of common values and traditions. The basis for the Baltfood brand rests on:

- Combining place marketing and product and corporate branding (one key assumption of Baltfood is that “You buy brands and labels that build your self-image”);
- Distinguishing between internal and external target groups, and focusing on external target groups with SMEs and qualified workforce,
- Brand bipolarity, an apparent contrast of two values characterising the brand, the Nordic characteristics and the emotional features associated to what best can be offered by the food sector;
- Levering rational and emotional reactions (quality, local and organic food, Scandinavian food, sea food, culture and history, stories on local food);
- Evolving eventually from a network brand to a business-to-consumer brand.

For more information on this case: www.baltfood.org; info@baltfood.org
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4. Policy action examples

In recent years, the restructuring of industrial policies around Europe has led to the definition of a new generation of cluster policies. Due to the high number of potential areas of research and growth, policy makers have worked out smart criteria to select clusters, putting a special emphasis on the excellent ones, and launched cluster programmes to enhance the visibility of their best clusters. In this handbook, the most prominent policies in Europe have been taken into consideration to give an overview of the approaches available. In some cases, targeted public support programmes have opted for the labelling of the clusters that are characterized by high specialization, great potential for innovation, critical mass and visibility. The promotion of the label carried out by the programme owners and the funding authorities is fundamental for ensuring the visibility of both the policy and the clusters. Finally, labelling helps to ensure consistency with other relevant policies. Other approaches in Europe have opted for the establishment of an umbrella brand or of a programme to support clusters in developing a targeted communication strategy.

Five examples of policy action related to cluster marketing and branding are presented below: three cases of labellization (France, Germany and Norway), one case of umbrella brand (Clusterland Upper Austria) and one case of structural platform for the coaching of cluster communication managers (VINNVAXT programme in Sweden).

**FRANCE Pôles de Compétitivité**

In 2004 the French Government introduced a cluster policy and a cluster labeling system (Label “Pôles de Compétitivité”). Clusters have been selected following a call for proposals: global and national competitiveness clusters have been recognized, so that different categories of cluster have been created 71 clusters have been granted the “Pôles de Compétitivité” label: 7 world class clusters, 11 world class aspiring clusters, and 53 competitiveness clusters with national goals and visibility.

This labeling strategy guarantees tangible benefits in terms of visibility and marketing of the French clusters. Several clusters use the “world-class cluster” label as a marketing tool: the visual representation the “pôle mondial” in the visual materials aims to give a clear message to the receivers on the critical mass and relevance of that cluster compared to all others at national level.

**GERMANY Kompetenznetze Deutschland and Spitzencluster Programmes**

The German national research and innovation strategy foresees a categorization for regionally-anchored “networks of competence” (“Kompetenznetze Deutschland”) and “leading-edge clusters” (“Spitzencluster”). In both cases, belonging to the initiative means being members of a “club” and being given access to a quality label for the best clusters. In the Kompetenznetze case, the initiative targets Germany’s lead-
ing 100 competence networks at regional and national level. The benefits for the members encompass a wide range of visibility actions, such as access to a communication platform, participation in top quality publications, trade shows and conferences, and use of the quality label “kompetenznetze.de” in public relations’ activities. The “Spitzencluster” initiative involves a narrower group of “leading-edge clusters”. Since 2007, ten clusters have been selected at national level with the aim to take Germany to the top of the league of technologically advanced nations.

The programme underpins its labellization strategy associating the selected clusters with a dedicated brand: “Invented in Germany”. The label strengthens the image of the clusters at international level by linking them to the credibility of Germany as a top country for technological achievements. Due to the massive investment allocated to the “Spitzencluster” initiative (400 million euros for two rounds of the competition), the programme owner (the Federal Ministry of Education and Research) has put great importance on the “Invented in Germany” label promotion. Selected clusters have been requested to adopt the logo in the communication materials not only to promote themselves at international level, but also to give visibility to the initiative in front of national public opinion.

NORWAY: Centres of Expertise and ARENA programmes

By mid-2000s Norway put forward a cluster policy segmented in two programmes:

- The **Arena programme** offers both specialist and financial support for long term development of regional business clusters with a national scope. Its main objective is to strengthen the ability of clusters to innovate by establishing a stronger and more dynamic interaction between industry, R&D institutions, universities and the public sector. Since 2008, 22 regional clusters have been supported by the programme.

- The **Norwegian Centres of Expertise (NCE) programme** was launched in 2006. NCE is a national programme set up with the aim of strengthening regional industries’ international competitiveness by developing core competences. NCEs have an international scope. So far, twelve regional NCE projects have been selected.

Both Arena and NCE are national programmes owned by Innovation Norway, the Industrial Development Corporation of Norway (SIVA) and the Research Council of Norway. Even if both of them fund branding activities for clusters, NCE programme addresses well-structured clusters with a strong potential at international level and, as a consequence, it has worked harder on an advanced strategy for clusters’ branding.

NCE clusters are selected using rigorous criteria, among which are: shared interests among the operators, shared awareness of the importance of the cluster, shared visions, established cooperation forums, international orientation, etc.

The NCE programme is based on the idea that competition and co-
operation between companies are compatible values. International visibility and development of new technical solutions offer a common ground for cooperation. The NCE programme offers professional and financial support in establishing networks on a long-term perspective. The companies participating in the NCE cluster are offered professional and financial support for up to ten years. The programme funds for up to 50% of eligible costs for the following activities:

- Network construction within the cluster and with external operators. Analysis and strategy processes;
- Development of ideas and project proposals;
- Cluster management;
- Marketing of the cluster.

Cluster branding is considered a key activity for those clusters willing to increase visibility and reputation abroad. Nonetheless, the involvement of the cluster members and the bonding of the partnership is a precondition to the display of a strong and positive image at international level. Cluster members need to agree on the purpose and vision for the cluster, on the objectives of the communication and on the target groups. Brand building is thus a process aimed at shaping a common identity and consolidating the partnership, rather than being an external communication tool.

“Clusterland Upper Austria” is a showcase model of a regional cluster portfolio, constituting an umbrella brand for 6 clusters and 3 networks. The initiative has gained international acknowledgment thanks to its centralized cluster management model inspired by the “innovation through co-operation” motto. The identification of the sectorial priorities and the clusters has not been based on a selection process; on the contrary it has been the result of a top-down approach. The chief role of policy makers in defining key sectors for the regional economic development has had a relevant impact on the consistency of the “Clusterland Upper Austria” visual identity. By means of a feedback loop, the label links the clusters to the credibility “Clusterland Upper Austria” has gained both at national and international level.
SWEDEN: VINNVÄXT programme
The VINNVÄXT programme was established in 2001 with the aim of creating strong regional innovation systems in specific fields with the active participation of players from the private, public and research sectors. VINNVÄXT wants to create international competitive research and innovation milieus/clusters and currently VINNOVA is funding 11 clusters for a 10-year period.

Distinguishing features of the VINNVÄXT programme are the use of a common value-system based on the triple helix and the partnership approach through which VINNOVA acts not only as the programme managing authority but also as a supportive partner.

As a supportive partner, VINNOVA offers communication coaching to the VINNVÄXT initiatives in order to provide them with a clearer understanding of what strategic communication in a cluster is. The coaching activity (with expertise provided by an external consultancy) is part of the training initiatives scheduled in the framework of the VINNVÄXT programme. The activity took the form of joint knowledge and experience seminars (networking and experiencesharing between the various initiatives) and individual coaching sessions. The consultants offered specific communication training and planning, starting from a mapping of the receivers’ needs.

The added-value of the coaching sessions consisted in clarifying the strategic concept in relation to the relevant interacting actors behind each initiative, identifying target groups and suggesting new structures for making the triple helix actors work together. Not only communicators but also process managers have been involved in the communication activity, thus enhancing the success of the initiative.

All in all, the VINNVÄXT programme sets the frame for selected clusters to work systematically with communication, with the aim of putting communication planning at the core of the cluster strategic development. Communication and branding are not just tools for conveying a positive image of the cluster, but they also contribute to identifying the key challenges and shaping strategic choices.
5. Conclusions and recommendations

Nowadays, it is ever harder for companies to face global competition alone, and they do it better in networks. Thus, a plethora of clusters are striving for excellence and positioning themselves at international level. In order to stay competitive, clusters of the future must be able to pool internal resources and the best companies in their niche of specialisation, as well as to attract external resources and the best human capital. To achieve these goals, cluster branding and marketing efforts are necessary.

Moreover, cluster branding and marketing strategies do require a strong focus on the cultural dimension of globalization and of its economic consequences. When addressing the strategic issue of clusters, novel concepts must use local specificities to address global challenges, and also link this to the needs of the home territory.

Smartly allocate resources on cluster marketing and branding
Marketing and branding can play an important role for the future competitiveness of clusters and for their long-term survival, contributing to enhancing the competitiveness of the local economy which revolves around cluster initiatives. Regions and clusters can both benefit from a branding image which valorizes local excellence.
- Regional funding should promote the assets of the local economy, valorizing cluster marketing and branding as a key vector of their excellence;
- Carefully select a handful of excellent clusters to whom to associate the image of the region, in line with the regional innovation strategy for smart specialisation;
- In order to ensure a win-win game for regions and clusters, make sure there is a link between the branding strategy of the region/country and its strong clusters;
- Make sure clusters embrace the region’s messages on local excellence in innovation;
- Cluster marketing and branding enhances the attractiveness of the cluster towards potential new members, who see the advantages of joining. More members means activating a virtuous cycle that fosters innovation activities;
- Public support to branding activities should not be limited to initiatives supporting a cluster’s promotion but it might become a tool to sustain their innovative development;
- Consider adopting a label for the region’s best clusters in order to stimulate competition for excellence and to increase credibility and visibility of these clusters.

Valorise territorial branding
Integrating territorial branding and cluster marketing and branding implies having a clear and shared vision of which messages must be conveyed to the public, for both the region and the clusters to maximize their image.
- Rethink a regional cluster strategy which includes marketing and branding as a key activities, in the same way that cluster internationalisation and cluster governance usually are;
- Be open to a process of re-branding of your region according to the evolution that traditional economic sectors may have been going through;
• Define and be clear on what the general vocation of your region is: a high-tech location? Or a green one? Touristic? Etc. This might help to fit a marketing and branding axis into the regional strategy for clusters;
• Perform a benchmarking process with other best practices, but do not replicate them uncritically. Focus instead on the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the regional offer;
• Adopt a shared identity which is agreed by all the main local stakeholders. It may recall specific features of the territory with a high marketing profile, and keep into account that geography, territory and traditional values matter!

Ensure a participatory process and ownership
The inclusion of a branding and marketing axis in a wider strategy for clusters implies undertaking a complex process which involves stakeholders that represent the local economic context. Such a process aims to reach a consensus on the core messages, which can be adopted later on by the clusters themselves.
• Policy makers must exert a strong leadership if they wish to set a supportive institutional framework, generate a broad community involvement, and fuel formal and informal flows of communication aimed at building a consensus on the brand strategy;
• The commitment and partnership with local stakeholders must be consistent over time. Defining a global strategy for clusters which includes a strong branding and marketing component requires funding, but one-time or spot actions may not be sufficiently rewarding;
• Supporting initiatives targeted to the local community is important to consolidate the local image of the cluster and foster awareness among society;
• Promote opportunities to link excellent clusters, new technologies, public involvement initiatives, and tourism if convenient.

Promote the use of a new generation of communication tools
It is commonly agreed that the rise of social media and new communication tools has changed the way the public perceives how information flows and reaches a broader mass of people, at the expense of traditional means which have a much more limited impact.
• The experiential dimension of branding and promotion needs to be emphasized, in order to transfer and communicate the richness of local contexts, clusters and networks. Storytelling and the construction of narrations through events has become a crucial element to be carefully designed in branding and promotion strategies;
• Traditional communication tools and channels (brochures, participation to fairs…) must be updated and accompanied by new media and tools that attract and engage the audience;
• The cluster branding and marketing strategy needs to be updated from time to time to keep up-to-date with new trends in media and communication in order to ensure durable effects;
• Differentiating communication goals according to each target audience can be highly productive;
• Turn traditional stereotypes into positive messages, making use of tools and images that convey cheerful emotions.
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www.tmg.at

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  www.are.se
Paper Province Cluster
  www.paperprovince.com
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  www.vinnova.se

Spain
22 Barcelona project
  www.22barcelona.com
ACC1Ó Catalan Agency for Innovation and Competitiveness
  www.acc10.cat/ACC1O/cat
Bephysic
  www.physicbcn.net
Generalitat de Catalunya
  www.gencat.cat

General websites related to clusters and branding
Brand Channel
  www.brandchannel.com
Brand Driven Innovation
  www.branddriveninnovation.com
EUC2C, Inter-sectoral group of organisations for innovation and competitiveness in companies
  www.euc2c.com
European Cluster Collaboration Platform
  www.clustercollaboration.eu
European Cluster Observatory
  www.clusterobservatory.eu
Medicon Valley Alliance
  www.mva.org
Nation Branding
  www.nation-branding.info

OECD
  www.oecd.org
PRO INNO EUROPE
  www.proinno.net
TCI Network
  www.tci-network.org
The Financial Brand
  www.thefinancialbrand.com
U Brander
  www.unbrander.wordpress.com
Glossary of key terms

**Brand**
Mixture of attributes, tangible and intangible, synthesized in a symbol, which creates value and influence.

**Branded House**
When the company brand is the dominant source of identification and meaning, and all product and service brands are clearly connected and coherent to it.

**Brand Equity**
The value, both tangible and intangible, that a brand adds to a product/service.

**Branding**
The active process of brand development.

**Brand Strategy**
A plan for the systematic development of a brand to enable it to meet its agreed objectives.

**Cluster**

**Cluster members or constituents**
Cluster members or better “constituents” (since to be part you do not need to sign a membership) include end product or service companies; suppliers of specialized inputs, components, machinery, and services; financial institutions; and firms in related industries. Clusters also often include firms in downstream industries (that is, channels or customers); producers of complementary products; specialized infrastructure providers; government and other institutions providing specialized training, education, information, research and technical support (such as universities, think tanks, vocational training providers); and standard setting agencies. Government agencies that significantly influence a cluster can be considered part of it. Finally, many clusters include trade associations and other collective private sector bodies that support cluster members.” (Michael E. Porter, On Competition, Harvard Business Press, 1998, p.215-216).

**Cluster Organisation**
“Cluster initiatives are increasingly managed by specialised institutions, known as cluster organisations, which take various forms, ranging from non-profit associations, through public agencies to companies.” (EC Communication: Towards world-class clusters in the European Union: Implementing the broad-based innovation strategy- SEC(2008) 2637} 17 October 2008, p.8). A Cluster Organisation does not necessarily have members, but it provides services to the cluster initiative participants.

**Note:** Cluster organisations have different names in different countries, e.g. compétitivité pôles, centres of expertise, innovation networks and competence networks etc.

**Cluster Initiative**
“Cluster initiative: an organised effort to increase the growth and competitiveness of a cluster within a region, involving cluster firms, government and/or the research community”. (Örjan Sölvell, Göran Lindqvist and Christian Ketels, The Cluster Initiative Greenbook, Vinnova/TCI, 2003).

**Cluster Development**
The cluster development process encompasses a range of organised efforts aimed at increasing the growth and competitiveness of the organisations in the cluster. Efforts are usually based on an evaluation of the cluster’s strengths and capabilities (a mapping exercise), from which a vision for the cluster is formulated and objectives articulated. Targets and actions plans specific to individual clusters are developed. Results are then monitored and evaluated.
Cluster Manager
The Cluster Manager is the head of a Cluster Organisation. The term can also refer to all senior members of staff in a Cluster Organisation.

Cluster Members
Cluster Members are the Businesses, universities, policy makers, other public sector organisations and other private sector organisations that actively participate in a Cluster Initiative. They may pay a membership fee to the Cluster Organisation.

Corporate Identity
It is consists of the elements by which the company/cluster differentiates itself from other organisations and it tells how it wishes to be viewed by others, and how others recognize and remember it.

House of Brands
A house of brands is when a major brand adds new products but labels them with distinct brand identities.

Innovation
Innovation is what drives productivity/competitiveness and prosperity. “It is the creation, development and implementation of new products, processes or services, with the aim of improving efficiency, effectiveness or competitive advantage. Innovation may apply to products, services, manufacturing processes, managerial processes or the design of an organisation. It is most often viewed at a product or process level, where product innovation satisfies a customer’s needs and process innovation improves efficiency and effectiveness. Innovation is linked to creativity and the creation of new ideas, and involves taking those new ideas and turning them into reality through invention, research and new product development”. (Source: Economist.com). One output of innovation is the creation of new firms through spinouts or start-ups. Innovation can also change the structure of an industry.

Cluster labellization
Policy action aimed at empowering existing clusters.

Location branding (or place branding)
The practice of branding geographic locations (countries, regions, cities and towns) as a key driver for tourism, inward investment and/or export revenue. It is related to the notion that places compete with other places for people, resources, and business.

Policy maker
A person with the power to influence or determine policies and practices at an international, national, regional, or local level.

Storytelling
It is a means for sharing and interpreting experiences. In advertising, storytelling is a technique used to create emotional power and build customer loyalty.

Umbrella brand
It is an overarching brand used across multiple related products.

Visual Identity
It consists of the visual aesthetic of the brand meaning, among other things, its logo, logotypes, symbols, colours, and other visual elements.
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