



# **The Role of Culture in Branding Small Islands: A Case Study of the Isle of Man**

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# “Happy Jack” by The Who





Happy Jack wasn't old  
but he was a man





He lived in the sand  
at the Isle of Man





The kids would all sing,  
he would take the wrong key





So they rode on his head  
in their furry donkey





# Isle of Man





# Isle of Man

- Over the last 4 decades, the island has undergone dramatic change: Economic, Political, Demographic and Cultural
- One of the responses to these dramatic changes was a (re)branding exercise called *Freedom to Flourish*



# Presentation Overview

- What is Place Branding?
- The Role of Culture in Place Branding
- *Freedom to Flourish*: The Isle of Man Branding Project
- The Role and Place of Culture in the *Freedom to Flourish* project



# What is Place Branding?

- A form of marketing
- Function of globalization and global competition
- Aimed at both internal and external audiences



# Place Branding Literature (Kaneva, 2011)

- Technical-economic: “economic growth, efficiency and capital accumulation.”
- Political: “impact of national images on nation-states’ participation in a global system of international relations.”
- Cultural: “implications of branding for national and cultural identities.”



# The Role of Culture in Place Branding

- Culture as an “attractant” for business and investment (Kotler and Gertner, 2002)
- Economic development and growth as a driver of cultural revitalization
- Challenges of capturing the essence and meaning of culture in a brand message



# Branding Islands: Does Insularity Matter?

- Separation from the mainland has allowed many islands to develop unique cultures and languages, but as the Isle of Man case will demonstrate, being an island does not insulate a place and its culture from outside influences
- In some cases, the juxtaposition between island culture and external influences may be starker and thus harder to capture in a brand message



# *Freedom to Flourish: The Isle of Man Branding Project*

- Project initiated in 2003
- Managed by a cross-sectoral, volunteer steering committee comprised of representatives from business, government and non-profit organizations





# *Freedom to Flourish: The Isle of Man Branding Project*

- In 2004, Tynwald (the Isle of Man Parliament) approved an investment of £500,000 to develop a vision and implementation strategy for the brand
- Surveys, interviews, focus groups were conducted both on and off the island

# *Freedom to Flourish:* Brand Proposition

“The Isle of Man is a land of possibility where people and businesses can reach their full potential. It has been self-governing for over 1,000 years, which has created a secure yet stimulating environment. This gives people and businesses the freedom to flourish, providing foundations for a dynamic economy and an unrivalled quality of life.”



# The Role and Place of Culture in the *Freedom to Flourish* Campaign

- Culture as a “supporting actor” to economic development
- Manx culture: difficult to define
  - traditional and contemporary dimensions
  - ethnic and civic dimensions

# *Freedom to Flourish: The Isle of* Man Brand Book

- Cultural and historical images and symbols (Three legs of Man, Loaghtan Sheep, TT motorcycle race)
- Contemporary images (financial services, space rocket)
- Bilingual: English and Manx Gaelic

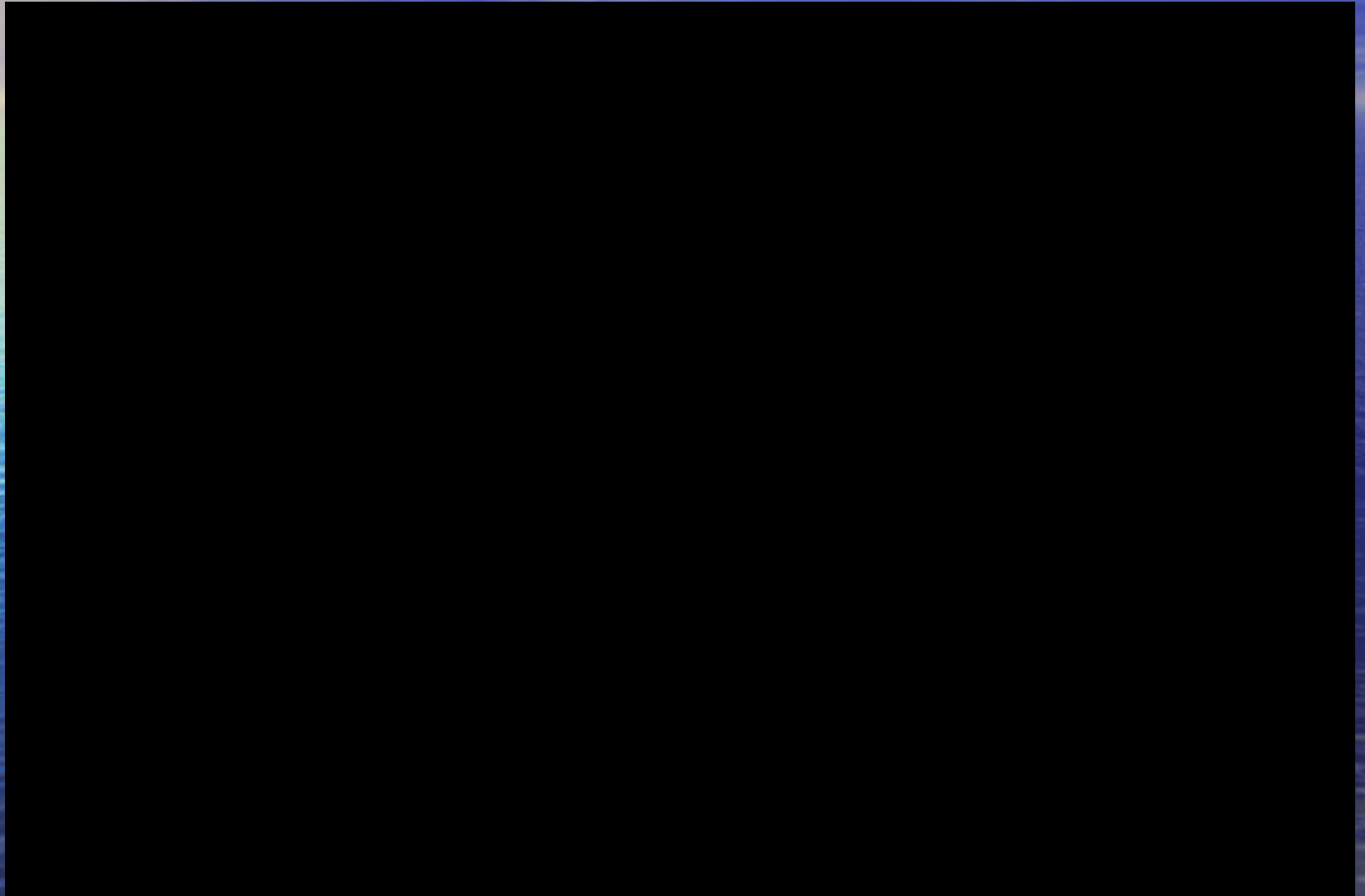


# *Freedom to Flourish* Video

## Key Messages:

- Dynamic and growing economy
- Unrivalled quality of life
- Indigenous language and culture that differentiates and distinguishes the Isle of Man from other places (competitors?)

# Freedom to Flourish Video





# Discussion Questions

- Does the *Freedom to Flourish* brand ignore key aspects of the traditional cultural heritage of the Isle of Man in order to emphasize more modern and dynamic characteristics of the island's economy and society?
- Is the *Freedom to Flourish* brand message aimed primarily at an external (as opposed to internal) audience? Is this a problem?

# Discussion Questions

- Does branding homogenize and dilute culture by trying to find generic images and descriptors that attempt to appeal to everyone, but end up appealing to no one?
- Is island branding (as a sub-category of nation-branding) distinct from the branding of other jurisdictions?