

# *Evaluating the Use of Sense of Place as a Business Strategy in the Marketing and Promotion of Craft Beverage Tourism*

By Donna Albano and Jeffrey Lolli

## Introduction

In the highly competitive market of Craft Beverage Tourism, many entities utilize their distinctive geographic identifiers to market their unique sense of place to their customers. Examples include the names of the business and products, labeling that reflects their location or local ingredients used and indigenous folklore and nostalgia to acknowledge the culture that shapes their industry, all to create a bond with customer's lifestyles, sense of community and place attachments (Williams & Stewart, 1998). The use of sense of place as a business strategy is highlighted through a case study of one New Jersey brewery by examining six components of sense of place through the lens of the MFPCE. Gruenewald (2003) applies the original MFPCE framework as a construct to examine perspectives on place that can advance theory, research, and practice in education. Concerned about the lack of place-based education over state mandates and standardized testing, Gruenewald's (2003) MFPCE examines the relevance of place and supports the claim that educational research, theory, and practice need to pay more attention to places. Beyond education, place is a concept of growing interest in many fields, including architecture, ecology, geography, and business. Gruenewald (2003) posits "an understanding of place is key to understanding the nature of our relationships with each other and the world" (p. 622).

Within the MFPCE, Gruenewald (2003) details five components that defines this framework: (a) perceptual, (b) sociological, (c) ideological, (d) political, and (e) ecological. Cavaliere (2017) has contributed a sixth indicator, (f) temporal, resulting from empirical research involving agritourism and climate change in NJ. This case study will help educate students/future craft beverage entrepreneurs/educators on mastering the challenges of an increasingly competitive craft beverage business environment while striving for market success. The benefits for using sense of place as a strategy for marketing and promotion of a craft beverage business will be discussed.

## Background

Craft Beverage Tourism has emerged as a niche segment of the tourism industry. Craft Beverage Tourism can be defined as traveling to learn about and experience places and activities where wine, beer, cider, and craft spirits are produced (Albano, 2018). The emerging research highlights significant and positive impacts on the destinations where they are located. Craft Beverage Tourism is a transdisciplinary area that is rapidly developing in the United States (Slocum et al., 2017). According to the World Food Travel Association (2016), food and beverage is an increasingly significant motivator for travel.

New Jersey's Tourism Industry plays a significant role in the state's economy and has direct and indirect impact on state revenues. Tourists visit shore towns, historic sites, state and national parks, mountains, lakes, and casinos. They directly contribute to the economy through lodging, recreation, retail, food and beverage, and transportation. Also, affectionately known as the Garden State, New Jersey is home to more than 9,071 farms covering 715,057 acres of farmland. The state is among the leaders in many forms of agricultural production ("The State of New Jersey," 2016). New Jersey now has over 50 wineries, 114 production breweries, and approximately 20 Distilleries, each with its own unique appeal and products, which provide the opportunity for host and visitor experiences, tastings, and education ("State of New Jersey," 2019).

One brewery, Tuckahoe Brewery (TB), established in 2011 in Ocean View, New Jersey, in Cape May County, was started by four home-brewing friends who believed in turning their hobby into a career. After a successful four-year run in their initial location, TB expanded to a new 10,000-square-foot facility to allow the company to quadruple their production capabilities. This new location includes a tasting room and tours. This move also changed the county where they reside, making them the first brewery in Atlantic County, NJ. Currently, TB distributes throughout the state of NJ to bars, restaurants and liquor stores with hopes of expanding distribution to Pennsylvania (PA) and Delaware (DE) in 2020. They brew beer daily and operate the tasting room four days a week serving 16 beers on tap.

## Literature Review

Sense of place is a multifaceted topic, with roots derived from personal and interpersonal experiences, direct and indirect contact with an area, and cultural values and shared meanings (Farnum et al.,

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**Donna Albano** is affiliated with Stockton University. **Jeffrey Lolli** is affiliated with Widener University.

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2005). Sense of place can be described as the entire group of cognitions and affective sentiments held regarding a particular geographic locale (Altman & Low 1992; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001). The phrase sense of place is also used by Anholt (2009) to denote those aspects that make a location distinctive and memorable and thus communicate its personality. This distinctiveness is derived from a variety of factors which consist of the place (the physical and cultural environment), the products with which the place is associated, and the people (Anholt, 2009).

The ability to inspire an emotional connection with people is also key to having a distinctive character. Thus, when place identity becomes strong enough to be felt or experienced, this connection is often referred to as a sense of place (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001). Furthermore, sense of place is a blend of social constructions interacting with physical settings. While geographic location and physical landscape are tangible, the meanings they provoke, though often less tangible, are equally significant in terms of personal and collective experiences, social interactions, and affective engagements (Campelo et al., 2014). The study of the concept of place is at home within critical tourism studies (Blackstock, 2005; Everett, 2008; Sims, 2009; Trauer & Ryan, 2005). What becomes clear is that an understanding of sense of place can support destinations in facilitating visitor attachments to place (Jarratt et al., 2019).

Destinations need to identify their most potent appeals and seek the essence that makes them different and attractive to visitors (Anholt, 2009). How this destination feel is communicated has largely been the domain of place branding and destination marketing. Place marketing and branding have become important strategic tools to allow destinations to create their unique identity and to differentiate themselves from the competition (Jarratt et al., 2019). Destination branding and positioning activities ought to be significantly influenced by an in-depth understanding of, and appreciation for, an organization's unique sense of place.

The use of sense of place has been gaining critical attention in social science research in areas such as food and foodscape experiences and thus, is now being applied to craft beverage tourism in this case study (Cavaliere, 2017; Kneafsey et al., 2008). Gruenewald (2003) details five components that contribute to the MFPCE as follows: (a) perceptual, (b) sociological, (c) ideological, (d) political, and (e) ecological. Cavaliere (2017) has contributed a sixth indicator, (f) temporal, resulting from empirical research involving agritourism and climate change in NJ. This framework was selected and utilized in this case study because it is useful in understanding sub contexts of sense of place. Gruenewald (2003) explains that the problem is that "human institutions, such as corporations, have not demonstrated an orientation of care and consciousness toward the places that they manipulate, neglect, and destroy" (p. 622). The six framework indicators served to structure the research for this study (see table 1).

The following section of the case presents the sense of place findings

of the brewery in more depth using each of the six MFPCE indicators and follows with a description of how the indicators were embodied by the brewery. Each indicator was utilized and served to highlight the way in which the brewery has incorporated a sense of place.

### Indicator One: Perceptual

The first indicator of the MFPCE is entitled perceptual, which identifies specific elements of TB that affect the five senses, including touch, taste, smell, sound, and sight. Perceptual skills are activities that humans use to understand what their senses communicate. They involve one's ability to organize and interpret information that is received and give it meaning. Through analysis of the TB website, tasting room, beer, and beer labels, the following perceptual indicators were discovered.

**Website:** Splashed on the homepage of their website you will see the TB logo of a merchant ship, brewery name, hops graphic and physical location (Egg Harbor Township, NJ). This watercraft is symbolic of a cargo ship and harkens back to the 17th century. The watercraft is also symbolic of the original location of the brewery in Upper Township, NJ, originally settled in the 1690s by whalers, fishermen, and sailors. The name Tuckahoe is of Native American origin, and the name of the community where the brewery first originated. Hops are the flowers of the plant primarily used in brewing beer to add flavor, bitterness, and aroma. This logo can be found on every beer label, growler, beer mug in the tasting room, logoed merchandise (which can only be purchased in the brewery), as well as on their promotional products including branded tents, stickers, and signage. The beer mugs pictured on their website symbolize their mug club for patrons to join and own their own mug. Only 75 are available and they hold more than a pint of beer for the same cost. The mugs are made for the brewery by a local NJ pottery shop from a connection made at a local beer festival. Mug Club members have access to special events and new beer releases. The website also highlights some of the brewery's featured beers. TB also utilizes social media including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to promote products, engage with their customers, and highlight special events.

**Tasting Room:** The tasting room layout is designed for patrons to view the brewery operations from the tap room through large windows. The bar and stools were purchased and repurposed from a local restaurant that was closing. The colorful chalkboard menu highlights each beer on tap including the alcohol by volume (ABV), cost for each of the four sizes available, short tasting profile, and coordinating graphics. The paintings on the walls are all local NJ artists.

**Beer and Beer labels:** After successfully penetrating the market and expanding beer production, marketing the beer through creative, enticing names and labels became a priority at TB. The founders of the TB are high school teachers, and several of the beer names have been inspired by those roots, including The New Old School IPA, Snack Session IPA, and Quatrain which is a type of stanza, or a complete

**Table 1**

**Framework Indicators, Themes, and Examples**

<b>MFPCE Framework Indicators</b>	<b>Emerging Research Themes</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Criteria Evaluated</b>
Perceptual	*The Five Senses	Touch, taste, sight, feel	The five senses, encouraging visitation, which could include tasting and smelling the product, encouraging purchasing of products or other promotional products.
	*Marketing	Social media, iconography, CSR	How the products are packaged, labeled and newsletters and other methods of communications are considered.
Sociological	*Nostalgia	Old timer, native New Jersians, Jersey Devil,	The location of the business, specifically mentioning the state of NJ, claims of being "first" or the "only" brewery as an identifier.
	*Identity	Gender, old world vs new world,	The mention of folklore, gender and nostalgia are all analyzed and reported in this dimension.
Ideological	*Awards	Certifications, metals	Awards won & communicated for products. Additionally, any reference to the quantity or production of products or being indigenous to the product, place or process.
	*Social Relations	Native Americans, slavery, Africans, Europeans	Identify or communicate any larger connection with the world, gender and power, humor, colonialism, or the economy.
Political	*Prohibition (historical)	Jersey Tourism, Garden State	Prohibition and the laws that have impacted the local Craft Beverage industry. Age access or communication of the drinking age. Analyzing for marginality and resistance factors.
	*Legislation (current)	State boundaries, Distribution, where to buy	Analyzing whether the shape of the state was used politically or as a geopolitical boundary identifier.
Ecological	*Raw Materials	Grains, hops, fruit, etc.	References to agricultural products including ingredients used in production, animal references, and references to health, consumption, nutrition and calories.
	*Elements	Fire, reclaimed wood, water	The elements including earth, wind, fire, weather and seasons.
	*Geography	Rivers, mountains,	Land formations
Temporal	*"The Firsts"	First brewery, biggest distributor	Seasonal perceptions. All history and stories relating to the craft beverage business.
	*Age	Age of drinker	Age of operation, production or historical references of the business.
	*Time	Food miles, time in transport, time of tours	References to events, holidays, hours of operation and tours.
	*Local	Sourcing distance, local ingredients	Perceptions of time in travel and transport of food.

poem, consisting of four lines. The Snack Session label was inspired by the name and product. A session beer is a type of beer that is 5% ABV or lower. The label is a caricature of a yellow submarine bass-like fish creating a youthful but Beatlesesq visual. The label change had a direct impact on increased sales, while staying true to multiple dimensions of the perceptual framework, including the coastal water location, school reference, and beer descriptor. Other beer names are inspired by NJ local towns including Angelsea Red Ale, Steelmantown Porter, New Brighton Imperial Coffee Stout, Hollybeach Pumpkin Ale, and Marshallville Wit. A specialty beer called Lag Putt Golfer's Ale was created for the Ladies Professional Golf Association tournament held in NJ each June. Another specialty beer called Splitting Aces was made

to pay homage to the local NJ casino industry.

A local NJ artist with a desire to create a beer label and a creative sales manager collaborate on beer names and coinciding graphics to help increase the brand awareness of both the product and brewery. For example, the Angelsea Red Ale started as Angelsea Irish Red. The new label dons the new name and a treasure map creatively paying homage to TB's distributors on the map. A pirate skull face wears a bandana with the Irish flag colors and a four-leaf clover. These colorful, meaningful graphics emphasize the importance of the perceptual frame and link to TB's sense of place. The research revealed several important perceptual indicators. However, the opportunity exists to better communicate these efforts on their website, in their marketing

materials, on site, and throughout their digital & traditional marketing media. Furthermore, how can TB better incorporate a heightened in-brewery customer sensory experience centered around touch, taste, smell, sound, and sight to enhance word-of-mouth marketing and promotion without losing sight of the core business? In essence, how can these elements occur in a manner that are not obvious and take away the main reason customers come to TB, to drink beer?

### **Indicator Two: Sociological**

The second indicator of the MFPCE is entitled sociological and includes elements that communicate the location of the brewery, the mention of folklore, and gender as it relates to nostalgia. TB is the first brewery in Atlantic County out of the seven that currently exist. In addition, TB is the 6th oldest craft brewery in the state. The brewery team all hail from NJ, and one of the two brewers was taught by the teachers/owners. All of the beer labels boast proudly brewed in New Jersey. A shift to update the beer labels to reflect a newer look is in conjunction with a local NJ artist. The NJ born-and-raised artist is a Jersey Shore native and friends with the TB Sales Manager. The local-artist-rendered beer can labels communicate sociological elements, including lighthouses, waves, anchors, an octopus, a cargo ship, a captain's wheel, a mermaid, surfboards, all of which strongly communicate the geographical landscape that resonates with the TB brand and Atlantic County, NJ. For example, the Anglesea Red Ale label displays a treasure map, which pays homage to several of their distributors on the map. Atlantic County lies along the Atlantic Coastal Plain with the Atlantic Ocean to the east and is known for the three barrier islands that run adjacent to the coast. These indigenous symbols of the shore utilized by TB stress the connectedness to their proximity to the shore and brand. The sociological dimension of place according to Gruenewald (2003) state that "relationships among place, identity, and culture are varied and complex" (p.627) as elucidated by the brewery's strong link to their location, relationships with their employees and vendors, and their teaching profession. As the Craft Brewery industry continues to grow, it will be important for TB to keep the integrity of their local brand identity as they grow and attempt to resonate with a larger market. Additionally, how can TB leverage their location as a differentiator in promotion and marketing?

### **Indicator Three: Ideological**

The third indicator of the MFPCE is entitled ideological and includes examining awards won and how they are communicated. It also includes how the brewery identifies larger connections with the world, gender as it relates to power, humor, colonialism, and the economy. The Ideological indicator can examine any reference to being indigenous to the product, place or process. TB exemplifies the ideological framework by sourcing local products that are made, distributed, and served by local employees.

TB is the recipient of two awards for their beer. Competing locally is a way to establish credibility within the growing craft beer market. The time that goes into designing recipes and executing them in order to craft a product worthy of recognition speaks to TB's ideals of creating a quality product. In 2014, they received Best Jersey Beer from the Atlantic City Beer Festival, and in 2018 they received the Best Session Beer from the Atlantic City Beer Festival. Guests may not be aware of these prestigious awards, thus TB has the opportunity to capitalize on these awards and recognition through multiple communication channels.

TB sees itself as an establishment with the job of connecting the drinker to the drink through their unique local influences. The brewers are conscious of economic trends including hazy IPAs and will create these beers begrudgingly, but they know what sells. Ideologically, TB is aware that they have to stay abreast of the craft beer movement, which includes brewing beers that appeal to a large population while staying true to their craft and local influences. With the move to the 10,000-square-foot facility in 2011, the plan of increased production to 1,000 barrels this year is a goal, which includes their most recent investment is their own canning line. As TB grows, how can they continue to connect small-batch craft quality to their brewery, while better promoting and marketing their products to a broader audience?

### **Indicator Four: Political**

The fourth indicator of the MFPCE is entitled political and includes examining all references to laws that impact NJ craft breweries. In this highly regulated industry, politics and power play a role in the regulatory climate of TB's business operations. Politics and place are entangled and often play a role in how business takes place. We examined the website for age access and looked at NJ laws through the political lens for compliance and business impact at TB.

In 2012, NJ liberalized its licensing laws to allow microbreweries to sell beer by the glass as part of a tour, and sell up to 15.5 gallons (i.e., a keg) for off-premises consumption. This resulted in a massive surge in NJ breweries leading the nation in the growth of its craft beer industry. In May 2019, NJ unveiled new standards for these businesses to follow, after a year-long deliberation period, putting new restrictions on microbreweries. The State of NJ Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control's (2019) special ruling was a response to push back from bars and restaurants that felt breweries were operating too much like their own businesses. The most notable changes are as follows:

Breweries will be limited to hosting 25 on-premises special events. The new rules, however, refined the definition of special events to those that are promoted by the media or include entertainment like live music, DJ's, or live-televised championship sporting events, trivia, paint and sip, animal adoption events, and yoga.

Breweries are still limited to 52 private events per year, but now those hosting the parties can bring their own wine and beer to the events.

State law requires breweries to give patrons tours of their facilities before serving them. But under the new regulations, repeat brewery customers will only be required to take a tour once a year, so long as the brewery maintains a record of previous customer participation in tours. The new rules also aim to make the tours more substantive and meaningful.

Craft breweries will not be allowed to sell food, have a restaurant on premise, or work with food trucks or vendors to provide food at the location. However, menus from restaurants can be left, as long as there is not an exclusive partnership between the two businesses. Food can be delivered to patrons inside the breweries.

The breweries would be allowed to apply for a newly created permit that would allow 12 off-premises events a year, at which they can sell four or six-packs of beer, as well as beer in open containers.

TB complies with the Federal Trade Commission's suggestion to self-regulate and require age verification before communicating with a visitor. In particular, when web content is likely to have a strong appeal to minors or alcohol purchases are permitted online, the use of age-verification technologies should be utilized (Federal Trade Commission, 2014). TB understands the importance of self-regulation to comply with the NJ political landscape in which they operate. In addition, TB complies with all of the regulations outlined affecting their tasting room operations with one TV, hosting food trucks, compliance with special event regulations, and compliance with local municipal pet friendly regulations (requiring dogs to be on a leash). TB could benefit from an enhanced strategy for communicating their compliance with these laws so their customers appreciate their efforts and understand how the brewery operates. While there are state laws that govern the craft brewing industry, many local jurisdictions have their own special rulings. Thus, it is important to communicate these restrictions or special rulings to guests, in particular those who may be visiting for tourism from out-of-state. It is important for TB to have a business strategy that addresses the ever-changing regulations and communicate their compliance with these regulations to all key stakeholders. A significant management dilemma for TB will be how to stay abreast of the every-changing laws in this area to remain compliant, while at the same time maintaining a flexible business strategy to respond to these changes.

### **Indicator Five: Ecological**

The fifth indicator of the MFPCE is entitled ecological and identifies all references to agricultural products such as, ingredients used in production, references to animals, and natural elements (earth, wind, fire, land formations, weather and seasons). An ecological theme was found to be prominent with TB. They acknowledge the importance water quality and chemistry in beer making. They also acknowledge how a local competitor uses the environment in their marketing,

referring to how they dig deep to tap the 800-foot Sands freshwater aquifer in the area. TB purchases a majority of their hops from a local NJ Farm (Rabbit Hill) that agreed to increase the growth of hops due to the growing NJ craft beer industry. A specialty beer produced by TB named What the Shuck is an American Stout brewed with locally sourced oysters from Cape May, NJ. This partnership was a result of a meeting with the Haskin Shellfish Research Lab of Rutgers University. TB representatives traveled to the oyster beds on the Delaware Bay to connect with the people and harvest process. The oysters are added to the end of the whirl in the beer making process. The calcium from the oysters provide creaminess to the beer, and the oysters impart flavor. In another TB brew, Fu Man Blue, a Blueberry Farmhouse Ale was made with 700 pounds of blueberries from a local family farm (Consolo Family Farm) in Hammonton, NJ, known as the Blueberry Capital of the World. The New Brighton Coffee Stout is made with local coffee beans from a small batch coffee roaster in Oceanview, NJ, specializing in Fair Trade Organic coffee (Harry and Beans). An additional ecologically conscious behavior at TB is the disposing of all spent grains to local farmers, providing an opportunity for others to use the spent grains for feed or cooking. While sustainability and environmental issues are important to TB, it is a best-keep secret. Do opportunities exist to cross market initiatives with local vendors to capitalize on the sourcing of local NJ ingredients used in TB products? Could TB also communicate to key stakeholders the role it plays in being a sustainable business by sourcing local ingredients and committing to support their local NJ partners? Finally, what can TB do to showcase these initiatives and alliances in their promotion and marketing to appeal to a growing customer base that prefers to do business with sustainably responsible companies?

### **Indicator Six: Temporal**

The sixth indicator of the MFPCE is entitled temporal and identifies specific perceptions of seasonality and time in the travel and transport of food. References to events, holidays, hours of operation and tours, age of operation, production or historical references of the business were considered as related to the conceptualization of time. Until May 2019, the NJ State law required that NJ Breweries provide a tour of the facility to each patron; however, those rules have been relaxed and repeat brewery customers are only be required to take a tour once a year, so long as the brewery maintains a record of previous customer participation in tours. TB's website indicates their tasting room hours Thursday - Sunday, open approximately 24 hours a week, excluding private parties. Having limited tasting room hours is a conscious attempt to focus on brewing and distribution and not the tasting room as a priority. An events link on the TB website provides a calendar with tasting room hours of operation and any special events being held at the brewery and their FB site has an events tab as well. The temporal indicator was reflected in the highlighting of sea-

sonal beers each year including the Hollybeach Pumpkin Fu Man Blue, Tuckahoe Belgian Summer Ale, Tuckahoe In the Season, and Tuckahoe Peaches. TB engages in community events and hosts events to support local artists and musicians. They also support local fundraisers by providing tour and tasting donations and engagement on local community scholarship committees. A challenge for TB is that seasonal products require careful preparation by the brewery, and advance notice to distributors, retailers, and consumers. Thus, how can TB develop a seasonal marketing strategy to plan for and communicate these product roll-outs in advance? In addition, how can TB better market and communicate their community outreach and engagement, as well as their philanthropic endeavors.

This case study reinforces the notion that one craft producer holds the power to capitalize on its unique sense of place to build brand image and differentiation in the crowded and growing craft beer market. The research of TB has identified many products, services, and processes that resonate within all six indicators of the MFPC Framework. However, there are several management dilemmas identified throughout the six indicators in this case: 1) maintaining the perceptual experience without losing sight of the core business; 2) keeping the integrity of the local brand identity as the business grows and targets a larger market; 3) connecting small-batch craft quality to the brewery, while better promoting and marketing products to a broader audience; 4) continually staying abreast of the ever-changing laws in this area to remain compliant, while at the same time maintaining a flexible business strategy to respond to these changes; 5) communicating sustainable initiatives and alliances in promotion and marketing; and 6) promoting and marketing seasonal initiatives and philanthropic endeavors. In conclusion, opportunities exist for TB to more effectively use sense of place as an effective business strategy to better market and promote their craft beverage business.

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