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Hip-hop Entrepreneurship – Intersections of Pop Culture and Place Branding/ Marketing

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<https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/music/posts/la-et-ms-gangnam-style-exceeds-1-billion-views-on-youtube-20121222-story.html>

In my recently accepted article “[Oppan Gangnam Style! A series of Accidents – Place Branding, Entrepreneurship and Pop Culture](#),” which has been in the works since 2013, I sought to reflect upon the whole notion of opportunity recognition in Entrepreneurship discourse.

Drawing insights from an article I discovered purely by accident, [Gorling and Rehn](#), that “discovery” as entrepreneurship researchers have often subscribed to, enabled me reflect upon, and reposition the place of “accident”, “arbitrariness,” or to put it simply – “dumb luck” into that space. As point [Gorling and Rehn](#) out:

Three accidental ventures – HotOrNot.com; Save Karen – Help her pay off her credit card debt; and The Million Dollar Homepage – A US\$1 million Web idea.

My recent study highlights the unintended consequences of a 2012 K-Pop song, “[Oppan Gangnam style](#)” by Korean artist Psy (aka Park Jae-Sang) in what is arguably a series of accidents spanning three streams of literature – pop culture, entrepreneurship, and place branding. Using a storytelling approach, I sought to capture narratives of an attempt to lampoon, but inadvertently put the community on the global map. My observations and content analysis highlight the interconnections of entrepreneurship and other disciplines – notably marketing (place branding) and pop culture – albeit within the context of a potpourri of accidents.

In my interrogation of these intersections, I sought to highlight the implications for the intersections of entrepreneurship, place branding (marketing) and Pop Culture. Starting with Entrepreneurship, is Psy and/or Gangnam Style opportunity recognition in entrepreneurship parlance? The answer is yes and no. Yes, because for the man himself he has navigated from the margins to the mainstream (financially and via social capital) – albeit only tentatively – even with a “**one hit wonder.**”

As for Place Branding/ Marketing, there have been missed opportunities and especially so in the case of the Destination Management Organisations, and City Branding Officials in the Gangnam District who obviously failed to leverage on the word-of-mouth (WOM) to showcase a City no one outside of South Korea would have otherwise known about. Indeed, other Global Cities (e.g. Dubai) took the steps to leverage that opportunity – for example, the celebrated headline news articles such as one by the Abu Dhabi-based *The National*, entitled “[Quincy Jones in hunt for Arab Psy.](#)”



With Quincy Jones at the American University of Sharjah, UAE, September 2013

Third, and finally, Pop Culture has demonstrated the intermediary role of bringing Entrepreneurship & Marketing (Place Branding) together – albeit accidentally in this instance, but nonetheless highlighting a cautious reliance of the notion of proactive opportunity recognition. This is because accidents, arbitrariness and luck have had a rather “un-acknowledged” role to play.

I say this with good reason. Cities have been celebrated in Pop Culture – notably hip-hop especially in the North American context ranging from California (2pac feat Dr.Dre - [California Love](#)), New York (Jay-Z feat. Alicia Keys - [Empire State of Mind](#)), and Atlanta (ATL – [Calling All Girls](#)), among others.

Be that as it may, geographies outside these Anglo Saxon axis have been less so celebrated with a few exceptions such as the mid-1970s hit by Third World, “[Lagos Jump](#)”, which also mentioned other Nigerian Cities such as Aba (Eastern Nigeria) and Ife (SouthWest Nigeria).

Similarly both Ojuelegba and Surulere suburbs of Lagos (former capital and still commercial nerve centre of Nigeria) articulated by first, Fela Kuti the Afrobeat King in his “Confusion Break Bone” album, and sampled by the likes of WizKid while Surulere has also been talked about in a remix ft Don Jazzy, Wizkid and Phyno.

In a previous article entitled “[Marketing Senegal through hip-hop – a discourse analysis of Akon’s music and lyrics](#),” I also highlighted the branding of two key Senegalese Cities Goree Islands (Slave Port Island) and Touba (Holy City).

To recap therefore, places have been branded/ marketing through hip-hop (pop culture) from California through New York, Atlanta, Senegal and Nigeria (Lagos, Aba, Ife) – but all these have been rather purposeful rather than accidental as is the case with Seoul’s District of Gangnam – see [Gangnam Style: how Seoul’s most exclusive neighbourhood went global](#).



Ultimately, and to reinforce my proposition, Place Branding through Pop Culture provides avenue for Entrepreneurship Research as this could be purposeful/ planned events or accidental occurrences. In the light of the latter a parting question would be wither opportunity recognition?



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Comment:

This ICSB Gazette issue is featuring an article written by Dr. Nnamdi O. Madichie Professor of Marketing & Entrepreneurship at the UNIZIK Business School, Awka, Nigeria.

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