

Rebranding for tourism

We will look at two examples of rebranding that have been designed to influence people's perception of holiday destinations.

- ◆ The rebranding of Llandudno in North Wales as 'Alice Town', with associated art, walking trails, maps and apps, is an example of rebranding to promote **heritage tourism**.
- ◆ The 2015 rebranding initiative by VisitBritain to find new Chinese names for landmarks across the country, illustrates how simply renaming places can be used to boost tourist numbers.

Llandudno and Alice Liddell

Llandudno, 'Queen of the Welsh Resorts', was developed in the second half of the nineteenth century as a purpose-built holiday resort by the Mostyn family, who still own much of the land today. Mostyn Estates, along with the town council, strictly regulate any new developments on the promenade and require the regular repainting of historic hotel frontages. As a result, day-trippers feel the place still has the air of Victoriana about it.

The real Alice in Wonderland

Lewis Carroll was a friend of the family of Alice Pleasance Liddell, for whom he wrote *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Alice's family owned a house, Penmorfa (which was demolished in 2008), in Llandudno and holidayed every year in the resort.

It is possible that Carroll's incredible tale, first published in 1865, about a girl who followed a white rabbit into its burrow, was inspired by Alice's own stories of her adventures on the Great Orme – the prominent limestone headland that dominates Llandudno.

Reinventing 'Alice Town'

The closure of the town's Rabbit Hole Museum in 2009 might have meant that Llandudno's link with *Alice in Wonderland* was lost. But in 2012, to mark the 160th anniversary of the birth of Alice Liddell, Conwy County Council commissioned four large wooden sculptures of characters from the book (Figures 3 and 4). These larger-than-life structures were greeted with a mixed reception locally, being heralded as 'a great asset to the town' by some, while others suggested they were 'garish', 'pointless' and not in keeping with the local character.

▶ **Figure 4** The Mad Hatter sits on the promenade in Llandudno



▶ **Figure 2** Location map of Llandudno, North Wales



▶ **Figure 3** On the Alice Town Trail, Llandudno



Enhancing the experience

A guided walk around the new sculptures and other highlights of Llandudno, the 'Alice Town Trail', was the idea of local entrepreneurs, who were then able to gain funding from Llandudno Town Council, Conwy County Council and Visit Wales to make it happen.

The Alice Liddell Innovative Community Enterprise Ltd (ALICE Ltd) was founded with the ethos 'to firmly establish and market the Alice in Wonderland connection in Llandudno worldwide, benefitting the local community'. A range of 3D 'Alice' apps brings the story to life using augmented reality and digital animation (Figure 5). They also guide you around the town trails, following bronze-cast rabbit footprints mounted in the pavements.

Benefits for Llandudno

All profits from trail-linked maps and apps sold are reinvested in community projects. New businesses like The Looking Glass Ice Cream Parlour have created jobs in the town.

An annual 'Alice Day' in May involves ten local schools and begins an established Victorian extravaganza weekend that has boosted visitor numbers for many years in this part of North Wales (Figure 6). 'Our aim was, in part, to remind local people of the history and some areas of the town they might never have visited, to help them rediscover its beauty... because it really is a wonderland' said Barry Mortlock, Director of ALICE Ltd.

Lessons from Potter's Lake District

Conwy County Council's initiative may have been inspired by the way in which the Lake District National Park has profited from the promotion of the area's association with author and illustrator Beatrix Potter.

Today you can visit Potter's home in the village of Near Sawrey (Figure 7) and a gallery of her paintings in Hawkshead. The award-winning family attraction 'The World of Beatrix Potter' in Bowness, on Lake Windermere, has welcomed more than three million visitors over the last 20 years, with a 15 per cent increase in visitor numbers in 2013–14.



▲ Figure 5 The White Rabbit app combines augmented reality with a town trail



▲ Figure 6 The Victorian extravaganza weekend in Llandudno



▲ Figure 7 Beatrix Potter's home, Hill Top, is popular destination for visitors to the Lake District