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# Place and Destination Branding: A Review and Conceptual Mapping of the Domain

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*Although there is increasing interest in place and destination branding, the inter-disciplinary nature of the field poses challenges for the development of a coherent knowledge base. With a view to informing both research and practice, this article presents a systematic review combining place and destination branding, identifying and defining its core themes, and developing a conceptual map of the inter-play between them. The following key themes are identified: general, brand identity, image and personality, politics, heritage, communication/media, country-of-origin, and designscape and infrastructure. The article concludes with an agenda for further research including the need for research on specific themes across a wider range of place entities.*

**Keywords:** destination branding; place branding; place identity; place image; infrastructure; politics

## Introduction

Developing a strong brand can make a significant contribution to a place or destination's competitive advantage (Che-Ha *et al.*, 2016; Milicevic *et al.*, 2017). The growing power of international media, the increase in place branding campaigns, and the mobility of people and capital, has driven interest in place and destination branding (Hanna and Rowley, 2008; Green *et al.*, 2016). This has led to increasing interest in place identities and their differentiation and communication (Dorcic and Komsic, 2017), and considerable development in practice and theory associated with place and destination branding (Papadopoulos, 2004; Anholt, 2005; Baker and Cameron, 2008; Gertner, 2011; Milicevic *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, it is timely to conduct a review of place and destination branding theory and research.

This review embraces both place and destination branding; it takes an inter-disciplinary perspective (Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013), and includes the branding of various place entities (towns, cities, regions, nations/countries). We adopt Zenker and

Braun's (2017: 275) definition of a place brand as "a network of associations in the place consumers' mind based on the visual, verbal, and behavioural expression of a place, and its' stakeholders. These associations differ in their influence within the network and in importance of the place consumers' attitude and behaviour". Definitions of place branding are somewhat elusive, but an early definition by Anholt (2004) states that place branding is the practice of applying brand strategy and other marketing techniques to the economic, socio-political and cultural developments of cities, regions and countries. However, since much of the literature on place branding is in the field of destination and tourism marketing, it is logical to embrace both place and destination in this review (Hankinson, 2001, 2005). Destination branding, then, is defined as an aspect of place branding in which the place entity under consideration is viewed from the perspective of tourists and the tourism industry (Blain *et al.*, 2005; Hankinson, 2005; Hosany *et al.*, 2006; Hanna and Rowley, 2008).

This review draws on contributions from the tourism, marketing, urban studies, city development, policy, and business literatures. In so doing, it responds to Lucarelli and Berg (2011:10) who suggest that 'critics of the field can [...] be criticized for basing themselves on a limited number of studies, for applying a one-disciplinary perspective in a field which is essentially

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multidisciplinary, and for not attempting to develop a mode of analysis in which results from different disciplinary backgrounds can be compared'. Hankinson (2015) suggests that cross disciplinary synergies such as those identified in earlier reviews (e.g., Hanna and Rowley, 2008; Lucarelli and Berg, 2011) have led to a more holistic view of place branding and the development of a stronger critical perspective on place branding and marketing (Gertner, 2011).

This article presents a systematic review combining both place and destination branding. Previous authors have conducted systematic reviews on aspects of place and destination branding, such as place marketing and branding (Gertner, 2011), city branding (Lucarelli and Berg, 2011), and destination image analysis (Pike, 2002), but little previous research has attempted to systematically review the domain of place and destination branding. These systematic reviews are complemented by conceptual overviews on place branding (Papadopoulos, 2004; Kavaratzis, 2005), a terminological review (Hanna and Rowley, 2008) and a general overview (Dinnie, 2004). Others have undertaken conceptual explorations of place marketing (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008; Skinner, 2008), and city marketing (Kavaratzis, 2007).

The aim of this systematic review is to contribute to the development of theory and practice in place and destination branding by:

- Profiling the extant knowledge base on place and destination branding, in terms of journals, and research methods.
- Presenting a critical thematic commentary and a conceptual map of the field.
- Formulating an agenda for future research, with a view to enhancing knowledge, theory, and practice.

## Methodology

To explore the extant literature on place and destination branding, in accordance with Tranfield *et al.* (2003), a systematic review was performed across a variety of databases, covering marketing, management, tourism, and public policy studies. Systematic literature reviews differ from conventional, narrative literature reviews in that they adopt a replicable, scientific and transparent process for the purpose of identifying knowledge base patterns and key contributions in a specific field (Tranfield *et al.*, 2003).

The search was conducted over a two-year period (2017–2019); to cover the literature of place and destination branding since its inception, no date limits were specified. An initial search was conducted using the terms: 'place branding', 'place brand', 'destination

branding', and 'destination brand'. This was followed by additional searches on associated terminology, including 'city branding', 'nation branding', 'country branding', 'regional branding', and 'location branding' (Hanna and Rowley, 2008). Using these search strings, searches were performed using Google Scholar together with Harzing's Publish or Perish (HPOP). Searches were also conducted in the following databases to ensure the completeness of the retrieved article set: Emerald, IEEE Xplore, EBSCO Business Source Premier and ACM Digital Library, and further items added to the dataset in HPOP. The references in HPOP were then exported to Excel prior to manipulation of the items in the dataset using pivot table operations. This facilitated the cleaning of the dataset (e.g., the elimination of duplicates), and re-ordering of the dataset as the basis for the bibliometric analyses presented below.

An exclusion process was used to refine and focus the dataset, by eliminating all articles in the following categories (Tranfield *et al.*, 2003): non-peer reviewed publications (e.g., professional magazines, books); non-cognate publications; conference proceedings papers; non-English language articles; untraceable articles, with incomplete or incorrect citations; and, pre-publication and duplicate versions. This exclusion process led to a final set of 553 articles.

Next, through an iterative process, broad provisional themes were identified, and articles were allocated to themes on the basis of their titles, abstracts and text. Each researcher undertook an independent allocation of articles to themes, prior to discussion of the allocations to and the appropriateness of the themes. In the early iterations, if appropriate, an article was allocated to more than one theme. For example, an article researching the effect of sport on the place brand identity, would have been allocated to both of the themes 'brand identity, image and personality', and 'heritage'. In the final iteration, after discussion, any article with more than one code was allocated to its 'dominant' theme. The themes identified are: general (GEN), brand identity, image and personality (BIIP), politics (POL), heritage (HER), communication/media (COM), country-of-origin (COO), and designscape and infrastructure (DES). Given the wide scope of the literature review, that is, place and destination branding, the coding did not, for instance, differentiate between brand identity, brand image, and brand personality, but classed them all under one theme. The text within the section on the theme summarised key research on aspects of these three components of branding and on the relationships between them. This process of allocating articles to themes also informed the elicitation of the definition, research/practice questions, and research/practice assumptions for each theme (Table 1).

**Table 1** Themes in place and destination branding literature

<i>Themes and their definition</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Research/practice question</i>	<i>Research/practice assumption</i>
General: Overviews of practice and concepts.	GEN	What is place and destination branding, and what are the issues associated with its implementation?	Place and destination branding practice and theory can be applied to a variety of place entities.
Brand Identity, Image and Personality: Place/destination brand identity, image and personality.	BIIP	How can places/destinations establish a positive brand image?	It is essential to align brand identity, image and personality with the underlying place identity, image and personality and to evolve them in tandem.
Politics: Stakeholders, public diplomacy, and governance.	POL	Who are the key stakeholders and how can they be engaged?	The development of place identity and its representation through a place brand is a negotiated process involving multiple stakeholders.
Heritage: Museums, arts, culture, sports, universities etc.	HER	What is the significance of heritage in place and destination branding?	In various contexts, the richness, existence or lack of heritage, influences BIIP.
Communication/Media: Brand communication through traditional and digital media.	COM	How can a place or destination brand be effectively communicated?	To sustain stakeholder engagement, it is important to communicate a coherent place brand.
Country-of-Origin: Use of place in promoting products.	COO	What is the dynamic between country-of-origin branding and place and destination branding?	By association, the use of a place name communicates product quality, which in turn influences place brand identity and image.
Designscape and Infrastructure: Regeneration, economic development, infrastructure.	DES	How can designscape and infrastructure be aligned with place and destination branding?	Through physical/functional and experiential attributes, designscape and infrastructure poses a significant influence on place brand identity and image.

## Findings and discussion

### *Bibliographic distribution by journal*

Table 2 identifies and ranks the journals (according to Journal Citation Reports 2017 – JCR, and Academic Journal Guide 2018 – AJG) that have published articles on place and destination branding listed in the dataset. These ‘top 23’ journals account for 73% of the total

dataset. The table reveals that the literature is scattered across a wide range of journals, in various disciplines. The journal of *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* is responsible for a substantial proportion of the publications (35%) and has enhanced the focus on place branding as compared with destination branding. A significant number of the journals are in travel and tourism, including: *Annals of Tourism Research*, *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, *Journal of Travel Research* and

**Table 2** Top journals by number of articles (4 or more)

<i>Journals</i>	<i>Count of title</i>	<i>Journal ranking</i>	
		JCR	AJG
Place Branding and Public Diplomacy	192	-	-
Journal of Place Management and Development	33	-	2
Journal of Vacation Marketing	18	2.2	1
Tourism Management	16	5.9	4
Journal of Travel Research	14	5.2	4
Journal of Destination Marketing and Management	12	3.7	1
Journal of Product and Brand Management	11	2.8	1
Journal of Business Research	10	2.5	3
Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing	10	2	2
Cities	8	2.7	2
Annals of Tourism Research	8	5.1	4
Journal of Marketing Management	8	2.2	2
Journal of Brand Management	8	1.6	2
International Marketing Review	7	2.6	3
International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research	7	-	1
Urban Studies	7	2.6	3
Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism	6	1.2	2
Journal of Hospitality Marketing and Management	5	2.7	-
Tourism Review	5	-	1
Tourism Analysis	5	-	2
Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management	4	-	1
Marketing Intelligence and Planning	5	1.4	1
European Journal of Marketing	4	1.5	3
Total	403		

*Tourism Management*. Place management is represented by *Cities, Journal of Place Management and Development* and *Urban Studies*. Journals in general marketing and branding include, *Journal of Marketing Management, European Journal of Marketing, and Journal of Product and Brand Management*. Some research has achieved publication in high-ranked journals such as: *Tourism Management, Annals of Tourism Research, and Journal of Travel Research*.

#### *Distribution by research methods*

Different research methods make various contributions to theory, knowledge and practice. For place and destination branding there is a significant body of conceptual studies (Table 3), which typically explore the underlying concepts of the field, and at times illustrate the debates with reference to specific places, but do not conduct rigorous empirical data collection. The largest group of conceptual studies is concerned with brand identity, image and personality (BIIP). Various authors have sought to interpret these mainstream concepts in a way that aligns with the nature of a place. A significant proportion of the empirical studies also focus on BIIP, but this is complemented by a similar level of interest in politics and stakeholder groups (POL). Case-studies and surveys are the dominant research methods, and account for the majority of the studies under BIIP and POL, while under COM the dominant method is content analysis of web or social media sites.

## The seven CORE themes

### *General*

This theme draws together general discussion on the nature of place branding and its process. In particular, it also identifies several models of place branding processes and comments on the relationship between them.

Several scholars have explored the applicability of main stream branding theory to places, including consumer-based brand equity (Boo *et al.*, 2009), brand

architecture (Herstein, 2012; Hanna and Rowley, 2015) and corporate branding (Caldwell and Freire, 2004; Skinner, 2005; Dinnie *et al.*, 2010). However, place brands are dynamic, multifaceted and complex entities, and cannot be as readily manipulated, as can corporate and commercial brands. Furthermore, it is important to differentiate between the nature of place brands on the basis of the place entity being branded. For example, while cities and towns are perceived from an operational point of view due to their size and function, countries and regions are perceived as functionally diverse in terms of the representational parts of their identity (Caldwell and Freire, 2004). Additionally, difficulties arise from the complex structures that govern a place's 'operational boundaries' which are associated with the differing objectives of national, regional and local government. Such difficulties influence the funding that places receive so that they attract visitors and investment (Herstein, 2012).

In recognising such complexities, Hankinson (2004) develops the 'relational network brand', which positions place identity at the core of the branding process. He states that a place's core identity is defined by its brand personality (characterised by positioning) and the reality of the place. Similarly, Hanna and Rowley (2011) develop the 'strategic place brand management model', at the heart of which is the interdependence of the functional and experiential place attributes, their regeneration, and stakeholder engagement, all of which drive the place brand identity. In support of Kavaratzis (2004)'s 'city communication model' and discussions on the centrality of visual stimuli (Blain *et al.*, 2005), Hanna and Rowley (2011) also identify brand articulation and communication as components of the strategic branding process. Likewise, in their model, 'the sense of place', Campelo *et al.* (2014) demonstrate that destination brand identity is shaped by the 'habitus' of the place characterised by the symbols, meanings, attributes and the behaviour that represents the experience of the place. To understand the significance and meaning of the place 'habitus', not only helps in determining what should be portrayed but also how it should be portrayed to fulfil

**Table 3** Research methods cited in the dataset

Themes	Conceptual	Research methods							Total
		Survey	Case-study	Interviews	Workshops	Mixed	Experiment	Content analysis	
GEN	24	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	2
BIIP	92	40	18	5	-	15	1	2	81
POL	28	30	26	17	2	6	3	5	89
HER	49	7	26	2	2	1	1	-	39
COM	23	4	13	3	-	1	-	15	36
COO	19	12	8	4	-	3	-	-	27
DES	18	4	17	-	1	1	1	2	26
Total	253	98	108	32	5	27	6	24	300

Total number of articles in dataset (253 + 300) = 553



stakeholder expectations and build a sustainable place brand.

Herstein (2012), develops a ‘country-city-region matrix positioning’, which maps the geography of the country to be branded and to whom it should appeal, against its national culture. The challenge for national tourism organisations is to identify and capture the country’s portfolio of offers and to make them relevant to diverse stakeholder groups. This has implications for the articulation and management of the place brand portfolio/architecture. On the basis that pivotal to the articulation of the place’s tourism offering is the identification and understanding of its brand architecture, Hanna and Rowley (2015) develop a model of the ‘place brand web’.

While significant theoretical progress has been made in identifying the components inherent in place branding, further research should focus on the relationship between the various components of the place-branding process and place-specific aspirations. This needs to take into account the dynamic context of the place, including its economy, resources, natural environment and image.

#### *Brand identity, image and personality*

Places consist of diverse touch points. These touch points consist of functional and experiential attributes that form the places’ hedonic and symbolic characteristics, all of which underlie its core identity (Konecnik and Gartner, 2007; Usakli and Baloglu, 2011; Kim and Lehto, 2012). These characteristics form the consumers’ image of the place and of the place brand (Zavattaro *et al.*, 2015; Kock *et al.*, 2016). To communicate a positive representation and avoid an ‘artificial’ place image, the brand identity must align with the place identity(ies) (Vanolo, 2015). Several authors have stressed the need for the participation and consultation of residents and local stakeholders in the generation of a place identity that recognises and communicates the dynamic and contested social constructions that make the place (Nadeau *et al.*, 2008; Vanolo, 2015; Zavattaro *et al.*, 2015; Green *et al.*, 2016). Others have emphasised that destination image consists of cognitive, affective and conative attributes and that these dimensions enable other stakeholders to characterise or describe a destination (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006; Konecnik and Gartner, 2007; Qu *et al.*, 2011; Papadimitriou *et al.*, 2015; Kock *et al.*, 2016). Due to the complex and networked nature of these diverse touch points (Zenker and Braun, 2017), promotion-orientated, and frequently fragmented, communications dominate place branding strategies (Oliveira and Panyik, 2015; Green *et al.*, 2016). Research needs to further explore the processes associated with successfully engaging stakeholders in committing and contributing to coherent and unified place identity/ies, as

a basis for effective target group-specific sub-brand communications strategies (Zenker and Braun, 2017).

In the context of tourism, gathering momentum is a stream of research on destination personality (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006). Fuelled and underpinned by self-congruity theory (Sirgy and Su, 2000), various studies have found that destination personality is associated with tourists’ self-congruity and can leverage perceived destination image and influence tourists’ behavioural intentions to: (re)visit, engage in word-of-mouth, and develop ties with a place (Zavattaro *et al.*, 2015; Papadimitriou *et al.*, 2015; Usakli and Baloglu, 2011; Kock *et al.*, 2016; Pan *et al.*, 2017).

More specifically, a number of studies (e.g., Pan *et al.*, 2017) have examined the relationship between the place brand personality and place brand image of tourism destinations, often using the original or adapted versions of Aaker’s (1997) brand personality scale (Hanna and Rowley, 2019). Given that Aaker’s scale was developed to measure the personality of tangible products, its suitability for studying destination personality is questionable. Hence, a number of studies have proposed additional dimensions that are destination specific (Hosany *et al.*, 2006; Usakli and Baloglu, 2011; Hanna and Rowley, 2019), while a limited number have developed their own scales (Rojas-Mendez *et al.*, 2013; Kaplan *et al.*, 2010; Pan *et al.*, 2017).

However, unlike Aaker’s scale, implementation and replications of the proposed place brand personality scales is scarce. As such the application of the concept of brand personality to places remains underdeveloped. Future research should focus on addressing the wider contextual expansion and validation of the proposed scales, more specifically, to aid Destination Marketing Organisation’s (DMO) in designing and evaluating the outcome of their marketing and brand communications among the places’ stakeholder groups. Moreover, through personality, perceptions of places can be unearthed, analysed in light of the place’s functional and experiential attributes, and positioned relative to other place entities.

#### *Politics*

Articles under this theme acknowledge the political dynamics of place branding. This involves both the practical management of the place branding process through the engagement and involvement of key agents and stakeholder groups (Cai, 2002; Morgan *et al.*, 2003; Ooi, 2004; Klijn *et al.*, 2012; Pasquinelli, 2014; Kavaratzis and Kalandides, 2015) and, the discursive privileging and marginalisation of particular values and social groups (Johansson, 2012). Kavaratzis and Kalandides (2015: 1378) assert that ‘place branding is a highly selective political process’, and its outcomes

depend on stakeholder groups. For example, involving residents and public managers influences spatial planning policies, whereas involving businesses influences tourism/leisure policies (Eshuis *et al.*, 2018).

Core to the debate is the distinction between branding a destination (to attract tourists/visitors), and branding a place (to engage residents). For example, Zenker *et al.* (2017) suggest that branding often relies on simplified messages, which may work for visitors, but does not align with residents' more complex understanding of the place. This disjuncture between groups can lead to significant differences in their perceptions of the presented brand, brand awareness, brand meaning and brand equity, which causes confusion among visitors as they are exposed to differing notions of the place (García *et al.*, 2012). Hence, a starting point is to develop a more nuanced understanding of residents' attitudes, roles and reactions to place branding (Braun *et al.*, 2013), as well as when and how stakeholders are engaged, and the differences between being engaged with the brand and with the place.

Evidence suggests that residents' brand attitudes are not based on a single element, nor are they stable over time. Merrilees *et al.* (2009) found that for Gold Coast City, the dominant association was sun and surf, but other factors such as safety, nature and cultural activities, shopping and dining were also important. Gibson and Davidson (2004) found that residents of Tamworth, Australia's 'country music capital', were relatively supportive of their town's new image, but that the reasons for this support were embedded in a complex and entangled process, involving politics and funding evolution, through which the place is interpreted and negotiated.

Several articles explore the notions of politics and the role and engagement of different stakeholders through the lens of a specific place branding campaign, in which brands act as organisational entities (Pasquinelli, 2014). However, the interactions in such campaigns can be problematic. For instance, despite lengthy discussions with tourism authorities (national, regional, communal and local), tourism businesses, and a survey of tourists' expectations and experiences, no consensus was reached for the brand Denmark (Ooi, 2004). In contrast, Tourism New Zealand has been successful in creating a powerful destination brand through stakeholder partnerships and the harnessing of non-traditional media (Morgan *et al.*, 2003). Adopting a more critical slant, Johansson (2012) and Pasquinelli (2014), with reference to Tapiola Garden City in Finland, and Newcastle/Gateshead, respectively, point to the importance of evolution in understanding the success of place branding. Finally, Cai (2002: 720) suggests that the outcomes of cooperative branding may not always have the intended consequences: 'cooperative branding

results in a consistent attribute-based image across multiple rural communities as perceived by tourists, but builds stronger linkages of the image to the brand identity and more favourable affective and attitudes-based brand associations for a region than for individual communities'. While there is consensus regarding the importance of stakeholder participation in place branding, evaluation of the longer term impact of participation is lacking, as is discussion of the match between the anticipated and eventual outcomes associated with the place branding process.

### *Heritage*

This theme takes an inclusive approach to heritage to include discussions around 'tradition' and 'culture', which embody heritage, but also conventions and the creative industries (the arts, film, literature and cultural events). As active promoters of local development, national and regional governments have come to recognise the contribution and significance of culture and its interrelationship with place regeneration (Ulldemolins and Zamorano, 2015). One of the goals of urban and cultural-policy making is to promote the authentic (distinguishing) feature(s) of the place; the more relevant and specific the cultural narrative regarding the past and the present, the more symbolically charged it becomes, in turn allowing the place to gain competitive advantage (Evans, 2003; Kavoura, 2013). However, community validation is dependent on an alignment between such narratives and the reality of the place, including its functional and experiential attributes (Drake, 2003; Rantisi and Leslie, 2006; Xing and Chaplin, 2006; Jensen, 2007; Kavartzis and Ashworth, 2007; Lee and Arcodia, 2011). In line with discussions under POL and BIIP, this involves public diplomacy and the articulation of a stakeholder endorsed place identity. Hence, while, from a branding perspective, the heritage and cultural sector may be viewed as distinct from the place as a whole, there are considerable benefits to be accrued from developing a better understanding of the processes associated with the alignment between heritage branding and country/city/town branding.

In practice, using heritage for branding places often centres on events, including sports and food festivals. Such events are not purely related to short-term economic gains but are valuable opportunities for promoting the place's identity and cultural values. The challenge is to articulate an accurate fit between the event, and the destination's image (Xing and Chaplin, 2006; Gold and Gold, 2008; Zhang and Zhao, 2009; Lee and Arcodia, 2011). In addition, regeneration initiatives spurred, for instance, by successful Olympic bids may not always serve the needs of existing communities but rather encourage gentrification (Evans, 2003; Gold and

Gold, 2008), and may be viewed as a top-down approach lacking in community validation (Zhang and Zhao, 2009). Hence, future research needs to focus on the processes associated with the management of the house-of-brands related to a place.

Finally, there is a nascent body of research investigating the interrelationship between local traditions, place reputation, and the creative industries. Here, cultural narratives (Kavoura, 2013) are a catalyst for creativity (Drake, 2003). For instance, designers and performing arts organisations may produce experiences and theatre that have locally inspired elements. In turn, it is equally possible to envisage that these outputs contribute to the subjective and objective interpretations of place by stakeholders.

### *Communication/media*

Underlying this theme is research on place brand representation on different digital platforms and the espoused importance of integrated marketing communication (IMC). While some are interested in how IMC can be achieved (Dinnie *et al.*, 2010; Munar, 2011), others propose new algorithms for analysing the extent of coherence between the offerings from different stakeholders (Sevin, 2013; Koltringer and Dickinger, 2015; Oliveira and Panyik, 2015). Websites are typically managed by commercial organisations (Trueman *et al.*, 2012) and city councils (Florek *et al.*, 2006). Social media sites may be owned by a wide range of interested parties (travel experts, travel websites and individual enthusiasts), and feature resident or tourist created content (Munar, 2011; Sevin, 2013; Oliveira and Panyik, 2015).

DMOs aim to create a strong and attractive brand identity for their place. However, their attempts may be undermined by a lack of interorganisational coordination, possibly associated with stakeholders' level of commitment to supporting the branding efforts of the place or its associated organisations. For instance, for five ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) members, there was a need not only for increased coordination between different government organisations, but also between those organisations and their respective private sector stakeholders (Dinnie *et al.*, 2010); this level of coordination is difficult to achieve. In contrast, Trueman *et al.* (2012) found that unified brand communication was not achieved in Bradford because company brands had disassociated themselves from the city brand, as a result of the city's negative reputation. Hence, there is scope for further research into the practices associated with, and the factors that hinder, coordinated and consistent communications.

A number of studies have recognised the need to monitor communications on websites and social media.

Florek *et al.* (2006) found that on city council websites in New Zealand, practices differed significantly, but none were judged as 'especially distinguished'. Using a web content mining approach, Koltringer and Dickinger (2015) assert that one of the challenges is that different types of information sources (online travel communities, social travel guides and blogs, and DMO websites) have different communication goals, and provide different destination representations. Munar (2011) also points to the difficulties associated with identifying all of the different genres and platforms on which formal and other elements of the brand may appear. Oliveira and Panyik (2015: 53) suggest that 'content generated by tourists, travellers, professional travel bloggers and travel journalists who post, comment and share information on social media channels is arguably the greatest digital challenge of destination branding today'. Sevin (2013) created semantic and social network maps of Tweets relating to Boston and New York, and argues that the success of place branding campaigns can be improved by using these methods to explore the connection between cities, people, and messages. In addition, social media with its diversity of platforms presents a particular challenge for monitoring the communication associated with a place. Multiple voices can air their assorted opinions on a place, and at times, this 'chatter' is likely to undermine any 'formal' communications about the place. Hence, there is considerable scope for further research into how social media impacts on impressions of the place and its brand, both 'in-the-moment', and over the longer term, and for the development of tools to monitor place brand identity on websites associated with the place.

### *Country-of-origin*

This article does not embrace the full scope of the considerable country-of-origin literature, but is restricted to research that explores the interplay between country-of-origin branding and place and destination branding, which, on the basis of the systematic literature review conducted in this research, emerges as an important dynamic. More specifically, this theme explores why places earn reputations for specific products; and, how place matters in determining the product. It also points to the importance of place cultures and cultural industries, the place's local market, word-of-mouth, regulations, and tourism as influencers in this process (Molotch, 2002).

The literature is both fragmented and limited, with articles covering a variety of sectors, countries, and research and theoretical perspectives. The majority of the articles that discuss branding in relation to COO explore the impact of COO on product (or service/experience) brands or the impact of product brand on the brand equity of the country. There is agreement that COO influences



consumer product preferences and evaluations (Gnoth, 2002; Laroche *et al.*, 2005; Ozretic-Dosen *et al.*, 2007; Gomes *et al.*, 2015). Studies have examined the relationships between country images and a range of other variables. For instance, Laroche *et al.* (2005) demonstrate that the relationships between country images, product beliefs and product evaluation are complex due to the cognitive, affective and conative components of country image. Gomes *et al.*'s (2015) use the dimensions of nature, culture, infrastructure and socioeconomic environment, atmosphere, social conditions, and affective destination image to study the relationships between destination-of-origin, brand image, destination image, and wine tourism brand equity.

Given that supply chains are often complex, there may be more than one country involved with the product. For example, Srinivasan *et al.* (2004) explore the COO effect of the manufacturing country (Mexico and Malaysia) and the branding country (United States and Japan) on product evaluations and confirmed the value of choosing a developed country as the branding country, while achieving cost reduction by shifting manufacturing to developing countries. Other studies uncover the complexity of consumer decision-making processes associated with COO. For example, Godey *et al.* (2012) found that brand and guarantee were consistent influencers of purchase decisions relating to luxury goods across seven countries, but that the importance of COO varied between countries. Similarly, Ozretic-Dosen *et al.* (2007) found that brand and price were much more significant determinants of chocolate choice among young Croatian consumers than COO, although they did express strong preferences for specific COOs. Other studies have examined the effect of product branding on country/place branding (Lee *et al.* (2015) creative food – Canada; Lahtinen *et al.* (2014) wooden eco-design furniture – Scandinavia).

Overall, there are a variety of research questions relating to the relationship between and the influence of country image and the images of the brands created in that country. As a result of increasing country and other place branding campaigns, the implications of country brands influencing the success of product brands and *vice versa*, is that public and private sector organisations should work together to coordinate the development of their country equity in a variety of areas from attracting tourists to foreign direct investment.

#### *Designscape and infrastructure*

This theme explores the relationship between place branding and urban and rural development and regeneration with its associated designscape and infrastructure (e.g., Julier, 2005; Trueman *et al.*, 2008; Oliveira, 2015a, 2015b). This includes both design

hardware, such as buildings, and emotional software or brand identity programmes, as communicated through literature, websites, slogans and other platforms (Julier, 2005). The development of designscape is viewed as a response to the major challenges that places face at the environmental, financial and economic levels (Julier, 2005; Trueman *et al.*, 2008; Oliveira, 2015a, 2015b). Despite the complexities associated with the creation of successful designscapes, branding and regeneration can overcome negative perceptions (Julier, 2005; Trueman *et al.*, 2008; Beckman *et al.*, 2013; Oliveira, 2015a, 2015b). Moreover, consideration of the creative aspects of diversity, ethnicity and demographics in city neighbourhoods enhances brand value alongside generating a sense of wellbeing (Trueman *et al.*, 2008). In studying downtowns in the US, Beckman *et al.* (2013) also forefront the value of brand experience in creating cohesive but distinct place branding messages for tourists and locals.

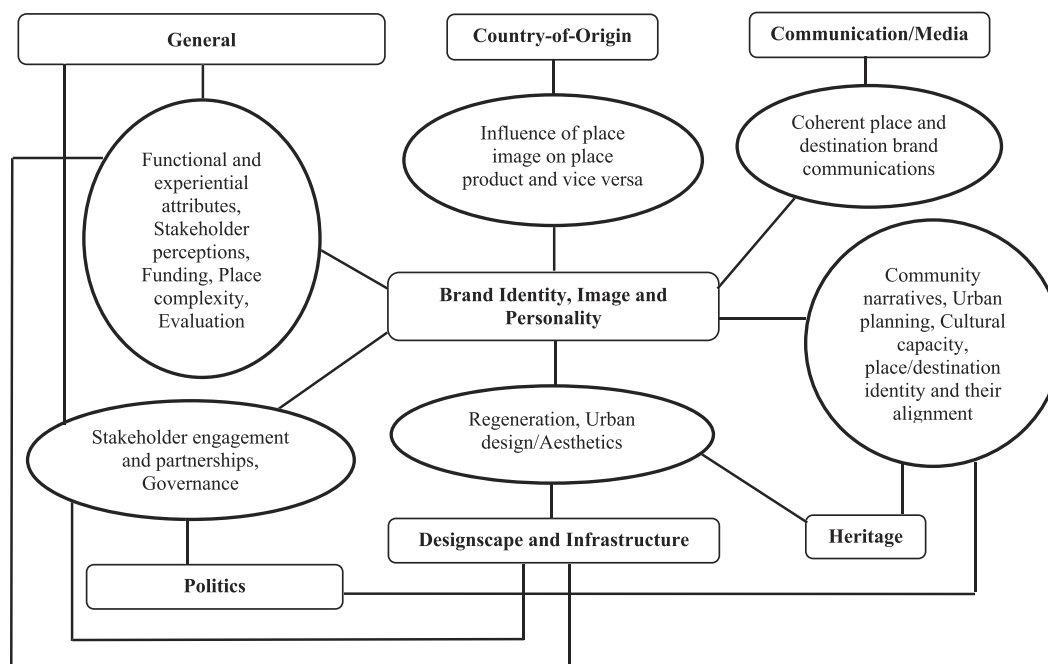
Others have explored the impact of mega-events such as the Olympic Games on regeneration, city re-branding and changing urban agendas (Gold and Gold, 2008), and the Eurovision Song Contest in generating direct and indirect income from visitors, and improved destination image (Arnegger and Herz, 2016).

In the context of rural regions, research reports, be it more sparsely, on the success (Catalonia in Eugenio-Vela and Barniol-Carcasona, 2015), and failure (Tuscany and the Arnovalley in Pasquinelli, 2010) of branding as a driver of economic development.

The need to enhance and maintain a places' economic vibrancy drives the development of designscape and infrastructure. However, investment associated with mega-events, for example, has the potential to derail a cohesive and inclusive approach to place development, leading to a segmented place identity and unintended brand ambiguity. Hence, it is important to develop approaches for the measurement of place brand-equity, based on investment attractiveness (Bose *et al.*, 2016; Jacobsen, 2009). Moreover, further research is needed into the factors and processes associated with successful coupling of re-branding with designscape and infrastructure in a range of urban and rural settings.

### **The research domain: A CONCEPTUAL map**

This review identifies seven core themes. Articles were allocated to themes on the basis of their primary focus however, as is evident from the discussion under each theme there are cross theme concepts. For example, 'community narratives' is referred to in articles that focus on HER, BIIP, and POL. Similarly, 'stakeholder engagement' features in the themes: GEN, POL, and



**Figure 1** A Conceptual Map of the Place and Destination Branding Literature

DES. We refer to such elements as *intersecting concepts*. The proposed conceptual map (Figure 1) presents the seven themes with their intersecting concepts listed in the ovals. The lines in Figure 1 link the intersecting concepts with their relevant themes.

The complexity of these conceptual interactions is also evident in the text relating to the various themes. For instance, Kavoura (2013) comments on the importance of promoting the distinguishing features of the place (*links to brand image, identity and personality*). Others emphasise the need for an alignment between place narratives and the place's functional and experimental attributes (Jago *et al.*, 2003; Xing and Chaplin, 2006; Gold and Gold, 2008; Zhang and Zhao, 2009; Lee and Arcodia, 2011) (*links to designscape and infrastructure*). Gold and Gold (2008) point to the importance of integrating events with the destinations overall communication strategy (*links to communication/media*). The risk associated with incongruity between a top-down approach to branding initiatives, and the realities of the place as experienced by stakeholders is acknowledged by Zhang and Zhao (2009) and Ulldemolins and Zamorano (2015) (*links to politics*). On the other hand, food festivals have been associated with the regeneration of local identity (Lee and Arcodia, 2011) (*links to brand image, identity and personality*).

## Conclusions and future research

This paper reviews research into both place and destination branding. It identifies seven core themes, and

allocates the prior research into these themes. The study provides a conceptual mapping of the domain (Figure 1), previously missing, and particularly valuable, given the domains fragmented and interdisciplinary nature (Table 2).

Key characteristics of the domain are: (1) the scatter of articles across a range of journals in fields such as tourism, branding, and marketing; and (2) the relatively weak ranking, and practitioner focus of the journal *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy (PBPD)* that has attracted most content (Table 2). While PBPD acknowledges the significance of the links between research and practice (often through case-studies), going forward, knowledge and theory would be well-served by the development of the ranking, recognition and rigour of dedicated place management journals. In parallel, achieving higher publication rates in journals such as *Tourism Management*, *Public Administration Review*, and *Environment and Planning A*, would expose research and theory to wider critiques and audiences.

The review confirms that place brand identity, image and personality is an area where there is strong evidence of a growing empirical tradition (Table 3). However, due to the variety of place entities under consideration, there remains considerable scope for further consolidation of the knowledge base. For instance, with reference to place identity there is limited exploration of the notion of brand positioning; that is, little attention has been paid to the role of 'competitive intelligence' and the jostling of places for stakeholder attention. Yet, central to successful place and destination branding is the engagement of stakeholder

groups (Zenker *et al.*, 2017). Research on reframing the notion of branding and regeneration to align with the co-creation perspective and the impact and experience of place branding initiatives on different stakeholder groups on the basis of their role (e.g., residents) or demographics (e.g., age) is of particular significance. For example, at leadership level, in order to ascertain an understanding of the challenges and the support required by and of DMO's from stakeholders, more interview-based studies (Table 3) need to be conducted with DMO professionals across various places. Such studies would allow for knowledge transfer and the diffusion of best practice between similar and differing place DMO's.

Additionally, while studies on place brand personality have sought to measure the construct (e.g., Kaplan *et al.*, 2010; Pan *et al.*, 2017; Rojas-Mendez *et al.*, 2013), it would be beneficial to widen the context of such scales to include independent variables such as brand equity, and brand loyalty, and dependent variables, such as level of repeat visitors, resident satisfaction, and investment, so as to measure the tangible and intangible outcomes attributed to the branding process.

A significant limitation of the domain is the non-transferability of its findings, given that research has tended to focus on single place case-studies (Table 3) with a limited number of authors focusing on 'destination' cities or countries with common heritage and studying these in one study (Julier, 2005; Florek *et al.*, 2006; Merrilees *et al.*, 2009; Pike, 2009; Lee and Arcodia, 2011). There is also a distinct scarcity of longitudinal studies, which given the dynamic nature of places would be particularly apposite. Studies that employ longitudinal horizons would be particularly valuable in: (1) evaluating the significance and evolving role(s) of various stakeholder groups and their identification with the place; and (2) understanding and theorizing the evolution of places and their brands over time. Place branding practice and research tend to be associated with initiatives to enhance a place's attractiveness and/or reputation, and is less inclined to engage with the negative events that can afflict a place, such as natural disasters or economic downturns. Greater focus on the challenges associated with places that are in some sense 'difficult to promote' and how these might be navigated, together with the tensions that can arise between different stakeholder groups in such processes would be beneficial.

Finally, while some have sought to capture the components of the processes associated with place/destination branding from various perspectives (see *General*), future research focusing on each of the identified themes, should delve deeper and expand the knowledge base associated with each theme. For example, in the Communication/Media theme, there is currently a dominance of studies that focus on digital media, such as websites and social media; this should be

complemented by studies that explore other media, including print, ambient media and IMC. This theme-by-theme exploration would be particularly valuable in the validation of existing conceptual models, and for the theoretical formulation of theme-specific conceptual maps and any potential emerging perspectives.

This study is not without its limitations. First, it does not distinguish between countries and nations and smaller place entities (regions, cities, and towns), yet there are variations in the extent to which each of the seven themes applies to the different types of place entities. For example, most, but not all research under country-of-origin relates to countries. In addition, as regards the theme politics, the issues relating to governance and public diplomacy associated with branding nations are very different from those associated with city branding. For example, while at both levels place branding is outward looking, there is greater emphasis on attaining resident buy in at city/town level. Second, notwithstanding the care taken by the researchers to ensure consistency of coding, the allocation of articles to themes was based on the subjective judgment of the researchers; other researchers may have made different choices, especially since a number of the articles cover more than one topic. Nevertheless, the methodological process adopted is replicable and facilitates a comparative analysis between this and future studies. Finally, there is also a range of other aspects of the literature on place and destination branding that could be explored further. These include: (1) an analysis of the place branding topics that are declining or growing in terms of number of publications and citations; (2) using article rankings in the systematic literature review selection process; and, (3) further exploration of the trajectory of place branding articles in specific journals.

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