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# **Towards a Holistic Place Branding Model: A Conceptual Model Proposal**

## **Abstract**

**Purpose** – This paper proposes a comprehensive and integrative model which will contribute to a successful place branding.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The new model is proposed based on the analysis of thirty previous place branding models and enriched by the literature review.

**Findings** – The result of this work is the conceptual model that offers a more global perspective of place branding and consists of the following eleven interrelated elements: Place, Brand Leadership, Community Stakeholders Engagement, Brand Vision, Brand Architecture, Brand Identity, Brand Communications, Brand Image, Brand Experience, Brand Actions and Brand Evaluation, that must be incorporated into any place branding model as they prove to be relevant and play a strategic role in the branding process. They are essential for place brand development and management, and represent key success factors of place brands.

**Research implications** – Giving researchers a guide for literature development, theory building and future research.

**Practical implications** – Offering practitioners, professionals, local officials and even governments a model that explains the place branding process to effectively create and manage a place brand.

**Originality/value** – Unlike previous models which take different perspectives on the branding process, this one is holistic as it encompasses (almost) all of them. The new model highlights also new elements that do not appear in the previous ones.

**Keywords** Place branding, Conceptual holistic model, Branding process, Place brand development, Success factors

**Paper type** Research paper

## **Introduction**

In such a difficult economic context, countries, regions and cities have to face a great challenge to increase their attractiveness and strengthen their competitiveness as they compete with other places around the world for new resources, businesses, investors, tourists, residents, talented people, worldwide events, etc. Political leaders and local officials have realized that trying to distinguish their places through a unique competitive advantage to assert their individuality was the solution. Hence the use of marketing and branding techniques.

In fact, place branding is spreading throughout the world and especially among the major metropolises (New York, Lyon, London, Amsterdam, Berlin, Barcelona, Paris, etc.) as a new marketing tool to elaborate an enticing territorial offer built around a brand name that refers to the place. It has become an important activity for places around the world (Lucarelli and Berg, 2011) and is now perceived as a natural element to be integrated in the economic development of places (e.g. Cleave, 2014; Kavaratzis, 2005; Papadopoulos, 2004; Pasquinelli, 2013; Rainisto, 2003). Moreover, local officials and public authorities are increasingly investing on place branding initiatives. Lucarelli and Berg (2011) report from the 2005 Eurocities Questionnaire that the average per capita city marketing budget allocated for city branding was approximately €400,000/city, ranging from £130,000 to €10 million per year (Seisdedos, 2006). This reflects the growing importance of place branding as an important item on the policy agenda of governments at all geographic scales (Cleave, 2014).

However, reality has shown that the creation of a place brand does not systematically mean attractiveness or development. Indeed, some place brands were actually successful (I love NY, Only Lyon, I Amsterdam, etc.) generating a craze around the brand from intra and extra-muros targets, whereas other brands have failed (Montpellier Unlimited, Think London, Limousin "Osez la différence", etc.) leading to their deletion. The application of branding principles and techniques to the selling and repositioning of cities has in reality so far met with only limited success (Heeley, 2011) which has sparked a debate whether all places should be actively branding themselves or that the method is more appropriate to some places than to others (van Gelder, 2008). As one of the few studies in this field conducted on more than 5000 place brands by the Australian consulting firm "K629" reveals, 86% of these brands fail one year after their launch (Gayet, 2015). This scary failure rate reveals a very unfortunate reality that may shock place branding practitioners and researchers, as well as

governments and local officials who make the decision to initiate such place development strategy and who will be responsible for the effects and consequences of the place brand implementation.

Actually, the current question facing public authorities and local officials is no longer whether to have a brand but rather how to create a successful one, hence the real need for models retracing the branding process especially that academics have not yet succeeded in providing a general framework for the place branding development to achieve the expected results in terms of attractiveness, competition and socio-economic development.

It is towards this perspective that our research is oriented as we seek to propose, through this paper, a comprehensive conceptual model to support researchers in developing research in the place branding field and managers in embracing a global approach to place brand management.

### **Place branding models**

In a review of place branding management models, Hanna and Rowley (2011) notice that the existing place branding models are mostly new, have not been widely cited, adopted or adapted. Those models also lack a holistic approach as they take different perspectives on the branding process such as: place brand relationships; brand communications; brand identity formation; brand image building; place's relevant intervention fields, which constitute a strong brand; sense of place; stakeholders engagement; strategic planning; and branding process. Although these models are limited to the context of the perspectives they reflect, they have proved very useful in identifying the different perspectives and various aspects that characterize place branding, and form therefore a rich foundation and an important basis for further research and practice. Indeed, these models are a valuable addition to the literature.

However, according to several authors (Andersson, 2014; Ashworth and Kavaratzis, 2010; Gertner, 2011; Giovanardi, 2015; Hankinson 2004; Hanna and Rowley, 2011; Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013; Lucarelli and Berg, 2011; OguztimuretAkturan, 2015; Rainisto, 2003; Vuignier, 2016), the place branding field still lacks a solid theoretical background which has motivated researchers to develop the theory and build a process of implementing place branding. There is, therefore, a pressing need expressed by a large number of authors (e.g. Acharya and Rahman, 2016; Arabzadeh and Aghaein, 2015; Gaggiotti et al. 2008; Hankinson, 2004, 2007; Hanna and Rowley, 2011, 2013; Hudson et al., 2016; Kavaratzis, 2005, 2008; Kavaratzis et

al., 2015; Lucarelli and Berg, 2011; Qian, 2010; Zenker and Braun, 2010) to establish a new comprehensive and integrative place branding model to support the development of both practice and research in the field, and to provide also helpful guidance and useful reference for place marketers and place branding practitioners.

To develop a holistic model, there is a need to analyze and compare all place branding models found in literature to highlight their key elements and understand their interrelationships to generate, at the end, a more useful global framework. The models' analysis demonstrates that strong similarities exist between the current models which can serve as a basis for their integration. In addition, each model has shortcomings that can be supplemented by the elements of the other models. Thereby, the model proposed in this article is based on a synthesis of the theoretical frameworks developed by the different authors, drawing on their similarities and integrating their complementary suggestions.

A set of thirty models, as shown in the table below, were selected according to their relevance in the place brand development. Among these, five are destination branding models, namely those of Cai (2002), Baker (2007), Gnoth (2007), Moilanen (2008) and Balakrishnan (2009), that were considered since their contribution is deemed useful to the place branding process. These four models define a general framework for the development and management of a destination brand that can be transposed to a place brand. Moreover, it should be noted that the majority of studies have not developed testable models (only those of Cai, 2002; Hanna and Rowley, 2011; Cleave, 2014); leaving only models which are mostly conceptual and developed as part of a specific case study or applied to different places for comparison.

Consequently, a new place branding model is proposed based on these models and enriched by the literature review which highlighted the key elements essential to the model formation and to the place brand success as they are considered by several authors as key success factors. In fact, the proposed conceptual model contributes first of all to a better explanation of the phenomenon and shows how a place branding process can be successful in today's competitive and globalized market by presenting a framework for designing successful place strategies based on several interrelated components. The model consists of the eleven following elements: Place, Brand Leadership, Community Stakeholders Engagement, Brand Vision, Brand Architecture, Brand Identity, Brand Communications, Brand Image, Brand Experience, Brand Actions and Brand Evaluation.

The table below highlights the components of the proposed place branding model and compares them with those of the previous models. The table also shows the extent to which the new model offers a more global perspective of place branding and integrates all the key components that contribute to its formation.

**Table** Place branding components

Proposed components	Place	Brand Lead	Comm Stakeh Engag	Brand Vision	Brand Arch	Brand Identity	Brand Comm	Brand Image	Brand Exp	Brand Actions	Brand Eval
<b>Models</b>											
Anholt (2002)	X										X
Cai (2002)	X					X	X	X		X	X
Rainisto (2003)		X	X	X		X		X			X
Hankinson (2004)	X		X				X				
Kavaratzis (2004)							X	X		X	
Azevedo (2005)		X		X		X	X	X		X	X
Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2005)						X	X	X			
Anholt (2006)	X										X
Rainisto (2006)		X	X	X	X	X	X				X
Trueman and Cornelius (2006)	X					X	X			X	
Anholt (2007)	X										X
Baker (2007)			X		X		X			X	X
Hankinson (2007)		X	X	X		X	X		X		
Gnoth (2007)	X				X		X		X		
Dinnie (2008)						X	X	X			
Gaggiotti et al (2008)	X									X	X
Kavaratzis (2008)	X		X	X		X	X				
Moilanen (2008)	X			X		X	X	X			X
Balakrishnan (2009)		X	X	X			X	X			
Campelo et al (2009)	X		X								
Govers and Go (2009)	X					X	X	X	X		
Kavaratzis (2009)	X		X	X		X	X				
Qian (2010)		X	X		X		X				X
Zenker and Braun (2010)	X	X			X		X	X			
Hanna and Rowley (2011)	X	X	X		X	X	X		X		X
Balakrishnan and Kerr (2013)		X	X		X					X	X
Hanna and Rowley (2013)	X	X	X		X	X	X		X		X
Cleave (2014)						X	X	X	X		
Arabzadeh and Aghaeian (2015)		X	X	X		X		X			
Hudson et al (2016)		X	X							X	X
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>15</b>

## **The choice of the holistic Place Branding Model components and their significance**

This section will discuss the various components of the proposed model and explain why they were selected.

- Place

Place refers to the tangible (functional) and intangible (experiential) place attributes (Hanna and Rowley, 2011, 2013). In total, sixteen models refer to this component which was explicitly cited only in four models (Anholt, 2006 ; Gaggiotti et al., 2008 ; Campelo et al., 2009 ; Zenker and Braun, 2010). Some authors (Hankinson, 2004 ; Trueman et Cornelius, 2006 ; Kavartzis, 2008, 2009 ; Moilanen, 2008 ; Hanna and Rowley, 2011, 2013) used 'Infrastructure', 'Physical Infrastructure', 'Landscape' or 'Presence' to designate the same meaning as the previous authors, that is the basic infrastructures and physical elements of a place, as well as the landscape that composes it. Cai (2002) also used in his model another term 'Destination size and composition' and explains that taking it into consideration is a condition which precedes destination branding. This element corresponds to our component 'Place'. Furthermore, Govers and Go (2009) put the expression 'Temporal, Environmental and Situational Influences' that includes all those factors particular to a place. Anholt (2002, 2007) did not integrate 'Place' or 'Infrastructure', but he stressed the important role of these elements when explaining both his models. However, place is much more complex to be only represented by its physical elements, it also includes other dimensions (social, cultural, economic, political, etc.) which must be taken into consideration in its analysis and evaluation. As Gaggiotti et al. (2008) explain: "the Place element of the model includes the city's geographic location, heritage and history, natural environment, developed infrastructure such as airports and other transportation systems, existing sectors of economy and industry clusters, among others" (p.118). Indeed, Gnoth (2007) is the only one to incorporate 'Destination Capital' as part of his model to designate the cultural, social, natural and economic capital of the destination. Accordingly, place is the starting point of any place branding strategy. This element has its importance and we assert that it must feature in any place branding model or framework.

- Brand Leadership

Brand leadership is responsible for developing the place brand and conducting the whole branding process starting from providing brand vision, managing and engaging all community

stakeholders to generate brand commitment, developing brand identity, communicating the brand, forming and reflecting the desired image, to delivering brand promise to different targets by implementing several brand actions to ensure that brand experience meets targets' expectations. The whole branding process is subject to continuous evaluation from leadership, especially the brand experience. Therefore, brand leadership is an essential component to incorporate into the branding model as it represents a success factor to the effective development of place brand.

However, brand leadership was only mentioned in twelve models with different namings. In their models, Rainisto (2003, 2006) and Azevedo (2005) use 'Planning group', while Arabzadeh and Aghaeian (2015) use 'Working group', but both terms indicate the entity responsible for the planning, execution and control of place marketing/branding activities. Obviously, both terms refer to 'brand leadership'. In addition, Rainisto (2003) introduced 'leadership' in the same model to designate the overall ability of local leaders to conduct place branding process and shape the right strategies. Hankinson (2007) highlights the primary role of Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) as the leader of the branding process. Qian (2010) puts City Branding Organization in his model which refers "to the various institutions which organize the multiple forces to participate in city branding management; to establish and execute the city branding objectives, plans, policies and strategies in order to gain city branding management achievement" (p.316). Zenker and Braun (2010) use 'Place brand management' to designate the group responsible for the brand creation and management instead of 'Brand leadership'. Although they do not highlight this component in their first model, Hanna and Rowley (2011) explain that leadership is responsible for brand identity development and stakeholders engagement, while in their second model (2013), 'brand leadership' is clearly the first component. Although they did not include this component in their model, Balakrishnan (2009) and Balakrishnan and Kerr (2013) stress respectively the important role of governing bodies to conduct branding strategies for destinations and governments to lead the place branding process through its four sequential stages (deciding, designing, delivering, and determining). Finally, Hudson et al. (2016) explain that the development of a planning taskforce is essential throughout the place branding process, which refers to 'brand leadership'.

- Community Stakeholders Engagement



A stakeholder is defined by Freeman (1984: 46) as “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization objectives”. All places are characterized by a variety of stakeholders belonging to many sectors of activity and who have several goals to achieve and have different personal interests – even contradictory ones – to satisfy. However, stakeholders within a place are not limited only to the government and different public institutions, businesses, organizations, development and tourism agencies, political leaders but each place is also known and identified by its local community which is defined as a group of interacting people living in a common place and having individual identities, own culture, different and common values. Thus it refers to local residents of a place who may be involved and mobilized to support the development and improvement of the brand identity and the brand delivery as they are the best ambassadors of the place brand. Indeed, by embodying the brand values and appropriating the place brand, residents will communicate and represent the brand. Although it has been neglected by many authors and practitioners, the strategic importance of residents’ involvement in place branding has then become increasingly significant among authors and researchers in recent years, but still insufficiently studied.

Community Stakeholders engagement in place branding process is very essential in order to create, select and influence place brand attributes, define place identity, communicate the brand, contribute to deliver the brand promise to target customers and to succeed their brand experience. Therefore, community stakeholders play an important role in the place brand success. Hence the need to imply local residents and establish strong partnerships and large networks of stakeholders because building strong relationships with customers, suppliers, community, shareholders, and even competitors to deliver long term economic, social and environmental value is at the heart of contemporary marketing (Hankinson, 2009).

Community Stakeholders Engagement is included in fifteen models. Although Anholt (2002, 2006, 2007) explains in his models that the place population is an important criterion that must be integrated to form a place brand and an essential indicator to evaluate it, he makes no reference to local community engagement and participation in place branding process. Rainisto (2003, 2006) used 'Public-private partnerships' to refer to cooperation between public and private actors to ensure the success of place marketing/place branding process. The Hankinson model (2004) presents place brand as an established relationship with several consumers and stakeholders. He explains that effective place branding is based on extending the brand through effective relationships with all stakeholders. The 'Adoption and attitude' stage of the Baker model (2007) concerns the brand adoption by stakeholders and the support

they provide. Hankinson (2007) also incorporates stakeholders as an important element in his model. Gaggiotti et al. (2008) explain in their model the strategic importance of stakeholders' commitment and participation in city brand management. Kavaratzis (2008, 2009) mentions 'local communities' in his two models to prioritize the involvement of residents, investors and businesses in the brand development and delivery. The author incorporates also 'synergies' as an important component because obtaining agreement and support from all stakeholders is very crucial in place branding/city branding process. 'Stakeholder management' is an essential element in the Balakshrinan's (2009) model as it contributes to define the vision. Campelo et al. (2009) consider that local community and the different interactions with place play a primordial role in the development of a sustainable brand, the strengthening of place authenticity, the support of place identity and the construction of the sense of the place. Hanna and Rowley (2011, 2013) explicitly cite 'stakeholder engagement (management)' to designate the component that encompasses the processes by which stakeholders are identified, their interests displayed, and interactions managed. Balakrishnan and Kerr (2013) do not cite this variable in their model but clearly explain that stakeholders including residents are primordial to deliver the place brand promise to different targets. Arabzadeh and Aghaeian (2015) mentioned in their framework that public-private partnerships are one of the success factors of place branding. Hudson et al. (2016) develop a community-based place brand development model suggesting that any group in charge of place brand development should interact and work closely with community stakeholders including, but not limited to, residents, businesses, government, community leaders. Hudson et al. (2016) support the community stakeholders' involvement in the place brand development because they are the most important element (component) in the process and play an essential role in all stages of brand development.

- Brand Vision

Each place has a specific vision about what it aspires to be in the future. In place marketing, vision is the profound intuition and insight about the future long-term position of a place in the market (Rainisto, 2003). The strategic vision is also a global picture of what a place wants to achieve after a planning horizon that has previously been chosen by local officials. It will guide place and brand leadership in managing the desired change through the implementation of the place brand. Consequently, vision is a must to guide the economic development of successful places, and forming a brand vision based on realistic assessment and strategic analysis is the starting point of the branding process.

Brand Vision is evoked in nine models that are those of Rainisto (2003, 2006), Hankinson (2007), Moilanen (2008), Kavaratzis (2008, 2009), Balakrishnan (2009), Azabzadeh and Aghaein (2015), and Azevedo (2005). The latter doesn't integrate it as an element of the model but speaks about it insofar as the first step of his model aims to develop a vision and a strategy,

- Brand Architecture

In general, places are composed of sub-brands associated with or owned by communities and organizations of both public and private sectors within a specific place. Such brands may be owned by local authorities, tourist offices, organizations, businesses of all sizes, major industries and several groups operating in various fields of activity. In place branding context, the most appropriate solution is to adopt an overarching brand for all activities – an umbrella brand or branded house strategy (Aaker and Joachimstaler 2000). In such a situation, brand architecture is therefore needed to manage the number and nature of brands employed and the relationship between each brand (Devlin, 2003). This component then refers to the process of designing and managing brand portfolios owned by the communities associated with the place (Hanna and Rowley, 2011, 2013). Besides, brand architecture was found to be a particularly relevant concept in the context of destination branding (Hankinson, 2009), and there is no reason that it is not so in place branding, even though places are more complex than tourist destinations.

On the other hand, it is also possible to think of other relations which may link the place brand with other types of brands of the same nature, that is to say, linked and attached to different spaces within the same place such as nation brand, region brand, city brand or destination brand. To better elucidate this idea, let's take the example of a city that wants to have its brand: brand architecture must be able to manage the relationship of the city brand with possible nation brand and/or region brand or even brand destination belonging to the same place. Such situation is really complicated and difficult to manage because conflicts could emerge between the country, its regions and its cities, each protecting its interests and defending its motivations in having its own brand.

Despite its strategic role in managing place brand relationships, brand architecture is found solely in eight models: Rainisto (2006), Baker (2007), Gnoth (2007), Qian (2010), Zenker and Braun (2010), Hanna and Rowley (2011, 2013) and Balakrishnan and Kerr (2013).

- Brand Identity

Place, with all its complexity, its different dimensions (economic, social, political, cultural, etc.) and its various infrastructures, plays a central role in the development of brand identity, which in turn reflects the place. Accordingly, brand identity is how brand leadership wants the place brand to be perceived by the whole world. It represents the essence of the brand, the distinctive characteristics that make it what it is (Hanna and Rowley, 2013). It is also a unique set of place brand associations that the management wants to create or maintain and that reflects what the place stands for and implies a promise to customers from the place organization (Rainisto, 2003). Moreover, brand identity is the active part of the image-building process (Rainisto, 2003) with the creation and maintenance of a unique set of associations projected through brand elements. Brand identity creates then a relationship between the brand and the customers with a value proposition that consists of functional, emotional and self-expressive benefits (Kapferer, 1992).

Therefore, brand identity is the basis of any place branding strategy and the heart of any place branding process. Actually, this key element is part of seventeen models. Brand Identity was clearly cited by Cai (2002), Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2005), Trueman and Cornelius (2006), Hankinson (2007) and Moilanen (2008). The other authors used 'Place Identity' (Rainisto, 2003; Govers and Go, 2009; Hanna and Rowley, 2011, 2013; Arabzadeh and Aghaeian, 2015), 'Local Identity' (Cleave, 2014), 'City brand identity' (Azevedo, 2005), 'National identity' (Rainisto, 2006), or 'Nation-brand identity' (Dinnie, 2008) to refer to place identity, and, therefore, brand identity. On the other hand, Gnoth (2007) and Kavaratzis (2008, 2009) did not mention the term 'identity' but have integrated in their models 'Value System' and 'Internal Culture' respectively, which are generally accepted as part of the identity and contribute to its formation.

- Brand Communications

Brand communications refer to the promotional mix used to communicate the brand and focus more specifically on the activities associated with the communication of brand identity. Brand communications should be on what the place brand stands for to several customers and must bring brand image closer to brand identity. However, they do not only target to reach place customers, but there is also a need to communicate with a wider range of stakeholders such as investors, suppliers, other business partners, special interest groups and local community in order to unify them around a common content and avoid then problems of inconsistency and

confusion in the messages transmitted. Consequently, brand communications are crafting the messages that brand leadership and other parties involved in the brand development would like to be received, and sending them out both to internal and external audiences. After all, brand communications are a central component of the place brand management process.

This is the most cited element among the models (21 times), which proves the strategic importance of communication in any place branding approach as it represents the main channel linking place identity with the projected image to the different targets. Although it is not included in the Kavaratzis and Ashworth model (2005), communication plays an important role in transmitting brand positioning (value proposition) to target groups. Communication does not appear in Baker's model (2007) either, but he emphasizes the vital role it plays in bringing a brand to life, notably through marketing communication, advertising, internet and public relations. Gnoth (2007) doesn't include this element in his model but explains that communication makes it possible to convey and express the values of the destination at all brand levels. Finally, Cleave (2014) refers to brand communication using 'brand identification', or how the place brand is promoted to the target audience and includes the logo and the slogan.

- Brand Image

Once again, it is useful to start by defining place image which is directly linked to place brand image. A place and all its components form and reflect an image that in return refers back to that place. A place's image is therefore the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that people have of a place and brand image is the perception of a brand in the minds of people or how the place brand is perceived in reality by external and internal audiences. It is what they believe about the brand, their thoughts, feelings, and expectations, as reflected by the brand identity and brand associations held in consumers' memory. To form a strong, positive and attractive image is one of the main objectives of place branding that can lead to a powerful and distinctive competitive advantage for a place.

Brand image is another important element in place branding process as it appears in twelve models. Cai (2002), Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2005), Moilanen (2008) and Cleave (2014) use the term 'brand image', Balakrishnan (2009) uses only the term 'image', Rainisto (2003) and Arabzadeh and Aghaeian (2015) use 'place image' instead, Kavaratzis (2004) uses 'city's image', Dinnie (2008) uses 'nation brand image', Govers and Go (2009) use 'perceived place image', Zenker and Braun (2010) use 'overall place brand perception' which refers to place

brand image perceived by the target groups. Azevedo (2005) doesn't integrate brand image among the other components of his model, but explains that it is the result of the brand identity system creation.

- Brand Experience

Today, all place brands seek to provide consumers with distinctive, authentic and unique experiences. Brand experience is the component in which place customers engage with the place brand and live the brand promise. Through this engagement, the place brand comes to life in the customer's mind who formulates perceptions of the brand experience and interpret the brand identity to create their own notion of brand image (Hanna and Rowley, 2011). Furthermore, brand leadership, key stakeholders, local community and brand communications contribute to shape brand experience which is also largely influenced by the place as the infrastructure available has a direct and significant impact on the experience lived by customers within the place. Indeed, without rich and various infrastructures in the place, customers cannot live the experience promised by the place brand. Accordingly, the key outcome of the branding process is not brand image but rather brand experience which is really crucial to satisfy and retain current customers and attract new ones as experience is the main point of contact of the targets with place brand. This is why the experience is the subject of continuous evaluation in order to improve it.

Although experience is a key element of the branding process and a determining criterion of the place brand evaluation, it has only been mentioned in six models, namely Hankinson (2007) who does not include it but he emphasizes that brand experience must be delivered by the DMO, Gnoth (2007), Govers and Go (2009), Hanna and Rowley (2011, 2013) and Cleave (2014). Gnoth (2007) speaks of 'tourism experience' and places it at the end of his model to show that all components upstream of the process contribute to the formation of the tourism experience and impact it considerably.

- Brand Actions

What is meant by brand actions are the marketing programs in the form of a coordinated, thoughtfully designed set of activities that help brand leadership achieve place branding objectives. They include specific marketing actions for each part of the branding strategy. They must also be programmed throughout the branding process and in relation to each component of our proposed model. Indeed, other actions apart from those related to marketing

and branding must be planned in order to support the place brand development such as mobilizing place leaders and local authorities around the place brand, fostering of stakeholder partnerships and networks expansion, raising awareness of residents on the importance of engaging and participating in the place branding process, creating a network of brand advocates and brand ambassadors, developing place infrastructures through appropriate regeneration activities and designing actions to improve the quality of life in the place.

Despite its strategic importance in the brand deployment and maintenance as well as the delivery of its experience, brand actions are not a common element among authors since it was mentioned only in eight models. The authors who have either incorporated or evoked this element in their models are: Cai (2002) who uses 'marketing programs' to refer to actions intended to construct the desired image; Kavaratzis (2004) who puts and explains in his model that primary communication relates to the communicative effects of a city's actions, when communication is not the main goal of these actions and it is divided into four broad areas of intervention ('Landscape strategies', 'Infrastructure projects', 'Organisational and administrative structure', and city's 'behaviour'); Azevedo (2005) who does not mention this element in his model but he explains that the planning group responsible for the city brand must develop actions towards different target markets; Trueman and Cornelius (2006) who present a "toolkit" composed of the "Five Ps" (Presence, Purpose, Pace, Personality, Power) of place branding and provide for each element a set of relevant tools, in order for the practitioner to successfully address each "P" in its full potential; Baker (2007) who puts this element last to designate actions taken to keep the brand fresh, relevant and in the 'top of mind' of current and potential clients; Gaggiotti et al. (2008) who use 'What we need to do' to refer to actions and strategic directions which aim to focus the attention and energies of all stakeholders to achieve a common goal; Balakrishnan and Kerr (2013) who refer to this element by calling the third stage of their model 'Delivering', which consists in delivering the brand promise and value through a set of actions led by stakeholders and residents to satisfy the target markets; and finally, Hudson et al. (2016), who name the penultimate phase of their model, 'Organization and planning phase', to designate the development of the plan of the brand creation and marketing actions.

- Brand Evaluation

Evaluation must be done throughout the place branding process in order to ensure the proper execution of the brand development and implementation strategy. In addition, brand

evaluation ensures that the place brand substantiates its promise and then, allows gathering feedback on brand image and brand experience particularly, which is necessary to the evolution of the place brand and the improvement of the delivered experience to different target customers. Therefore, brand evaluation must be an ongoing process that doesn't only intervene at the end of the model with the brand experience evaluation but can also be a starting point in order to audit and assess the current place situation (Hudson and Ritchie, 2009). Consequently, brand evaluation is a vital element to be integrated to the place branding model.

The evaluation process appears in fifteen models as shown in the table above. In the three models of Anholt (2002, 2006, 2007), evaluation is not cited but it is the main function in the formation, determination and evaluation of a national brand, a city brand and the competitive identity of a nation. Cai (2002) doesn't integrate this component among the other elements of the model, but explains that the DMO must evaluate the gap between the perceived and projected image to construct the desired image that will be compatible with the destination brand identity. Despite he does not integrate this element in both his models, Rainisto (2003) explains that the planning group has to diagnose the place's condition, using, for example, the SWOT-analysis. In his second model, Rainisto (2006) explains that professional qualitative and quantitative research is needed at the beginning to find out how the nation brand is now perceived internationally by the target markets and in the own country by its own residents. The first level in the city branding model development of Azevedo (2005) comprehends a SWOT analysis in order to identify the sustainable competitive advantages, the external opportunities and threats in order to develop a strategy, a vision and an integrated action orientated toward the different target markets. Besides, Azevedo includes in the third level of his model the performance measurement and monitoring of the city branding strategy. In the Baker's model (2007), the first step is about the assessment and audit of the brand current state and position in the world. Gaggiotti et al. (2008) start their model with an evaluation of the place situation through the analysis of the place, people, processes and partners that would give authorities an answer to the question ' what we are now '. The first step in Moilanen's model (2008) is the analysis of the current state to create an overview of the current perception and level of knowledge of a destination. Besides, a continuing monitoring is needed to find potential problems or opportunity sources especially after the comparison of brand image and brand identity to identify the necessary adjustments. The core level in Qian's model (2010) is City Brand Index which evaluates the city brand and directly reflects whether

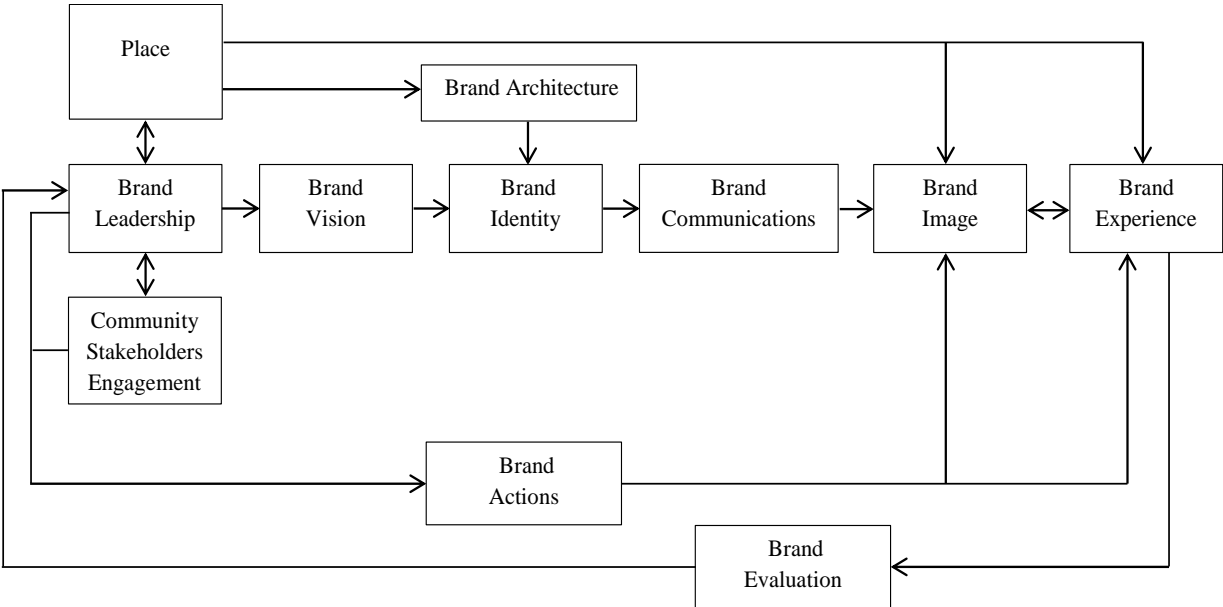


city branding successful or not, and the influence and effectiveness of city branding success factors. In the outermost level of his model, Qian puts City Brand Audit to refer to the systematic verification of prior work in city branding, which could find the existing problems and fix them. In both models of Hanna and Rowley (2011, 2013), 'brand evaluation' refers to the process of collecting feedback on brand image and brand experience. The fourth stage of Balakrishnan and Kerr's model (2013) consists in determining the effectiveness of the previous stages of deciding, designing and delivering the brand. Hudson et al. (2016) designate this element by 'monitoring phase' which refers to the continuous evaluation process of the co-created place brand with the members of the community.

**The holistic Place Branding Model**

A nomological network of all these concepts is developed below. The key elements of the model are connected and interacting with each other supporting the process of successful place branding practices. The model identifies clearly the influences and actions processes between these components. In fact, the arrows on the model show influence relationships between these elements which proved to be essential for place brand development and management.

**Figure A** holistic place branding model



It is obvious that the place branding model is a very complex process. First, the Brand Leadership forms a vision about what the place aspires to be in the future. The Brand Leadership, responsible for conducting the whole place branding process, must work closely

with the various place stakeholders, including local residents. They must start from the Place and take into account all its tangible and intangible characteristics and the set of dimensions that distinguish it. All these elements (brand leadership, place, community stakeholders engagement) come within the definition and formation of Brand Identity. Additionally, the latter must take into account the different brands present in the place – whether commercial brands, corporate brands or brands of non-profit organizations – as well as other place brands either belonging to the same place (destination brand, city brand) or located in the global territory to which the place in question belongs (regional brand, nation brand), which are ultimately part of its composition and influence its formation.

The defined Brand identity refers to a Brand Image through any kind of Brand Communications, including word of mouth. The image is influenced by the place (its components, attributes, dimensions, specificities, landscape, infrastructure, buildings, architecture, inhabitants, etc.) and by all actions undertaken mainly by the Brand Leadership, in order to support the place brand formation and development, and the various stakeholders and residents.

The Brand Experience is central to place branding as it represents the primary point of contact with the several target customers who form a real idea about the place and its image. Like the brand image, the experience is also influenced by the place's infrastructures and supported by the actions deployed by the brand leadership as well as the various stakeholders and residents who assist in the realization of the brand experience.

Last but not least, the Brand Leadership must evaluate the whole place branding process in order to ensure the proper execution of the brand development and implementation strategy. Brand Evaluation can intervene at the end of the process to evaluate mainly the brand experience but also in the beginning in order to audit and assess the current place situation and form a rich information source to the Brand Leadership.

### **Conclusion and recommendations for future research**

For many years, place branding has remained a rich and complex area of research which has attracted the attention and the willingness of more and more researchers to explore in depth this field and understand it in order to contribute to the place branding literature and theory. Indeed, the majority of work in this field is qualitative in the form of individual case studies and cross-case comparisons, or even conceptual analyzes in order to enrich the literature.

It may seem that creating a brand is easy, a nice logo and a catchy slogan with a good communication campaign, but the reality is very different as place brands are extremely complex and require the mobilization, commitment and participation of all place stakeholders, including residents, as well as a large budget and a lot of time. Actually, it is a large-scale project spanning several years.

Thus, all this work and colossal efforts must end up paying off with the development of a brand that will change the place and enable it to achieve the expected objectives in the short, medium and long term. This brand must be able to evolve over time and persist but above all succeed and not fail and disappear some time after its creation.

Consequently, place branding researchers have been mobilizing for some years now to design a place branding model contributing to the effective development of the place brand and therefore to its success. It is in this perspective that our research is inscribed.

Based on previous models and enriched by a consistent literature review, this paper proposes a holistic place branding model that will contribute to the existing literature and form a framework for the place brand development. This model will then contribute both to research by giving researchers a guide for literature development, theory building and future research, and to practice by offering practitioners, professionals, local officials and even governments a model that explains the place branding process to effectively create and manage a place brand.

The proposed model consists of the following 12 elements: Place, Brand Leadership, Stakeholder Engagement, Local Community (engagement), Brand Vision, Brand Architecture, Brand Identity, Brand Communications, Brand Image, Brand Experience, Brand Actions and Brand Evaluation. These elements are fundamental components that must be incorporated into the place branding model as they prove to be relevant and play a strategic role in the branding process. Thus, they are essential for place brand development and management, and represent key success factors of place brands. In addition, this model reveals and highlights new elements that do not appear in previous models.

The development of this conceptual place branding model paves the way for future research which will mainly aim to enrich it even more, and contribute to advancing research in place branding because there is still a considerable scope for further theory building and research. So future research will aim to:

- Explore and develop each component of the place branding model in order to well understand its role.
- Empirically test the relevance of the model components.
- Investigate relationships and interactions between model components through qualitative and quantitative study.
- Test the proposed model in a number of different case-study contexts in order to evaluate its applicability and its adaptability.
- Test the previous conceptual models elaborated by the authors cited above in order to better understand their value and contribution.
- Develop more explicit, detailed and empirically tested models of place branding.
- Develop, if necessary, new models of different types of places, such as countries, regions, cities, and towns.

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