It's a Brand? It's a Place? No, it's Oporto's case.

É uma marca? É um local?
Não, é o caso "Porto".

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Abstact: The following article discusses the phenomenon of Place Branding in Portugal and one of its main cities, Porto. This paper frames this construct and points out its main manifestations in the world. Different perspectives and insights are discussed in order to context the concept — in time and space — focusing on the manifestations of Place Branding in Portugal and specially in Porto.

Keywords: place branding, city branding; globalization, Portugal, Porto, brand image

Resumo: Este artigo analisa o fenómeno de Place Branding em Portugal, com particular foco no exemplo da cidade do Porto. Ao olhar e incluir diferentes manifestações de Place Branding no mundo, este estudo olha globalmente para este fenómeno, enquanto procura um entendimento mais aprofundado sobre este constructo, analisando-o, no tempo e no espaço, com especial atenção ao caso de Portugal e, em particular, da nova identidade na cidade do Porto.

Palavras-chave: place branding, city branding, globalização, Portugal, Porto, imagem de marca

Introduction

We are experiencing an era where territorial entities are branded like ordinary companies or products (Van Ham, 2008). Nowadays, all places — whether it is a country, a region or a city — depend on trust and customer satisfaction in order to attract more and more people with the purpose of generate income. Having a good image and the best reputation possible is a priority for these territorial entities if they want to succeed at the world's stage (Boisen, Terlouw, Groote & Couwenberg, 2018). They are all competing against each other since most of them offers the same "product" and that is why the competition is fierce.

Place Branding corresponds to the practice of applying branding strategies and other marketing techniques to the economic, political, and cultural development of countries, regions, and cities (Boisen, 2007; Kemp, Childers & Williams, 2012). This phenomenon is a sort of soft power, and it develops from the attractiveness of a place's culture, political ideals, and policies (Van Ham, 2008). Likewise, these policies are becoming more important over the last decades (Boisen et al., 2018). One can consider Place Branding to be a way of influencing others into consuming the singular traces of a certain country, region, or city. Van Ham (2008, p. 127) explains it as "an effort to use strategies developed in the commercial sector to manage [...] the soft power of a geographical location".

The practice of Place Branding goes way beyond the marketing/branding world (Anholt, 2008), because it deals mostly with real territories' socioeconomic aspirations. Van Ham (2008, p. 127) considers Place Branding a form of intellectual property — "(...) the totality of the thoughts, feelings, associations and expectations that come to mind when a prospect or consumer is exposed to an entity's name, logo, products, services, events, or any design or symbol representing them". So, Place Branding it's a way more than just the sum

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of mere slogans and vintage ad campaigns that promote paradisiac and dreamy countries.

According to Ollins (1999), it's vital to look at the history of the process, as place branding is "older" than the concept of branding itself. In this paper we look at the Portuguese experience and aim to unveil a little more if there are any effective manifestations of good Place Branding practices in our country.

Theoretical Backgound

A place's reputation is set by its culture, people, political ideas, and policies (Van Ham, 2008). Generally speaking, branding is essential for subjects to create value in the relationships they establish with others (Ollins, 1999). While this reality has always been experienced by brands, geographical points also undergo the same procedure too. For both brands and places, value does not correspond to a permanent state, as it always changing and adapting to time and context (Van Ham, 2008). Bosein (2015) considers Place Branding to be a way of creating, sustaining, and shaping positive place identity. Sarabia-Sanchez, Cerda-Bertomeu, and Kalandides (2018), as well as Casais & Monteiro (2019), regard place branding as an activity connected to public sector local authorities that create a place brand as a way to face competition and communicate a predetermined image which relates with the perceived identity of locals simultaneously. In this context, place branding has to do with the involvement of public diplomacy with different stakeholders, such as experts, private sector, and residents (Kalandides, 2018). Insch & Walters (2018) state it is fundamental for managers to involve citizens in the process of brand design to respect their perceived city identity. Residents are ambassadors of the city brand (Kavaratzis, 2017): it is necessary for them to be engaged with the spot, so they do not feel alienated (Henninger et al., 2016).

Nevertheless, the topic gives room for multiple interpretations and meanings (Noronha, Coca-Stefaniak, Morrison; 2017), due to its closeness to terms such as Place Marketing and Place Promotion. Some authors regard Place Branding as an instrument of Place Marketing and others show an opposite position: Place Marketing is just one of the several instruments Place Brading offers. However, all academics agree on the fact Place Branding corresponds to a « (...) network of associations in the consumer's mind based on the visual, verbal, and behavioral expression of a place and its stakeholders. » (Zenker & Braun, 2017, p. 275).

The immediate and most direct goal of these type of branding strategies is to reinforce a place's economy. As Ollins (1999) states, history is full of episodes which are reminiscent of Place Branding, but the truth is that this process is, more than anything else, a consequence of the globalized world the 21st Century presents us daily. It is undeniable that globalization accelerates Place Branding and creates the necessity for all territorial entities to develop themselves so its political and socioeconomical structures produce wealth. Van Ham (2008) and

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Anholt (2008), when addressing the same topic, assert global economic forces (derived from globalization) turn "good brands" as important tools more than ever. At this stage, it is clear that brands are places and places are brands (Ollins, 1999). All states use branding techniques when promoting themselves or its local and 'made-in' products, but on most occasions, people do not notice as they are so used to it. The 'Country-Of-Origin' effect is endlessly played by these entities and that is basically why one associates Germany with cars, Japan with cameras and Switzerland with watches (Van Ham, 2008), just to name a few.

This is not an easy game though. Since Place Branding does not correspond to a static reality (Van Ham, 2008; Boisen, 2007), it seems extremely difficult for a place to find his niche or a distinctive position in world markets (Boisen et al., 2018). To engage in a competitive market, guarantee customer satisfaction and creating — plus maintaining — brand loyalty is tremendously difficult, however possible, as the cities of New York and Amsterdam or the country Singapore demonstrate.

Ordinary brands do their work by selling products which promise a "better world" (Ollins, 1999). Geographical sites are now proceeding in the same exact way, but instead of selling mere items or services, they commercialize experiences, feelings and 'ways of living'. (The United States of America did it in the 1930's: the billboard that preached "There's No Way Like The American Way, in a clear reference to the so-called *American Dream*, is a great example of Place Branding). Boisen et al. (2018) and Ollins (1999) states that nations, regions and countries can use the power of branding to deliver a message about their value and values to the widest possible audience.

It is kind of amusing that political actors and brands face similar issues (Ollins, 1999), but, then again, this point only proves that disciplines like advertising communication, branding, and marketing are truly essential to states and other entities in today's society. We believe this reality is even more relevant now more than ever as the world is still struggling with the Covid-19 pandemic. It is safe to predict that communicational processes are going to play an important role on the recovery procedure, especially Place Branding.

Places work just like brands do (Ollins, 1999; Van Ham, 2008; Anholt, 2008; Bosein et al., 2018). If a certain geographical site wants to succeed by reinforcing its influence, it must ensure its products, services and locations are commercialized in the freshest way possible, due to the fact that competition is fierce, and all actors pursue the same goal. In this context, emotional bounds are very much needed as brand loyalty dwells on those (Ollins, 1999). The Place Branding theme makes even more sense now: we live in a time when public authorities treat citizens like clients as they adopt a business-type of speak (Van Ham, 2008). It is a truism to affirm that currently countries, regions, and cities are willing to create new and different lifestyles to then sell those to local and foreign people by asking for premium prices. All these geographical points want to benefit from an appealing branding strategy, that is, they want to become an attractive venue so higher prices can be charged as well as higher profit margins can be achieved (Ollins,

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1999). If this plan turns out well, it is possible for places to expand their market and political share (Bosein et al., 2018).

Nations, regions, and cities aim to appeal to more clients and charge even more for their products and services. Nevertheless, some authors understand the primarily objective derives from an internal point of view, as these entities want to improve its citizens lives and experiences by "giving them a sense of belonging and a clear self-concept" (Pedeliento & Kavaratzis, 2019). Regular brands also aim to improve their own employees lives and experiences and all the great companies have success in creating a sense of shared identity among workers and collaborators. As Ollins (1999) stated, branding is not just the selling of products or ideas and gaining market share and recognition — it is mainly about constructing identities and reinforcing loyalty and reputation.

Although some authors believe that countries and other geographical entities really are like brands (Ollins, 1999; Van Ham, 2008), there are others that don´t agree. Anholt (2008) doubts this practise is directly linked to the marketing communications world, believing instead that Place Branding is more related to simple "policy changes". He states there are no proves that the use of marketing communication tools manipulates international public insights of countries, regions, and cities, supporting his statement on the fact that there is data which does not indicate a real correlation between "national brand value" and "nation branding campaigns", mainly because it is a complex task to distinguish between regular selling strategies (like tourism campaigns and investment promotions) and genuine Place Branding policies. The author goes on by saying there are few "branding nation initiatives" that are impactful enough to be considered as game changers. Anholt's concerns can be linked to the conceptual confusion that Bosein et al. (2018) also showcase. These authors reveals that are several countries that have produced zero marketing campaigns but managed to present improvements in their reputation, while other nations have spent millions on advertising and public relations and their value stayed the same. Nevertheless, Anholt (2008) stated that Place Branding and similar techniques are essential for geographical sites to succeed in a globalized world, but it is ultimately essential for the ones who occupy political structures to understand how brand communication works and what are its main concepts. If they are able to understand it, they can create a strong new dimension for "development, statecraft and governance" (Anholt, 2008), since Place Branding is a hybrid term as it is influenced by several different sectors at the same time (Noronha et al., 2017).

Brands are profoundly linked to an idea of differentiation and identification (Aitken & Campelo, 2011) and so are places. Different brands have different meanings, symbols and values which demonstrate the existence of individual and collective identities (Askegaard, 2006). Since all places are facing global competition in both domestic and external markets, it is mandatory for them to apply branding techniques based on personal and specific impressions (Aitken & Campelo, 2011).

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In this context, one can say Place Branding obeys to five major principles: 1) Distinctiveness, because each place is different and offers unique characteristics; (2) Authenticity, once the real objects, values, and people can´t be replaced; (3) Memorability; for it is vital to crave the site's main traces in people's minds; (4) Co-Creation, because an holistic approach is absolutely necessary by all intervening agents: governments, business, civil society and target markets, such as investors and the press; and at last, but not least, (5) Place Making, as it essential for a place to present an integrative set-up always full of fresh innovations, public policies, structures, events and investments (The Place Brand Observer, 2015).

Place Branding in Portugal

As Ollins (1999) stated, there are many manifestations of the occurrence in the world's history. One can mention the French experience, which offers several "rebranding exercises" deeply connected to historical events, being the French Revolution and its major principles the main example. Also, the city of Paris is commonly treated as the 'City Of Lights', not because of the glittering Eiffel Tower, that's mainly to blame for the misinterpretation, but because Paris was one of the first European cities to adopt street lighting, although the nickname really gained the most traction during the Age of Enlightenment that followed. Moreover, Ollins (1999) mentions Ceylon which reinvented itself as Sri Lanka; Turkey's modernization conducted by Atatürk; and the USSR transformation into the Russian Federation. One easily understands these questions deal with not just branding, but, as the author affirms, the link with place branding is obvious. At present times there as well many countries, regions and cities which follow Place Branding strategies, such as Barcelona, Melbourne, Helsinki or Qatar (Bloom Consulting, n.d.). In Portugal there are not many immediate to mind Place Branding experiences. The Portuguese case relates more with Anholt's (2008) points-of-view. In Portugal there are plenty of national, regional and local campaigns which promote our territory and its advantages of all kinds (predominantly touristic), nevertheless it is rare to find a proper Place Branding occurrence in Portugal — but that does not mean there are no examples of it.

We believe the city of Porto is Portugal's best case of a successful Place Branding strategy and literature proves it (Casais & Monteiro, 2019). Nowadays all Portuguese and non-Portuguese people recognize Porto's new city identity primarily because of the design efforts and improvements the local government did with the help of Eduardo Aires Studio. There are a few points concerning Porto's place branding strategy that catch our attention. Do Porto's citizens feel like they belong in the city's community and daily experiences?

According to Campelo et al. (2014), the residents' involvement enhances the most important assets for place branding. This way it is essential for these individuals to co-create the place brand, so they do not feel distant from the community (Ram et al., 2016). As Boyd (2012) points

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out, the co-creation method of a city brand needs to represent the different visions of multiple stakeholders and the place's authenticity, both engaging people from the city and tourists, who look for that authenticity. But this an extremely difficult task. Insch & Walters (2018) argue multiple place identities can be detected in different populations of the city. Also, place identities tend to vary across time. There is also the possibility resident's brand identity may contrast with the image visitors get from the city (Zenker et al., 2017; Baxter et al., 2013). Casais & Monteiro (2019) reminisce on previous studies focused on Barcelona that illustrate this idea (Compte-Pujol et al., 2017). Residents and tourists could not be more different.

It is a fact that governments sometimes assume that residents are only passive beneficiaries or place customers of the brand (Casais & Monteiro, 2019). Literature shows that most city brands are formed having the external promotion in mind as the main goal is to attract tourists and external investment (Vasudevan, 2008). Most of the times, these local power institutions strive for good relationships developed between residents and tourists, as those define the character and atmosphere of a place. This happens due to the fact it is essential for a place's health to benefit from a positive communication from residents to outsiders, forming a good impression of the spot (Insch & Florek, 2008; Peighambari et al., 2016) and promoting tourism development (Vargas-Sanchez et al., 2015). Then again, for this to happen, residents must have a strong sense of belonging and satisfaction towards the city (Hunt & Stronza, 2014). Local governments can create these feelings but only if an internal place marketing perspective is taken into consideration (Insch & Walters, 2018). It is important to give residents, who form the greatest group of internal stakeholders (Compte-Pujol et al., 2017), opportunities to participate both in the city's community and on the co-creation of the place brand. As Insch & Walters (2018) state, residents strive for involvement and participation.

Casais & Monteiro (2019) take a deep look at Porto's place branding experience. They start by explaining how the strategy was developed. The city brand was created in 2014 and it is called 'Porto.' Its logo has won international awards, like the European Design Awards (2015), a British Design and Art Direction award, and a Graphis. Since 2014, many other cities have come up with similar design strategies based on the simplicity and aesthetics from Porto. On a parallel side, the city's tourism has been growing immensely (Rodrigues, 2019): Porto was named Best European Destination in 2012, 2014, and 2017. It is essential to understand if Porto's residents feel connected with the city brand. Casais & Monteiro (2019) purposed to analyse that theme and they reached important conclusions that prove that a successful place branding strategy ought to connect with both internal and external agents. The authors conclude Porto's residents were included in the brand development (Compte-Pujol et al., 2017; Kalandides, 2011), but the involvement was little.

Porto's city brand was built under an institutional perspective (Casais & Monteiro, 2019). It was a designer hired by the city council who came up with the logo. Only after the logo was designed did the council organized a public event where Porto's residents would comment on it

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and give suggestions. On the same occasion, citizens had also the opportunity to come up with own design/city icons. Taking into consideration Waheduzzaman & Mphande's views (2014), this situation corresponds to the so-called political model, which is based on a top-down approach followed by public discussion with the citizens. As Casais & Monteiro (2019) argue, the resident's activity is strict to the logo development, and they did not participate on a previous stage dedicated to a brand brainstorming. Even though Porto's citizens assume they wanted to participate more on previous stages of the process, most of the individuals favour the final result as they like the city's logo aesthetics and meaning.

Porto managed to create a graphic image that respects the city's view from each resident. Due to the fact Porto has a great variety of people and identities, it was important for the strategy to acknowledge these differences. The city was willing to come up with a visual language that shows Porto is a unique place. In that context, the city was inspired by its buildings and sights — that define a certain image, but are not considered 'brands' (Riza et al., 2012) — and created a new identity. 'Porto.' is based on a simple design concept, however It represents a complex, dynamic, and emotional reality sensed by the city's people (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013; Kavaratzis, 2009). The logo's immediate intention is to potentiate a moment of discovery and representation (Casais & Monteiro, 2019), as the selected imagery lets people build their own Porto image. Following Hernández et al. (2017) and Mueller & Schade's (2012) thoughts, one can state Porto's place branding strategy forms moments of brand attachment. Additionally, the 'Porto.' message appears accompanied by a set of icons that represent the city's top sights and traces, such as buildings, landscapes, and symbols representing gastronomy, culture, and traditions (Casais & Monteiro, 2019).

The city's spirit and personality are successfully captured by all the visual and aesthetics signs the design studio created — identified everywhere in the city and on the city's official social media accounts. 'Porto.' represents a timeless concept, as the message remains forever in individuals' minds. Moreover, the idea is independent from local government systems (Hankinson, 2007), so no matter who leads Porto the city's branding strategy will prevail and reach its residents and tourists. As Casais & Monteiro (2019) point out «the positioning of the city brand is stated with the dot after the word Porto. It comes as a form of affirmation that the brand is the city and not the city council» (p. 234).

The strategy's primarily goal was internal, as both the council and the design agency wanted to present the collective idea of 'home' Porto's people have. But now whoever visits the place — whether it is a national or a foreign tourist — experiences the same feeling.

Every city turns out to be a shared identity and Porto managed to reflect those feelings visually. Now, one can find them everywhere: in the streets, metro stations, public murals, local infrastructures and the in the back of municipal workers. Porto's local government managed to enclosure the feel of belonging in the same space, in the same city. Porto's residents have shown they identify with the new city identity due to the fact it represents faithfully the location

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and depicts memories, feelings, and sensations (Compte-Pujol et al., 2017; Casais & Monteiro, 2019). Moreover, the new city brand gives room for multiple views of Porto. Nevertheless, residents tend to feel the brand speaks more to tourists than to the city's residents. This situation makes us think it is possible for the city to improve its internal place marketing strategies.

'Porto.' is undoubtedly a case of successful Place Branding. It justifies this practise is not just about fresh designs, good copywriting skills, and original branding, but also to be about Co-Creation between all agents that intervein in the city's life and existence (Pedeliento & Kavaratzis, 2019).

Conclusion

The subject we chose to examine demonstrates the influence that advertising communication has on current society, especially on politics and other statal happenings. It gets easier to comprehend this matter if one realises Place Branding is, indeed, a form of power — soft power. Nevertheless, many authors struggle when trying to define this process due to the fact it manifests simultaneously in a great variety of sectors (Anholt, 2008), but especially in politics. In the end, Place Branding relies on many different factors and depends on a great variety of actors that need to 'co-create' strategies of this kind. If a geographical point, whether it is a country, region or city, wants to develop a way of improving its reputation and image, in order to attract the largest group of people, every single agent of that site has to be part of the change.

At most times, these entities behave just like brands do. Instead of selling a specific product or service, they commercialize the place's own traces and characteristics which are reflected on different realities, being the political and the economical the most important ones. Place Branding as a tool gets even more value if we look at the state of the globalized world. There are many different venues which offer the same product. The difference between them usually resides in the quality and effectiveness of the communication which is used to promote the site.

In Portugal there are not many examples of Place Brading techniques. Porto's city new visual identity, which was introduced back in 2014, is certainly the best case of this practice in the country. But even this campaign had its issues as a considerable group of the city's residents think the place brand was introduced to respond to touristic concerns (Casais & Monteiro, 2019). Nonetheless, people from Porto are pleased with the 'Porto.' message due to the fact it represents them in a broad, diverse way. All individuals and views are integrated within the discussed message.

It seems hard to come up with Place Branding strategies which can change the reputation of an entire country, but throughout the history one finds episode that reminisce Place Branding. It gets clear this strategy has to be considered by all geographical agents which want to promote their unique territories and people — just like brands do with their products (Ollins, 1999).

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