Characteristics and functions for place brands based on a Delphi method

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Abstract
Introduction. Representation of territories through brands is a recurring issue in today's modern society. The aim of this article is to establish certain characteristics and functions pertaining to brands linked to geographical areas. **Methodology.** The decision was made to conduct qualitative research based on a Delphi method comprising a panel of fourteen place branding experts. **Results.** In relation to commercial brands, it is found that, since they are publicly owned, place brands call for more complex management, preferably on three levels: public administration, private organisations and citizens. **Conclusions.** Based on the results obtained, it is concluded that management of places centres on the projection of unique, spatial identities on the context of increasing competition between territories.

Keywords: place brand; branding; communication; territorial identity; marketing; Delphi.

Contents: 1. Introduction. 2. Methodology. 2.1. Justification for the chosen panel of experts. 2.2. Panel members. 2.3. Delphi questionnaires and rounds. 3. Results. 4. Discussion and conclusions. 5. Bibliography.

Translation by **Nicholas G. Charles**

1. Introduction

The object of study of this article are place brands, which have witnessed a major boom in recent years in both professional and academic terms (Olins, 2004, Govers, Go, 2009, Anholt, 2010). Nonetheless, despite this peak there does not appear to be theoretical and conceptual foundations allowing for a distinguished overview of the processes for the conceptualisation and management of

brands associated with places in relation to (and to a certain extent, in conflict with) traditional brands linked to products and/or services (Kavaratzis, 2005, Hankinson, 2010, San Eugenio, 2012). Moreover, several authors have warned about the risks entailed by managing place brands in the same fashion as commercial brands are managed (Muñoz, 2008).

The representativeness of places and their people currently flows through the filter of the brand, established as a kind of significant device for conveying territorial identities. This creates a divide between place brands and commercial brands, the latter being solely focussed on achieving specific market targets (Alonso-González, 2008).

The primary objective of this research is to determine certain characteristics and functions carried out by brands linked to territories (country, nation, region, city or tourist destination). This will enable us to establish some of the logic behind their creation, use and significance. This article also addresses the scope of certain ancillary purposes: a proposed state of the matter for territory brands and the establishment of a potential future scenario based on the results obtained from applying the Delphi method, a research technique that is in essence based on prediction.

This text shall centre on work being carried in relation to commercial brands, although the Delphi method also, as far as possible and according to the opinion of experts, operates from a standpoint of distancing the processes for the conceptualisation and management of place brands from product and/or service brands. This takes us towards our initial working hypothesis: at present, the conceptualisation and subsequent implementation of territorial brands follows the same working patterns as those used for commercial brands. The hypothesis gives rise to our first research question: what are the main differences between a brand linked to places and a brand for products and/or services?

Indeed, brands associated with places do not provide any new ground with regard to what has been stated and written about the subject hitherto. What we do deem to be novel is to consider whether or not the practices carried out at present in relation to the implementation and management of place brands (which transcend historical tourist brands) incorporate the susceptibilities and sensitivities characteristic of public or common property or whether, on the other hand, territory brands are subject to conceptualisation and management patterns that are identical or similar to those attached to commercial brands.

As mentioned, this article is addressed on the context of a multidisciplinary observatory afforded by the varied profile and the backgrounds of fourteen experts who have collaborated with this research project. Generally speaking, the aim is to steer clear of the historical division existing between the academic and professional world (Baladrón-Pazos, Correyero-Ruiz, 2008). We will address the social and economic framework into which this research is placed below.

On the context of globalisation, a territory takes on significant influence and importance in economic, political, social and cultural terms (Harvey, 1989, Nogué, Albet, 2007). Capital flows must focus especially on the positioning of places. Hence, the transition takes place from the realm of places to the realm of flows (Castells, 2009). Here, the logic behind territory management – in other words, premeditated and/or induced construction of collective identities as a leading competitive element – entails handling that is similar to that given to any other good or service in today's global community.

There is no doubt that the marketing of spaces and the adoption of attitudes and fondness (sympathy) towards these places (branding), in both instances, incorporates connotations of strategic positioning managed from the standpoint of marketing and communication (Alameda, Fernández, 2012). In this respect, Nogué (2006: 208) states the following:

> "We are witnessing an exceptional process for the revaluation of places which, in turn, gives rise to competition between them that has hitherto been unseen. Hence the need to establish a uniqueness, to showcase and highlight all the significant aspects which make a place stand out from the rest, in short, to 'be put on the map'".

Places become a new transactional asset subject to a competitive environment undergoing major changes where positioning is attained largely through perception management; that is, citizens, tourists and companies acquire the images of places rather than the places themselves. Accordingly, the purpose of a territory brand mainly affects the specific work of perception *a priori* of certain spaces. Indeed, territories determine their competitiveness parameters through the power of evoking their brand image, which they use to place themselves on the map of forums for innovation and knowledge.

In this dilemma of sudden changes and dramatic flows, also in the sphere of space, we can place the logic behind the production and proliferation of territory brands as tracks identifying specific local characteristics. All in all, places are currently subject to management logic specific to the commercial sphere, driven by the application of communication and marketing techniques aimed at making the identities existing in geographical areas more tangible (Moilanen, Rainisto, 2009, Fernández-Cavia, 2011). The following are some of the key concepts linked to the process of building territory brands.

Table 1. **Glossary of key concepts linked to territory brands**

CONCEPT	DEFINITION
Brand	Multidimensional construct based on positioning halfway between the functional and emotional values of an organisation and the psychosocial needs of consumers (De Chernatony, 2009). The brand generates a certain amount of conscience, reputation and prominence on the market (Keller, 2008).
Branding	The construction of a brand by creating an image strengthening reputation, promoting loyalty, assuring quality, conveying value and affording a sense of belonging to this brand (Ollé, Riu, 2009). To engage in branding can be deemed as building brand value through effective communication of the features to be transferred to the minds of the addressees (Fernández-Cavia, 2011).
Place branding	The creation of a strategic brand identity based on a place's main active value (identity) with the aim of subsequently placing it on the market by optimising the main passive value (image). The practice of place branding should be based on three fundamental instances: place identity, place image and the consumer experience in the place (Govers, Go, 2009).

Place brand	A perceptive device with scope for supporting the distinguishing values of a place compared to other places, with the aim of showcasing a unique identity to attain a specific positioning (López-Lita, Benlloch, 2006).
Place experience	On a context of hedonistic consumerism, an experience begins and concludes with oneself. It highlights the importance of multi-sensory factors, fantasy and emotional aspects of experience-based and/or hedonistic consumerism of products (Govers, Go, 2009). Urry (2002) points out the visual nature of the experience of places.
Sense of place	The notion of a place fully encompasses the modern dichotomy between the global sphere and the local sphere. It often determines how society feels and conceives certain places. It is an expression commonly used by geographers when emphasising the importance of places as nuclei for personal feelings. In short, it represents the meaning people attach to specific places. Essence of place is a pathway pointing to the meaning and sensations inherent to a geographical area (Rose, 1995).
Place identity	Place identities are built by means of historical, political, religious and cultural discourse, as well as through local knowledge and as a result of the unavoidable interference of power struggles. Genuine place identity is managed by defining the unique characteristics and/or host of meaning found in a place and its culture at a specific moment in time (Govers, Go, 2009).
Place image	The host of impressions associated with a place as a result of the global perceptions of an individual (Bigné et al., 2000, Govers, Go, 2009). The image is based on features, functional consequences (expected benefits) and symbolic meanings or psychological characteristics that consumers link to a specific place (or service) and, consequently, the image has a bearing on the positioning and, ultimately, our behaviour with respect to other places (Anholt, 2008).
Place marketing	Traditional segmentation, orientation and positioning intended to promote places which sometimes includes network decision channels and product development (Govers, Go, 2009).

2. Methodology

This project opts for a qualitative approach to the object of study (territory brands). The Delphi method lends this research an analysis of the standpoint of a group of fourteen experts who will be subject to a systematic, iterative process aimed at gleaning their opinions and, to the greatest extent possible, their consensuses (Linstone, Turoff, 1975, Ruiz, Ispizua, 1989, Landeta, 1999).

This research technique has been chosen in order to establish a widely held opinion (legitimised by the panel's experts) with which to break away from what we consider to be a current lack of data and/or knowledge related to territory brands. Accordingly, the (authenticated) opinion was chosen to avoid resorting to simple speculation (Ruiz, Ispizua, 1989). Moreover, as pointed out by Linstone & Turoff (1975: 3): "Delphi may be characterized as a method for structuring a group communication

process so that the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem".

Delbecq, Van de Ven & Gustafson (1975) maintain that this technique attempts to systematically organise opinions and compare judgments of opinion regarding a pre-determined topic by providing a host of questionnaires designed in a sequential, meticulous manner and disseminated with summarised information characterised by feedback on opinions deduced from initial responses. Consequently, the aim is to reduce the interquartile range or gap observed between the expert opinion and the opinion of the group (Adams, 2001, Altschuld, 2003).

On the context of this research it seemed appropriate to use this method because, as Gaitán & Piñuel (1998: 140) highlight: "As an exploratory technique, it can be used to develop a theoretical construct relating to an area of study or to provide an approach applied to the ultimate design of a research project". The need for a future forecast and a theoretical and concept-based establishment of the object of study resulted in this choice being advisable.

2.1. Justification for the chosen panel of experts

The criteria for choosing the experts stem from three basic concepts. Firstly, an affinity has been sought between the experts and the object of study – in this case, brands linked to geographical areas. Secondly, the prestige and/or distinction obtained nationally and internationally by the experts in the professional and/or academic spheres has been taken into consideration. Lastly, we sought to form a group which, despite being linked by a pre-defined guiding topic, provided heterogeneous profiles to enhance the discourse and, accordingly, the final outcome of the research.

The group of experts includes geographers, environmental psychologists, publicists, economists, brand managers and experts linked to market research and marketing, among other profiles. The reason for this interdisciplinary nature is that it is necessary to address the topic of place brands from a range of viewpoints.

2.2. Panel members

The Delphi method included in this article unfolded with the help of fourteen experts in a range of professional and academic spheres. Accordingly, the research carried out takes into account twice the minimum number of seven members pointed out by Landeta (1999) which are required to form a Delphi panel. The final list of participants is as follows in alphabetical order:

1) Gonzalo Brujó: director general of Interbrand in Spain. The multinational firm Interbrand has been operating since 1974; it is a leader in branding strategies in the commercial sphere and, at present, it is also a pioneer in the field of territories.

2) Julio Cerviño: tenured university lecturer attached to the market research and marketing knowledge area at Carlos III University (Madrid). He is an expert in brand management and a standing advisor of the Leading Brands of Spain Forum.

3) Josep Chias: CEO of the consulting firm Chias Marketing. He was a lecturer at ESADE business school and is an acknowledged expert in territory marketing, communication and commercial brands. He has spearheaded tourist marketing projects all over the world.

4) Anna Domingo: she has sixteen years' professional experience in international development of marketing and place branding strategies. She specialises in territory branding and marketing communication and is the director of the consulting firm PADZZLE.

5) José Antonio Donaire: tenured university lecturer attached to the human geography knowledge area of the University of Girona. He is an expert in tourism and the use of 2.0 tools. He is currently the director of the Higher Institute for Tourism Studies (INSETUR).

6) José Fernández-Cavia: tenured university lecturer attached to the advertising and audio-visual communication knowledge area of Pompeu Fabra University (Barcelona). He was the lead researcher on the project "New advertising and promotion strategies for Spanish tourist brands online" funded by the Ministry of Science and Innovation.

7) Assumpció Huertas: senior lecturer attached to the advertising and audio-visual communication knowledge area of Rovira i Virgili University (Tarragona). She is a specialist in e-branding and territory communication.

8) Rafael López-Lita: full professor attached to the advertising and audio-visual communication knowledge area of Jaume I University (Castellón). He has published several articles (linked to territory brands) which are particularly pertinent to this research project.

9) Antonio Monerris: founding member of the consulting firm BrainVentures, primarily devoted to defining brand communication strategies. He regularly works on defining branding and communication strategies for territory brands.

10) Fernando Olivares: tenured lecturer in global communication and corporate image at the Faculty of Economic and Business Sciences of the University of Alicante. He is a researcher at the City Reputation Lab, the first European team to conduct research on this area.

11) Ramon Ollé: strategic planning director for the Grey Group. He is a lecturer in brand management at ESADE business school and the joint founder of the Center for Brand Leadership of the University of Columbia in New York. He chairs the Association of Strategic Planners of Spain and regularly works in the field of territory brands.

12) Gildo Seisdedos: lecturer at the marketing department of IE Business School. He is the director of the Urban Management Forum and the Madrid Global Chair on International Urban Strategy. He is an expert in city marketing and urban management and serves as technical director of MERCO Ciudad, an urban ranking of Spanish cities.

13) Sergi Valera: tenured university lecturer attached to the social psychology knowledge area at the University of Barcelona. He specialises in environmental psychology and his areas of interest include environmental cognition, experience and life processes, which are particularly important to the study of territory brands.

14) Marta Vallejo: director of Granta Consulting, a consulting firm that for the past 26 years has been devoted to the definition of territory promotion and communication plans. She specialises in

place and country branding and is a member of the Association for Place Branding and Public Diplomacy.

2.3. Delphi questionnaires and rounds

Having defined the members of the panel, they were contacted via email, the key Internet tool used throughout the entire Delphi process. For this research, the decision was made to issue two rounds of questions to the panel of experts (Landeta, 1999). The first, issued between 14 October and 23 December 2009, was managed by designing a questionnaire (see table 2) which, as Landeta (1999) points out, must be considered from the standpoint of open questions to encourage an initial brainstorming of ideas.

Moreover, it should allow for the definition of the key issues to be addressed on the basis of which closed questions shall be prepared (in a multiple choice and/or alternative response form) which will be included in the second Delphi round. This is how the process definitively concluded, the direct result of establishing a discourse-based consensus among the members of the panel (Gaitán, Piñuel, 1998). The following questionnaire was issued to the experts for the first Delphi round (open questions):

Table 2. **Questions put to the Delphi panel experts (first round)**

DELPHI QUESTIONNAIRE 1
1. In your opinion, what is a territory brand?
2. Should a territory brand be considered a management element (urban planning, environmental, etc.) or an instrument for communicating the values and/or features existing in a country, region or city?
3. What differences are there between a commercial brand and a territory brand? And what differences are there between a territory brand and a tourist brand? Can the same production logic be applied in all cases?
4. What fields of knowledge (academic disciplines) do you consider to be most suitable to the study of territory brands?
5. What does the phrase "the territory communicates" mean to you? Where does the communicative value of a territory lie?
6. Is the landscape a communicative metaphor for the territory? What role does it play in the overall communication process of the territory?
7. What do you understand by "brand experience with the territory"? What factors condition this life experience and/or experience?
8. There are at present numerous conflicts in the definition for territory brands. Expressions such as place branding, city marketing, destination branding, nation branding, place marketing and urban management, among many others, all converge. What is the reason behind this overload of definitions in recent years linked to the communication and marketing processes of a territory?
9. What are the ultimate goals that the implementation of a territory brand should seek?

10. Is the territory brand a reliable illustration of a consumer society characteristic of a globalised world? Does it portray the definitive commercialisation of space? Does the territory brand relate to the induced reproduction (simulation) of space that is so characteristic of postmodernism?
11. Could new country, region and city brand image construction logics have a bearing on the public management of a territory (town planning, environment, culture, etc.)?
12. To who or what does a territory brand appeal? Who is the target public? And who is the secondary public?
13. Does it make sense to build a territory brand beyond the urban and/or metropolitan area?
14. What raw material does a territory hold on which a brand can be built?
15. Is the territory brand metaphorically tantamount to attaching a barcode to a specific country, region or city?
16. What explanation is behind the substantial proliferation of territory brands in recent times?
17. In individual terms, do you consider the *in situ* brand experience with the territory to be a manifestation of intrapersonal communication?
18. Can the development witnessed in the communication processes in which the territory has been shrouded be summed up using the following phrase: "From information to persuasion, from promotion to emotion"?
19. What is the current situation regarding the development of the territory brand in the digital setting? What future projection do you envision?
20. Do you wish to mention any further aspect in relation to the territory brand that has not been dealt with thus far?

Once the period for submitting responses had elapsed, the first questionnaire was sorted, classified, systematically organised and interpreted. As a result of this process, a second questionnaire arose (between 15 February and 4 April 2010), this time forged based on the approach of using closed questions. Consequently, in the latter case the possible responses bore a multiple choice and/or alternative response structure on the basis of which a choice of the responses chosen should be carried out subject to hierarchy, valuation and comparison (Landeta, 1999).

3. Results

The results obtained shall be presented according to the statistical handling of the panellists' responses to make it possible to glean the individual opinions of the experts to provide a group-based widely held opinion. In addition to the quantitative data obtained, a context-based exposé with remarks to interpret the various standpoints, consensuses and differences expressed by the Delphi members will be conducted. The twofold approach in interpreting the results obtained (in a quantitative and qualitative manner) is justified both on account of the size of the sample and on the need to report on the findings made overall incorporating all potential nuances.

To the greatest extent possible in this specific case, this seeks to prevent the Delphi researcher from solely resorting to a simple description of the data to the detriment of providing his or her own qualitative interpretation based on pre-established goals. As a result, the Delphi method shall be applied and used according to the explanatory and predictive approach (Landeta, 1999). Moreover,

the complex nature of the object of study –territory brands– makes it advisable to provide a descriptive, reasoned and rational exposé (Landeta, 1999).

The results shall be arranged according to central criteria (median, mean and standard deviation) stemming from the statistical handling of the responses gleaned from the panel of experts. The second round includes ten questions stemming from the sorting and systematic organisation of the responses obtained during the first round from the panel (20 questions). The panellists operated on a scale whereby they had to rate their responses from 0 (lowest rating) to 10 (highest rating).

Lastly, it should be pointed out that although the responses from all the specialists consulted have been pooled during the second Delphi round, none of the members knew the remaining members of the panel formed during the preparation of this research.

Question 1. A territory brand is and implies…

No.	Response	Median	Mean	Dev.
1	A specific operation in the field of induced perception of territories (country, city, destination, region, etc.)	9.17	7.86	3.16
2	A host of meanings and/or attributions attached to a specific place	6.67	6.55	2.49
3	An asset of the territory, an excellent showcase for potential tourists, investors and/or organisations	5.83	6.19	2.88
4	Strategic, professional communication of tangible and intangible features and/or values inherent to the territory	5.83	5.6	3.04
5	The market value public sectors and organisations feature to the territory	4.17	3.93	2.23
6	A public diplomacy, political communication and/or institutional strategy	3.33	3.72	2.65
7	A toponym, a designation, a means of referring to a territory by mentioning the brand representing it	1.67	2.98	2.55

Table 3. **Meanings and implications of territory brands**

The option for which greater consensus was attained was linked to the function of the brand as a device for managing perceptions. In all likelihood, this is made explicit because this response option encompassed most concepts which, in an unordered fashion, initially had been considered by the experts for a potential definition of territory brand (perception, identity, communication, positioning) in the first Delphi round. Far behind, the option of identification between place and brand was placed in second position, while projection and external communication value of the place was placed between second and fourth position by the panellists.

Question 2. In the English-speaking world, the concept of territory brand can be assimilated with what expression:

No.	Response	Percentage
1	Place branding	85.7%
2	Destination branding	14.3%
3	Place marketing	7.1%
4	Destination marketing	7.1%
5	Others	7.1%

Table 4. **Match given to the meaning of territory brand in English**

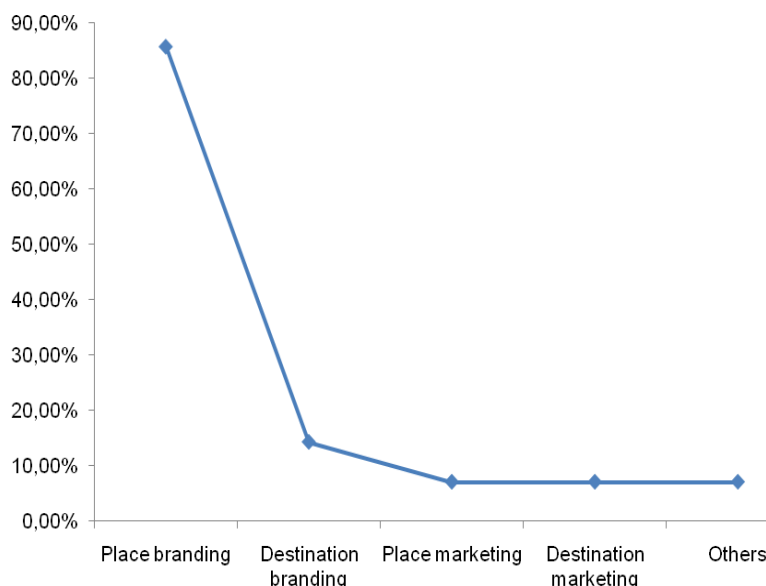**Equivalent to the concept of territory brand in the Anglo-Saxon sphere**

Chart 1. **Results obtained from the experts in percentages**

The second question posed in the Delphi survey sought to address the conceptual confusion relating to territory brand when adapting and translating terminology from English into other languages. The prevailing option chosen by the experts was the term place branding. However, one expert chose two options simultaneously, specifically place marketing and place branding. Another member of the panel following this same formula chose two potential responses: place branding and destination branding. A third participant also gave a double response: destination branding and destination marketing.

Lastly, one of the panel members disregarded all options as potential responses and included his own suggestion. In this instance, he opted for the option place brand. It is necessary to take into

consideration that the sum of the percentages for the results from the second Delphi question is greater than 100%. This is because some of the panellists chose more than one response.

Question 3. Who should take the initiative in implementing a territory brand?

No.	Response	Percentage
1	The public administration	71.4%
2	Others	35.7%
3	The private sector	21.4%
4	Citizens	14.3%

Table 5. **Leadership in creating territory brands**

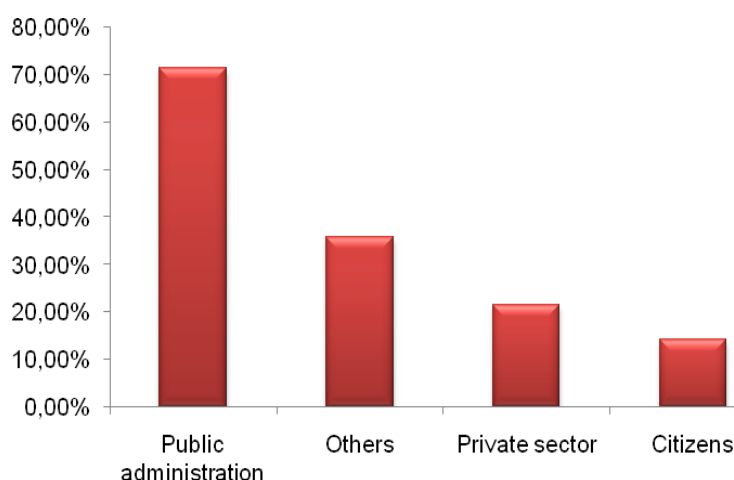**Who should assume responsibility for implementing a territory brand?**

Chart 2. **Responsibility for place brands**

In terms of percentages, leadership in implementing a territory brand pertains to the respective public administration. However, it is necessary to highlight the option "others", which encompasses the opinion of five experts. Three simultaneously chose the public administration and private enterprise, while two of them simultaneously chose the public administration and citizens. Likewise, one expert also initially chose the public administration, although he also availed himself of the option "other" to point out that companies who benefitted from the existence of a territory brand should bear an influence on the development and maintenance of it.

Similarly, one important statistic arises from the sorting of responses for the third Delphi question; namely, up to five experts expanded on the possible solutions adding the option "others" to point out the need to set up mixed management teams to take into consideration public, private and citizen interests. Indeed, the establishment of an impartial body representing the interests of all parties involved capitalises on most of the considerations made by the panel members. Moreover, it is necessary to take into consideration that the sum of the percentages stemming from the responses

given to the third Delphi question is greater than 100% because certain specialists chose more than one response.

Question 4. Territory brand: place management and/or communication?

No.	Response	Percentage
1	The territory brand entails management and communication in a supplementary manner. Management is linked to marketing, while communication is linked to branding	78.6%
2	In essence, a territory brand is an instrument for the communication of the values and/or features that would be attributed to a specific geographical area	21.4%

Table 6. **Functions linked to territory brands**

Chart 3. **Management and/or communication connotations associated with territory brands**

In view of the two possible responses, eleven of the fourteen experts chosen were of the opinion that the territory brand implied management and communication, in a complimentary manner. Solely three experts considered that the brand was merely a communication device.

Question 5. The foremost aspects distinguishing a commercial brand from a territory brand are as follows:

No.	Response	Median	Mean	Dev.
1	Simple management (market) or complex management (citizens)	8.89	6.92	3.34
2	Management of private interests or management of public interests	8.89	5.98	4.43
3	Commercial transaction or territory boost	7.78	7.62	2.08
4	Public sector or private sector	5.56	5.81	3.34
5	Specific publics or varied publics	5.56	5.71	3.56
6	Short-term or long-term	5.56	4.96	3.29
7	Intended brand image or spontaneous brand image	3.33	4.44	3.33
8	Elastic product and/or service or static identity	2.22	3.76	3.56
9	Submission to a commercial strategy or no restriction	2.22	3.59	3.80
10	Organisational success or political propaganda	2.22	2.91	3.16

Table 7. **Differences between a commercial brand and a territory brand**

The sphere of public interest and that of citizen involvement in territory brands, as opposed to private interests and solely the conditioning factor of the market innate to commercial brands is the difference to which the panellists have given greatest consideration. This is followed by the relationship of place brands with the development of the territory and the boost to the economy in the area the brand represents. The variety of publics involved and the establishment of long-term targets are other characteristics that were widely taken into consideration by the Delphi members.

Question 6. Order the fields of knowledge most closely linked to the study of the territory brand from 1 to 11 (the disciplines appearing as potential responses were suggested beforehand by the experts during the first Delphi round).

No.	Response	Median	Media	Dev.
1	Brand management	9	8.86	1.41
2	Communication	9	8.43	1.79
3	Marketing	8.5	7.64	2.27
4	Sociology	6	5.62	1.85
5	Economics	5.5	5.29	2.20
6	Town planning	5	4.71	2.37
7	Geography	4.5	5.14	2.51
8	History	3	3.21	2.39
9	Anthropology	3	2.86	1.92
10	Psychology	2	2.71	2.02

Table 8. **Disciplines linked to the study of place brands**

On this occasion, the statistical handling of the considerations of the experts shows that the classification is highly grouped around three disciplines of preference (in this order): brand management, communication and marketing. Disciplines such as sociology, economics, town planning and geography followed further behind.

Question 7. The existence of several expressions linked to territory brands (place branding, destination branding, city marketing, etc.) is due to the following:

No.	Response	Median	Mean	Dev.
1	In actual fact, it entails linking a brand to a place, whereupon all territory-based units and nuances deemed pertinent may be added	8.75	7.5	2.94
2	It is due to a lack of consensus on the definition of territory brand from a holistic, cross-disciplinary standpoint	7.5	6.96	2.63
3	An attempt to take over a professional and academic approach to an emerging sphere of knowledge and work	2.5	3.75	4.01
4	It is on account of its brief background and its relatively recent appearance in the professional and academic spheres	2.5	3.57	2.72
5	An idiomatic issue. The terminological nuances existing in English do not allow for a literal translation into Spanish	0	2.32	3.6

Table 9. **Variety of terms for place brands**

In the opinion of the Delphi members consulted, the variety of terms linked to territory brands stems from a fundamental issue in all cases: the association of a place with a brand that identifies and represents it. Indeed, the second response in order of priority can be understood as it is linked to the difficulty in naming the work entailed by building a brand from an interdisciplinary viewpoint. The result indicating that the variety of meanings linked to place brands can be explained based on an attempt to monopolise a patently emerging line of research or field of work is less representative.

Beyond doubt, the possible responses linked to the brief background of the term and the difficulty in translating certain anglicisms (the idiomatic issue) fall somewhat behind the priorities expressed by the experts in the panel.

Question 8. The inexorable aims of a territory brand should be as follows:

No.	Response	Median	Mean	Dev.
1	Positioning: identification and/or distinguishing in the minds of the public	10	8.21	2.29
2	Identification and belonging: local communities should feel that the territory brand belongs to them	7.78	7.38	2.60
3	Perception: it should provide a vision and reading of territories by means of a positive perception of their values and/or features	7.78	7.22	2.61
4	Future vision: the brand strategy should evade immediate challenges. It should be considered in the long-term	7.22	6.98	2.84
5	Recognition: it is important for the territory brand to awaken interest and be worthy of acknowledgment	6.67	6.83	2.65
6	Economic boost: it should contribute to the economic prosperity of the territories it represents	6.11	6.59	2.74
7	Frankness: the values and/or features conveyed should solely reflect the reality	5.56	5.73	1.75
8	Transfer: the territory brand should encourage the transition of the territory value to the brand value	2.78	3.15	1.33

Table 10. **Achievements to be attained by a territory brand**

Positioning is the primary goal to be attained by a territory brand according to the opinion of the panellists. Consideration for the local communities and their subsequent attachment to the brand came in second place among the preferences stated, above the historical projection of territory brands externally.

As a device for managing (positive) perceptions, the brand and the need to design long-term territory development strategies were among the highest rated options by the experts. Recognition, economic boost, frankness and transformation of territory value into brand value were respectively ranked from fifth to eighth in terms of importance in the responses obtained.

Question 9. The values and/or features of a brand which underpin the communication of a territory stem from the following:

No.	Response	Median	Mean	Dev.
1	Identity	10	9.29	1.56
2	Culture	8.57	8.06	1.38
3	Heritage	8.21	7.4	2.35
4	Human capital	7.86	7.4	1.33
5	History	6.79	6.07	2.44
6	Landscape	6.07	5.92	2.72
7	Natural resources	6.07	5.87	2.68
8	Geography	5.36	5.05	3.1
9	Town planning	5	5.05	2.65
10	Infrastructure	4.29	4.74	2.58
11	Architecture	4.29	4.39	2.63
12	Climate	4.29	4.23	2.65
13	Economy	3.93	4.13	2.6
14	Business structure	3.21	3.57	2.39

Table 11. **Transfer of territory value to brand value**

Based on the opinions compiled, it seems patent that the typical value on which to base the projection of a competitive territory image – the DNA – is identity. Indeed, in this context, identity is an extremely broad term which can be transformed into values and/or features such as culture, heritage, human capital, history or landscape, among other concepts. Accordingly, branding and promotion strategies will, in all likelihood, depend on the unique (tangible and intangible) resources available and on the positioning sought. This all leads to one clear objective: projecting a competitive identity among the local community and to the world.

Question 10. In a future scenario, the role the territory brand should play in societies should be as follows:

No.	Response	Median	Mean	Dev.
1	A major asset in the process of drawing in investors, talent, infrastructure, events, etc.	8	7.43	3.08
2	A comprehensive, cross-disciplinary communication strategy of the values and/or features of a specific place	7	6.14	2.66
3	A new reality for managing territories based on criteria involving the creation of identity, image and a positive reputation	6	6	2.83
4	A strategy affording new opportunities and quality of life	6	5.86	3.28
5	A prominent strategy of public diplomacy	2	2.86	2.68

Table 12. **Future forecasts for territory brands**

On account of the value afforded by the Delphi method in terms of future forecasts, the experts were asked about the role to be played by territory brands in coming years. Their consideration as instruments for in drawing in events, investment and talent was the highest rated option by the panellists. The capacity of the brand as a device for communication capable of pooling the assets of a place in a cross-disciplinary manner to create a positive reputation were the second and third highest rated options, respectively. The creation of new opportunities for territories and the improvement of the quality of life of its citizens are options that stem directly from the preferences described by the Delphi members during the first round.

4. Discussion and conclusions

In light of the responses provided by the experts, it seems clear that the nature and functions of territory brands do share some common ground with traditional commercial brands. Nonetheless, this research does show there are some differences to be taken into consideration. Although the purposes typically attributed to a brand (positioning, distinction, establishment of reputation, provision of a comparative and competitive advantage) are entirely comparable, the public importance of brands linked to places requires a distinguished handling according to the experts.

Indeed, the processes for the design and/or conceptualisation of the territory brand call for proactive involvement on the part of citizens. Hence, the study highlights the need for various parties to become involved in constructing the brand (with participation from governments, private enterprise and even citizens) to pool as many voices as possible in designing and launching place brands. Likewise, the research also envisages the need to emphasise the management aspect and not solely focus on heavy communication of territory brands.

According to the panellists, brands linked to spaces are also a device for territory management (town, environment, social planning, etc.) and, accordingly, should be understood beyond their ability to project a positive image of a geographical area. Similarly, the characteristic as a public asset pertaining to the territory brand means that it interacts in a sphere of work that is as complex as it is difficult to control (the public sector, the private sector and citizens), as opposed to commercial brands which are imbued in the realm of the positioning of products and/or services (that can easily be segmented). Therefore, the economic prosperity of territories and their people should be one of the key goals to be reached by place brands.

Although on account of their origin (pertaining to commercial brands), the study of territory brands has been substantially centred on the field of marketing, the Delphi shows the need to incorporate other disciplines in order to handle and research the issue. Thus, in addition to brand management, communication and marketing, the multi-faceted nature of the association between brand and place calls for the incorporation of disciplines such as sociology, economics, town planning and geography, among others.

The link established between a brand and a geographical area is based on a fundamental reason: the need to employ a device to swiftly, simply project a territory identity both locally and to the world which, on account of its characteristics, is capable of competing on the unforeseen market of places. Therefore, the brand lends the territory the added value of competitiveness (competitive identity). This leads us to cast doubt on whether the importance currently placed on the place brand could end up conditioning (or is even conditioning at the present time) the morphology of geographical areas, in other words, the urban planning and organisation of territory.

Overall, we consider that the responses of the Delphi members give rise to the definition of certain essential characteristics and functions to be carried out by territory brands, the primary goal of this article. In some cases, these characteristics fall in line with those pertaining to commercial brands, while there are substantial differences in other cases. This study to associate product and/or service brands with place brands has made it possible to answer the research question raised at the start of the article in order to settle the foremost differences existing between both types of brands.

Furthermore, the considerations of the panellists give rise to a proposed state of affairs in terms of territory brands. On account of its prospective value, the Delphi method has enabled us to lay out a future scenario linked to the performance of place brands, thereby addressing the two supplementary objectives raised in this research project.

Lastly, it is necessary to point out that the initial hypothesis of this research can be confirmed, albeit with certain alterations. In essence, place brands and commercial brands use highly similar working standards, especially with regard to their conceptualisation and subsequent management. Nonetheless, the fact that territory brands are publicly owned makes them more complicated to manage, disperses the interested parties and calls for teamwork from three spheres: the public administration, private enterprise and citizens.

In any event, the research carried out shows that the increasing competitiveness among territories lays out a new reality to incorporate into the management of places, once again focussed on attaining added value by projecting a competitive identity. This distinguishing value and its subsequent projection calls for the use of a brand understood as a common asset and a vital device in projecting modern, territorial identities.

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