The Necessity for a Local Level of Gastronomic Tourism Standardization: The Case of Torino's City Branding

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Abstract This study investigates the role and opportunities of gastronomy within the cultural re-branding of a city. Entrepreneurs and tourism authorities can emphasize the uniqueness of local cuisine but the common offer by different companies also requires alignment and standardization in order to define what they have in common, to assure product and service quality, and to communicate the service offer to potential customers. This creates a tension between standardization and authenticity: both concepts seem to contradict each other but these are needed in combination. This paradox is explored using the case of an alternative food network in the Italian city Torino. Our findings show the potential of this combined approach of authenticity and local standardization.

Keywords Tourism entrepreneurship • Cultural branding • Local gastronomy • Standardization

1 Introduction

Academic attention for urban tourism[1] pays little attention to the broader context in which tourism creates benefits as well as challenges for urban host communities. Apart from the benefits for companies as well as tourists, tourism brings problems

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[1]E.g. the workshop entitled "Integrating City Tourism(s) into the Urban Research Agenda, in L' Aquila, Italy, 2015, organized as a follow up to the 3rd Global Summit on City Tourism organized by the United Nations' World Tourism Organization entitled "New Paradigms in City Tourism Development".

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such as cultural commodification and gentrification. Such issues have led to growing discontent with tourism in many cities in Europe and beyond, despite the business advantages tourism brings. Paradoxically, sustainable differential advantages in the worldwide economy are often embedded in local assets, including knowledge, creativity, innovation and corporate-community collaborative initiatives. Another paradox is the emerging conviction that sustainable economic growth depends increasingly on the Social Progress Imperative for creating a shared language, gender equality and common goals. Public-private partnerships create opportunities to maximize social progress and minimize discontent. So the challenge is how to overcome such paradoxes and to preserve or even strengthen local authenticity while also benefiting from the efficiency and effectiveness of modern business approaches, and to do this in a cooperation between local stakeholders. Zeng et al. (2012) show that the paradox of authenticity and standardization can be bridged at company level, this paper explores how to do that at the level of a local community of companies and other stakeholders. We focus on developing common standards for locally produced authentic food to support gastronomic tourism, and take the case of the Italian city of Torino.

The paper is organized as follows. First, the literature review discusses the fields that need to get interconnected: community-based tourism, city branding, authenticity and standardization, and then highlights the combination of authenticity and standardization in alternative food networks. Next, the research methodology is presented. Then we present the empirical study on gastronomic tourism in Torino. In the last section we discuss our findings.

2 Literature

2.1 Community-Based Tourism

The past 50 years show expansion of transnational corporations. Olins (1999) suggests that TNCs and government entities have traded identities, i.e., they "are taking on each other's role". This is a difficult context for those who seek production and consumption at a small scale, and authenticity. Authentic geo-brands often must "break away from the hegemonic grasp of tour operators and the oligopoly of wealthy elites at the national level" (Timothy 2002, p. 150). This has spawned a community-based tourism approach, which advocates a form of tourism that seeks to leverage the contribution of a variety of tourist goods and services, including the engagement of residents toward community goals thereby warranting public support (Murphy 1985, p. 37). Community-based tourism uses cultural heritage assets to respond to the curiosity motives of recreational travellers. They can experience recreation in different ways, encompassing active physical and/or passive elements. Passive recreation tends to be dependent on the media (e.g. films, television, magazines) and life-entertainment (e.g. concerts, theatre and stage productions).

Active recreation increasingly involves travel for leisure purposes (e.g., learning a language, sport and related leisure activities, gastronomy).

A community is an independent group of people that share values and institutions (Brieger 2005) tied by mutual trust based on intense personal interactions (Hayami 1997, p. 241). However, the multitude of stakeholders and stakes may hinder common decision making in community-based tourism development (Orbasli 2000). Insiders (residents and local entrepreneurs and the public sector) and outsiders (international investors and business interests as well as tourists) may compete for scarce local resources to meet their own interests (Go and Trunfio 2011). The challenge is how to align these interests to preserve the authentic qualities over time. To achieve this, new forms of clustering and networked partnership are needed (Vaňová et al. 2010) such as Regional Innovation Ecosystems (Markula and Kune 2015). These broaden the role of enterprises, public sector, citizens and universities towards participative innovation processes and experiences, to yield multiple gains and insights in return. Place branding requires involvement of stakeholders, both as service providers in the branding process and as "brand ambassadors." Participation of local people is especially important because companies deliver the services and local residents impact the goodwill of the place brand, contributing to competitive positioning and stakeholder satisfaction (Freire 2009).

2.2 Rebranding Post-Industrial Cities

Tourists experience place encounters i.e., situations shaped by cultural and historical features, social and infrastructural contexts as well as the values and representations of political entities and projected images (Fan 2006; Govers et al. 2007). For instance, many cities with an industrial past are currently engaged in a process of repositioning their cultural identity and want to be perceived as creative by internal and external stakeholders (Vanolo 2008). The identities of post-industrial cities are often monolithic in nature: rooted in the success of a specific industry that tends to yield homogeneity in economic, political and social arenas (Vanolo 2008; Cannavale and Canestrino 2009). Rebranding such a post-industrial city is more difficult than its corporate variant (e.g. an airline brand). This challenges the local authorities to align the contributions of service providers to balance the assembly of components like authenticity and hospitality that contribute to create a new profile building on local values and intangible heritage.

Because the aim of an effective place brand is to help circulate its "products" within the market place, it is necessary that it remains within the relational context of functional similarity—standardization (Aronczyk 2008, p. 53). Therefore, the elements of the tourism supply need to be in line with the needs of consumers, with place branding efforts aimed at matching the demand and supply sides of the market (Go 2005). In most local areas the tourism sector consists of a heterogeneous supply of small and medium-sized enterprises, including transportation, attractions,

restaurants and accommodation. However, the tourist demand is also heterogeneous as tourists have different incomes, tastes, interests and attitudes. Accordingly, to satisfy their needs, tourists are in search for a 'product constellation' (Go 2005), i.e. a group of relevant suppliers capable of bundling their resources in a wider network towards the joint creation of a value proposition which responds to the (mass-)customized needs of a particular tourist profile. In this sense, territorial units need to draw upon common associations of stakeholders (Fan 2006).

2.3 Authenticity

Due to the alleged alienation consumers suffer in modern society they are increasingly in search of authentic places or travel experiences (Zeng et al. 2012). Consequently, authenticity has become a powerful marketing and branding tool in tourism. Authenticity should be rooted in a concept that is not solely the outcome of a contemporaneous production line, but rather aligned to history and tradition (Taylor 2001). A territorial unit's identity is critical to the delivery of authentic services and raises a dilemma with regard to the direction of causality of place branding—does the identity of a city allow this city to claim a competitive position? Or does the place branding process influence the city to shape its competitive place brand identity? (Fan 2006). Go and Govers (2011) and Hankinson (2004) claim that organic (authentic) images for cities with a history of industrial decline require more than marketing communications, so that the assembly of a value proposition reflects the identity of the destination. Moreover, Askegaard and Kjeldgaard (2007) suggest that local authenticity does not always require traditional and historical connotations. They claim that place branding practices that draw upon local cultural capital offer potential to construct a local culture, which does not only refer to nostalgic attributes, but also to the future and modernity.

2.4 Standardization

In tourism, transnational corporations (TNCs) have levered standardization to establish and sustain consistent service quality and brand image, in an attempt to outperform competitors unable to do so (Go and Ritchie 1990). The uniformity brought about by McDonaldization (Ritzer 2012) is not appreciated by everybody, many mobile, knowledgeable and value-oriented international tourists would prefer more appealing alternatives (Weiermair and Steinhauser 2003). Martinez Badillo (2008) suggests to use standardization for common branding of the specific local touristic offer. This would be a combination of the national and global level of standardization—local to describe unique characteristics, international to specify

an internet platform accessible all over the world to present this touristic offer to tourists.

In his seminal book *Standardization—A New Discipline*, Verman (1973) distinguishes five levels of standardization: the individual, company, association, national and international level. In this list, the local level is missing. Currently, the emphasis is on the international level—'standards facilitate co-ordination and co-operation on a global scale' (Brunsson and Jacobsson 2000, p. 1). Most national standard bodies advocate the importance of global standards. For example, the German standardization strategy emphasizes: 'German standardization has a consistent international agenda. (...) Germany is at the forefront in bringing future-oriented topics into standardization on a worldwide scale' (DIN 2016). Finally, Verman (1973) already signalled that associations had shifted their geo-organizational perspective from the national to the global level. The American Society for Testing and Materials, for instance, repositioned itself as ASTM International. And NGOs challenge governments and industries to set their standards in a way that encompasses the global level (Peters et al. 2009).

Though the local level was not included in Verman's (1973) dimensions of standardization these were common in Europe during the Middle Ages when local guilds set their own standards related to craftsmanship (Epstein 2008). Currently a movement can be observed which resembles the Middle Ages, wherein smaller territorial units retain an important role and render the concept of localization increasingly relevant (Mateo and Seisdedos 2010; Go and Trunfio 2011). This paper explores to what extent territorial units might apply a local level of standardization to enhance their attractiveness by developing identities and market these in a distinctive and sustainable manner (McKinsey Global Institute 2011) for competitive advantage and simultaneously attempt to mitigate human feelings of anxiety (Giddens 1991, pp. 38–39).

2.5 Alternative Food Networks

A form of combination of authenticity and standardization can already be observed in Alternative Food Networks (AFNs). AFNs share four main characteristics: a short distance between producers and consumers, small-sized farms, the existence of localized purchasing venues, and a commitment to the environmental, economic and social dimensions of production (Venn et al. 2006; Renting et al. 2003). They emerge as a consequence of changing consumer behaviour, with increased emphasis upon diversity and distinctiveness of food. Locally produced food offers potential to enhance a destination's attractiveness. An appropriate combination of localization and globalization, including local, national, regional and global standards for food, food production and food consumption, can contribute to the convergent development of an urban area, economically, socially and environmentally, and also provide a theme for destination branding (Rand and Heath 2006).

AFNs attach information and quality cues to products, allowing consumers to make a value judgment in relation to their knowledge of the production method and place (Renting et al. 2003; Venn et al. 2006). Transparent information in the form of certificates may give consumers justified confidence in producers' claims (de Vries et al., 2010). It provides consumers with value-laden information, delivering them the spatial-temporal link necessary to discern the indexical authenticity of a product as described by Grayson and Martinec (2004). Consumers are therefore more involved in AFNs, while in conventional food networks they largely remain passive (Morgan and Murdoch 2000).

Extended AFNs make use of authenticity to deliver satisfactory consumer experiences (Renting et al. 2003). Zeng et al. (2012) show that authenticity can be combined with standardization to commoditize traditional produce and expand market opportunities. Standards and certifications in AFNs allow for the differentiation of given products from conventional equivalents, based on quality, processes and place of production (Higgins et al. 2008). Arguably, standards become even more stringent for AFNs, as delivery of superior quality and authenticity is crucial to the survival of the network, under conditions of increasing regulatory and ethical boundaries (Morgan and Murdoch 2000).

Standards and certifications for AFNs render benefits for both producers and consumers but are also a cause of concern for AFNs. Smaller producers lack resources to meet standards or may have difficulties to obtain certification (de Vries et al. 2009; Higgins et al. 2008). Standardization has the potential to deplete an expression of local identity, a key driver of authenticity (Zeng et al. 2012). This occurs, for example, when AFNs give in to the demands of powerful value chain partners who apply standards and certification to raise competitiveness aimed at serving shareholder interests as opposed to a sustainable business approach which seeks to be accountable to stakeholder interests (Higgins et al. 2008).

2.6   Conclusions

In tourism, globalization and the resulting homogeneity have put into motion a counter-movement of localization and authenticity. Localization benefits from the economies of scale enabled by standardization. Standardization and authenticity seem to be conflicting concepts but Zeng et al. (2012) argue that entrepreneurs may use a combination of authenticity and standardization to meet customer wishes for authenticity in a cost-effective way and expand their business. However, they do not address the level of local host communities. First attempts can be observed to have Alternative Food Networks that combine authenticity and standardization at a local level. However, research insufficiently relates this to the broader context of city branding. This paper aims to fill this gap.

3   Methodology

The complex and contemporary nature of the subject justify explorative research suing a case study design (Yin 1994; Kitchin and Tate 2000). The Italian city of Torino was selected as a case, because its regeneration program seeks to improve its urban image and the cultural sector's capacity to raise tourism expenditures. Torino is the capital of the Piedmont region known for its authentic food—this combination seems to be an opportunity. A gastronomic tourism approach then would seek to pair the authenticity to local standards aimed at the preservation of local food traditions and knowledge transfer which contributes to social progress within the region and allows to better communicate the city's offer to external people.

We need empirical data and use triangulation to obtain these: in-depth interviews as the primary source of information, combined with desk research. Secondary data collection took place one month prior to the interviews, allowing for a greater degree of insight, related to the quality and completeness thereby reducing risks (Malhotra and Birks 2007). We contacted 27 members of Torino's gastronomy sector via email for participation. Interviews could be arranged with 12 of them, enough to reflect the heterogeneity of Torino's gastronomic tourism system. Included were the views of administrative bodies representing the local, provincial and economic dimensions, as well as representatives of the gastronomy network. All participants were provided with the same questions. Questions were first developed, screened and approved in English, and subsequently translated in Italian to limit information loss during the interview process. The questionnaire was pre-tested among three stakeholders. Three interviews were face to face, the other ones by phone. Furthermore, interviews were recorded, allowing for reliable transcripts from which categories and data reduction processes could follow (Maimbo and Pervan 2005). Interview time varied between 26 and 56 min (average 43 min). Verbatim transcript length varied between 2254 and 5689 words (average 3662 words).

4   Case Study: Torino's Slow Food Approach

4.1   Torino: Historical Ingredients for Creative City Branding

Torino is located within the Piedmont province, in the northwest of Italy, and is the country's fourth largest city (Camera di Commercio di Torino 2011; Crisci and Heins 2005). The city witnessed various "eras" (Fig. 1) each of which left their specific legacy. For instance, the Roman (military) era is reflected in Torino's urban layout: a squared blueprint with two primary perpendicular roads (Visita Torino 2011a). The Risorgimento era left the city with a style of architecture, arts, urban landscapes and rhetoric of the foregone monarchy manifest in the royal residences
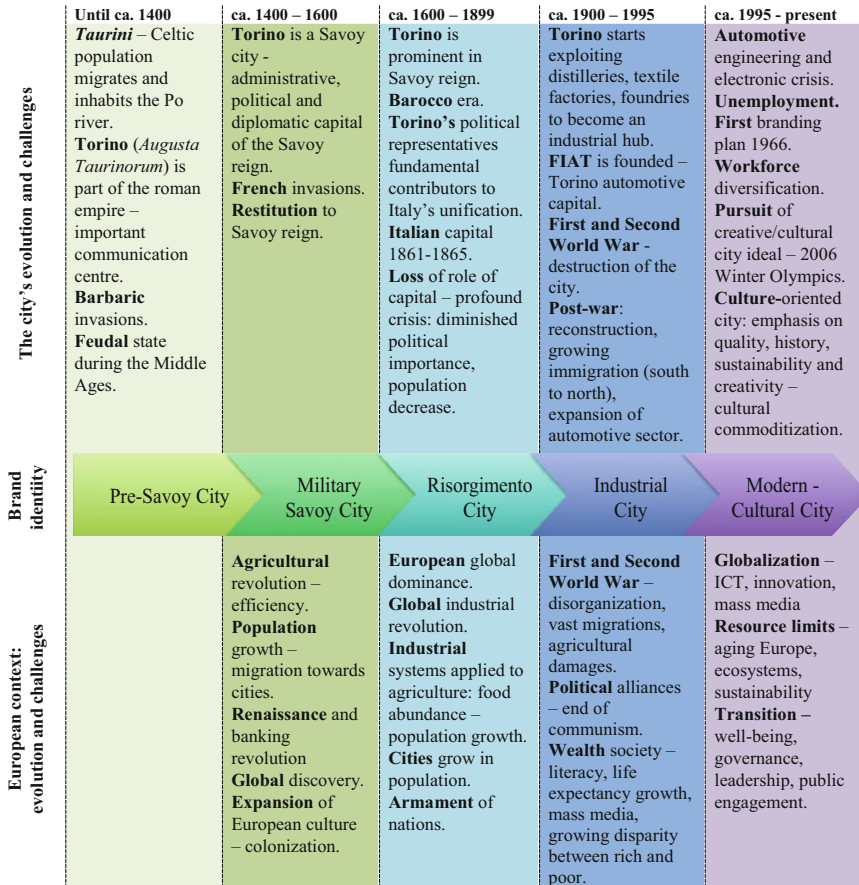
	Until ca. 1400	ca. 1400 – 1600	ca. 1600 – 1899	ca. 1900 – 1995	ca. 1995 - present
The city's evolution and challenges	*Taurini* – Celtic population migrates and inhabits the Po river. **Torino** (*Augusta Taurinorum*) is part of the roman empire – important communication centre. **Barbaric** invasions. **Feudal** state during the Middle Ages.	**Torino** is a Savoy city - administrative, political and diplomatic capital of the Savoy reign. **French** invasions. **Restitution** to Savoy reign.	**Torino** is prominent in Savoy reign. **Barocco** era. **Torino's** political representatives fundamental contributors to Italy's unification. **Italian** capital 1861-1865. **Loss** of role of capital – profound crisis: diminished political importance, population decrease.	**Torino** starts exploiting distilleries, textile factories, foundries to become an industrial hub. **FIAT** is founded – Torino automotive capital. **First and Second World War** - destruction of the city. **Post-war**: reconstruction, growing immigration (south to north), expansion of automotive sector.	**Automotive** engineering and electronic crisis. **Unemployment.** **First** branding plan 1966. **Workforce** diversification. **Pursuit** of creative/cultural city ideal – 2006 Winter Olympics. **Culture**-oriented city: emphasis on quality, history, sustainability and creativity – cultural commoditization.
Brand identity	Pre-Savoy City	Military Savoy City	Risorgimento City	Industrial City	Modern - Cultural City
European context: evolution and challenges		**Agricultural** revolution – efficiency. **Population** growth – migration towards cities. **Renaissance** and banking revolution **Global** discovery. **Expansion** of European culture – colonization.	**European** global dominance. **Global** industrial revolution. **Industrial** systems applied to agriculture: food abundance – population growth. **Cities** grow in population. **Armament** of nations.	**First and Second World War** – disorganization, vast migrations, agricultural damages. **Political** alliances – end of communism. **Wealth** society – literacy, life expectancy growth, mass media, growing disparity between rich and poor.	**Globalization** – ICT, innovation, mass media **Resource limits** – aging Europe, ecosystems, sustainability **Transition** – well-being, governance, leadership, public engagement.

Fig. 1 Torino brand genealogy. Sources: Visita Torino (2011a, b); Gambarotta et al. (2004)

or the renowned *Via Po'* (Visita Torino 2011b; Comoli 2012). Torino's industrial era leaves numerous unoccupied factories throughout the territory.

In addition, the city can be characterized by the notion of "high quality" derived from the historical presence of the royal family and the city's political importance: examples are the refinement of high quality fabrics and tobacco, followed by the engineering and automotive sectors (Palmucci and Visconti 2012).

Torino's recent history (1900 onwards) is linked to the automotive sector as headquarters of FIAT are in the city. Upon production peaks (1960–1970) the factory employed a third of the city's work force, and Torino became a "one company" manufacturing city (Huxley 2010). The 1980s–1990s automotive crisis led the city into a deep socio-economic crisis. Between 1990 and 2002, FIAT's Turin based production decreased from 60% to 30% of total production and resulted in a social as well as an economic crisis for Turin, and a 20% increase in the

unemployment rate (Colantino et al. 2014). Torino was forced to engage in a process of deliberation regarding its future to overcome its manufacturing image (Huxley 2010; Verri 2005). In response, public sector initiatives included the launch in 1996 of the city's first branding plan, a campaign for workforce diversification, the staging of the 2006 Winter Olympics, and the pursuit of a modern creative city. Torino's industry and its reputation have since diversified, specializing in innovative and high-tech knowledge sectors, providing alternative paths to low-skilled employment (Huxley 2010).

4.2   Slow Food

Though Torino is the capital of the Piedmont province known for its Slow Food, this food tradition has been distinct from the city's rebranding efforts. The Slow Food association was founded in 1986 by Carlo Petrini in Bra, Piedmont, as *Arcigola*. It is considered an innovative and creative response to globalized food systems (Simonetti 2012). The aim of the Slow Food association is to re-introduce and safeguard the pleasures of authenticity and traditions of food, promoting flavour uniqueness and quality (Simonetti 2012). Furthermore, the association aims to re-educate consumers to the notion of *gusto* (taste), preserving agricultural biodiversity and promoting a new model of alimentation, respectful of the environment and national identities.

Slow Food aims to re-generate and protect traditional food and wine produce by recognizing those that meet the qualities of "*buono, pulito e giusto*" (good, clean and fair). These are included in a list called "*L'Arca del Gusto*" (The Ark of Taste). Listed products must be traditionally produced (authentic), tasting well (re-education of taste) and be compatible with an economically and environmentally sustainable system (fair trade). Through this selective process, Slow Food singularizes food produce emphasizing distinctiveness (Lotti 2010). For Slow Food to endorse and support a given product, the latter must adhere to a series of standards. Here meat production serves as example to explain the selection criteria:

- The animal must belong to an autochthonous breed and be raised with respect to the environment and animal life.
- Meat product derivatives must reflect the local gastronomy history as well as *good taste*.
- The products and animals (in this case) are considered endangered (Lotti 2010).

Adherence to such criteria ensures that more general standards of quality, authenticity and sustainability are met (Slow Food West Michigan 2012). Subsequently, the methods of production can be established: This process is conducted differently for each product Slow Food supports. The SF association considers the EU-wide standards that regulate food productions and hygiene as a source which endangers conservation of agro-biodiversity (Lotti 2010). Therefore, the stringent production standards that each participant in a Slow Food presidium must meet are

designed in a collaborative process between producers and the SF association on an individual basis, further emphasizing their products' uniqueness. These standards allow variation for each product in order to respect the notion of uniqueness, respectfulness of traditions, tastiness, etc.

4.3   Analysis

Food is a pivotal aspect of any destination, being one of the four systemic aspects that compose tourism experiences (Gnoth 2002). According to consumer studies and travellers' ratings, Torino's gastronomy sector already scored (8.63) above Italy's national average (8.38) (Salamon 2008). Torino might take better integration of the famous nearby Slow Food in its gastronomy sector as a spearhead. Further emphasis may attract even more tourists and contributes to the preservation of Piedmont's traditions and gastronomic products (Lotti 2010). This helps to present Torino with an opportunity to position itself as the place to be for the sustainable production and consumption of authentic food.

So far, Torino's branding efforts did not result in a set of attributes to construct the city brand nor weights that show their relative importance (e.g. weights assigned to the role of gastronomy). The city lacks an agreed-upon set of functional attributes of authenticity. Laying down such attributes in a set of standards would allow to assign labels to companies and their processes, products and services, and this would create opportunities within the global competitive market to raise the value of tourist experiences. It would facilitate Torino's process of transforming from a post-industrial city to a creative and high-quality city.

Such a transition is not easy. Our interviews reveal a lack of effective interaction amongst SMEs in Torino. This hinders common place branding (Cannavale and Canestrino 2009; Go and Govers 2011; Huxley 2010). However, the mass media and social media harbour the potential for communicating and enforcing a local brand identity. So the time may have come for stakeholders in Torino to overcome their culture of self-made business and establish a partnership for city branding.

Quality is inherent to Torino's reputation stretching to a number of sectors that operate or have operated in the city:

- High quality textile factories—a legacy left by the royal family;
- A well-developed technological innovation sector (more than its expertise in car manufacturing—Torino's polytechnic university ranks first in Italy);
- A chocolatier sector, offering a high quality gastronomy product.

Therefore we think the notion of quality should be taken into account in the city's re-branding efforts and this may establish the bridge to the inclusion of Slow Food in the positioning of the city. Of course, this choice must be endorsed by the internal stakeholders so that a cohesive and organic image can emerge (Hankinson 2004; Go and Govers 2011), as opposed to relying primarily upon marketing and communication efforts (Govers 2012) to drive branding efforts.

To demonstrate quality of products and services, standards are needed: standards to be able to compare local performance with performance elsewhere, and standards to assure that the quality level is maintained and improved. Normally these would be international standards but in case the products and services as such are typically local, local standardization can establish and promote the level of quality. This could provide a suitable option for Torino's entrepreneurs to avoid the loss of the distinguishable aspects of their products and the weakening of reputation of both their firm and the city (Paniccia 2007).

The development of such local quality standards can build on the spirit of excellence manifest in Torino's tacit knowledge capabilities that are at the core of "indigenous" production (Paniccia 2007). This tacit knowledge should be codified in local standards which allow for a degree of flexibility for contextual differences as well as a transparency in the choice of methods. Then performance standards are better than standards that prescribe solutions (CEN/CENELEC 2010; De Vries 1998). Such standards help network partners to define criteria for their processes, products and services and these allow them to monitor quality assurance.

Torino has potential not only for a retro-marketing approach, but more importantly to advance insight to what extent the city has adopted a shared language and common goals and style. It should balance between serving the demands of the international community and preserving and presenting the memories and place associations from the past that the host city residents hold dear. Locally developed standards would aid in the preservation of the traditional business-base, pivotal to the development of a sustainable destination (Maheshawari et al. 2011).

Torino does not have to start from scratch. The guidelines developed by the Slow Food association regarding e.g., autochthonous breeds, and valorization of Piedmont's local produce have already yielded positive results for its agricultural economies and rural communities (Paniccia 2007; Maheshawari et al. 2011). The standards used for Slow Food's processes have proven relevance for thousands of local gastronomy entrepreneurs, administrative bodies and consumers around the world.

In the development of local standards, the local community may make use of international standards and guides. In particular ISO/IEC Guide 76:2008 'Development of service standards—Recommendations for addressing consumer issues' (COPOLCO 2008) can be of help: though designed with international standards in mind, this guide can also be used for the systematic development of local standards—not only for the food but also for the restaurants.

The combination of the city branding process with the standardization process links public sector initiatives with private and academic resources. It requires a combination of marketing knowledge, standardization knowledge, strategic thinking and organizational changes leading to a common ground for coordinated cooperation. The stakeholders should integrate technological, market and organizational change within a city brand based on the functional attribute of quality that spans across various sectors (Paniccia 2007). In order to enable such boundary spanning knowledge processes, Torino must transform towards networked

collaborative partnerships upon which to define inter-network functional attributes contributing to collaborative behaviour, upgrading competitiveness (Berg et al. 2008).

However, the city faces a problem. Our findings suggest that individualistic behaviour and lack of ability to think at a strategic level hinders a collective approach to branding, and impedes delivery of a coherent gastronomic tourist experience. In another study Mertens (2011) also used standardization to explore the feasibility of a partnership of bars and restaurants under a city brand umbrella and reported similar problems: lack of strategic thinking and lack of cooperation attitude, leading to sub-optimal results at both the city and the firm level.

To conclude, Torino reinvents itself as a culturally branded unit (European Commission 2007; Gambarotta et al. 2004). However, this new Torino brand identity can be further strengthened. The city leadership should rely on the community in order to manage the integration of technological, market and organizational change to accomplish a publicly engaged regeneration strategy for the city and the surrounding region. Communities of practice get underway internally by valorising new resources. The leadership must therefore be institutionalized so that local partnerships feel empowered to respond promptly and effectively to changing consumer demands and resource pressures, and to overcome individualistic behaviour of single players. Institutionalization enhances the chance of long-term continuity in ways that are valued and rewarded by the community.

5   Discussion and Conclusions

The case of Torino shows the potential of standardization to support place branding. Place branding presupposes commonality and its essential characteristics may be incorporated in standards. These can be performance standards specifying minimum quality levels for process, product or service characteristics, test methods, and standards to communicate these characteristics to external parties such as tourists. In developing such local standards, international standards may be used, but the typical local situation will necessitate either additions or modifications. Cooperation is imperative to develop such local standards. In the ancient guilds, such cooperation was institutionalized. Some local communities may already have organizations that are prepared to develop such standards. However, the combination of knowledge and skills needed to develop and implement these standards may require a knowledge-transfer framework, supported by a dedicated team based in a dedicated center. Both formal education and professional education would be well served to learn more about standards which are omnipresent in society while professionals who serve the tourism sector need to learn how standards impact their work, career and profession (de Vries 2014).

In the European context one may question whether the emergence of local standards would hinder the single European market without barriers to trade (Czaya 2007). This could in particular be the case if local products are being

exported. However, this issue is manageable, using the European Union's schemes of geographical indications and traditional specialties, known as Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), and Traditional Specialities Guaranteed (TSG). Moreover, in the case of localization, services are being delivered nearby, so there is no export and thus probably no conflict between local standards for the service offering and international or European service standards. Local standards would support the economic and cultural development of cities and in this way support the development of Europe in the direction of 'unity in diversity' (Arts et al. 2003). This would be a welcome addition to the ongoing unification, which increasingly causes irritation among European citizens and undermines trust in the common European adventure. In a similar way, the opportunities of combining authenticity and standardisation for the sake of sustainability, cultural heritage and prosperity apply all over the world, as already exemplified in the studies on Chinese restaurants (Zeng et al. 2012) and tourism in developing countries (Marinez Barbillo 2008).

This work contributes, first, to the standardization literature, which tends to ignore the local level of standardization and with a few exceptions also fails to relate to the concept of authenticity; second, to the tourism and hospitality literature by linking city branding to standardization and addressing the authenticity versus standardization issue. Our findings have managerial relevance for local entrepreneurs and tourism authorities who are capable of envisioning the potential of applying a common branding standard. Moreover, our case also shows that thinking in such a strategic way can be a challenge.

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