

Place branding research: a thematic review and future research agenda

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Abstract The growth of globalization has intensified the competition among countries, cities and regions to attract various target audiences. Places need different marketing and branding strategies to gain competitive advantage and reputation. This article presents a review of extant place branding literature and identifies various research themes. The 147 articles on place branding were identified from three major global databases published during January 2004 to April 2014 (the last 10 years) in scholarly or academic journals. These articles were examined, analyzed and categorized according to various criteria such as research themes, bibliographic data, method of study, method of data collection, types of data analysis techniques used, conceptual/theoretical frameworks proposed and geographical locations focused. Our results show that: (1) most of the articles are based on conceptual, case, and qualitative studies; (2) place brand identity emerged as a major research theme in all studies. The present article also provides avenues for future research by identifying major gaps in literature.

Keywords Place brand · Place branding · City branding · Tourism branding · Literature review

1 Introduction

Place branding research has gained much attention among academics and practitioners as due to extreme competition, places (nations, cities and regions) seek to gain competitive advantage over others. Place branding is a

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comprehensive term which encompasses destinations, nations and cities. The competition among countries, cities and regions for resources such as foreign investment, capital, talented or skilled manpower and visitors is acute today. There is also competition for enhanced image and reputation. The economic, technological, demographical and political changes have contributed towards the intensity of global business competition (Van den Berg and Braun 1999). Due to the aforementioned reasons, policy makers have been forced to adopt place branding strategies.

Place image is a significant construct of place branding and has been widely examined in context of tourism (i.e., destination image). Place image has been known as a precursor of place branding (Pike 2009). The fundamental of place branding is to build a positive place image that identifies and distinguishes places by choosing an appropriate brand element mix (Cai 2002). Place image significantly impacts tourist future behaviour intentions such intention to revisit, word of mouth (WOM) and intention to recommend to others (Alcaniz et al. 2009; Baloglu 1999). Another important construct in place branding is place brand communication. A recent study by Braun et al. (2014) has shown the impact of three types of place brand communication strategies (physical, word-of-mouth and traditional place brand communication) on attracting visitors and residents by surveying 274 place marketing professionals.

Another recent study by Konecnik Ruzzier and de Chernatony (2013) proposed an empirical place brand identity model. Place brand identity is considered as a supply side perspective of place branding which eventually influences the demand side perspective (place image) (Cai 2002; Konecnik and Gartner 2007; Merrilees et al. 2009; Pike 2009). Konecnik Ruzzier and de Chernatony (2013) argued that in order to clearly and consistently communicate with multiple target audiences, place brand must have brand identity that distinguishes one place from another.

The present study contributes to the existing body of literature in the following ways:

1. It identifies nine themes from a review of articles on place branding that have been published during January 2004 – April 2014. No prior study has made such an attempt before.
2. Before this study, literature reviews were available on papers published upto 2009. The present article expands the time line and considers publications upto 2014.
3. This study presents a nomological network which shows inter-construct relationships that have been reported in the studies considered here. This representation provides a view of all the constructs that have been examined in reviewed literature. Future researchers may examine other possible inter-relationships among constructs not shown in the network.
4. Based on an extensive literature review, various antecedents and consequents less examined hitherto have been identified, and future research directions laid down.

The objectives of this article are twofold. First, it aims to summarize, synthesize and analyze previously published work on place branding. Second, it classifies 147 studies

published in various international journals on the basis of several variables and provides future research agenda.

The rest of the paper has been structured as follows: Section 2 describes the methodology used to select relevant literature for our study. Section 3 elaborates the ways in which articles have been classified. Sections 4, 5 and 6 describe geographical context of considered studies, methodologies adopted by the studies reviewed and data collection methods followed by them respectively. Sections 7, 8 and 9 elaborate the conceptual and theoretical frameworks proposed by studies reviewed, data analysis techniques used and results of meta-analyses applied by reviewed studies respectively. Sections 10, 11 and 12 comprise nomological network of constructs, theses and dissertations identified and future research agenda respectively. Discussion and implications, and conclusion and limitations are given in Sections 13 and 14 respectively.

2 Methodology

To meet the objectives of the study, relevant studies were identified through a two-step process and were then subjected to analysis. In the first step, articles published in scholarly or academic journals on place branding during January 2004 to April, 2014 were selected. We also included relevant dissertations and theses on place branding. Book reviews, conference proceedings, working papers and publications of government and private firms were excluded. The following online databases were used for sourcing the studies:

- I. EBSCO Business Source Complete
- II. ABI/INFORM
- III. SCOPUS (see Table 1).

The articles were searched in the above mentioned online databases using the keywords “Place brand” and “Place branding” in the titles (see Table 1). These keywords were used because they have been reported to be the most preferred terminology in place marketing and place branding literature (Gertner 2011b). While the words *nation*, *country*, *city*, *region*, *destination branding and marketing* have also been widely used, they were not used for selecting articles for our study as considering

Table 1 Results database: Studies found in various electronic databases

Key terms	Number of articles found in			
	EBSCO	ABI/INFORM	SCOPUS	Total
Place brand	30	37	26	93
Place branding	80	85	65	230
Total	110	122	91	323

After removing all duplicate and irrelevant articles, 147 articles were finalized for this review

them resulted in a very great number of studies yielded by the databases used. Thus, to reduce the number of studies while keeping relevance intact, these keywords were excluded.

In the second step, the articles so collected were checked for relevance and duplication. Articles that were found irrelevant or repeated, were removed. Finally, total 147 articles were selected for this review. All articles were thoroughly read and then classified on the basis of several criteria such as article classification (based on bibliographic data), geographic context, methodology adopted, data collection methods, conceptual or theoretical framework used, and data analysis techniques used by different researchers (see Table 2).

3 Article classification

All 147 studies were classified year-wise on the basis of publishing frequency, author(s), and journals in which published (see Table 3). A graphical representation of the year-wise classification is given in Fig. 1. In this graph, if we draw a trend line, we observe a constant year-wise growth in the number of articles published each year up to December 2013. However, the period of January 2014 to April 2014 witnessed a falling trend. It is noteworthy here that the present study considers publications from January 2004 to April 2014, thus, the trend after April 2014 does not fall under the purview of this study.

The articles were further classified on the basis of journals in which published, discipline, publisher, and region (see Table 4). It was observed that the studies spread across 43 different international journals. Majority of studies were published in the following journals: Place Branding and Public Diplomacy, Journal of Place Management and Development, Journal of Brand Management, Journal of Marketing Management, European Journal of Marketing, Journal of Business Research, Town Planning Review, Marketing Review, Journal of Town and City Management, and Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism. The articles reviewed in this study have been contributed by distinct academic disciplines such as Marketing, Business and Management, Tourism, Planning, Social Science and Urban Studies. This confirms the multidisciplinary nature of place branding literature. The majority of articles reviewed were published in United Kingdom (UK) and United States (US) based journals.

Table 2 Place branding literature: Different features/variables evaluated

Variable	Basis of identification
Article Classification	Author(s), Title, Year of publication, Journal, Place of publication, Volume, Issue, Pages.
Geographic Context	Country, Region, City and others including towns, etc.
Methodology adopted	Qualitative (Cases), Quantitative and Conceptual
Data Collection Methods	Survey, Focus Group, Documents, Web contents, Interviews, etc.
Conceptual or Theoretical Frameworks	Conceptual/theoretical background of the articles.
Data Analysis Techniques used	Thematic Analysis, Content Analysis, Factor Analysis, SEM etc.

Table 3 Year-wise classification of place branding literature

Year	No. of Articles	Number of Authors	Authors	Journals
2004	8	30	Boyne and Hall (2004), Dinnie (2004), Hankinson (2004), Hosper (2004), Kotler et al. (2004), Papadopoulos (2004), Azevedo (2004), Pedersen (2004)	Place Branding and Public Diplomacy (4), Journal of Vacation Marketing (1), Intereconomics (1), International Review on Public and Non-profit Marketing (1), Journal of Urban Technology (1)
2005	7	8	Anholt (2005), Blichfeldt (2005), Dooley and Bowie (2005), Freire (2005), Kavaratzis (2005), Pant (2005), Skinner (2005),	Place Branding and Public Diplomacy (6), The Marketing Review (1),
2006	8	25	Anholt (2006a), Beracs et al. (2006), Florek et al. (2006), Gold (2006), Vitiello and Willcocks (2006), Warnaby and Bennison (2006), Anholt (2006b), Hosany et al. (2006)	Place Branding and Public Diplomacy (7), Journal of Business Research (1)
2007	9	15	Allen (2007), Gertner (2007), Gould and Skinner (2007), Hornskov (2007), Peel and Lloyd (2007), Pryor and Grossbart (2007), Rein and Shields (2007), Skinner and Kubacki (2007), Askegaard and Kjeldgaard (2007),	Design Management Review (1), Place Branding and Public Diplomacy (7), Journal of Macromarketing (1)
2008	17	28	Anholt (2008), Baum et al. (2008), Coaffee and Rogers (2008), Fullerton et al. (2008), Hall (2008a), Hanna and Rowley (2008), Iversen and Hem (2008), Mayes (2008), Medway and Warnaby (2008), Ooi (2008), Peel and Lloyd (2008), Rausch (2008), Wills and Moore (2008), Hall (2008b), Therkelsen and Halkier (2008), Van Ham (2008a, b),	Place Branding and Public Diplomacy (10), Fennia (1), European Journal of Marketing (2), Town Planning Review (1), Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing (1), Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism (1), Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science (1)
2009	8	10	Anholt (2009), Jacobsen (2009), Daramola-Martin (2009), Forristal and Lehto (2009), Freire (2009), Zenker (2009), Andersson and Ekman (2009), Ashworth (2009),	Place Branding and Public Diplomacy (3), Journal of Place Management & Development (3), Journal of Brand Management (1), European Spatial Research and Policy (1)
2010	12	19	Anholt (2010), Hankinson (2010), Hansen (2010), Hildreth (2010), Houliez (2010), Kaplan et al. (2010), Metaxas (2010), Rizzi and Dioli (2010), Ryan and Mizerski (2010), Syssner (2010), Lichrou et al. (2010), Ashworth (2010)	Place Branding and Public Diplomacy (9), European Journal of Marketing (1), Journal of Town & City Management (2)
2011	19	30	Boisen et al. (2011), Clifton (2011), Govers (2011), Hanna and Rowley (2011), Kostanski (2011), Lindstedt (2011), Maheshwari et al. (2011), Mak (2011), Ren and Blichfeldt (2011), Sevin (2011), Skinner (2011), Sneed et al. (2011), Van Assche and Chien Lo (2011),	Place Branding and Public Diplomacy (7), Journal of Place Management & Development (5), European Planning Studies (1), Journal of Marketing Management (2), Journal of Brand Management (2), Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism (1), Marketing Review (1),

Table 3 (continued)

Year	No. of Articles	Number of Authors	Authors	Journals
2012	21	51	Zenker and Martin (2011), Zenker (2011), Kalandides (2011), Aitken and Campelo (2011), Gertner (2011a, b), Bodet and Lacassagne (2012), Freire (2012), Giovanardi (2012), Hanna and Rowley (2012), Harrison-Walker (2012), Horlings (2012), Jacobsen (2012), Jansson (2012), Johansson (2012), Kavaratzis (2012), Kemp et al. (2012), Kerr and Balakrishnan (2012), Klijn et al. (2012), Martinez (2012), Mettepenningen et al. (2012), Orth et al. (2012), Pigman (2012), Rothschild et al. (2012), Tantawi and Youssef (2012), Gustavsson and Elander (2012), Konecnik Ruzzier and Petek (2012),	Place Branding and Public Diplomacy (7), Journal of Place Management & Development (2), European Sport Management Quarterly (1), Academy of Marketing Studies Journal (1), Urban Studies (1), Journal of Product & Brand Management (1), Public Management Review (1), Journal of Town & City Management (1), Sociologia Ruralis (1), Journal of Business Research (1), Journal of Management History (1), African Journal of Economic & Management Studies (1), Local Environment (1), Anatolia – An International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research (1)
2013	31	52	Boland (2013), Braun et al. (2013), Chan and Marafa (2013), Giovanardi et al. (2013), Hildreth (2013), Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013), Konecnik and de Chernatony (2013), Lucarelli and Brorström (2013), Melewar and Dennis (2013), Porter (2013), Taha (2013), Tobiasa and Wahl (2013), Zakarevicius and Lionikaite (2013), Zavattaro (2013), Zenker and Beckmann (2013a), Brown et al. (2013), Cavicchi et al. (2013), San Eugenio Vela (2013a, b), García et al. (2013), Govers (2013), Hakala and Öztürk (2013), King and Crommelin (2013), Lemmetyinen et al. (2013), Mittilä and Lepistö (2013), Ryu and Swinney (2013), Sevin (2013), Vuorinen and Vos (2013), Zenker and Beckmann (2013b), Hanna and Rowley (2013a), Hanna and Rowley (2013b),	Place Branding and Public Diplomacy (11), Journal of Place Management & Development (3), Marketing Theory (2), Journal of Business Research (1), The Marketing Review (2), Environmental Communication (1), Architecture, City and Environment (1), Land Use Policy (1), Management of Organizations: Systematic Research (1), Administrative Theory & Praxis (1), Journal of Marketing Management (2), International Food and Agribusiness Management Review (1), Boletín de la Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles (1), Journal of Brand management (1), Town Planning Review (2)
2014	7	12	Campelo et al. (2014), Cull (2014), Freire (2014), Hall (2014), Zenker and Rutter (2014), Alekseyevna and Viktorovna (2014), Hoyng (2014),	Place Branding and Public Diplomacy (2), Journal of Travel Research (1), Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism (1), Cities (1), World Applied Sciences Journal (1), Cultural Studies (1)

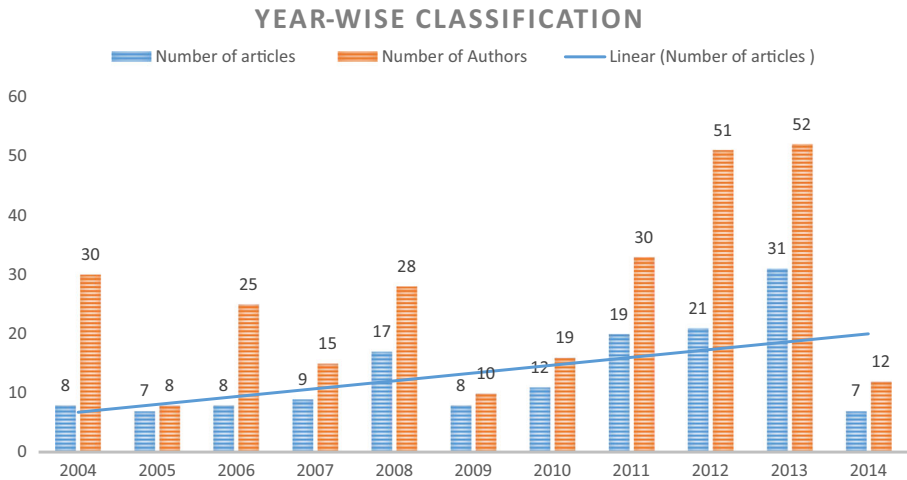


Fig. 1 Year-wise classification of articles published, and authors involved

Journals from other geographical areas such as Netherlands, Germany, Lithuania, etc. have comparatively lesser representation in place branding literature.

3.1 Research themes of total reviewed articles

A review of the 147 articles led to the identification of the following themes: brand identity, stakeholder aspect, place brand image, planning and strategy, general aspect, promotional aspect, sustainable aspect, place brand architecture (umbrella branding) and place brand personality. The sample also included literature reviews and other themes such as place brand equity, place brand experience and ethical issues in place branding.

The majority of articles were based on the theme place brand identity (52 articles, 35.4 %) (see Fig. 2). Our findings indicate that researchers have focused more on the various aspects of brand identity (cultural, security, sense of place, political issues, narratives, environmental issues and tangible and intangible assets of a place) and its role in place branding development. The environmental issues of any place have a bearing on its image, and any change in the environment (e.g., weather, beauty) may lead to a change in the brand identity of the place. For example, tourists generally go to a popular tourist spot to enjoy its weather and beauty. If however, due to whatever reasons, the weather and beauty of the area undergoes changes, the influx of tourists will also most probably decrease because the identity (place brand identity) of the place is no more associated with the same beauty anymore.

The next most studied theme was found to be stakeholder aspect followed by planning and strategy.

4 Geographical context of studies

We observed that various countries, cities and regions have been considered by different scholars for study. Of all the articles reviewed, 21 studies focused on country

Table 4 Journal-wise classification of articles

S.No.	Name of the Journal	No. of Papers	Discipline	Publisher Name	Region
1.	Place Branding and Public Diplomacy	73	Marketing	Palgrave Macmillan	UK
2.	Journal of Place Management and Development	13	Marketing	Emerald Group	UK
3.	Journal of Marketing Management	04	Marketing	Taylor & Francis	UK
4.	Journal of Brand Management	04	Marketing	Palgrave Macmillan	UK
5.	The Marketing Review	04	Marketing	Westburn Publishers	UK
6.	European Journal of Marketing	03	Marketing	Emerald Group	UK
7.	Journal of Business Research	03	Management	Elsevier Inc.	Netherlands
8.	Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism	03	Tourism & Hospitality	Routledge (T &F)	UK
9.	Journal of Town & City Management	03	Urban Planning & Place marketing & branding	Henry Stewart Publications	UK
10.	Town Planning Review	03	Planning	Liverpool University Press	UK
11.	Marketing Theory	02	Marketing	Sage Publications	US
12.	Academy of Marketing Studies Journal	01	Marketing	Allied Academies	US
13.	Journal of Macro marketing	01	Marketing	Sage Publications	US
14.	Journal of Product & Brand Management	01	Marketing	Emerald Group	UK
15.	International Review on Public and Non Profit Marketing	01	Marketing (Public & Non Profit)	Springer Verlag	Germany
16.	Journal of Vacation Marketing	01	Tourism	Sage Publications	US
17.	Journal of Travel Research	01	Tourism	Sage Publications	US
18.	European Sport Management Quarterly	01	Management and Tourism	Routledge (T &F)	UK
19.	Journal of Management History	01	Management	Emerald Group Publishing	UK
20.	Management of Organizations: Systematic Research	01	Business & Management	Vytautas Magnus University	Lithuania
21.	Urban Studies	01	Urban Studies	Sage Publications	US
22.	Architecture, City and Environment	01	Urban Studies	Universitat Politecnica de Catalunya	Spain
23.	Cities	01	Urban Policy	Elsevier Limited	Netherlands
24.	Design Management Review	01	Design Management & Strategy	Design Management Institute	US
25.	Sociologia Ruralis	01	Social Sciences: (Sociology &	Blackwell Publishing	UK

Table 4 (continued)

S.No.	Name of the Journal	No. of Papers	Discipline	Publisher Name	Region
26.	Environmental Communication	01	Political Science) Environmental Science and Management	Taylor & Francis Group	UK
27.	African Journal of Economic and Management Studies	01	Economics	Emerald Group Publishing	UK
28.	Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science	01	Sociology and Political Science	Sage Publications	US
29.	European Planning Studies	01	Planning	Routledge (T &F)	UK
30.	Land Use Policy	01	Planning (urban & rural land use)	Elsevier Limited	Netherlands
31.	Public Management Review	01	Public Management	T & F Group	UK
32.	Administrative Theory & Praxis	01	Public administration theory	M.E. Sharpe, Inc.	US
33.	Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing	01	Travel and tourism	Routledge (T&F)	UK
34.	Cultural Studies	01	Social Sciences	Routledge (T&F)	UK
35.	Anatolia	01	Tourism & Hospitality	Routledge (T&F)	UK
36.	Journal of Urban Technology	01	Urban Studies	Routledge (T&F)	UK
37.	Inter-economics	01	Business and Economics	Springer Science & Business Media	Netherlands
38.	World Applied Sciences Journal	01	Multidisciplinary	IDOSI	UAE
39.	European Spatial Research and Policy	01	Planning and Development,	Lodz University Press	Poland
40.	International Food and Agribusiness Management Review	01	Agricultural and Biological Sciences: Food Science	International Food and Agribusiness Management Asso.	US
41.	Boletín de la Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles	01	Social Science (Geography)	Association of Spanish Geographers	Spain
42.	Local Environment	01	Environmental Science	Routledge (T&F)	UK
43.	Fennia	01	Social Science	Geographical Society of Finland	Finland

context, 28 on city context, and 17 on region context. In 4 studies, scholars mentioned both city and region (e.g., Freire 2007; Sysner 2010). Twenty two studies considered

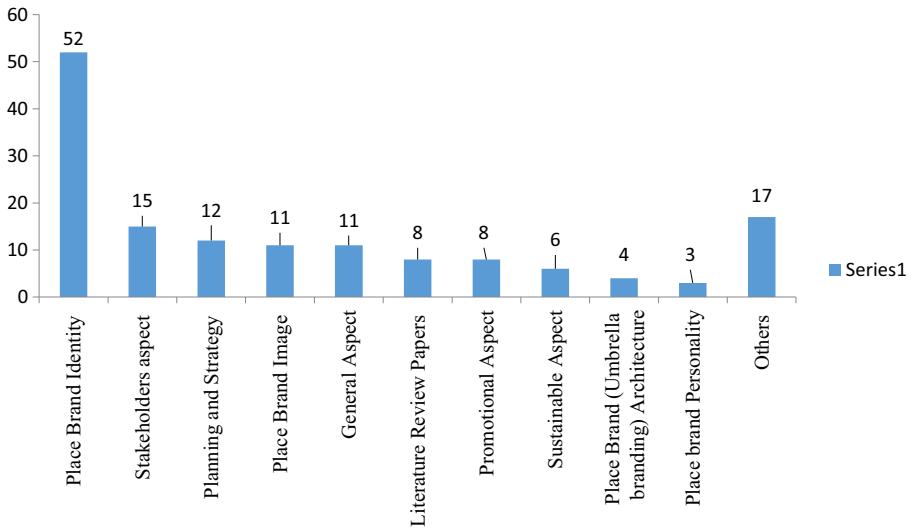


Fig. 2 Research Themes (Total sample articles reviewed)

locations such as islands, continents, towns, states and rural areas while 55 studies did not specify any location. The UK emerged as the most widely studied geographical context in a majority of past studies (e.g., Boyne and Hall 2004; Skinner 2005). Liverpool (UK) was the area of study of most researchers who conducted city based research. The Oresund Region (Europe) has been studied mostly in region based studies. The countries, cities and regions examined in most of the studies were largely located in the European continent. Place branding studies focusing on North American, African and Asian continents are rare in studied literature. It is noteworthy that the words ‘town’ and ‘city’ have been used in our study on the basis of their usage in the articles reviewed. In many articles, the two terms have been used interchangeably.

5 Methodology adopted by the studies reviewed

All 147 studies were further analyzed on the basis of methodology adopted. It was observed that 97 studies were empirical while 50 studies were non-empirical in nature. Thus, empirical studies accounted for 66 % of the total number of studies reviewed, and used qualitative, quantitative and mixed (combination of qualitative and quantitative) methodological approaches. These empirical studies were further divided into case studies and research studies. The research studies included all those studies which used qualitative, quantitative and both qualitative and quantitative data. Of total 97 empirical studies, 76 (78 %) studies used qualitative data and 16 (17 %) studies used quantitative data. The remaining 5 (5 %) studies used both qualitative and quantitative data. Studies using qualitative data followed various approaches such as multi-sited ethnography, social representation, hermeneutic, phenomenological, ideographic, narrative and semiotic. Different theories such as actor network, grounded and historical were also used in qualitative studies. All reviewed studies were classified as case-studies, conceptual

and research studies. Research themes of these studies were also identified. On the other hand, non-empirical studies (34 %) were mostly conceptual in nature and mainly included editorials, opinion pieces and review of previous literature.

5.1 Case studies

5.1.1 Classification based on geographical location

In the present review, 46 case studies (47 % of the total number of empirical studies) were identified which focused on different countries ($n=7$; 15.2 %), cities ($n=14$; 30.4 %), regions ($n=11$; 23.9 %), both city and region ($n=1$; 2.17 %) and others ($n=11$; 23.9 %). Location was not mentioned in two case studies. Of total seven country based case studies, four case studies used single location (South Africa, Armenia, Denmark and Singapore), while the other three focused on multiple locations (EU, US, China, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway, UK and Scotland). Of total 14 studies, 10 city based case studies used single location such as Dundee, Liverpool and Sydney (e.g., Peel and Lloyd 2008; Daramola-Martin 2009; Kerr and Balakrishnan 2012) and four cases used multiple cities (e.g., Coaffee and Rogers 2008; Rizzi and Dioli 2010; Taha 2013). Liverpool (UK) was the most examined in city context case studies.

Out of total 11 region based case studies, seven focused on a single region (e.g., Hornskov 2007; Mak 2011; Porter 2013), and the Oresund region was most widely examined. The other four case studies considered multiple regions such as Gyor, Styria and Wales (US), Tuscany (Italy), Minnesota and Missouri (US) (e.g., Van Assche and Chien Lo 2011; Clifton 2011). The only case study based on both city and region contexts (Syssner 2010) used various cities and regions of Sweden. The case studies that fell under the category of other geographical contexts focused on various locations such as states, islands, rural areas, towns and the national parks of different countries.

5.1.2 Research themes of case studies

Six distinct research themes of case studies were identified (see Fig. 3) in the review. Major themes included place brand identity, planning & strategy, sustainable development, place brand architecture, place brand image and stakeholder aspect of place branding. This shows that researchers have been interested in diverse areas in place branding as a field of study. Also, the studies have been carried out in several nations,

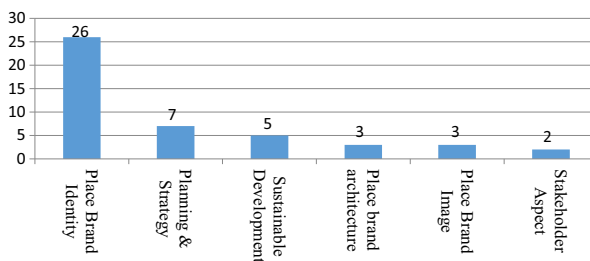


Fig. 3 Research Themes of Case Studies

cities and regions of the world which shows that place branding is a concept that has gained global recognition.

5.2 Conceptual studies

5.2.1 Research themes of conceptual studies

In this review, 50 conceptual articles including editorials, opinion pieces and reviews of literature were identified. Some of these articles were written by renowned personalities in the field of place branding such as Simon Anholt, G.J. Ashworth and Robert Govers. Four major research themes of conceptual studies - place brand identity, general aspect, stakeholder aspect of place branding, and place brand image, were recognized. Seventeen studies (34 %) discussed various issues on place brand identity such as tangible/intangible attributes, cultural aspects, spatial identities and environmental concerns of places. Nine studies (18 %) discussed the general aspect of place branding including trends, de-marketing, general overview and proposed models for place branding. Five studies (10 %) touched upon stakeholder aspects such as role of residents, customer equity and satisfaction. One of the five studies mentioned above proposed a relational network brand model. Of the 50 articles on conceptual studies, there were a few editorials and opinion pieces also (See Fig. 4).

5.3 Research studies

5.3.1 Themes of research studies

Fifty-one research studies (53 % of the total empirical studies) were identified in this literature review, and six research themes were recognized on the basis of the different issues discussed by various authors. Research studies include both qualitative and quantitative studies excluding all case studies and conceptual studies. Place brand identity emerged as a leading theme ($n=11$, 21.56 %) followed by stakeholder aspect ($n=8$, 15.68 %), promotional aspect ($n=6$, 11.76 %), place brand image ($n=5$, 9.8 %), planning & strategies ($n=4$, 7.84 %), and place brand personality ($n=3$ studies, 5.88 %) (see Fig. 5). 8 literature review papers were also found which mainly included meta-analysis, general review, critical review and methodological review.

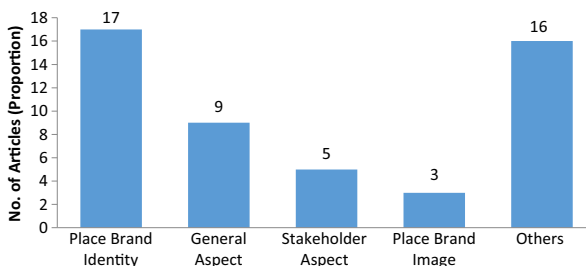


Fig. 4 Research Themes for Conceptual Studies

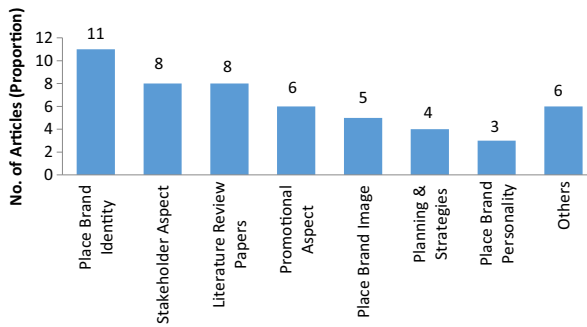


Fig. 5 Themes for Research Studies

6 Data collection methods

It was observed that qualitative studies used numerous sources for data collection. While case studies mostly used qualitative data, some case studies did not mention the method of data collection. All qualitative studies collected data through interviews, observations, secondary sources (literature, documents, books, news articles, web contents, web series & social media), opinion surveys, free association of words, brainstorming sessions, and a combination of the above mentioned sources (See Table 5). Quantitative studies collected data mostly through surveys and experiments. Studies which adopted the mixed methodological approach used both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection (See Table 6).

7 Conceptual or theoretical frameworks

We have attempted to determine how many of the 147 studies considered proposed conceptual models/frameworks. We found that most studies did not present any such model. Of the 147 studies, only 32 (22 %) models/conceptual/theoretical frameworks were identified out of which 28 models were conceptual or theoretical and only 4 were

Table 5 Data collection methods of qualitative studies

Method of Data Collection	No. of Articles	Types of Data Used	No. of Articles
Observations and Interviews (In-depth, Focus Group, Semi structured)	7	Interviews & Focus group meeting	1
Secondary Sources (documents, web contents, literature review)	9	Interviews	14
Free Association of Words	1	Observations, Secondary sources, Interviews	2
Secondary sources & Interviews	12	Opinion Survey & Brainstorming Session	2
Web Content Analysis, Online Web series and Social Media	4	Interviews & Qualitative Survey	2
Not Mentioned/Specified	19	Secondary sources & Observations	1

Table 6 Data collection methods of quantitative studies

Data Collection Methods	Data Analysis Techniques	Articles
Online Survey	EFA, <i>t</i> -Test & Regression	Forristal and Lehto (2009)
Pre-Post Experimental	Diagnostic copy test	Fullerton et al. (2008)
Survey (Telephonic)	Linear Regression & Partial Least Squares (PLS)	Jacobsen (2012)
Survey	Factor Analysis	Kaplan et al. (2010)
Survey	SEM	Kemp et al. (2012)
Survey	Regression Analysis	Orth et al. (2012)
Survey (Mail)	CFA	Sneed et al. (2011)
Survey	ANOVA and Correlation analysis	Tantawi and Youssef (2012)
Survey	Regression and SEM	Zenker and Rutter (2014)
Survey	ANOVA	Zenker (2009)
Survey	EFA, Canonical Correlation & MANOVA	Hosany et al. (2006)
Survey (Mail)	<i>t</i> -Test	Ryu and Swinney (2013)
Interviews & Experiment	None	Zenker and Beckmann (2013a, b)
Previous Literature (Review)	Meta-Analysis	Gertner (2011a)
Previous Literature (Review)	Content Analysis & Chi Square test	Hanna and Rowley (2008)
Previous Literature (Review)	Meta-Analysis	Lucarelli and Brorström (2013)
Previous Literature (Review)	Meta-Analysis	San Eugenio Vela (2013b)

empirical in nature. Majority of the proposed models were chiefly concerned with the conceptualization of the place brand identity construct. To this end, researchers used classical branding and organizational identity theories along with the concept of sense of place. The place brand construct was also conceptualized through place brand image and stakeholder perspectives. Place brand image has been conceptualized using two and four dimensional tangible/intangible framework. Researchers have considered different stakeholders of place branding in their conceptual frameworks or models. Brand equity, brand personality and brand architecture theories have also been used by researchers to conceptualize the place branding construct.

8 Data analysis techniques

It is observed that out of the 51 research studies reviewed, majority of qualitative studies have either not used, or not specified (if used) the data analysis techniques. Of those that specified the qualitative techniques employed, 9 studies used content analysis while 7 used thematic analysis. Only 2 studies adopted qualitative analysis software Atlas.ti 2.0 and (CAQDAS) Nvivo. Studies that followed the quantitative approach and both qualitative and quantitative approaches together, used ANOVA, Structure Equation Modeling, Factor analysis (EFA & CFA), Correlation and Regression analysis (See Tables 7 and 8).

Table 7 Data collection methods and data analysis techniques for studies with mixed research design approach

Data Collection Methods	Data Analysis Techniques	Articles
Interviews, Focus group, Survey (Web based)	Correlation analysis and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)	Klijn et al. (2012)
Secondary published sources and On-line survey among opinion leaders and key stakeholders	Delphi Technique	Konecnik and de Chernatony (2013)
Document analysis, Interviews, Survey (Phone)	ANOVA	Mak (2011)
Interviews & Survey	Qualitative Analysis and SPSS used	Tobiasa and Wahl (2013)
Semi structured Interviews & Survey	None	Warnaby and Bennison (2006)
Secondary sources, Interviews & Survey	ANOVA (F-test) and SPSS used	Konecnik Ruzzier and Petek (2012)

In our study, we have reported the dominance of qualitative studies which mostly used content and thematic analysis of data. Zenker and Beckmann (2013a, b) in their study noted that quality of interviewed participants was questionable. We observed that this may be due to majority of qualitative studies using unstructured or semi-structured techniques of data collection which are considered convenient methods by researchers. Thus, the results of these studies cannot be considered conclusive and generalized. Also it was noted that qualitative methods contain certain kind of subjectivity due to individual interpretations of researchers (Chan and Marafa 2013). Our findings show that most of the studies used either qualitative or quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. We suggest that a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis may generate more accurate results. We also found that quantitative studies were less in number. Most of the quantitative studies relied on surveys and some of these studies used smaller sample sizes which brought the accuracy of results in question.

Table 8 Data analysis techniques of qualitative studies

Data Analysis Techniques	Articles
Content Analysis	9
Thematic Analysis	7
Qualitative Analysis Software (Atlas.ti 2.0, CAQDAS Nvivo)	2
Thematic & Content Analysis	1
Delphi Method	1
Not Specified/Not Used	54

9 Meta analyses carried out by previous studies and results

In this section, we present the major findings of meta-analyses carried out by the reviewed studies. Gertner (2011a, b) reviewed place marketing and place branding literature up to the year 2009. The findings of this review are presented as under (Gertner 2011a, b):

- The scholars of numerous academic disciplines contributed to place branding literature and raised various topics related to business, management, marketing, branding, public diplomacy, urban planning, design and geography.
- The literature was mainly qualitative, descriptive, or based on case studies, editorials, personal opinions of authors and marketing and advertising campaigns carried out by places.
- A few qualitative articles used specific methods such as ethnography, textual analysis, in-depth interviews, focus groups, literature reviews, historical analysis and hermeneutics.
- There was scarcity of quantitative empirical research and most of the qualitative articles lacked theoretical background and did not advance testable models or hypotheses. A few articles found on quantitative empirical research used simple statistical analysis.
- The literature focused on wide range of locations which included nations, cities, continents, metro areas, groups of countries, boroughs and business districts.
- The scholars used a variety of topics and issues and 'branding', 'brands' and 'image' appeared to be preferred terms for discussion. It was also observed that the term 'place marketing' was not used much for discussion.
- The literature was based on secondary sources of data and convenience samples which created the problem of external validity. It was observed that most of the articles did not advance the recommendations for future research.

Another comprehensive review was carried out by Lucarelli and Berg (2011), and they also included place branding studies up to the year 2009. The findings of this review are presented as under (Lucarelli and Berg 2011):

- The authors asserted that place branding literature has grown continuously. They notified that place branding literature showed the characteristics of cross-disciplinary mix research domain.
- The authors reported that the empirical foundation of the domain was mainly characterised by case studies (i.e., 65 % of the total reviewed studies). The research domain also involved few comparative studies and fewer studies attempted to measure the impact of city branding efforts. They noted that scholars examined large metropolitan cities as well as small suburban towns, and the majority of articles focused on cities in the western world, especially European.
- The researchers have mainly relied on case studies rather than comparative and multi-case studies, and qualitative methods rather than quantitative.
- The authors found three main perspectives for approaching the phenomenon of city branding by scholars: branding as production, branding as appropriation, and critical studies. The authors concluded that most of the place branding studies

embraced the production perspective whereas appropriation perspective was less adopted for city branding.

- The authors reported fragmented theoretical foundation in literature. They noted that the marketing paradigm which includes place, city, destination and urban marketing was used more while the branding paradigm which includes place, city, destination and urban branding was less frequently used. They clarified that branding paradigm appeared in the 2000s after which researchers frequently used the term place branding and city branding instead of place marketing and city marketing.
- Out of the total reviewed articles, the authors identified 51 articles that proposed models and reported that more than half of those models were developed on the basis of traditional branding and marketing models.
- They presented two approaches, namely marketing (e.g., promotion, selling, communication), branding (e.g., image building, visual identity) and three perspectives - place (destination, territory, location and area), city (municipality and town) and city regions (metropolitan, cosmopolitan and urban).

Recently, Lucarelli and Brorström (2013) undertook meta-theoretical analysis of place branding literature and the findings of their review are as follows (Lucarelli and Brorström 2013):

- The authors reported that interdisciplinary characteristics of these studies were derived from numerous academic disciplines such as marketing, geography, urban studies and tourism.
- Even though literature shows academic diversity, a few journals covered nearly half of all studies published, and majority of articles were published in “topic” journals.
- The authors categorized all place branding studies according to the meta-theoretical perspectives those studies endorsed.
- They identified six perspectives (critical structuralist, radical humanist, production, co-production, consumer oriented and appropriation perspective) of place branding literature and found that these six perspectives were based on a two dimensional continuum (regulation-radical change and objective-subjective).
- It was found that place branding studies which used objective approach (i.e., critical structuralist, production, co-production and consumer oriented perspective) were more predominant in literature. On the other hand, studies that adopted the subjective approach (i.e., critical humanist, appropriate perspective) were less in number.
- They notified that the studies which adopted critical structuralist perspective conceptualized place branding as a socio-political phenomenon and these studies were mainly sociologically or geographically motivated. Further, the studies which adopted critical humanist perspective conceptualized place branding as a socio-cultural construct.
- The authors found that studies following the production perspective concentrated on mechanism of formulation of place brands, branding activities and events. These studies also focused on process, management, building and governance in place branding.
- Studies following the co-production perspective focused on exploring and understanding the actors’ role, construction of place branding as a social phenomenon

and influence and weight of different types of actors in the process of governance, management and building of place branding.

- The studies belonging to consumer-oriented perspective focused on the methodological aspect. These studies approached actors through surveys, and carried out experiments and qualitative and quantitative investigations to get the information.
- Studies adopting the appropriation perspective conceptualized place branding as having various degree of order, collaboration and integration. These studies adopted the bottom-up approach where actors formed the main focus of analysis. They suggested that future studies should adopt appropriate perspectives for approaching place branding literature.

10 Nomological network of constructs

A nomological network of constructs has been developed based on the studies reviewed (see Fig. 6). This network shows the relationship among constructs previously examined by the studies considered for the present review. All these constructs were found relevant to the context of our study (place branding) and are considered vital for the development of place branding strategies.

The relationships between place brand identity and brand leadership, stakeholder participation and landscape & infrastructural assets have been established by Konecnik Ruzzier and de Chernatony (2013), Hanna and Rowley (2011, 2013). Hankinson (2004) also highlighted the relationships between place brand identity and stakeholder participation and landscape & infrastructural assets. Similarly, the significance of stakeholder participation in formulation of place brand identity was emphasized by Kavaratzis (2012), Vuorinen and Vos (2013). Figure 6 shows the link between place brand identity and place brand communication (Hanna and Rowley 2011, 2013a, b), and between place brand communication and place brand image (Kavaratzis 2004; Hanna and Rowley 2011, 2013a, b). Hankinson (2004) has also shown the link between place brand communication and landscape & infrastructural assets. Florek et al. (2006) demonstrated the relationship between place brand communication and landscape & infrastructural assets. Kavaratzis (2004), Peel and Lloyd (2008) considered

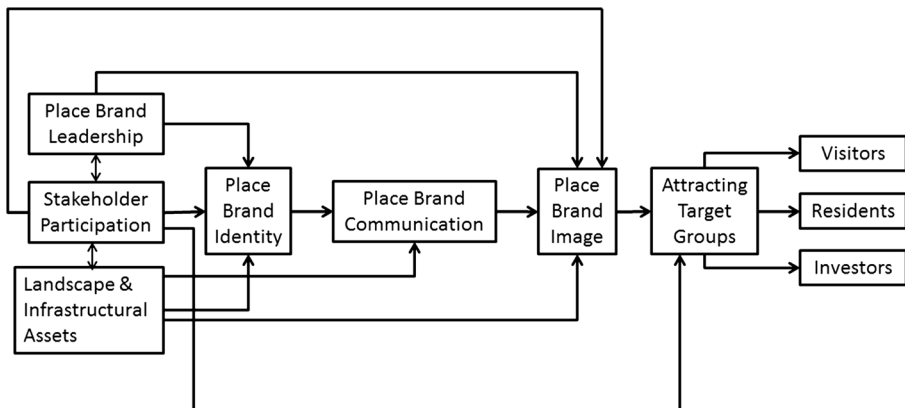


Fig. 6 Nomological Network of Constructs

place brand leadership, stakeholder participation and landscape & infrastructural assets constructs as part of communication which in turn directly affected place brand image. According to Kotler et al. (1993), the aim of place branding strategy is to attract various target groups such as visitors, residents and investors. Klijn et al. (2012) empirically validated the positive relationship between stakeholder participation and attracting target groups.

11 Theses and dissertations on place branding

In our study, we have identified nine dissertations/theses related to place branding. Hanna (2011) developed a model of strategic place brand management using different theories (i.e., classical branding, place branding, and stakeholder). The proposed theoretical model was tested through in-depth interviews with practitioners associated with destination marketing organisations. The role of place branding in sustainable development has been elaborated by Maheshwari (2010). The thesis explains the place branding concept and its evolution and development from regeneration, growth and sustainability perspectives. Bitterman (2008) explained the critical evolution of place branding and revealed potential issues and concerns of place branding in future. Lu (2012) showed the impact of place brand on individual brand within the place. The study specifically focused on the branding of industrial clusters and explored the impact of cluster brands on individual brands of the organisations within the cluster. Mauro (2011) described the motifs in architectural site for developing place branding strategy. The author noted that these motifs comprised symbolic and graphical expressions that enhanced depth and meaning for building sense of place. Barnett (2013) highlighted place branding strategies for municipalities. The study analysed place branding strategies concerned with the economic development of various municipalities and investigated the perception of internal audiences of city brand. Chandler (2013) discussed the significance of place brand to build and support social capital among residents of a particular location. The dissertation of McGeary (2012) elaborated the role of documentary filmmaking which highlighted specific features and characteristics of a particular place in implementing place branding theory. Dempsey (2011) investigated political issues in representation of place and how they affected place branding strategy.

12 Future research agenda

In our study, we observed that leadership, brand communication, stakeholder participation, brand personality, brand image and brand experience are important constructs in place branding context. Also, significant consequents were found such as future behaviour intention, attracting target groups, brand advocacy, brand loyalty and satisfaction of target audiences. As social media is a powerful medium of communication, the influence of social media communication on attracting target group warrants future investigation. Also, there is a need to further examine the impact of leadership on external stakeholders. The brand experience in context of place brand development is another area that requires further study. Although research on place brand personality in context of tourism has been growing, its assessment in context of residents as

stakeholders of place needs more research attention. Also, it is noticed that while place brand equity has been examined in the tourism context (Konecnik and Gartner 2007; Boo et al. 2009) and investor context (Jacobsen 2009, 2012), place brand equity in resident context would also be a relevant area for further research.

A thorough review of existing literature led to the identification of major gaps. The research questions in this study are formulated on the basis of the gaps determined. A summary of the gaps so recognized from literature is presented in Table 9.

Boyne and Hall (2004) examined the use of World Wide Web in promoting local food as part of tourism development. Florek et al. (2006) also discussed the role of websites in the place brand building process. It has been observed however, that the role of social media in development of place branding has not been examined despite its rapid growth. The use/role of information technology in place branding is an area that warrants more research. Therefore, we propose the following research question:

RQ.1. How does information technology affect the process of place branding?

Table 9 Summary of major gaps identified

Gaps Identified	Source
The use of information technology in different range of issues of place branding.	Boyne and Hall (2004)
(a) The contribution of concepts and models from corporate, services, non-profit and internal branding in the field of place branding	Hankinson (2010)
(b) The role and development of brand identities that form the basis of brand communications	
(c) The transferability of strategic branding concepts such as brand architecture	
(d) In services branding, the management of the place brand experience	
(e) In internal branding, the impact of organizational culture on place brand management practices	
(a) There should be focus on defining and testing models and relationships	Gertner (2011a, b)
(b) The development of theoretical frameworks and typologies	
(c) The attitudes toward city brands and nation brands	
There is a need to identify and test possible methods of stakeholders' involvement	Kavaratzis (2012)
More investigation through theoretical & empirical research will be required for the role of residents in place branding	Braun et al. (2013)
There should be focus on specific areas such as place image evaluations, brand equity studies, stakeholder satisfaction investigations and brand impact assessments	Chan and Marafa (2013)
The role of brand experience, development of theoretical frameworks and to undertake empirical research in relation to place brand experience	Hanna and Rowley (2013b)
Exploration of structural linkage between spatial planning and place branding in future research	Van Assche and Chien Lo (2011)
The role of cultural products such as films, books and music in development of place brand image or reputation	Dinnie (2004)

Hanna and Rowley (2013b) emphasized the role of brand experience in development of place branding and included brand experience as a variable/construct in their place brand management model (Hanna and Rowley 2011). The management of place brand experience is a major gap identified by Hankinson (2010) and there is considerable scope to examine place brand experience in future research. Thus we propose the following research question for further research:

RQ.2. What is the role of brand experience in the development of place branding practices?

Kavaratzis (2012) highlighted the significance of stakeholder participation in place branding. Our findings indicate that researchers have shown increased interest in stakeholder based place branding. It is required that possible methods for the inclusion of stakeholders in the creation and development of place branding be examined in future research. Thus we propose the following research question:

RQ.3. What are the methods of stakeholder involvement in the place branding process?

Hankinson (2010) emphasized the importance of internal branding in place branding. The influence of culture has been widely examined in tourist studies and it is observed that nations/cities/regions have various public and private organizations for managing place branding practices. It would be interesting to understand the impact of different organizational cultures on place brand management practices. It would be worthwhile to investigate:

RQ.4. What is the impact of organizational culture on place brand management practices?

Residents are important stakeholders in building the place brand. Most studies found in literature have focused more on the tourist context. Braun et al. (2013) stressed on the role of residents in place branding and supported the participation of citizens in governing processes as discussed in urban governing literature. Empirically tested models in the context of the role of residents in the place brand building process should be investigated in future research. Thus we propose the following research question:

RQ.5. What are the roles of residents in the place branding process?

Culture and cultural products of places (nations/cities/regions) have significant influence on place branding. While it is generally accepted that culture is important to development of place branding, there was no study that empirically tested the role of cultural products in place branding development. Dinnie (2004) drew attention to the fact that the role of cultural products such as films, music and books has been overlooked in place branding research. Thus, there is a strong need to examine the influence of cultural products on place

branding in future research. On the basis of the above discussion, we propose the following research question:

RQ.6. What roles do cultural products (film, music, books, etc.) play in the development of place reputations and image?

Hankinson (2010) asserted that it would be interesting to know the transferability of various strategic branding concepts to place branding. Although brand equity, brand image, brand personality concepts have been applied to places in the context of tourism, few studies have examined the brand architecture (umbrella branding) in place branding research. Thus the following research question is worth answering:

RQ.7. How strategic branding concepts such as brand architecture can be transferred to place branding practices?

In this review, several articles were found linked to spatial planning and place branding. Spatial planning is an important aspect for the development of places (nations/cities/regions). Van Assche and Chien Lo (2011) noted that there is a need to uncover the linkages between spatial planning and place branding. These issues should be investigated in future research. Thus we propose the following research question:

RQ.8. What is the structural linkage between spatial planning and place branding?

13 Discussion and implications

Interest in place branding literature has been increasing quickly among academics and practitioners. This article systematically summarizes and analyses recent place branding research and publications based on various variables. The 147 articles in this thematic review were collected through three global databases and spread across 43 different journals.

Place branding research is multidisciplinary in nature, as is evident by the articles reviewed that come from various streams such as marketing and branding, tourism and hospitality, business and management, urban studies, planning and development, economics, geography and environmental science. Interestingly, majority of papers on place branding come from two journals, namely Place Branding and Public Diplomacy, and Journal of Place Management and Development. It was also found that majority of articles lacked proper theoretical background. The studies that did provide theoretical backgrounds used different theories of product, service, corporate marketing & branding, and social sciences. This restricts a robust theoretical development of place branding literature.

It was also examined that conceptual studies, case studies and qualitative studies were predominant in place branding literature whereas quantitative studies were very small in number. Majority of studies did not advance testable models and most of the models were conceptual in nature, therefore more empirically testable models and

quantitative investigations should be carried out in future. Our results show that the number of city context studies has grown which reveals scholars' increased attention in the area of city marketing and branding.

In context of research themes of the articles, place brand identity related issues were found to be more dominant. Other research themes used frequently were place brand image, stakeholders' aspect and planning & strategy related issues.

The present review article has numerous implications for academics and practitioners and adds to place branding literature in many ways. First, the study provides an in-depth understanding of the considered research domain and how it has been examined. Second, this paper acts as a useful instrument to better understand and analyze recent research themes in the place branding area. These findings would be of great interest to policy makers and administrators as they can formulate effective strategies on the basis of these revelations to enhance the brand image of their respective places. This study also lays down important future research agenda for researchers so that the gaps identified in considered literature could be filled.

14 Conclusion and limitations

The major purpose of this review was to identify and analyze studies, case studies and models or conceptual/ theoretical frameworks based on various research themes in the field of place branding. The majority of articles have not advanced models or conceptual/theoretical frameworks and most of them are conceptual in nature. Models or frameworks are essential for research and theory development, and the place branding field still lacks sound theoretical background. According to Zenker (2011), places are a complex construct and developing models for these cannot always be precise. We found that most of the reviewed studies were conducted in European countries, cities and regions. Therefore, the applicability of these models or frameworks on other developing countries, cities and regions is questionable.

While the theme of place brand identity has been dominant in literature, a robust conceptualization of the theme has not been established because researchers have more often used case study approach and qualitative methodology. More research is required on other themes of place branding identified in this review.

As any other study, this review article also has certain limitations. First, this study used the keywords 'place branding' and 'place brand' to find relevant studies. There may be other keywords that might give more such studies. Second, this review considers publications during January 2004–April 2014. Studies before 2004 have not been considered. Third, much of current literature has changed the term place marketing and branding to destination marketing and branding. This limits the scope of the present review. Fourth, this article considered studies published in English language only.

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