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# Place marketing and place branding: A systematic (and tentatively exhaustive) literature review

Renaud Vuignier

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Working paper de l'IDHEAP 5/2016  
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# **Place marketing and place branding: A systematic (and tentatively exhaustive) literature review**

**Renaud Vuignier**

May 2016

**Working Paper de l'IDHEAP 5/2016**

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# **Place marketing and place branding: A systematic (and tentatively exhaustive) literature review**

*Renaud Vuignier*

## **Abstract**

This paper presents a systematic and complete overview of the scientific literature in the field of place marketing and place branding research. A total of 1172 articles published between 1976 and 2016 in 98 different journals were analyzed and meticulously classified into categories and subcategories according to disciplinary approach, method used and perspective adopted. This literature review thus provides a detailed overview of the state of the art and reveals various trends and developments in this emerging field of study. Among other things, it demonstrates that the field suffers from a lack of conceptual clarity, diverging definitions and a weak theoretical foundation, which means it addresses a very broad range of research topics. In addition, the field lacks empirical evidence and explanatory articles, meaning that the numerous hypotheses concerning the effects of place marketing activities on attractiveness remain unsubstantiated. The review also underscores the literature's lack of interest in the political and institutional contexts of places, although this information is crucial in terms of public management. Moreover, this work notes that the rhetoric of consultants is given pride of place, with the publication of numerous prescriptive articles focused on sharing best practices. Finally, this study notes the existence of a significant number of critical articles.

**Keywords:** place, marketing, branding, literature review, state of the art, public management



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## Introduction

“The practice of ‘branding’ has invaded all aspects of public and private life” (van Ham, 2002, p. 249). In fact, in the case of geographic locations (i.e., places), significant effort and resources are being devoted to the development of place marketing and place branding strategies: Switzerland spends millions of francs in public funds each year on such activities<sup>1</sup> (Jacobsen, 2009).

Numerous public and para-public organizations at every level—local, regional, national, international and cross-border—sometimes even consider these strategies to be crucial to regional management and development. As a result, there is an emerging field of research devoted to the scientific analysis of these practices.

The literature on place marketing and place branding is full of idiosyncrasies. As a relatively new multidisciplinary field that is “largely based on anecdotic evidence from single case studies” (Lucarelli & Berg, 2011)<sup>2</sup> and influenced by the prescriptive approach of consultants (Aronczyk, 2008; Boland, 2013) and other practitioners (Niedomysl & Jonasson, 2012),<sup>3</sup> it is fragmented, lacks empirical data, and requires more academic rigor. Some very recent appraisals (Acharya & Rahman, 2016; Oguztimur & Akturan, 2015) have, in fact, said as much, as have various previous literature reviews (Andersson, 2014; Berglund & Olsson, 2010; Chan & Marafa, 2013; Gertner, 2011a, 2011b; Lucarelli, 2012; Lucarelli & Berg, 2011). However, to date, no systematic and exhaustive overview of this emerging field of study has corroborated these shortcomings. Only a comprehensive literature review can provide a solid foundation for the scientific development of the field and put an end to the observed tendency to systematically reinvent the wheel. While we do note that a variety of articles using different perspectives are being written to address this very theme, these papers are sometimes complementary, sometimes contradictory, and frequently fail

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<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to estimate the amount of money spent on place marketing, given the variety of sources (public, para-public and private) and time frames (project-based funding and regular funding). By way of illustration, here are some figures quoted in the literature: US\$6 million in Portugal, US\$15 million in Italy’s Lombardy region, and US\$33 million in Singapore (Jacobsen, 2009). Berlin apparently spends €5 million per year on place marketing (Jacobsen, 2009, 2012), while the German state of Baden-Württemberg spends 7 million (Zenker, 2014, p. 158), the city of Stuttgart, 2.5 million (Jacobsen, 2009), and Hamburg, 4 million (Jacobsen, 2009). In the United Kingdom between 1995 and 1996, 93% of local authorities engaged in place marketing activities, spending an average of £279,600 each (Young & Lever, 1997). Kotler, Haider, & Rein (1993) estimate that 10% of all major newspaper advertising in the United States is used for place marketing. Communities and regions in the United States apparently spend US\$538 million annually on place marketing (Jacobsen (2009) citing (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2002)). Lucarelli & Berg (2011), discussing the Eurocities Questionnaire and the work of Seisdledos (2006), underscore that European cities spend an average of €400,000 on marketing activities, with the actual number varying from £130,000 to £10 million. Brittany’s brand strategy initiative, which seeks to create a more unified image for the area, cost €400,000 (Lupieri, 2013). France is also home to a campaign that will be discussed later called “Je veux Metz!” Costing €800,000, this was funded 80% by the French government and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and 20% by the Metz metropolitan region (CapCom, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> “Thus, depending on the scientific and ontological perspectives chosen, it could either be argued that the empirical foundation of the domain is largely based on anecdotic evidence with few comparative studies and even fewer studies attempting to measure the impact of city branding efforts, or that the research domain is founded on rich auto-ethnographic data, often collected in a close collaborative relationship with the city.” (Lucarelli & Berg, 2011, p. 14) “The empirical foundation of the domain is largely based on anecdotic evidence from single case studies, and there are few comparative studies on the impact of different types of branding elements on output or performance data” (Lucarelli & Berg, 2011, p. 22)

<sup>3</sup> The authors describe the field as having a very “practitioner-led” approach.

to reference each other. For these reasons, we decided to conduct a broad (almost exhaustive) and systematic literature review.

A total of 1172 articles published between 1976 and 2016 in 98 different journals were identified, using specific criteria to select the journals examined (systematic phase) and a pragmatic approach to find additional items (empirical phase). The articles were then examined closely and classified into categories and subcategories according to disciplinary approach, method used and perspective adopted. Before discussing our methodological choices in detail and presenting the findings of our literature review, we would like to begin by clarifying our position with regard to the terms “place marketing” and “place branding,” briefly explain the origins of and recent developments in this field, and then look at existing literature reviews.

### Place marketing vs. place branding

To help expose the lack of conceptual clarity in the literature, it is important to begin with a discussion of the very name of the field. Therefore, we decided to review what has been written about these two terms. In the next section, we will discuss the terms “marketing” and “branding,” explain the shift from place marketing to place branding, commenting on the way in which these terms are understood from both an academic and a practical perspective, and present the definitions we ultimately used.

### Related terms

Branding is not synonymous with marketing. According to a classic definition of the term “marketing,”<sup>4</sup> branding<sup>5</sup> is part of marketing. It is a marketing tool associated with perception, image, mental associations in the minds of target groups, awareness and reputation. Branding refers to the process of managing a brand. It is an endeavor that highlights the brand through activities designed “to establish a significant and differentiated presence in the market.”<sup>6</sup> Therefore, for branding to occur, a brand must either exist already or be in the process of being created. In the case of a place, branding creates an identity to encompass all of its commercial activities, in other words, it identifies them with the brand. From a managerial perspective, there

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<sup>4</sup> “Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large” (American Marketing Association, 2015). The basic elements of marketing are an exchange (participants in this exchange and the content of what is being exchanged), the exchange process (how the exchange is conducted) and the relationship between the participants in the exchange, for more on this see Kotler & Dubois (2004). “We define place marketing as the ‘coordinated use of marketing tools supported by a shared customer-oriented philosophy, for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging urban offerings that have value for the city’s customers and the city’s community at large’” (Eshuis, Klijn, & Braun, 2014, pp. 153-154).

<sup>5</sup> “Place branding refers to the development of brands for geographical locations, such as regions, cities or communities, usually with the aim of triggering positive associations and distinguishing the place from others” (Eshuis & Klijn, 2012). “Place brands are symbolic constructs meant to add meaning or value to places. Brands are signs that identify places and evoke associations that imbue places with cultural meaning.” (Braun, 2008, p. 43).

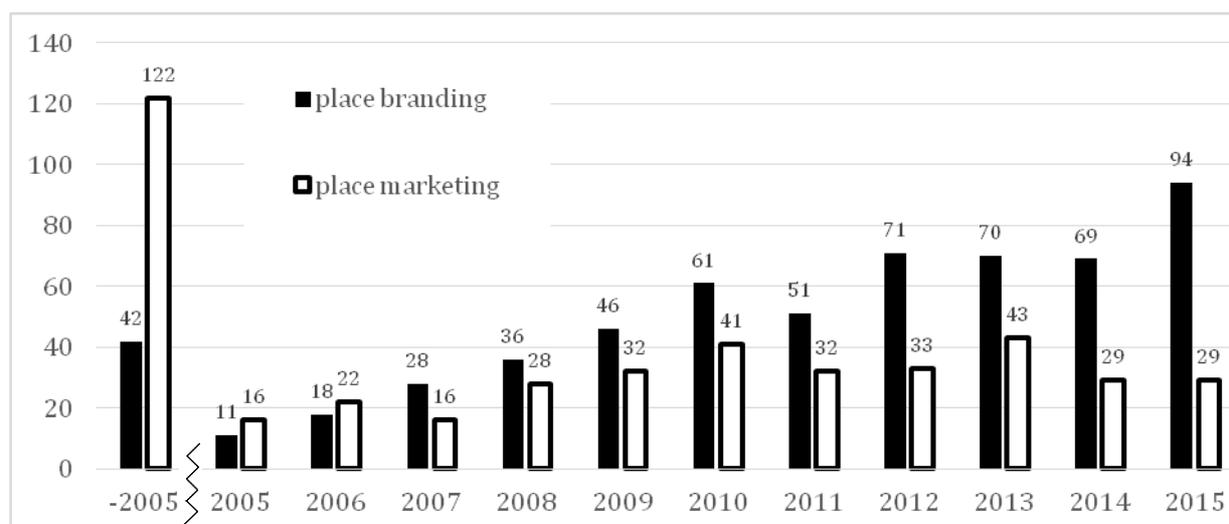
<sup>6</sup> The Business Dictionary, <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/branding.html>, consulted May 6, 2016.

is a difference between branding activities at the operational level and the brand strategy itself.<sup>7</sup> The latter defines the brand identity and, in principle, includes a component dedicated to the brand policy, which sets the rules for using the brand.

However, despite these differences, the term “place branding” is now commonly used to designate the entire field of place marketing, place branding and brand strategy (Skinner, 2008).

Usage can differ, depending on context: American authors, as (Gertner, 2011a, 2011b) points out, seem to systematically favor the appellation “place marketing.” It can also depend on the individual author: more meticulous researchers clearly define and differentiate between the two terms. Nonetheless, recent papers tend to systematically refer to place branding, even in articles that do not focus on the dynamics associated with the brand itself. The literature on place marketing and place branding thus no longer tends to clearly distinguish between marketing and branding, at least when it comes to designating the field of study. The idea of place branding is now defined in such broad, all-encompassing terms that the two terms are confused and used as synonyms (interchangeably) by numerous authors. The phenomenon is evident in this literature review: authors have a tendency to refer to both terms and there is no significant difference in content between articles that appear in the search results for the keyword “place marketing” and those for “place branding,” while recent documents simply appear in both. Conducting the same exercise with Google Scholar corroborates this finding (see Chart 1): the use of the words “place branding” is replacing that of the words “place marketing” (assuming of course that, like our literature review, there is no significant difference in content between the two search results).

*Chart 1: Number of article titles that include “place branding” or “place marketing,” according to Google Scholar search results (updated February 2, 2016)*



<sup>7</sup> “Long-term marketing support for a brand, based on the definition of the characteristics of the target consumers. It includes understanding of their preferences, and expectations from the brand.” (BusinessDictionary, 2016; Sugumaran, 2014, p. 227).

From a practical standpoint, it is understandable that these two concepts would be considered equivalent. After all, when the ultimate goal is to develop a brand, the action of branding does involve marketing activities. At the implementation stage, both branding and marketing activities include communication and promotional campaigns, events and tools to showcase places, internally and externally, and both support measures aimed at improving place quality. A concrete example of this is the hard-to-categorize communication campaign dubbed “Je veux Metz!” (I want Metz!) (CapCom, 2011) launched by the Metz metropolitan region. Playing with the idea of attractiveness, this campaign took an unusual approach and targeted specific groups, notably a young executive frustrated at not being hired for a job in Metz, a CEO regretting that he did not take advantage of business opportunities in the city and a baby in tears that her parents did not choose to live in Metz. Generating a certain buzz, this communication campaign is a marketing activity that is part of a place marketing strategy. If its goal had been to develop Metz as a brand, it could also have been one of several branding activities as part of a place brand strategy, though this was not the case.

From an academic standpoint, the essential distinction lies in the fact that a branding strategy is, by definition, a process whose ultimate goal is to create a brand. In practice, this means trying to build a brand image in the minds of potential “consumers” of the place in question, a brand identity that includes values, as well as specific tangible aspects, with everything identified by a single, consistent name that has a recognizable logo, and often a slogan. The major difference thus lies in the importance of “image” and “identity” (and how they are managed); when both are enhanced, they can eventually become the brand’s image and identity (Skinner, 2008).<sup>8</sup>

### Shift from marketing to branding?

In his analysis of the theory and practice of city marketing, Braun (2008, p. 35) observes a shift from marketing to branding. Similarly, according to Kavaratzis (2004, p. 11) “City branding is here suggested as a new episode in the application of city marketing, because it changes the focus of the endeavor. Branding is attempting to create associations with the city; associations that are emotional, mental, psychological, moving away from the functional - rational character of marketing interventions. This does not mean that the functional/rational aspects are becoming

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<sup>8</sup> Skinner (2008) effectively explains the distinction between place marketing and place branding: “[T]he term ‘place marketing’ may either be used to mean, specifically, ‘place branding,’ or may be used to consider aspects of marketing places wider than branding, while the term ‘place branding’ may equally be used when referring to these wider aspects of ‘place marketing.’ [...] [T]he term ‘place branding’ is the one that has certainly achieved dominance within the literature. [...] The wider term ‘place marketing’ may therefore be better suited to issues about a place’s overall management – a place can then be considered as a location having a single identity with multiple facets, a history, and cultural heritage, and pre-existing perceptions, and be managed as akin to a corporation, market getting, from an outside-in approach by its multiple stakeholders, in partnership. If the term ‘branding’ applies here at all, it can be seen to relate to the creation of a corporate brand identity. The term ‘place branding’ is then better clarified as linking to a place’s promotional activities, contextualised in the domain of marketing communications, marking the place with a distinct identity in the minds of the various target groups targeted by the incorporated place, from an inside-out approach, assuring the place’s multiple stakeholders, in partnership, manage and communicate the place’s brand identity to the wider world as they wish it to be presented.” (Skinner, 2008, pp. 923-924).

less important. It signifies a change of direction in that the desired brand is what guides the marketing measures on the city's physical environment and functionality." Branding is thus seen as the next step, or the "ultimate objective" (Braun, 2008, p. 36), of the marketing process. It is inspired by the successful use of brands for products, services and especially businesses (Mihalís Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005). Accordingly, reports and articles analyzing best practices often include exclamations like the following from this blogger and practitioner of place marketing: "in the past few years, place marketing has entered the era of Place Branding" (Chartron, 2013). In fact, it is a way of underscoring the current importance attributed to symbolic aspects and image.

Along with the field's scientific development, there is a tendency to attribute, without empirical evidence, numerous qualities or even an "essential" role to place branding. It would seem that "everyone would like their own brand" (Chamard, Gayet, Alaux, Gollain, & Boisvert, 2014, p. 107). Using communication campaigns, a plethora of places claim to have created a place brand, although being a brand means being perceived as such by target groups (brand awareness) and ensuring that such declarations are accompanied by a brand effect (Kapferer, 2012a).<sup>9</sup> Among publications in the field, the following quote from the work of Eshuis & Klijn (2012, p. 36) is manifest: "[T]he branding perspective adds something essential to public administration perspectives that so far has been largely ignored, that is, the role of influencing perceptions and motivating actors by means of symbolic constructions that mainly work by means of associations and emotions." Though lacking much empirical evidence, this work is a perfect example of the trend to use the fashionable term "branding" simply to highlight the role of symbolic and emotional aspects, as well as the importance of having public administrations consistently and dynamically take into account the perceptions of target groups. In fact, Skinner (2008) Skinner (2008, pp. 923-924)<sup>10</sup> even maintains that the preference for the term (place) branding is associated with an attempt to ensure that articles target a journal's focus.

### Assessment from a practical perspective

It is also worth noting that more practice-oriented authors have other reasons to justify the current use of the term branding rather than marketing. Their arguments are based largely on anecdotal examples from specific cases, not on any scientific literature. For example, Govers (2011, p. 230) contrasts place branding, which is based on place identity and is thus supply driven (what the place is as well as what it can offer), with place marketing, which is driven by demand

<sup>9</sup> Kapferer notes, in particular, "It takes more than branding to build a brand" (Kapferer, 2012a, p. 2). This idea is explored further in greater detail in other works by the same author (Kapferer, 2011, 2012b, 2013). The concept of brand awareness is developed in the book, *La sensibilité aux marques: marchés sans marques, marchés à marques* (Kapferer & Laurent, 1992).

<sup>10</sup> "The confusion over the use of terms therefore stems not only from the way the literature developed over time in different subject areas, but also appears to be linked to the way authors successfully target articles for publication, using terms that better align with their own discipline area, and target journal's focus rather than necessarily using the most appropriate term for the specific construct under investigation." (Skinner, 2008, pp. 923-924)

or the existing market (target groups and their needs). The author concludes that “place branding is clearly linked to place marketing, but also a separate field of study and practice in its own right.”<sup>11</sup> Such a reflection has the merit of providing several elements of practical interest:<sup>12</sup> for example, it encourages practitioners to take a greater interest in what a place has to offer and its identity, culture and heritage, rather than simply trying to meet market needs. It also argues that a branding strategy is a long-term initiative with activities designed to enhance the profile, image and reputation of a place, which distinguishes it from marketing activities aimed at meeting demand. Although this distinction is interesting, it is not necessary if one adopts a classic definition of marketing, which cannot be summarized as simply meeting demand.

### Definitions

It is important to distinguish between various concepts whose origins date back well before the emergence of a literature that studies their application to geographic locations.

- **Place marketing** “refers to the application of marketing instruments to geographical locations, such as cities, towns, regions and communities. Following Braun (2008, p. 43) we define place marketing as the ‘coordinated use of marketing tools supported by a shared customer-oriented philosophy, for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging urban offerings that have value for the city’s customers and the city’s community at large” (Eshuis et al., 2014, pp. 153-154).
- **Place brands** are “symbolic constructs meant to add meaning or value to places. Brands are signs that identify places and evoke associations that imbue places with cultural meaning.” (Eshuis et al., 2014, p. 154).
- **Place branding** “refers to the development of brands for geographical locations such as regions, cities or communities, usually with the aim of triggering positive associations and distinguishing the place from others. [...] [P]lace branding is an element within place marketing that involves influencing people’s ideas by forging particular emotional and psychological associations with a place.” (Eshuis et al., 2014, pp. 154-155). It is therefore a marketing tool for place management.

If we stick closely to these definitions, place branding clearly appears to be one of many place marketing tools. Therefore, although well aware of these discussions within the literature and the fact that some authors, intentionally or not, treat these concepts as synonyms, we have decided to

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<sup>11</sup> Govers (2011, p. 230)

<sup>12</sup> However, we feel it is of little scientific relevance because the author makes do with a simplistic definition of marketing without referring to any of the literature in the field, which is constantly evolving.

clearly separate place marketing from place branding, as the latter is simply a tool (strategic and operational) of the former.

For the purposes of this literature review, we have decided, for practical reasons, not to systematically rehash these concepts and instead refer to all of the literature as being about “place branding,” “place marketing” or “place branding and marketing.”

Our decision to use the adjective “place” is because it is the most common and inclusive term for describing this field of study. We do observe, however, that different appellations are sometimes used, depending on the type of place in question or the approach taken. For example, one can speak of city, urban, rural, neighborhood, nation, destination (tourism-oriented), place, territory (territorial), land, area, space and location marketing and branding,<sup>13</sup> etc. It does not seem appropriate to launch a new type of marketing for each particular territory.<sup>14</sup> Such an exercise would raise other fundamental questions, such as: at what point in a marketing logic would it be relevant to talk about a city rather than a rural village? The response would require that there be a consensus on the classification. However, there is no agreement on the definitions of these terms. We have therefore decided to use the term “place” to be as inclusive as possible.

## Origins

On one hand, globalization is leading to a rescaling of national state space (Brenner, 2004), dividing and subdividing places (Antheaume & Giraut, 2005) and creating increased competition between places (Thiard, 2007). On the other hand, public and para-public organizations are evolving in an organizational environment influenced by the *New Public Management* (Emery & Giauque, 2005; Joye, Decoutère, & Ruegg, 1996; Ritz, 2003) and other types of reform trends (*post-New Public Management* for instance). In this context, there is growing interest in place marketing strategies on the part of public agencies in charge of places, be they cities (Babey & Giauque, 2009), regions (Mihalis Kavartzis, Warnaby, & Ashworth, 2015), countries (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002) or other inter-regional spaces (Zenker & Jacobsen, 2015). Although applying marketing tools from the private sector to geographic locations that are by nature public and communal can prove delicate and requires adaptation (Graham, 1994; Stewart

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<sup>13</sup> “The more holistic approach of location or place brand management is gaining interest.” (Kerr, 2006, p. 276) According to Kerr (2006), there is a movement from “destination branding” focused solely on tourism to a more broadly based form of “location branding.” To the best of our knowledge, the term “location branding” is not often seen in the literature.

<sup>14</sup> In the general field of marketing and branding, we observe a proliferation of “new” types of marketing and branding. It is as if the existence of a new marketing research topic or tool legitimizes the emergence of a new dedicated field of study. As a result, marketing textbooks are full of various classifications and listings: from digital marketing to affinity marketing, to citizen marketing. For example, one can talk about service marketing, social marketing, experiential marketing, tourism marketing, web marketing, e-marketing, international marketing, marketing to seniors, sustainable marketing and cultural marketing (Ferrandi & Lichtlé, 2014). Gayet (2014) presents a long list of types of marketing, notably integrated marketing, shared marketing, citizen marketing, identity marketing, affinity marketing, excellence marketing, creative marketing, digital marketing, real-time one-to-one marketing and viral marketing. Other interesting appellations: guerrilla marketing (Nechita, 2014), place brand love (Swanson, 2015) and pride marketing (Chamard et al., 2014, p. 123). To use an expression that would no doubt make Bourdieu (1982b) proud, it is tempting to talk about the art of marketing the art of marketing.

& Walsh, 1992; Walsh, 1991, 1995), place marketing approaches are being developed, using a market logic of attractiveness and selective retention, for various target groups like investors, businesses, organizations, tourists and residents.

However, this is not a new phenomenon, since the marketing of towns and cities goes back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Ward, 1998). It was not until the 1970s that place marketing practices started to become more sophisticated than simple tourism campaigns (symbolized by early 20<sup>th</sup> century posters), and it was not until this time that researchers and consultants began to analyze such practices (Mihalis Kavartzis, 2004, p. 59; Oguztimur & Akturan, 2015).

### Origins of practices

In terms of practice, it was in fact during the 1970s that the state of New York developed its branding strategy with the “I love NY” slogan and logo, a strategy that is considered a textbook case since it is now cited in the literature as a prime example of place branding (Maynadier, 2009).<sup>15</sup> City branding practices have evolved since then, and many places have launched place marketing or place branding strategies. The European examples we have most often seen cited in the literature and at conferences (Gayet, 2014) are Barcelona (Beloso, 2011), Amsterdam and its “Iamsterdam” branding project (Mihalis Kavartzis, 2008), both of which were launched in 2003, Lyon and the “OnlyLyon” program created in 2007<sup>16</sup> (M. v. Chanoux, 2013; M. Chanoux & Keramidis, 2013) and Berlin and its “Be Berlin” branding campaign launched in 2008 (Müller, 2013). Internationally, the list of places with such initiatives is endless: Costa Rica (“Pura Vida”), Malaysia (“Truly Asia”), South Africa (“South Africa: Alive with Possibilities!”), the Kazakhstan capital of Astana (Fauve, 2015; Low & Yermekbayeva, 2012), Bogota (Kalandides, 2011), etc.

Place marketing practices are obviously not employed only in major cities and countries, but can be found in a variety of small and medium-sized places (Alaux, Serval, & Zeller, 2015; Andersson, 2015; Glinska, 2015) such as the mid-sized American city of Reno, Nevada (Zavattaro, 2014), and, in the French-speaking world, the Canton of Valais (Michelet & Giraut, 2014), Brittany (Charles & Thouément, 2007), Auvergne (Chanut & Rochette, 2012) and Alsace (Chamard et al., 2014). Moreover, branding practices are spreading to places of varying sizes like cross-border and inter-regional areas (Zenker & Jacobsen, 2015), such as the Öresund region between Denmark and Sweden (Falkheimer, 2014).

Another indicator of the popularity and variety of current place marketing practices: the numerous rankings and indexes that assess place quality (Cusin & Damon, 2010). At the

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<sup>15</sup> Created by Milton Glaser, this slogan and logo were used for the first time in 1977. The Empire State Development Corporation owns the trademark and licensing rights (New York State Library, 2013). “I love NY” is the first recognized city brand (Maynadier, 2009, p. 2).

<sup>16</sup> “ONLYLYON is both the brand and the international marketing programme created in 2007.” (Only Lyon, 2015).

moment, few of these have been the subject of scientific research, but they can be seen as “snapshot[s] of the symbolic battlefield of cities” (Anttiroiko, 2014)<sup>17</sup> and used as “longitudinal assessment tools” in the practice of place marketing (Chamard et al., 2014, p. 79).<sup>18</sup>

### Origins of research

The article by Kotler & Levy (1969) proposing to broaden the concept of marketing to non-business organizations is regularly cited as a symbol of the moment when “place” entered the academic field of marketing. The study of image as a factor in tourism development by Hunt (1975) is also often mentioned as a pioneering example of an academic interest in “place” as a potential subject of marketing efforts. In 1988, G. J. Ashworth & Voogd (1988, p. 65) stated that “It is the argument of this article that a marketing approach to urban planning is a very promising new avenue to explore.” In the early 1990s, several articles demonstrated an interest in this field with general and somewhat tantalizing questions such as “Can places be sold for tourism?” (Gregory J Ashworth & Henk Voogd, 1990), “Marketing of places: What are we doing?” (G. Ashworth, 1993)<sup>19</sup> and “Can cities market themselves like Coke and Pepsi do?” (Matson, 1994).

Hanna & Rowley (2008, p. 63) explain that awareness about destination branding theories began to grow in 1998, the year that the theme of the Travel and Tourism Research Association’s Annual Conference was “Branding the Travel Market.”

### Recent developments in the field

Clearly, place marketing and branding practices and research are not recent developments. However, several changes have occurred recently in this field, indicating the emergence of a scientific field devoted to it. Firstly, the practice of place marketing has evolved from trying to meet the needs of specific target groups (using subsidies and promises of low production costs, for example, to attract businesses and workplaces), to using more sophisticated and differentiated

<sup>17</sup> Anttiroiko quoted in an interview (Anttiroiko, 2015) about his book on city branding (Anttiroiko, 2014).

<sup>18</sup> There are numerous types of rankings and it is difficult to get an overview of them all. Some focus on a specific place size (primarily cities and countries, but also regions). Few of these rankings are solidly constructed with detailed indicators implemented in a transparent manner. Many seem to take advantage of their parent institution’s reputation and provide only very cursory presentations of their findings. Most rankings are issued by consulting firms, private research institutes or other organizations and are rarely generated by universities themselves; however, such rankings are frequently quoted in the scientific literature and numerous authors straddle both academia (publishing in academic journals and fulfilling university research mandates) and the practical world (consulting for governments or other institutions). Anholt is a perfect example of this type of author. There are barometers issued by audit and consulting firms like Ernst & Young (attractiveness surveys) and KPMG (Global Cities Investment Monitor) and banks (Crédit Suisse’s Locational Quality of Swiss Cantons and Regions), the Global Cities Index from consulting firm AT Kearney and the Milken Institute’s annual Best-Performing Cities index, rankings conducted by management consulting firm ECA International, the Saffron European City Brand Barometer, the European Green City Index, the PwC Cities of Opportunity Report, the Good Country Index, the FutureBrand Country Index, the Bloom Consulting Country Brand Index, rankings from government agencies like the Invest in France Agency (AFII), statistics and rankings from national and international organizations (patents per capita as an indicator of innovation), the OECD (FDI statistics), the World Bank, the IMF, the Global Competitiveness Report by the World Economic Forum, the European Commission’s Innovation Union Scoreboard, rankings in Swiss newspapers (Das Schweizer Wirtschaftsmagazine Bilanz Städte Ranking, Weltwoche Gemeinderating, Tages Anzeiger Regionsrating) and from other countries (rankings in magazines like Forbes and Time, fDi Intelligence by the Financial Times, BBC GlobeSpan, etc.). Some rankings, like Cushman & Wakefield’s Manufacturing Index, are very specific. At a somewhat more academic level, there is the IMD World Competitiveness Scoreboard and the indexes developed by Anholt: the Anholt GMI City Brands Index and Anholt GfK Nation Brand Index and other indexes like the Global Innovation Index (*The Global Innovation Index 2014: The Human Factor in Innovation*) from Cornell University, the INSEAD (European Institute of Business Administration) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

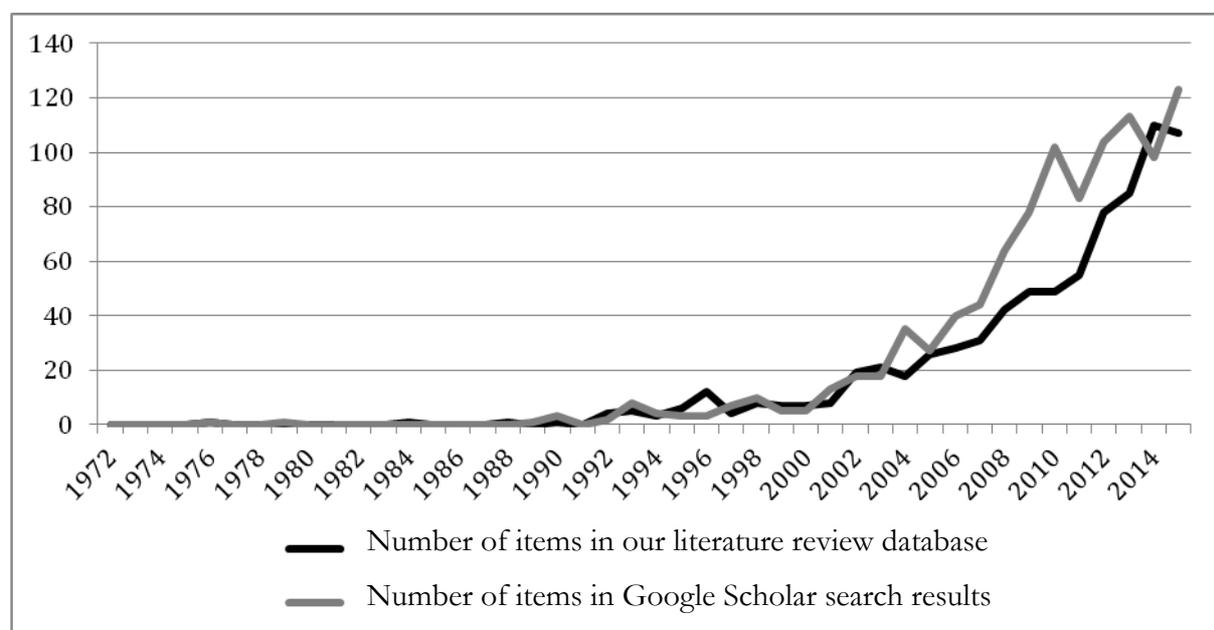
<sup>19</sup> Place marketing is considered a “special type of marketing” (G. Ashworth, 1993, p. 648).

efforts focused on regional development in general (Berglund & Olsson, 2010, p. 7; Mihalis Kavaratzis, 2007; Short & Kim, 1999). This echoes our earlier remarks about the shift from place marketing to place branding.

In other words, it is no longer enough to simply “sell” a place; instead, one must alter and improve it in accordance with a long-term vision and expectations, using a marketing logic involving interaction between current and potential target groups and the facilities, residents and organizations already on site. Furthermore, the appearance of so-called place branding practices (as we saw when discussing the difference between marketing and branding) is evidence of the important role of place image, which “has been known as the precursor of place branding” (Cai, 2002; Pike, 2009).<sup>20</sup> The range of practices and the literature analyzing these practices has become very broad and includes numerous concepts, even those that appear unrelated to marketing like land planning, urban planning and regional development.

Moreover, the total number of scientific papers on topics related to place marketing and place branding is increasing. This phenomenon is evident in the findings of this literature review (black line in Chart 2) and can also be seen in Google Scholar search results (gray line in Chart 2) and the number of organized conferences and platforms associated with this theme (Dé silets, 2012; The Place Brand Observer, 2016).

*Chart 2: Number of items per year in our literature review database (in black) and number of items per year in Google Scholar search results (in gray) of titles with the keywords “place marketing” or “place branding.”*



<sup>20</sup> “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).” (Acharya & Rahman, 2016, p. 2)

Changing practices and the emergence of an academic field of study devoted to this phenomenon have led to the development and study of various marketing tools adapted to places, which are complex, multifaceted objects with multiple meanings. At this stage, several authors (whose literature reviews we will discuss later) have remarked that the current literature on place marketing and place branding is essentially a patchwork; it examines various types of places, in part or in whole, rarely using a clear theoretical framework and a transparent methodological process. Dominated by consultants and practitioners, this field of study is struggling to break free from a mentality of best practices. In light of this, the initial idea was to conduct a meta-analysis (Rosenthal & DiMatteo, 2002). It is now clear, however, as Gertner (2011a) found with his “tentative” meta-analysis, that it is impossible to build a consistent, relevant collection of articles as the literature is too fragmented and its methods insufficiently comparable. We have therefore chosen to conduct a systematic and tentatively exhaustive review of the available literature. In fact, the number of articles analyzed surpasses the total in the largest existing literature review we know of, by a factor of 3.6. It includes a classification of all these works by relevance, disciplinary approach, method and perspective adopted. Unlike existing overviews of the state of the art, it offers a comprehensive look at the literature by taking into account all fields of research associated with place marketing and place branding.

### Primary existing literature reviews

To the best of our knowledge, no existing literature review has inventoried more than 292 papers. In fact, among the primary literature reviews identified, Lucarelli & Brorström (2013) work on a corpus of 292 publications, Lucarelli & Berg (2011) categorize 217 articles, Gertner (2011a, 2011b) examines 212, both Oguztimur & Akturan (2015) and Acharya & Rahman (2016) study a total of 147 each, Chan & Marafa (2013) look at 111 and Andersson (2014) analyzes 86.

The primary existing literature reviews have established several different classifications. We will therefore briefly present an overview of each one, in reverse chronological order:

- The most recent one we know about is that of Acharya & Rahman (2016), which identifies nine themes addressed by the literature.<sup>21</sup> These authors conclude that most of the 147 articles examined are conceptual, qualitative and based on case studies. The major research theme to emerge from all the studies is place brand identity.

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<sup>21</sup> That is: “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 the articles were based on the theme place brand identity (52 articles, 35.4%). [...] The next most studied theme was found to be stakeholder aspect followed by planning and strategy” (p. 7 of the article with unnumbered pages).

- Oguztimur & Akturan (2015) review 147 articles on city branding (a category included in place branding). Noting that the articles are either “marketing” or “urban planning” oriented, the authors propose four categories to describe the topics addressed: (1) city branding concepts, processes and measures, (2) branding strategies, (3) social urbanism and (4) cultural and tourism branding.
- The literature review of Andersson (2014) focuses solely on place branding articles in the field of human geography. She organizes the 86 articles analyzed into seven different categories.<sup>22</sup>
- Chan & Marafa (2013) analyze 111 papers, focused on 117 different places, appearing in three academic journals that frequently publish articles on the subject.<sup>23</sup> The authors conclude that the articles examined lack integrated research approaches and an integral theory, and that few have a statistical basis. Place branding literature thus offers little in the way of explanatory material to advance this field.
- The work of Lucarelli & Brorström (2013) is based on a corpus of 292 articles and is a meta-theoretical analysis of the literature. The authors apply the model of Burrell & Morgan (1979) to the organization and analysis of paradigms, which enables them to divide the field of place branding research into six perspectives.<sup>24</sup> They discover that the literature is dominated by studies adopting an objectivist approach, driven notably by a production and consumer-oriented perspective.<sup>25</sup>
- Lucarelli & Berg (2011) classify 217 articles published between 1988 and 2009 into three categories: those focused on (1) production (process under which brands are created and managed), (2) appropriation (the way in which brands are perceived and consumed by target groups) and (3) criticism (impact of branding logics on the existing social, economic and cultural environment). The authors try to show that city branding research (as a subdomain

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<sup>22</sup> Her categories: (1) papers that see place branding as a means to create, change, preserve or regain place identities and place images, (2) papers that present place branding as part of a growing urban entrepreneurialism within public administration, (3) papers that discuss the theoretical relationship between place branding and geography, (4) research papers on best practices and policy recommendations, (5) papers that perceive place branding as an undemocratic and socially excluding process that promotes social elites while systematically marginalizing less powerful groups in society, (6) papers that make place branding an integral part of strategies to make creative places, and (7) other papers that refer to consumption, place images used in product branding and private-public partnerships (PPP). This literature review underscores the wide variety of topics addressed in articles about place branding.

<sup>23</sup> According to these authors, the three academic journals that most frequently publish articles on place marketing and place branding are: *Journal of Brand Management*, *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* and *Journal of Place Management and Development*. These journals publish few articles by French-speaking authors. Their literature review does quantify certain trends: 67% of the articles are about countries, 32% are about cities and regions, and 1% address both; 60% use qualitative methods, 29% use quantitative methods and 11% use mixed methods.

<sup>24</sup> “Applying a model like the one by Burrell and Morgan to place branding literature, given its interdisciplinary nature, permits us to group different studies not according to which method or concepts they adopt, but by which meta-theoretical perspective those studies endorse. Given the relatively smaller size of the literature about place branding, compared at least to organization studies, marketing and corporate branding, we here argue that the research domain can be divided essentially into six perspectives: the critical structuralist perspective, the radical humanist perspective, the production perspective, the co-production perspective, the consumer-oriented perspective and the appropriation perspective.” (p. 73)

<sup>25</sup> In terms of the number of studies, it should be pointed out that studies adopting an objectivist approach heavily dominate the literature while studies adopting a subjectivist approach are lower in quantity and “popularity” (p. 73); “As the analysis has suggested, the literature is heavily dominated by studies adopting an objectivist approach in terms of productive, co-productive, consumer-oriented but also critical structuralist perspectives” (p. 76).

of place marketing) is a booming field with a fragmented theoretical foundation that is often based on case study anecdotes<sup>26</sup> rather than on sound empirical research.

- Having closely examined 212 articles about place branding and place marketing published in 43 periodicals between 1990 and 2009, Gertner's analysis (Gertner, 2011a, 2011b) presents a classification by time period to explain the development of this field of study: a gestation period (1990–2000), the birth of the discipline (around 2002), a period of adolescence (2004–2008) and a last phase with the approach of maturity (2009 and onwards).
- Berglund & Olsson (2010) propose a classification that divides articles into four categories: (1) empirical, (2) critical, (3) prescriptive and (4) conceptual.

These various classifications underscore the multidisciplinary nature of this field of study and illustrate the variety of articles in terms of research interests and questions. However, they are not comprehensive and the categories chosen are not really explained or discussed. Moreover, not one of these literature reviews resulted in a classification system that could be systematically used for all papers associated with place marketing or place branding. Given the multidisciplinary nature of this field of research and its multifaceted subject (“place”), it is important to move away from a silo mentality in order to successfully gather together articles that address the same phenomenon while using different and at times diverging disciplinary approaches and perspectives.

### **The need for a systematic literature review**

The relevance of conducting a broad, systematic literature review can be explained in part by the need to transcend the limits of existing literature reviews. Such a process is also justified by the ongoing need to clarify existing research in this field, which is the result of a convergence between several academic domains<sup>27</sup> and whose lack of conceptual clarity has been raised by many authors (Berglund & Olsson, 2010; M. Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013, p. 71; Niedomysl & Jonasson, 2012).<sup>28</sup> In addition, a structured overview of the field of place branding and marketing is required if we want to provide a knowledge base for future research.

In fact, the primary literature reviews mentioned earlier (Andersson, 2014; Berglund & Olsson, 2010; Chan & Marafa, 2013; Gertner, 2011b; Lucarelli & Berg, 2011) all agree that this field of research has not yet reached a very advanced stage. It lacks generally accepted definitions, agreed-

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<sup>26</sup> However, rigorous case studies can provide reasonably good results, as shown in an article on place branding case studies (Lajarge, 2000).

<sup>27</sup> According to Hankinson (2010, p. 300), “After years of separate development, there has recently been a convergence between the academic domains of urban policy, tourism and mainstream branding resulting in the emergence of a new domain of place branding.” We would also add public management, classic marketing and political science to the list of disciplines active in this field, as evidenced by certain articles published in their respective academic journals.

<sup>28</sup> “[O]ne of the most fundamental questions; what it actually means to market a place; remains largely unanswered” (Berglund & Olsson, 2010, p. 4).

upon classifications, and a general research plan with an overview of the existing research and issues to be clarified (with research models, variables).

Florek & Kavaratzis (2014) underscore that researchers are starting to become aware of the need to address the field's lack of discipline and theoretical foundation. To this end, as M. Kavaratzis & Hatch (2013) note, many authors have tried to introduce theories, like Niedomysl & Jonasson (2012), or have proposed models (Hankinson, 2004; Hanna & Rowley, 2011, 2013). However, these suggestions are not being systematically adopted and articles are not collectively generating a theory of place marketing and place branding. Instead, they appear to be a collection of separate, disconnected papers. Although this could be perceived as the sign of an academic discipline in the making that is relatively young and bursting with a variety of fragmented research topics, a situation like this demonstrates the need for clarification in existing research.<sup>29</sup>

## Methodology

A corpus of 1172 papers was obtained following a two-stage research process: a systematic phase and a phase that can be described as empirical. Although the findings from these two complementary phases could be discussed separately, for the purposes of this literature review we have chosen to present them in aggregated form.

### Systematic phase

We begin by explaining how we conducted a systematic literature review that ultimately enabled us to collect 833 papers. It was decided to include only articles published in English, referenced online, with no time limits other than the article be available online between July 2015 and January 18, 2016 (starting and end dates of the literature search). To avoid the potential bias of research guided by algorithms beyond our control and because search engines like Google Scholar are limited when it comes to a systematic literature search (Kembellec, 2012, p. 40), we elected to conduct our searches using the search engines of the journals that publish on this topic or could be interested in this field. The articles in our literature review published in academic journals are thus all peer-reviewed papers, in other words, accepted by reading committees. In the following sections, we provide details on and a discussion of the criteria used to select the journals and keywords.

### Journals selected

It is not easy to select relevant academic journals for a multidisciplinary field. The primary journals are obvious choices when one has been working in the field for some time, but trying to

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<sup>29</sup> “[A] dire need for theoretical clarification” (M. Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013, p. 71).

identify all the journals that address or could potentially address a topic is a meticulous task. It was a two-step process: we began by drawing up a list of the primary journals based on existing literature reviews, and then expanded this list by adding the top-ranked journals of any disciplines associated with place marketing. This second step required looking at various journal rank indicators, which obviously do not always agree, given their respective political and economic viewpoints (Schöpfel & Prost, 2009). The rank indicator used was the SCImago Journal Rank (SJR) (Henshaw, Medway, Warnaby, & Perkins, 2015) developed by Elsevier using the Scopus database (Parkerson, 2007). We decided to work with this ranking rather than others like SNIP<sup>30</sup> or the IPP,<sup>31</sup> given that it “is a size-independent indicator and it ranks journals by their ‘average prestige per article’ and can be used for journal comparisons in the scientific evaluation process<sup>32</sup> (for a detailed academic discussion of these issues, see Guerrero-Bote & Moya-Anegón (2012) and Moed (2010)). To obtain a sufficiently large number of journals and still ensure that this meticulous task was feasible,<sup>33</sup> we decided to include the top 10 journals per category in the SCImago Journal Rank indicator that were associated with the fields of marketing, public management, public administration, geography, tourism and political science.

In the end, after assembling the list of journals considered relevant by existing literature reviews and the top-ranked journals (and then eliminating the journals that did not produce any search results with our chosen keywords), we were left with a total of 30 journals.<sup>34</sup>

### Keywords selected

Given that the aim was to conduct a literature review on place marketing and place branding and that the number of journals was already quite high, we decided to restrict the list of keywords<sup>35</sup> to “place marketing” and “place branding” in the search engines of the individual journals.

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<sup>30</sup> Source-Normalized Impact per Paper.

<sup>31</sup> Impact Per Publication.

<sup>32</sup> “SCImago Journal Rank is a prestige metric based on the idea that ‘all citations are not created equal’. With SJR, the subject field, quality and reputation of the journal have a direct effect on the value of a citation.” (Parkerson, 2007).

<sup>33</sup> Apart from two student assistant colleagues who provided invaluable assistance with the downloading, printing and storage of the articles during the systematic phase, the author conducted this entire research project on his own. He would like to take this opportunity to offer his heartfelt gratitude to the two student assistants in question: Lisa Raval and Mathieu Gobet.

<sup>34</sup> Here is the complete list: *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* (formerly known as *Place Branding*), *Urban Studies*, *Cities*, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *Journal of Place Management and Development*, *European Planning Studies*, *European Journal of Marketing*, *European Urban and Regional Studies*, *Tourism Management*, *Journal of Marketing Management*, *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *Journal of Brand Management*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Annals of Tourism Research*, *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, *Journal of Destination, Marketing & Management*, *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie*, *Town Planning Review*, *Journal of Travel Research*, *Urban Geography*, *Journal of the American Planning Association*, *City & Community*, *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management* (formerly known as *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing*), *Marketing Theory*, *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, *Public Administration Review*, *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, *Public Management Review* and *International Journal of Public Sector Management*.

<sup>35</sup> As discussed earlier in the section on definitions, these terms are just two of many viable but more specific terms such as “city marketing,” “city branding,” “urban marketing,” “urban branding,” “nation branding,” “destination branding,” “location branding,” as well as many other generally equivalent but less relevant terms like “place brand” (we noted that, in principle, the term branding is part of a more general process and that articles referring to “place brand” also mention the keyword “place branding”), “territorial marketing” (a little-used term), and “territorial branding” (another little-used term).

## Empirical phase

Concurrently with this systematic literature review, as part of our research in the field (PhD in Public Administration), we put together a practical database of articles associated with place marketing that were mentioned in our readings, either in citations or bibliographic references. Since the goal was to provide a general overview of the literature, we deemed it relevant to include these elements. In particular, this empirical phase supplemented the systematic literature review with articles from other journals, articles in French, papers referenced in search engines like Google Scholar that were not identified during the systematic phase, as well as academic works other than articles, such as books (each proposed item was subjected to a careful reading to ensure its content was truly relevant, as explained later). In the end, after repetitions were eliminated, an additional 339 items were added to the 833 from the systematic phase, bringing the total number of documents analyzed for this literature review to 1172.

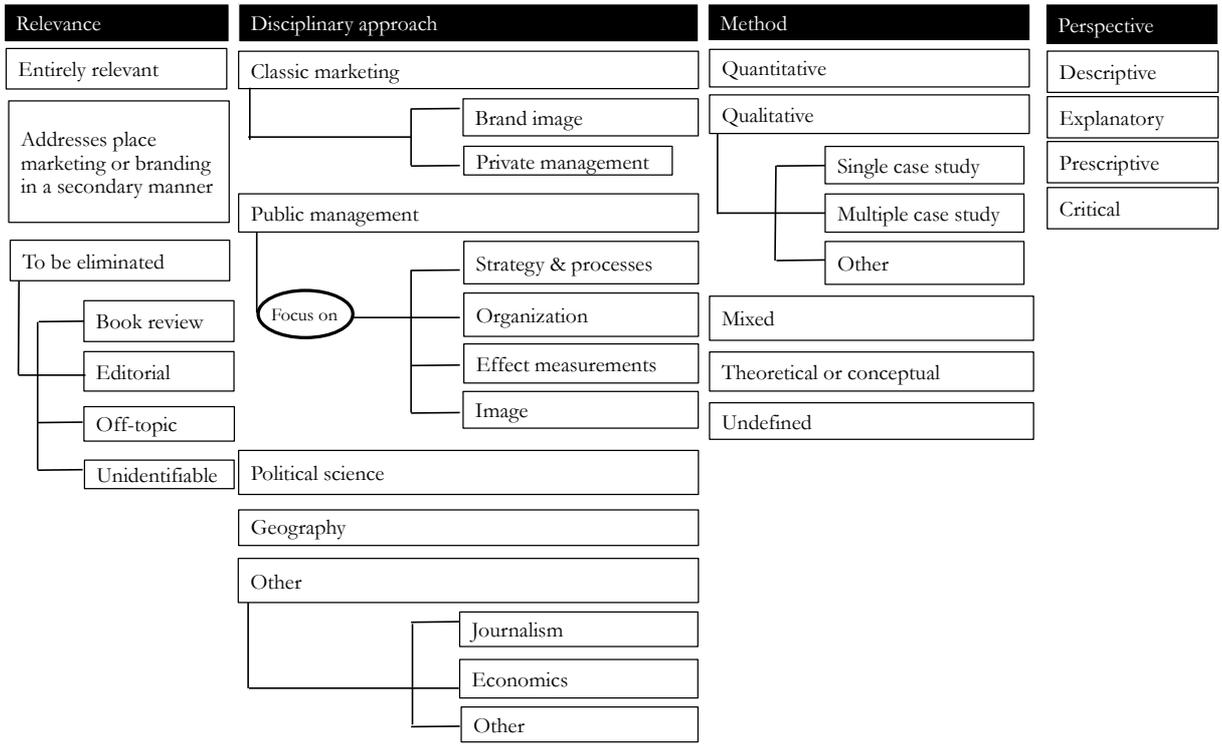
## Classification

The first task was to develop a classification system for organizing all the articles into categories. The categories chosen were the paper's relevance to the research topic (the criteria for this filter will be explained in greater detail later), the disciplinary approach, the method, and the perspective adopted. In addition, a comments area for notes on content was added to each article.

After being carefully read by the author, all the articles were sorted and placed into the categories (quantitative overview) that will be individually discussed in the next section and their content was assessed using various qualitative criteria (assessment of the content), such as the aim of the article, its contributions and its limitations. While such an exercise can appear simplistic for some large-scale publications (since each item is put in a box), it has the virtue of offering a clear snapshot of the current state of the field.

This section discusses the classification choices made and the related issues, as well as the criteria used for each category. The structure is outlined in the figure below.

Figure 1: Basic structure of classification system



### Classification by relevance

Once the corpus of 1172 publications was created, a content analysis phase determined the relevance of each item to the field of place marketing by asking the following basic question: Does this document address issues associated with place marketing? Three categories were created: the item is deemed entirely relevant, the item addresses place marketing in a secondary manner or the item is to be eliminated from this literature review because it is a book review, an editorial (or position paper), off-topic or unidentifiable.

Thus, despite the presence of some very interesting and informative editorials and book reviews in various journals (notably in *Cities* and *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*), it was decided to focus solely on actual academic papers in these journals. As stated earlier, other types of publications were included: books (a total of 28) and a very limited number of conference papers (a total of 4 unpublished papers in French whose content was deemed relevant). This step, which we have called classification by relevance, involved having the author sort each item after carefully reading it (or, in obvious cases, after carefully reading the abstract). It was a necessary step since we wanted to ensure that our goal of obtaining a broad range of documents would not negatively affect the quality of these documents.

## Classification by disciplinary approach

A careful reading of the articles led to their classification by disciplinary approach. In addition to content, indicators like the authors referenced in the bibliography and the academic style helped classify articles.

The first category groups together articles that address the field of **marketing** in the classic sense of the term. Such articles are based on general marketing literature and use an approach, methods and analysis tools particular to this discipline. “Place” is therefore understood to be a marketing object like any other, with no major adaptations.

The brand image subcategory contains articles that apply traditional brand analysis tools (normally used on products, services and businesses) to places. The private management subcategory covers articles that examine place marketing management issues from a purely “private” approach that does not consider the specifics of the place or its public, political and institutional context.

The second category gathers together articles that address the field of **public management**. Given the interdisciplinary nature of this approach, we have adopted a broad vision of public management since this category includes articles that examine the specifics of the public, political and institutional context in which a place marketing strategy operates as well as its management issues.

Four subcategories help specify the focus of each item: strategy in general (and the related processes put into place), the type of organization (stakeholder involvement, political and institutional arrangement created, partnerships set up), effect measurements (value, performance and impact of strategies) and image (place perception, place associations, place awareness or reputation). The last subcategory, which often confuses image and brand image, differs from the brand image subcategory of classic marketing because tools and methods from classic marketing have to undergo major adaptations before being used in place marketing. Unlike the classic marketing approach, it does not, for example, analyze the image of a city with the same tools regularly used to study the image of a private brand.

A third category contains articles that adopt a **political science** approach to examine place marketing issues. It therefore includes research focused specifically on political issues and stakeholders (politics), as well as sociological studies.

The fourth category brings together articles whose approach refers to **geography**. Such documents address place marketing by taking a special look at issues of land planning, urbanism

or regional development, or by using geographical concepts like the notions of sense of place or place making (Chang, 2011).

The fifth and last category is devoted to **other** articles, that is, those that do correspond to any of the preceding categories. It notably includes documents with a journalism or economic approach.

It must be noted that the category of tourism, whose academic status is the subject of some debate though the field itself is the focus of certain journals (Kadri, 2008),<sup>36</sup> was not given its own separate category since we believe that the very heterogeneous documents in this field can also be placed in other categories. For example, an article about tourism management can be classified under a public management approach, while research on the tourism image of a place can be similar to a classic marketing exercise, depending on the tools used.

### Classification by method

Using a classic distinction found in most manuals on methodology (van Thiel, 2014), articles were categorized according to whether they used quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods, or were theoretical or conceptual, in other words, based on theoretical aspects and the literature. While papers using theoretical methods sometimes present cases as an illustration, they do not develop them and the process is not like gathering empirical data. Literature reviews were classified in this category. Another category includes articles whose method is not defined or could not be clearly identified.

Based on existing literature reviews, we assumed that many items would be qualitative studies, which gave rise to the following subcategories: single case study, multiple-case study and other (the latter includes, for example, document analyses that are not part of a case study). We distinguish between single and multiple case studies, as well as between case studies that observe the methodological requirements of this approach (Yin, 2009) and case analyses whose methodology is either not explained in detail or ignored entirely.<sup>37</sup>

### Classification by perspective

This classification is broken down into four different perspectives. Among the nine categories mentioned by Rispoli (2002, p. 195)—descriptive, analytical, explanatory, prescriptive, didactic, Socratic method, propositional, interpretive and formative—we have kept the descriptive, explanatory and prescriptive perspectives and added the critical. The decision not to include the

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<sup>36</sup> *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, Tourism Management, Annals of Tourism Research, Journal of Vacation Marketing, Journal of Destination Marketing & Management, Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management* (formerly known as *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing*).

<sup>37</sup> The journal *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* explains this distinction as follows in a call for submissions: “Case studies are practitioner-based descriptions of real cases/projects. In contrast, analytical papers using the case-study research approach are usually classified as original research papers if they reflect against theory and use a valid and structured research approach with results that can somehow be generalized or learned from. Papers categorized as case studies are usually more descriptive and without theoretical ramblings and implications. Both types of papers as well as traditional academic papers are welcomed.” (Place branding and public diplomacy, 2015).

analytical perspective can be explained by the fact that all of the articles identified attempt to adopt an analytical view and aim to further the understanding of a phenomenon since they are all published in academic journals or publications. The other perspectives not used in our classification were deemed too specific and not suitable for our literature review which strives to provide an overview of the state of the art.

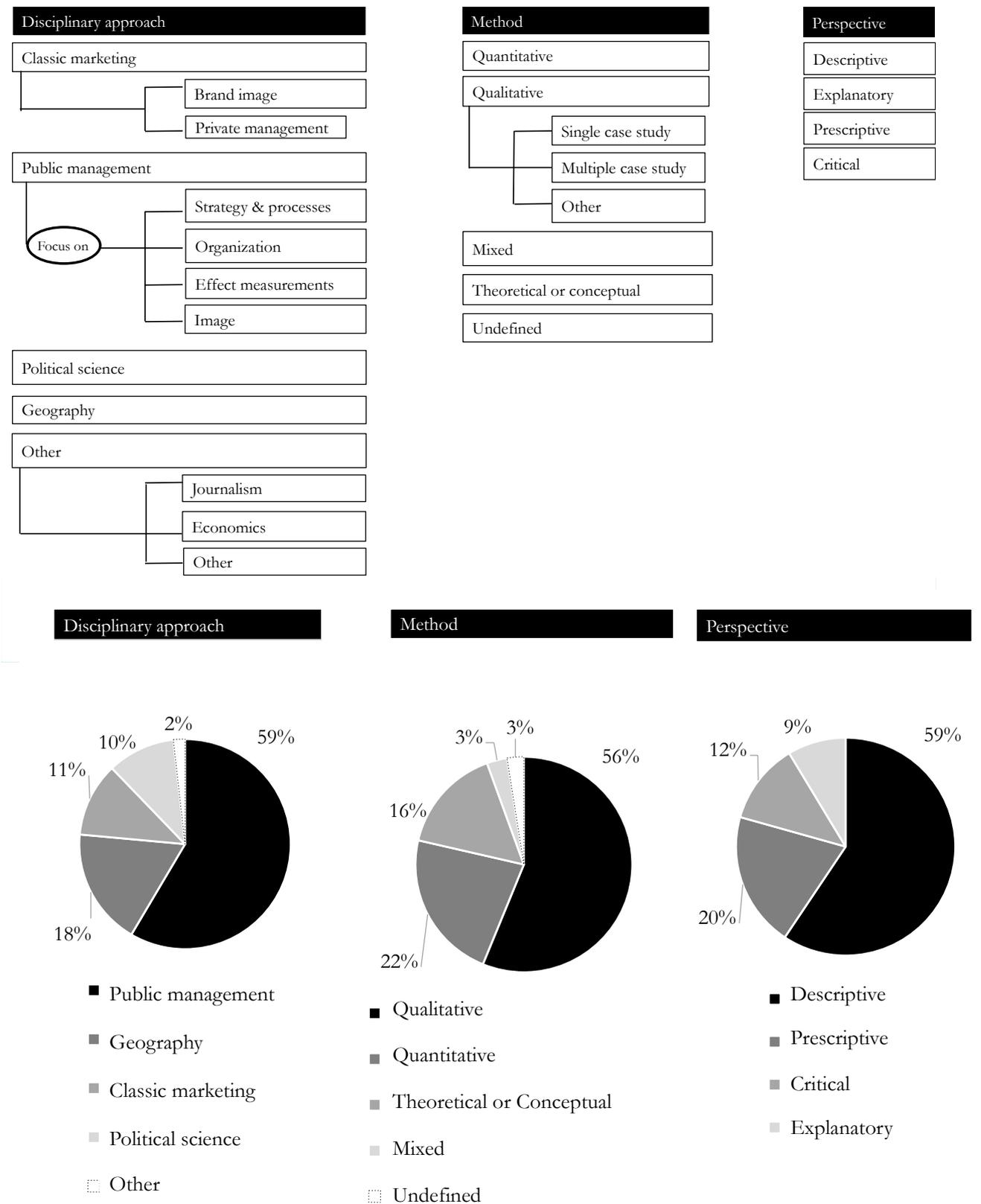
Certain articles could be classified in more than one category. An article could, for example, explain a phenomenon (explanatory perspective), and then propose some related managerial recommendations (prescriptive perspective) as well as some critical analysis (critical perspective). The choice of category for each item was decided by the perspective that dominated throughout the text. Following a careful reading, the task was thus to determine the text's overall impression: a description (reporting on a reality), an explanation (illustrating and linking phenomena), a recommendation (offering advice) or a criticism (rationally deconstructing facts).

The prescriptive, or normative, perspective covers publications whose contribution consists primarily of making recommendations and proposing new avenues to practitioners without offering a true scientific analysis. Such articles attach great importance to best practices, contain assumptions that are not debated and unsubstantiated methodologies and have no empirical evidence.

## Findings

The findings are presented first by category and subcategory, then by combinations of categories and subcategories that include the dimension of time. This is followed by an interpretation of these findings, and then a final summary. To increase the readability of this document, we will focus solely on key elements since the complete database is available upon request to the author.

Figure 1 and Charts 3, 4 and 5: Findings: articles (n=790) broken down by disciplinary approach, method and perspective



## Keywords

Plugging our keywords into the search engines of the various journals identified only generated lists of published academic papers, unlike the other general-interest search engines that we tested.<sup>38</sup> It was originally thought that the findings for the terms “place marketing” and “place branding” would be analyzed separately. However, two observations showed that this would not be appropriate or necessary. Firstly, when downloading the articles, it was noticed that many of the respective search results for the two terms overlapped<sup>39</sup> (these repetitions were obviously eliminated before the total of 1172 was reached). Secondly, in terms of content, the careful reading of the articles selected revealed no tendency to differentiate between these two categories, despite our critical look at the definitions of the terms “branding” and “marketing” (discussed earlier).

## Relevance

The relevance filter was used to immediately eliminate any articles deemed off-topic, in other words, documents in which the keywords referred only anecdotally to place branding or marketing (305 publications, which represents 80% of the articles eliminated), as well as editorials (32; 8%), book reviews (22; 6%) and conference proceedings (21; 5.5%) that had not been previously identified as such. In addition, 2 unidentifiable documents (0.5%) were part of the group of 382 items that made up the “to be eliminated” category.

Of the 1172 initial items found, 790 academic articles published between 1976 and 2016 in 98 different journals were deemed relevant. Of these, 214 were identified as addressing place marketing in a secondary manner. In such documents, place branding or marketing issues are not central to the analysis or the research questions themselves, but are discussed enough to make a contribution to the field. The remaining 576 documents deemed entirely relevant therefore made up the core of our literature review.

## Journals

As mentioned earlier, the systematic phase of the literature review identified 30 journals. With the additions from the so-called non-systematic (or empirical) phase of the review, the total number of journals examined reached 98 (80, if we consider only the 576 documents deemed entirely

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<sup>38</sup> In addition to Google Scholar, we tested Microsoft Academic Search and the search engine on PérUnil (<http://www2.unil.ch/perunil/pu2/>), a tool of the University of Lausanne like JSTOR and CAIRN, which is used to search digital libraries of periodicals. For unknown reasons, one of the journals (we have chosen not to name it since it is unclear whether the error was caused by the journal or whether there was a technical problem on our end) produced different results when we conducted several similar searches in a row. In fact, consecutive searches using identical search terms, conducted several minutes apart, did not always generate the same results. We have chosen to explain this for reasons of transparency. The difference, however, proved negligible: in four consecutive attempts, the journal listed 19 articles, then 20, then 19 again, and then 21. This is why we assume that our findings were not affected.

<sup>39</sup> Generally speaking, there was a very high proportion of overlap in the search results. In some cases, all the articles from one category were included in the other (place branding in place marketing, notably), while in other cases, a majority of the results overlapped. However, some documents appeared solely under one of the keywords.

relevant). In addition, 4 conference proceedings and 28 books were added to the corpus. The following journals proved to be the most prolific in our review: *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* (formerly known as *Place Branding*), *Journal of Place Management and Development*, *Cities*, *Urban Studies* and *Tourism Management*. Not surprisingly, our findings reveal a correlation between the journal and the type of documents found in certain categories; the title is often a good indicator. For example, *Marketing Theory* focuses on theoretical aspects, which makes this academic journal primarily a source for conceptual documents, while the journals *Urban Studies*, *Urban Geography* and *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* examine urbanism issues and thus publish more articles with a geography approach. Moreover, in terms of content quality, the articles in a given journal are relatively consistent.<sup>40</sup> However, if we look at all the categories and subcategories in our literature review, the findings vary significantly in the journals. Such an observation underscores the merits of conducting this literature review.

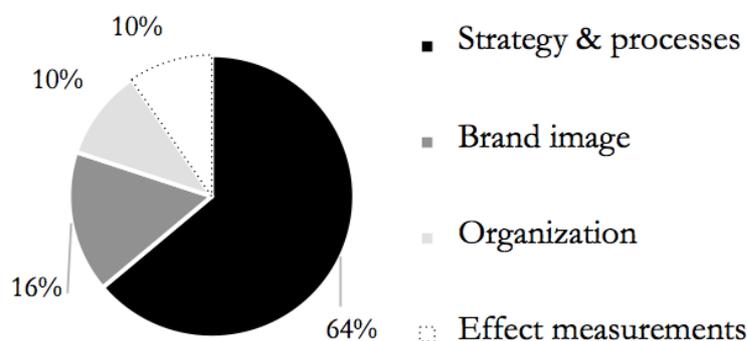
### Disciplinary approaches

The current literature confirms the multidisciplinary nature of this field of study (see Figure 1 and Charts 3, 4 and 5). As we see in Chart 3, 59% of the articles were classified in the public management category (462 items), 18% in geography (142), 11% in classic marketing (90), 10% in political science (82) and 2% in the “other” category (14). The content analysis reveals a tendency to adopt a silo mentality when studying the same specific characteristics; for example, papers using a given approach to examine the role of culture in place marketing strategies will often use the same primary references, while those addressing the topic from other approaches will rarely cite these references.

Within the public management approach (see Chart 6), 64% of the articles address issues of strategy and processes (295 items), 16% focus on brand image (75 items), 10% on organization, in other words, how to involve stakeholders and create and manage political and institutional arrangements and partnerships (such as Public-Private Partnerships or PPP) devoted to place marketing (48 items), and 10% focus on effect measurements, that is, the assessment of place brand value and place marketing strategies (44 items).

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<sup>40</sup> With the exception of the journal *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, whose content varies widely from one article to the next.

*Chart 6: Breakdown of articles classified under the public management disciplinary approach (subcategories)*

Among the articles classified under the classic marketing approach, 66% focus on brand image (59 items) and 34% on private management issues (31). These documents present tools regularly used to study the image of private brands, inspiring some authors to develop tools adapted to place marketing, like the advanced Brand Concept Map (aBCM) of Zenker (2014). When an article focuses on how such an instrument is used to manage a place and details the managerial specifics involved, we have classified it in the public management category.

Among the articles adopting the political science approach, which represent 10% of the documents, the analysis of the balance of power among stakeholders is a key concern and questions the use of marketing techniques in a public, social and political environment.

The geography approach addresses place branding and place marketing issues from two different angles: at the macro level, it offers conceptual reflections on space, place and geospatial relationships and discussions; at the micro level, it examines questions of land planning and architecture.

Very few items were classified under the category “other”: 72% of such articles adopt an economics approach (10 items), 7% a journalistic approach (1) and, in 21% of cases, the approach does not correspond to any of the other categories (3).

For each disciplinary approach, Chart 7 illustrates the percentage of articles using each method, while Chart 8 does the same exercise for the various perspectives.<sup>41</sup> These charts paint a picture of the relative weighting within each category. For example, the classic marketing category has the highest percentage of articles using a quantitative method, while the political science category has the highest percentage of articles with a critical perspective.

<sup>41</sup> These aggregate data (combinations) represent the 576 documents in the “entirely relevant” category.

Chart 7: Disciplinary approach broken down by type of method

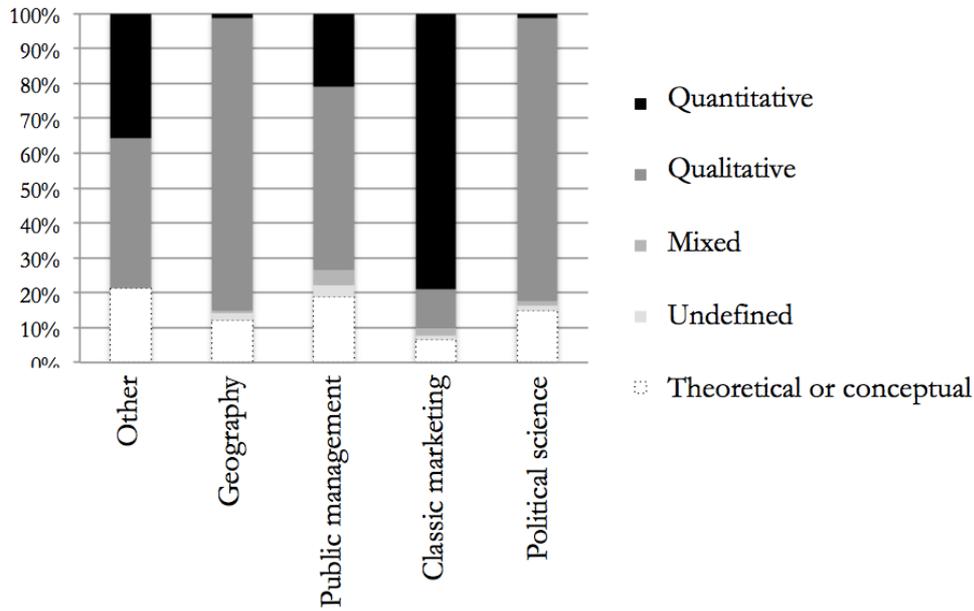
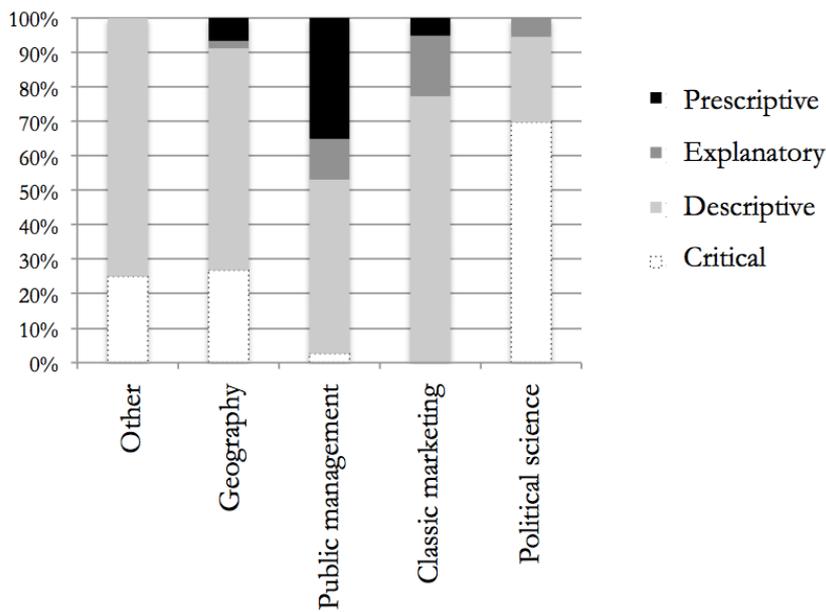


Chart 8: Disciplinary approach broken down by perspective



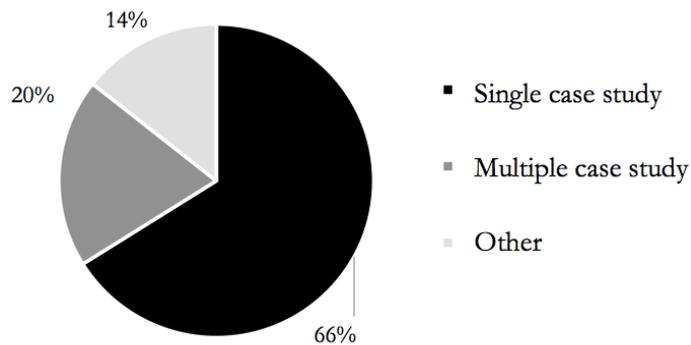
## Methods

According to our literature review, a majority (56%, 428 items)<sup>42</sup> of the articles use qualitative methods, while 22% (171) opt for quantitative methods and 3% (23) use mixed methods. Another 16% (121) of the articles are theoretical or conceptual and 3% (19) of the items do not specify the method used (see Figure 1, Charts 3, 4 and 5).

<sup>42</sup> Note that 428 is 56% of 762 items rather than 790. This is because for the purposes of classification by method we eliminated the 28 books from our corpus, after realizing that it was difficult to determine a method category for eclectic publications of this type.

Among the documents using qualitative methods (see Chart 9), 66% are based on single case studies, 20% on multiple case studies and 14% on other specific qualitative methods such as discourse analysis, the analysis of promotional materials, participant observation or action research.

Chart 9: Articles using qualitative methods (subcategories)



Among the case studies, very few follow “a rigorous methodological path” as defined by Yin (2009). A large number of articles are a cross between a true complete, detailed case study with an overview of the case, and an analysis of a specific element or phenomenon in a particular context. There is some terminological confusion in this regard, which is worsened by the fact that some journals also use the label “case study” for articles that do not use this method<sup>43</sup> while categorizing documents that meticulously use this method as “research papers.”

In terms of data collection, we note that interviewees often include practitioners, for example, contributors to organizations in charge of implementing place marketing (e.g., Destination Marketing Organizations) and students. The literature presents much fewer cases of collecting empirical data from target groups.

### Perspectives

While the 1172 items examined in this literature review are academic papers, the level of scientificity varies widely from one article to the next, as we have already hinted. All of the articles are, at least in part, analytical, to the extent that they study a phenomenon, seek to explain it and aim to add to the existing body of knowledge. Our classification by perspective is useful for highlighting the primary contribution of each article. Does the author (or authors) describe a reality? Does the author try to offer recommendations by highlighting the managerial implications of the research? Does the research primarily offer a critical viewpoint of its subject?

<sup>43</sup> In its guide for authors, the *Journal of Place Management and Development* defines articles in the category of “case studies” as follows: “Case studies describe actual interventions or experiences within organizations. They may well be subjective and will not generally report on research. A description of a legal case or a hypothetical case study used as a teaching exercise would also fit into this category.”

Or does the author explain a phenomenon with the help of solid arguments and empirical evidence?

Our findings indicate that 59% (469 items) of the articles are descriptive, 20% (158) are prescriptive, 12% (95) are critical and 9% (68) are explanatory (see Figure 1, Charts 3, 4 and 5). Generally speaking, certain authors are systematically classified in the same category because all of their articles adopt the same perspective. This is true, for example, of certain very practice-oriented authors. Also, the publishing journal can influence the perspective adopted. Certain journals require empirical data, for example, which is why such a significant number of articles in the classic marketing category adopt an explanatory approach.

The majority of papers are descriptive, that is, they offer readers a presentation of phenomena or case studies. Although they can sometimes be very sophisticated and analytical, such papers are limited to reporting on a specific reality, which is characteristic of an emerging scientific field. Only a minority of articles will go so far as to explain phenomena, for example, by linking variables or presenting substantiated causal relationships.

Articles with a prescriptive perspective are characterized by the repeated use of expressions and vocabulary indicating a value judgment, such as “should,” “successful,” “better,” and “key.” They seek to have a practical effect, to influence and change, rather than understand and explain.<sup>44</sup> As a result, they attach little importance to empirical measurements and tremendous importance to prescriptive elements. While almost all of the articles address the managerial implications of their findings, such implications figure most prominently in articles classified as prescriptive: these articles not only offer recommendations with regard to their specific research findings, they also advise the reader on a host of often abstract elements that at times lack empirical evidence. These documents are similar to reports from consultants and emphasize best practices and rankings.

The critical perspective encompasses articles that adopt a critical viewpoint and highlight the risks of using branding terms and tools from the private sector on places that are, by definition, public, political and endowed with a particular identity. These articles underscore the complexity and multidimensionality of places as they question the relevance of applying marketing tools: one cannot sell a place with a history, culture and identity.

Documents of this type are part of the power politics associated with place marketing strategies and tend to affirm that place marketing activities support a neo-liberal ideology and are part of a

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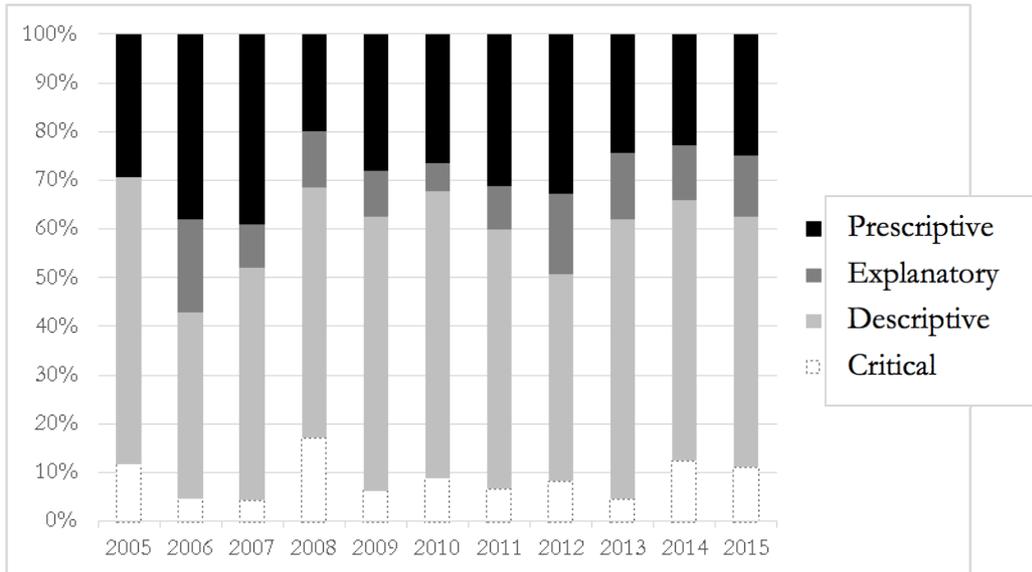
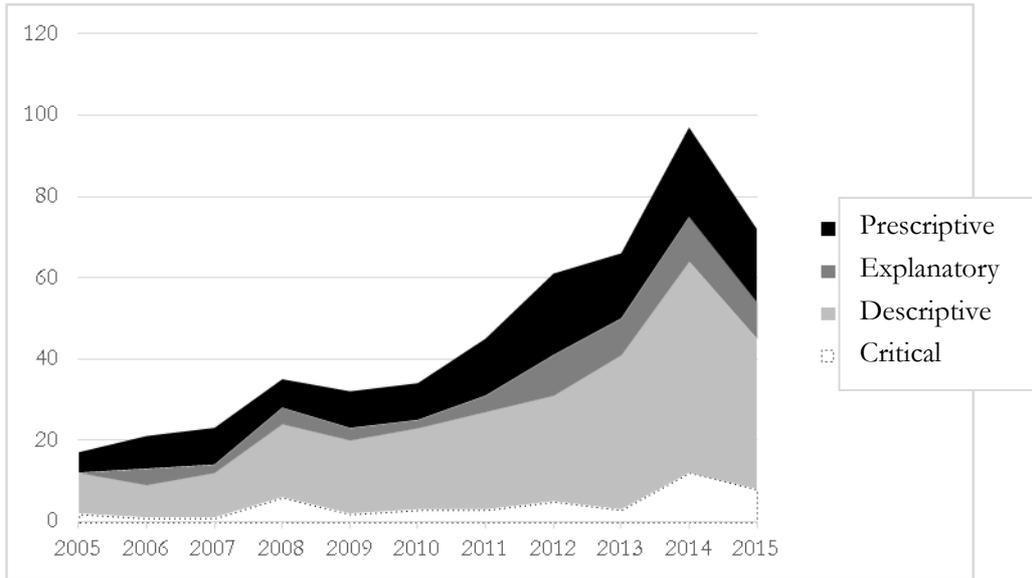
<sup>44</sup> For example: this article proposes “to help create multiple stakeholder buy-in to a single brand vision and consequently a strong cohesive brand.” (Virgo & de Chernatony, 2006, p. 379).

symbolic process of domination that can be exploited by the elites (Browning, 2014; Didier, Peyroux, & Morange, 2012; Eder & Öz, 2015; Eisenschitz, 2010; Mele, 2013).

Some authors condemn the fact that spending on place marketing may be done at the expense of public social policies, which in turn creates social injustice (Crisley, 1993; Harvey, 1989). In addition to attracting external target groups, place marketing is also a tool for internally legitimizing activities that “entertain” the public to avert any protests against local social problems (Häussermann & Colomb, 2003; Hubbard, 1995). As long as everything is polished, sterilized and simplistic like the images conveyed, this will inhibit any expression of multiculturalism and render the process selective and discriminating (Gold & Ward, 1994; Holcomb, 1994). Baur & Thiéry (2013) talk about the symbolic poverty of the visuals used to represent communities and places.

Charts 10 and 11 illustrate the change between 2005 and 2015 in the proportion of articles using each perspective. The proportions remained more or less constant during this period. However, the percentage of explanatory and critical articles rose very slightly, while the proportion of prescriptive and descriptive articles declined somewhat, although the latter category clearly remains dominant.

Charts 10 and 11: Change in perspective between 2005 and 2015



### Recurring themes

A careful reading of the 790 articles revealed the primary themes addressed and specific research topics. We begin by summarizing the six most common themes, then discuss some topics particular to certain disciplinary approaches and finally note some additional themes mentioned anecdotally.

#### Image

A large percentage of the articles on place marketing look at place image, awareness and reputation. Place perception is studied by creating indexes, using concepts like brand personality

and employing tools to measure the associations that people have about places. Many of the articles with a tourism-focus analyze the image of destinations.

### *Identity*

The multifaceted concept of place identity (Kalandides, 2011) is a common theme. It is considered a distinctive feature of any place: place identity is very different from the brand identity of a product, service or organization.

### *Effects*

Brand value and its effects are analyzed with the help of various concepts, notably brand equity and other closely related concepts: “brand equity may be considered an umbrella construct expressed through the use of one of the six terms: equity, evaluation, effectiveness, performance, measurement, and assessment” (Kladou, Giannopoulos, & Mavragani, 2015, p. 195).

### *Stakeholders*

Frequent topics include stakeholder analysis, stakeholder involvement in developing place marketing strategies, and the use of participatory processes (Eshuis et al., 2014; Kalandides & Kavaratzis, 2012; Mihalis Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015; Zenker, Erfgen, & Parker, 2014).<sup>45</sup> Numerous articles examine the perceptions of residents and citizens, in particular (Braun, Kavaratzis, & Zenker, 2013; Che-Ha, Nguyen, Yahya, Melewar, & Chen, 2015; Rehmet & Dinnie, 2013; Styliadis, Biran, Sit, & Szivas, 2014; Zenker & Rütter, 2014; Zenker & Seigis, 2012).<sup>46</sup>

### *The Internet and social networks*

Social networks and the Internet are popular research topics in the literature (Andéhn, Kazemina, Lucarelli, & Sevin, 2014; Charkas & Eltun, 2014; Ketter & Avraham, 2012; Scupola & Wildermuth, 2015; E. Sevin, 2013, 2015; H. E. Sevin, 2014; Zhou & Wang, 2014) and there is widespread interest in information and communication technologies.

### *Events*

Event strategies and specific events are frequently analyzed in the literature. This echoes the phenomenon of *événementialisation* (almost an “event mania”) that has been observed in certain places (Arnaud & Soldo, 2015). Researchers investigate a wide variety of events: festivals and mega-events (Olympic Games, Universal Exposition, World Cup, etc.), medium and small-scale

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<sup>45</sup> There is “an urgent need to rethink place branding towards a more participation-oriented practice” (Kalandides & Kavaratzis, 2012). Practitioners “should avoid creating and imposing a place brand and instead help shape it from the views of stakeholder constituencies” (Medway, Swanson, Delpy Neirotti, Pasquinelli, & Zenker, 2015, p. 63).

<sup>46</sup> Braun et al. (2013) speak of a “resident-orientated approach.”

events (Pinson, 2015) and series of events with umbrella titles like the “European Capital of Culture.”

#### *Topics particular to certain disciplinary approaches*

Specific themes were identified for each disciplinary approach. For example, articles in the geography category regularly mention the following two concepts: creative city (Florida, 2005, 2006) and urban entrepreneurialism (Hall & Hubbard, 1996). Architecture and urban design issues are also frequently addressed in articles of this type, which clearly distinguish between the characteristics of rural areas and those of cities. In classic marketing articles, certain concepts developed for products, services and businesses—like brand personality—are applied directly to places without adaptation (Demirbag Kaplan, Yurt, Guneri, & Kurtulus, 2010). In this same category, papers commonly assume that place brands are managed just like traditional brands in the private sector (Stephens Balakrishnan, 2009).

Depending on the disciplinary approach, articles can feature topics and issues related to place marketing like place competitiveness and attractiveness, regional development and governance, tourism and communications. However, each of these themes is the subject of its own specific literature, which is why most of the articles addressing these issues were deemed not relevant (see the section on relevance). Since they only address place marketing anecdotally, they were eliminated. Articles in the tourism category that specifically analyze marketing and branding issues were retained.

#### *Other themes*

The literature review also identified some very specific themes that are sometimes anecdotal. Here are some:

- The role of migrants (Kadirov & Triveni, 2010)
- The special case of slums (Hernandez & Lopez, 2011; Kalandides & Hernandez-Garcia, 2013; Torres, 2012)
- The influence of hip-hop (Madichie, 2011)
- Specific target groups like the creative class (Zenker, 2009) and gay people (Hughes, 2003)
- Food-branding (Berg & Sevón, 2014; Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2013; Boyne & Hall, 2004; Gyimóthy & Mykletun, 2009)
- The role of smells (Henshaw et al., 2015)
- The impact of litter (Parker, Roper, & Medway, 2015)

These topics demonstrate the variety of viewpoints and the breadth of place branding research, which we will examine in the next section.

### The diversity of place branding research

An examination of the literature reveals that, thanks to the lack of conceptual clarity and precise definitions, research papers in the field of place branding touch on a wide variety of specific topics. Figure 2 provides an overview of the diversity of place branding research in the literature, organizing topics along two axes, from a very narrow definition of place branding (on the left) to a very broad definition (on the right), and from strategic notions (at the top) to operational and concrete notions (at the bottom). The section on the far left represents articles whose definition of place branding sticks closely to the general concept of branding. A place brand does not refer to the physical, concrete characteristics of the place, but to the perception of these things. It is “a network of associations in the consumers’ mind based on the visual, verbal, and behavioral expression of a place, which is embodied through the aims, communication, values, and the general culture of the place’s stakeholders” (Zenker & Braun, 2010). Articles thus evoke the strategic aspects of the process designed to create place brands: the creation of a brand vision, the definition of brand identity and values, and the search for positioning. In more operational terms, authors look at the organizational structures in place, place perception (associations with the place brand), communication campaigns related to the place brand strategy, and even very tangible aspects like graphic design, logos and slogans, and promotional products. Research topics thus range from the place brand strategy defining the priority target groups to attract and retain, to the promotional products created, like the classic “I love New York” mug. Furthermore, some authors take branding concepts developed in the literature and apply them directly to place case studies, like the concepts of place brand love (Swanson, 2015) and place brand personality (Ewa Glinska & Jaroslaw Kilon, 2014; Ewa Glinska & Jaroslaw Kilon, 2014; Hosany, Ekinci, & Uysal, 2006; Ishii & Watanabe, 2014).

The central area of Figure 2 represents articles that focus on place promotion, which is an element of place marketing more than of place branding. Research topics in this area are place marketing strategy, promotional campaigns that involve concrete measures associated with legal, political and economic framework conditions, tourism, cultural and sports products and so-called flagship projects like events and monuments. In the other section of the central area, which is moving towards a broader definition of place branding, research includes issues like urbanism, planning (urban or rural), architecture and infrastructure (Gregory John Ashworth & Henk Voogd, 1990; Boland, 2013; E. Oliveira, 2014; E. H. d. S. Oliveira & Parker, 2015), from both a

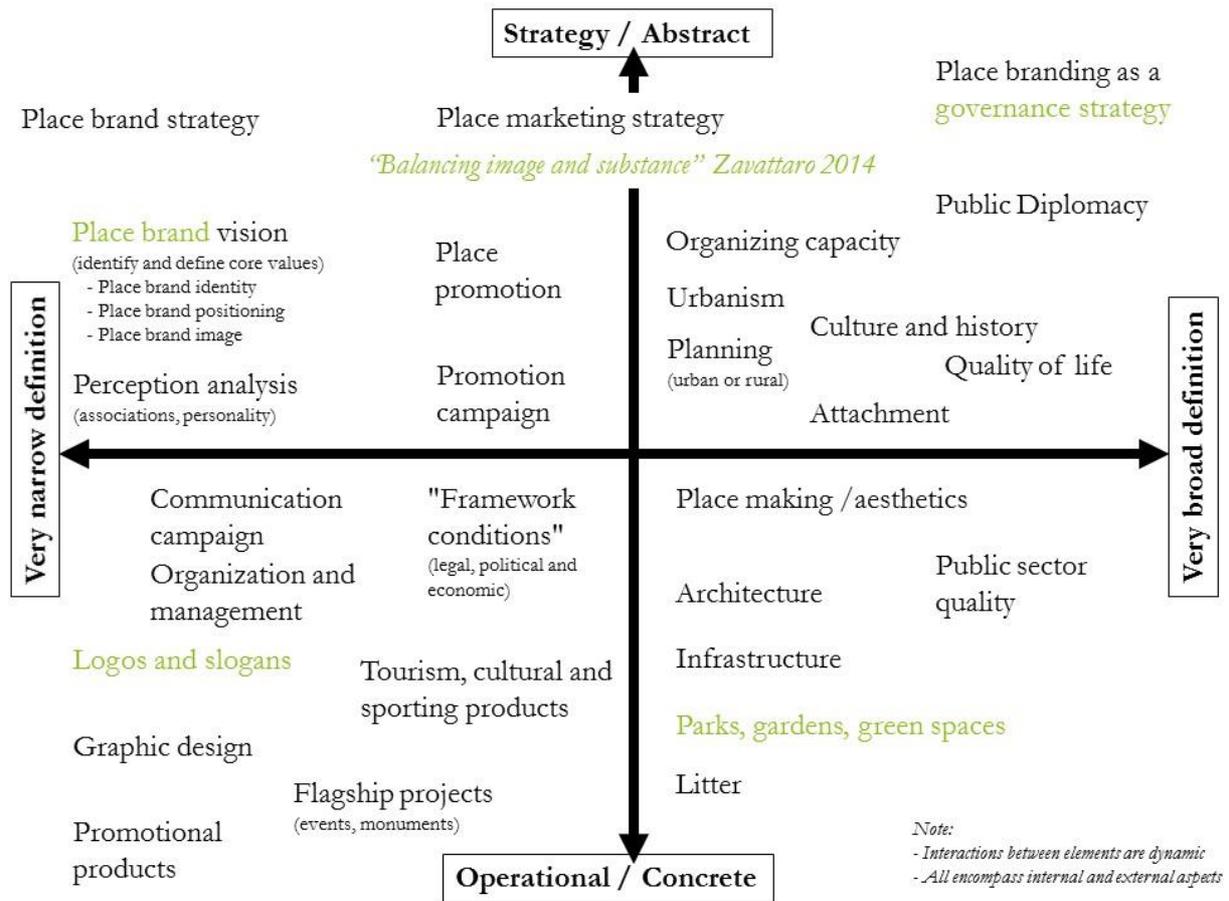
strategy viewpoint as well as very concrete aspects like managing parks, gardens, green space and litter (Parker et al., 2015).

The right-hand section of Figure 2 underscores that the literature also addresses very broad concepts of place branding, like culture and history, place attachment (Florek, 2011; Zenker & Rütter, 2014) and quality of life. In tangible terms, this means that target groups' perception of quality of life and public sector quality is also part of place branding. Furthermore, the field of public diplomacy can almost be considered part of place branding given that it is very similar to, and according to some authors a near synonym of, nation branding. Incidentally, one example of the connection between place marketing and public diplomacy is the fact that France has created the position of Ambassador of Cultural Attractiveness.

Finally, numerous authors underscore that place branding (and especially the place brand strategy) is political (Braun, 2008, p. 104) and part of a marketing strategy that is itself part of a place strategy (Janiszewska & Insch, 2012). However, the literature generally has little to say about the political and institutional aspects of place branding (Vuignier, 2015), even though this context is unique when it comes to public management. The broadest definition of the phenomenon of place branding appears to be that proposed by Eshuis & Klijn (2012), who believe that place branding is a very broad governance strategy that goes beyond managing image and perceptions (Braun, Eshuis, & Klijn, 2014, p. 64): it appears to add an essential element to public administration since the logic of branding can be adopted in all sectors involved in public management.

Place branding literature thus covers a broad spectrum of topics, from simple logos and slogans in some articles, to "beyond the logo" in others (G. Ashworth & Kavaratzis, 2007). Widely considered a strategic exercise, place branding is implemented with the help of very concrete measures that constantly seek to balance substance (tangible aspects) and image (perception) (Zavattaro, 2014).

Figure 2: The diversity of place branding research



## Conclusion

This literature review provides an overview of the state of the art and helps substantiate several characteristics of this field. Firstly, it underscores the multidisciplinary nature of this field of research with its variety of approaches, from public management and geography, to classic marketing and political science. Secondly, it looks at the change in the number of articles published and their content, confirming the emergence of place branding and marketing as a distinct area of scientific study. However, there is no evidence to “indicate the approaching maturity of the discipline,” in the words of Gertner (2011a, p. 123). In fact, our literature review shows that 36% of the scientific studies analyzed are single case studies. Moreover, the majority of studies classified in this category do not even use proper case study methodology as defined by Yin (2009). While these studies can be very practical and present interesting tools, they focus on specific cases, meaning it is difficult to step back and compare them with other situations. This, in turn, contributes to the idiosyncrasies of the field and hinders the development of a solid theoretical foundation.

In terms of perspective, 56% of the papers conducted a descriptive analysis, while 20% adopted a prescriptive approach. As a result, the field of place branding and place marketing does not include many explanatory articles and many questions remain. Nonetheless, it is no longer valid to ask very general questions like *Is it possible to market a location?* or *Can branding techniques be applied to places?* Such questions essentially ignore the advances that have been made in the literature since the 1990s, since these questions have already been addressed in numerous articles (see the section on the origins of the field).<sup>47</sup>

We have identified several themes that attract authors in this field and that we believe could develop in the coming years: analysis of the role of stakeholders and residents, advances in information technology (the Internet and social networks) and the overall effects of place branding and place marketing. This last point is particularly important since a brand, by definition, must produce a brand effect (Kapferer, 2012a; Kapferer & Laurent, 1992).

To summarize, five observations characterize the current state of research in this field. The literature on place marketing and branding:

- suffers from a lack of conceptual clarity, diverging definitions and a weak theoretical foundation, which means it addresses a very broad range of research topics;

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<sup>47</sup> The following quote is one of many to summarize the difference between place branding and other forms of branding: “Due to its multifaceted nature, city [place] branding differs from product/services branding for several reasons including: (1) the lack of control over the city experience (2) the mutating nature of the target market (3) the variety of stakeholders and steersers.” (Virgo & de Chernatony, 2006, p. 379)

- makes few references to classic marketing literature, which, for its part, provides clear definitions of marketing and branding;
- lacks empirical evidence and explanatory articles, meaning that the numerous hypotheses concerning its effects on attractiveness remain unsubstantiated;
- is disconnected from the political and institutional aspects of locations, although this context is important when it comes to public management;
- offers pride of place to the rhetoric of consultants<sup>48</sup> by including many prescriptive publications that aim to share best practices.

We would also like to mention two additional observations that have not, to our knowledge, been noted by other authors.<sup>49</sup> The first is that this literature features a significant number of critical articles. Critical articles shine a light on processes that legitimize social elites and neo-liberalism (Eisenschitz, 2010; Kaneva, 2011; Stigel & Frimann, 2006) and the phenomenon of imitation (Babey & Giauque, 2009; Riza, 2015), in which places paradoxically try to differentiate themselves by using similar tools and launching comparable projects. Careful reading of these papers shows that, although they are, in theory, far removed from public management issues, they can be very useful for understanding place branding processes. In fact, they offer a complementary, thoughtful perspective that is in stark contrast to the prescriptive papers we identified.

The second observation concerns a link between the disciplinary approach used and repeated references. When the bibliographies of the papers reviewed were read and compared, it was observed that papers adopting the same approach had a tendency to cite the same authors and reference works. In other words, each approach had its own list of common references. While this is hardly surprising, one consequence is that papers addressing the same field of study are not widely distributed. That is, the multidisciplinary nature of the field leads to a silo mentality in which articles in the same field are published at the same time, but without referencing each other. For example, if we look at the contributions to the field made by geography articles with regard to land planning and urban governance, they are very rarely cited in public management articles. Similarly, analysis tools used in classic marketing articles are not often used by authors working outside this approach.

Finally, we would like to note several limitations of this review. The database of articles could be improved and further developed in various ways, and this ongoing study could monitor how the

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<sup>48</sup> In the context of a sociological discourse analysis (Bourdieu, 1982a), this rhetoric could be characterized as performative (“saying is doing”) since the act of declaring that a branding strategy has an impact in fact contributes to its effects, which are socially and symbolically seen as proven, even though they are in fact only potential.

<sup>49</sup> Lucarelli & Brorström (2013) evoke this, albeit to a lesser degree, when mentioning the existence of “critical structuralist” papers.

literature is evolving over time. As for going into greater depth, the classification system could be refined with the addition of new subcategories and new types of classifications that focus, for example, on more specific descriptions of methodology or content. Furthermore, other aspects describing the literature could be highlighted, such as the location of the places studied or the references assembled by the authors. To broaden the review, other criteria could be considered when selecting journals, additional keywords could be used and more publication languages could be included.

### Future research

As presented in this literature review, the current state of place marketing and place branding research underscores the need to meet several challenges if this field of study is to achieve legitimate scientific status. The first challenge is to eliminate the lack of conceptual clarity that enables an array of almost magical effects to be attributed to branding. Second, it is important to discourage a silo mentality in the field as it prevents authors who work with different approaches from referencing (and thus reading) each other. This would definitely help prevent the constant reinvention of the wheel. If we look at the changes that have occurred over time, some of these challenges are being met; for example, the proportion of explanatory articles is (very slightly) on the rise. However, such articles continue to represent a very small proportion. In fact, the vast majority (three-quarters) of the papers analyzed adopt either a descriptive or prescriptive perspective.

Moreover, we concur with Parker (2015) and encourage authors to provide details about their methodological choices, clarify (or even discuss) the perspective adopted (Is it an academic article designed to explain or is it a practical case illustrating recommendations?), and refer to the theories mobilized in a comprehensive and transparent manner. If place branding and place marketing are to be considered a scientific field of study, we must do more than simply declare they are more than “a cacophony of logos [and] slogans.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> The full quote: “Brand-management philosophy has recently expanded to include public and spatial contexts producing a cacophony of logos, slogans and events all aimed at promoting and marketing places.” (Giovanardi, Lucarelli, & Pasquinelli, 2013, p. 365).

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## **L'IDHEAP en un coup d'oeil**

### **Champ**

L'IDHEAP, créé en 1981, se concentre sur l'étude de l'administration publique, un champ interdisciplinaire (en anglais Public Administration) visant à développer les connaissances scientifiques sur la conduite des affaires publiques et la direction des institutions qui en sont responsables. Ces connaissances s'appuient sur plusieurs disciplines des sciences humaines et sociales, comme le droit, l'économie, le management et la science politique, adaptées aux spécificités du secteur public et parapublic. L'IDHEAP est le seul institut universitaire suisse totalement dédié à cet important champ de la connaissance. Il est intégré dans la Faculté de droit, des sciences criminelles et d'administration publique de l'Université de Lausanne.

### **Vision**

A l'interface entre théorie et pratique de l'administration publique, l'IDHEAP est le pôle national d'excellence contribuant à l'analyse des mutations du secteur public et à une meilleure gouvernance de l'Etat de droit à tous ses niveaux, en pleine coopération avec ses partenaires universitaires suisses et étrangers.

### **Mission**

Au service de ses étudiants, du secteur public et de la société dans son ensemble, l'IDHEAP a une triple mission qui résulte de sa vision:

- Enseignement universitaire accrédité au niveau master et post-master, ainsi que formation continue de qualité des élus et cadres publics;
- Recherche fondamentale et appliquée en administration publique reconnue au niveau national et international, et valorisée dans le secteur public suisse;
- Expertise et conseil indépendants appréciés par les organismes publics mandataires et enrichissant l'enseignement et la recherche.