CHARACTERISTICS OF BRANDS AND PLACE BRANDING ON THE INTERNET

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Abstract: *This study aims to clarify the concepts of brand and branding in the new Internet environment, as complex processes that can be applied anywhere: to a physical good, a service, a store, an organization, an idea or a place. Assuming that brands have deeper meanings for consumers than the basic characteristics of the product or service being offered, the branding process is also defined in the context of places, in an effort to build a relationship with the customer and make emotional connections. Place branding perspectives are discussed, as it does not involve tourism only. It also involves the economic and socio-political sector as well as the historical perspective of the place.*

Key words: *brand, Internet, Cyberspace, place branding.*

1. Introduction. Defining the Brand

The term brand derives from an Old Norse word "brandr" which means "to burn". This of course references the ancient practice of using heated irons to mark burn livestock for identification purposes (Maurya and Mishra, 2012, p.122). On the other hand, the process of "branding has been around for centuries as a means to distinguish the goods of a producer from those of another" (Kotler apud Willy, 2006, p.274).

Perhaps the earliest instance of branding is the marking of the slaves and criminals in ancient times for identification purposes. Within this context, branding has been associated with "power, control, a sign of ownership indicated through marking a brand physically on the body and property" (Stone and Desmond, 2007, p. 202). The earliest forms of branding in Europe are considered to be the medieval guilds' trademarks on the products. The trademarks would protect both craftsmen and customers from low quality products (Kotler, 2006, p.274).

Brand is a complex phenomenon. As a result there is a wide range of definitions explaining it. According to the American Marketing Association a brand is a "name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or o combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors" (Kotler, 2006, p.274). The Business Dictionary defines brand as a "unique

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design, symbol, words, or a combination of these, employed in creating an imagine that identifies a product and differentiates it from the competitors. Over time this imagine becomes associated with a level of credibility, quality and satisfaction in customer's mind" (The Business Dictionary, http://www.businessdictionary.com/ definition/brand.html, accessed on 20.01.2018). Michael Baker states that "brands are clusters of functional and emotional values which promise stakeholders unique experiences" (Baker, 2003, p.372).

Considering the various definitions on brand used in the literature, De Chernatony and Riley conducted a content analysis research regarding it. As a result, 12 main themes were identified as definitions of brand: a legal instrument, a logo, a company, a shorthand, a risk reducer, an identity system, an imagine in consumer's minds, a value system, a personality, a relationship, an adding value and an evolving entity (De Chernatony and Riley, 1998, p.418).

According to the specific process involved, "Branding can be applied virtually anywhere a consumer has a choice. It is possible to brand a physical good, a service, a store, a person, an organization, or an idea" (Kotler, 2006, p.276). Brands are omnipresent therefore they can be found in almost every aspect of our lives: economic, social, cultural, sporting and even religion (Maurya and Mishra, 2012, p.122).

A brand is a product or service that adds dimensions in order to differentiate it from other products or services that are created to satisfy the same need. These differences can be either related to the product performance of brand: functional, rational or tangible, or related to what the brand represents: symbolic, emotional and intangible (Kotler, 2006, p.274). The ultimate aim for brands is to "create something distinctive that is able to command a higher price and hence ensure future sales and profits" (Rubinstein and Griffiths, 2001, p.395).

In order to brand a product it is essential to teach the consumers "who" the product is, "what" it does and "why" they should care. It involves "creating mental structures and helping consumers organize their knowledge about products and services in a way that clarifies their decision making and, in the process, provide value to the firm" (Kotler, 2006, p.276). Branding has been considered as one of the fundamental elements for a successful business. Brands have deeper meanings for consumers than the basic characteristics of the product or service being offered. Therefore "strong brands translate into real equity and sustained profitability" (Rubinstein and Griffiths, 2001, p.395).

2. Cyberspace

The term cyberspace was first introduced into the English language by Williams Gibson in his science fiction novel, Neuromancer, in 1984. According to the author, cyberspace represents a "consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts… A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system" (Cotton and Oliver, 1994 apud Bryant, 2001, p.139). However, the present connotation of the word has changed significantly.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, cyberspace refers to the "Internet considered as an imaginary area without limits where you can meet people and discover information about any subject: You can find the answer to almost any question in cyberspace" (Cambridge Dictionary, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/ english/ cyberspace, accessed on 24.12.2017). Although this definition is not completely accurate, it does point out several characteristics of cyberspace: its non-physicality, its social dimension and its functionality. Andrew Vande Moere claims that the term cyberspace is technically unimportant since there are other phrases used synonymously: the Internet, the digital domain, computer networking, data space, the informational sphere etc. However, this form connotes automation, artificial control and computerization as well as a multidimensional place (Vande, 1998, p.5)

Rebecca Bryant defines cyberspace as "the new medium of communication, electronic communication, which is fast outmoding, or even replacing more traditional methods of communication" (Bryant, 2001, p.139). David Holmes claims that cyberspace is "a global space inhabited everyday" (Holmes, 2001, p.6). The particular characteristics of cyberspace are represented by its space, that it can only be entered by specially designed devices and that it enables communication between individuals mostly independent of time and space (Vande, 1998, p.11).

The first distinctive feature of the cyberspace is its spatiality. Numerous people consider that the space can be either physical either non-physical (in our case virtual). Despite this general belief, specialists in the filed try their very best to explain why cyberspace cannot be perceived as being only virtual or only physical. Their conclusion is that cyberspace is only partially physical therefore it represents a different kind of space.

In the ordinary language, the physical space is determined by its relationship with the human body because it represents the space in which human bodies move and interact with one another. The physical space is a space "for the body, perceived and occupied by the body and in many respects directing the movements of the body" (Saco, 2002, p.25). By extension, virtual is only non-physical because it is something unopened to unmediated perception. The term physical, in general, is understood as a phenomenon that can be perceived by sight, taste, touch, smell and hearing. However, this understanding of physical is utterly wrong considering the numerous phenomena of the physical existence that cannot be directly perceived by the human body such as gravity.

From a conventional point of view, virtual represents only a non-physical space and it is understood as anything that is in digital form: "combinations of binary programming codes and electrical impulses that make up the bulk of the invisible data traversing computercircuits and network routes" (Saco, 2002, p.25). While these data may include simulations of something that conventionally is physical, it can only exist in a digital form therefore virtual can only be non-physical. From a technical point of view, virtual refers to "a digital representation of something else, typically something that does or will exist in the physical world" (Saco, 2002, p.24).

Regarding the issue of space, Rebecca Bryant says that we should have in mind two aspects of the cyberspace. "On the one hand, we have virtual reality – a 3-D cyberspatial environment which humans can "enter" and "move things", interacting with both the

computer and other human beings. One the other hand, we have the slightly less dramatic, but more utilitarian, world of networks of computers linked via cables and routers (similar to telephone connections) which enable us to communicate, store and retrieve information" (Bryant, 2001, pp.139-140). Andrew Vande states that cyberspace is a virtual place that is both real and artificial at the same time therefore by definition not a physical location and it can be considered as a "digital complement of our atomic world" (Vande, 1998, p.11). The biggest difference between cyberspace and physical space is that it involves an electromagnetic force rather than a mechanical one. As a result of this it has different physical proprieties.

Cyberspace has a geography of its own, made of networks and nodes in which process information travels from the places where it is enerated and managed. "The resulting space of flows is a new form of space, characteristic of the Information Age, but it is not placeless: it links places by telecommunicated computer networks and computerized transportation systems. It redefines distance but does not cancel geography" (Castells, 2001, p.207). Cyberspace has become a global space that is inhabited everyday by a large number of people.

As I mentioned earlier, the second characteristic of the cyberspace is that it can only be entered through special physical access devices "with an artificial processing mechanism, such as digital computing power and/or software that is joined with other access devices on a network of physical connection…without an access device, there is no distinction between cyberspace and communications in the real world" (Vande, 1998, p.11).

The virtual space can be entered only through a physical interface such as "personal computers, monitors, keyboards, pointing devices, microphones, video cameras, modems, network interface cards, servers, routers, switches, telephone lines, coaxial cables, optical fibre cables, radio towers, communications satellites, and, increasingly, handheld computers and Internet-ready cell phones" (Saco, 2002, p.26). Moreover, these are not the only physical components that represent the minimum condition necessary for the existence of the virtual space. Currents of binary data such as electricity, pulses of light and microwaves that flow in and out of them and form computer networks are themselves physical.

Last but not least, the third characteristic of the cyberspace is its social dimension. To be noted that originally the computer was designed and used for its capacity of a processor. However, in the 1990's, when the fascination with information technology occurred, the computer started to function as a "communication and social environment, rather than its capacity as a processor" (Holmes, 2001, p.58). Without this element, now it is impossible to understand the Internet. In fact, Rebecca Bryant states that cyberspace represents "the new medium of communication, electronic communication, which is fast outmoding, or even replacing, more traditional methods of communication" (Bryant, 2001, pp.139).

Once it became the new medium of communication, cyberspace had to combat claims regarding the rising of new patterns of social interaction. Manuel Castells responds to these claims saying that "social interaction on the Internet does not seem to have a different effect on the patterning of everyday lifestyle, generally speaking, except for

adding on-line interaction to existing social relationships" (Castells, 2001, p.119). Diana Saco states that "networking practices and orders are related as well to a variety of lived practices through which the spatiality of cyberspace is culturally experienced" (Saco, 2002, p.28). There are numerous practices online that represent extensions of face to face practices such as: homepages on websites that signify an arrival somewhere, participating in forums that signify being part of a community, e-mail "courtship" and so on.

Cyberspace enables interaction and communication between individuals mostly independent of time and space. "The sense of immediacy that apparently results from interactions in cyberspace is in fact artificial at best, since these human communications almost always lack similarity of place, and usually also happen in a shifted and different time" (Vande, 1998, p.11). In contrast to normal interactions, cyberspace interactions are usually indirect, delayed in time or separated by distance.

In order to understand better the new forms of social interaction on cyberspace one should build on a definition of community, de-emphasizing its cultural component, emphasizing its supportive role to individuals and families, and de-linking its social existence from a single kind of material support" (Castells, 2001, p.127). In sociology, communities are based on the sharing of values and social organization. In this new context they represent "networks of interpersonal ties that provide sociability, support, information, a sense of belonging, and social identity" (Wellman, 2001 apud Castells, 2001, p.127).

The Internet has an enormous impact on a wide range set of practices. These include changes in "interpersonal communication, sociality, and community: in courtship and romantic relationships and even in divorce; in surveillance and privacy issues; in grassroots social movements and campaign politics; in education, literature, authorship, and readership; in class politics; in statecraft; and most profoundly in potential changes to the construction and presentation of self" (Saco, 2002, p.9).

3. Online Branding

As a result of the Internet and its related interactive technologies a dramatic change has occurred in the brandsphere. However, the fundamental principles of branding continue to be the same. Rubinstein claims that "the core principles of branding are the same online as they are offline; it is just that on the Internet the brand transactions are more transparent and immediate" (Rubinstein, 2002, p.39).

The first executional difference online in branding is regarding the presentation of the brand because "people do not read electronic content the same way as they read print publications" (De Chernatony, 2000, p.187). On the Internet customers scan the information rather than read it.

Continuing the offline vs online discussion, "Old fashion marketing and branding that focused on communication was one way. The product was made and then the customers were informed; there was no opportunity for a discussion" (Rubinstein, 2002, p.37). The former marketing model of communication is no longer working because the Internet is an interactive medium. Thanks to the Internet, consumers feel empowered to

communicate not only with the brand but also with other consumers (Christodoulides, 2009, pp.141-142). Because of the Internet's interactive and community building potential, the customer has greater power and extended influence over other customers than in any other medium (Ind and Riondino, 2001, p.8).

In the traditional model of branding, the brand manager tries to control everything. He or she creates a specific brand imagine and communicates how great and wonderful the brand is. In case of emerging voices that state otherwise he or she tries to suppress them. Now, in the post Internet era, the role of the brand manager is no longer to control the imagine of the brand (to be the "guardian" of the brand) but to facilitate the sharing of the content instead (to be the "host" of the brand). Thanks to this, the power is now shifted to the consumers (Christodoulides, 2009, pp.141-142).

One of the main advantages of a two-way communication is that it allows brands to: receive accurate feedback from customers, deal with customers problems directly and shortly as well as thank them for their loyalty (Rubinstein, 2002, p.39). Frequent feedback translates into better understanding of the customer. "Branding in the Internet era involves building relationships, enabling interactivity, better tailored offerings and facilitates the creating and sharing of user generated content" (Christodoulides, 2009, p.142).

Because companies can no longer tell the consumers what they should think about the brand due to the emergence of the Internet, the key for success is to "consider all the relationships that the brand has with stakeholders (customers, employees, partners, the financial community etc.) and to understand what is valuable in those relationships and make an emotional connection with each group about the things that they value" (Rubinstein, 2002, p.36). Hence, branding is no longer just about imagine and advertising. Firstly, branding is about understanding the customer's real needs and developing a product or service that meets these needs. It is about creating a brand promise around these elements and then living up to it. Secondly, branding is about what companies stand for. It is about what they say and what they do because it affects directly the employees, the people that deliver the brand to, thus being the ones that should believe in it the most (Rubinstein, 2002, p.38).

The interactive feature of the Internet should be capitalized by the branding managers because "the web enables companies to engage in a more immediate and unfiltered dialogue with its publics, thus improving greatly the quality of the exchange of communication and information between the organization and its audiences and thereby potentially creating the basis for a stronger and more durable relationship" (Ind and Riondino, 2001, p.13). Online brands can address the following audiences: the consumers, the business partners, the employees, the investors, the communities and the Government (Hwang, McMillan and Lee, 2003, p.16).

Branding matters more on the Internet because all the activities that represent the brand promise are more transparent and much faster online. The brand promise starts with the way potential customers are targeted leading up to accessing the brand's website. The website should be easy and quick to navigate; it should not take much time for registration and definitely not ask for unnecessary information; assure the customer that the financial transaction is safe and private and that the goods bought will be

delivered on time. In case of any problems encountered, the sales service should be exemplary (Rubinstein and Griffiths, 2001, p.397).

Internet is all about thinking outside the box and breaking the rules. However certain rules must be followed such as: having a clear customer promise, understanding the customer and deciding what role the Internet is going to play. The following factors are very important for having a successful online brand: "delivering a consistent brand experience, integrating all the expressions of the brand, establishing brand awareness and measuring every new initiative against the brand" (Rubinstein and Griffiths, 2001, p.400). On top of these, brand managers should "ensure their brand's positioning is razor sharp and to encourage search engine owners to develop more consumer-focused engines" (De Chernatony, 2000, p.188).

So, from this perspective, a website can have the following functions: communicate about the company only, communicate about the brand only, sales only, communicate about the company and brand, communicate about the company and sales or communicate about the company, brand and sales (Hwang, McMillan and Lee, 2003, p.15). The best websites are characterized by consistency, interesting content and easy technical features. "A website should be dynamic, up to date and continuously enriched with new content. It should embody an organization's personality and display consistency in terms of both visual cues and content. It should orient visitors and provide easy-to-use navigation to help people from one area to another" (Ind and Riondino, 2001, p.12). Instant recognition is also a very important element for online brands. This can be achieved by visual consistency: "The logo of the brand must be clearly visible in every section of the website in order to make it clearly recognizable and reinforce the brand identity" (Ind and Riondino, 2001, p.12). Even though an easy-to-use website and great technical features are very important for brands online, the most important component is undoubtedly the communication. Customers question the messages sent and the values promoted by the brand. They do not respect companies that do not engage in dialogue, refuse to share information or accept criticism (Ind and Riondino, 2001, p.14).

4. Defining Place Branding in More than a Tourism Context

The term "tourism" is subject to a diversity of meanings and interpretations because it designates a variety of concepts. Tourism is studied as part of a wide range of disciplines: Geography, Economics, Business and Marketing, Sociology, Anthropology, History and Psychology and therefore "the differing conceptual structures within these disciplines lead inevitably to contrasts in perspective and emphasis" (Williams, 1998, p.2).

According to the World Tourism Organization tourism is "a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/ professional purposes" (The World Tourism Organization, http://statistics.unwto.org/sites/all/files/ docpdf/ glossaryterms.pdf, accessed on 18.02.2018). Greg Ringer says that "tourism is, after all, essentially about making available a diverse range of geographical locations to potential

visitors and thereby translating those locations into tourist destinations" (Ringer, 1998, p.18).

Williams states that tourism is "viewed as a composite concept involving not just temporary movement of people to destinations that are removed from their normal place of residence, but, in addition, the organization and conduct of their activities and of the facilities and services that are necessary for meeting their needs" (Williams, 1998, p.3). Another definition claims that tourism is "an activity that takes place when, in international term, people cross borders for leisure or business and stay at least 24 hours but less than one year" (Mill and Morison, 1998 apud Pender and Sharpley, 2005, p.4). The main characteristics of a tourist destination are represented by its spatial distinctiveness and cultural particularities. Local agencies try their best to attract a large number of tourists by showcasing these elements. Marketing a place as an attractive tourist destination using advertisement, brochures, press releases and travel agencies promotions is essential (Ringer, 1998, p.30). Greg Ringer notes that in tourist promotions, places are represented in a kind of patois "the sunshine cost", "the city of discovery", "the cultural capital" etc.) in order to create spatial identity. These epithets represent a set of traits specific to that place, "they insinuate dreams and myths into the public perception of place which may come, in time, to stand, like icons, logos or mottos, as shorthand statements of their character" (Ringer, 1998, p.19).

Relatively new to the field, the concept of place branding has gained prominence only since 1998. Despite occurring only in recent years, it has soon become a "powerful tool to gain competitive advantage, as it improves the development of a region or country not only in terms of leisure and tourism, but also in terms of attracting investment, new residents, jobs and skilled migrants" (Alonso and Bea, 2012, p.311).

Place branding has become more than a phenomenon, it has become a necessity that is provoked mainly by "globalization processes where the market place for ideas, culture, reputation, in addition to products, services and funds are fusing into a single global community" (Hanna and Rowley, 2007, p.63). Anholt claims that "when most people talk about place branding, they aren't usually talking about giving a name or a symbol to a place because places already have names and many already have symbols: they are talking about doing something to enhance the brand imagine of the place: place branding is believed to be a way of making places famous" (Anholt, 2010, p.7).

The concept of place branding refers to "branding and building brand equity in relation to national, regional and/or local (or city) identity. Brand equity is built through: brand loyalty; name awareness; perceived quality; brand associations in addition to perceived quality; and, other proprietary brand assets - trademarks, channel relationships" (Govers and Go, 2009, pp.16-17). It is to be noted that place branding provides the foundation for policies that pursue development as well as it serves "as a conduit through which residents can identify themselves with their city" (Alonso and Bea, 2012, p.314).

According to Alonso and Bae, place branding represents the bridge that unites the place's identity (the distinctive and particular cultural, historical, political, religious traits of a place) with the place's imagine (the perception of a place through communication and experience) and the place's reputation (how the place itself is, what's to be

perceived). "Place branding means creating, maintaining and enhancing a brand. Place branding helps attract tourists, investors, residents or other resources to the place, which puts such concept into practice (Alonso and Bea, 2012, p.313). Similarly, Govers and Go state that the bridge gap between the identity, image and experience gap is filled by place branding because it can be used to "mobilize value-adding partnerships and networks among public and private actors in order to build a coherent product offering (which includes tourism, trade, temporary employment and investment opportunities), communicated in the right way in order to guarantee the emotion-laden place experience that consumers are seeking" (Govers and Go, 2009, p.17).

Place branding does not involve tourism only. It also involves the economic and socio-political sector as well as the historical perspective of the place. Place branding represents "a group of initiatives with which social and economic value is generated through the reputation and perception of a place, as well as being a tool of integration and projection" (Alonso and Bea, 2012, p.313). The reputation of a place is formed through a broad number of activities such as: tourism promotion, export brands, government policies, the performance of the country's leaders on the international scene the approach towards investors and the attraction of skilled workers.

Due to the fact that brand image represents the perception of a brand in people's minds, people create their own mental image of a place by 3 areas of contact: "firstly, perceptions and images obtained through accumulated experiences; secondly, various forms of place representation such as films, novels, paintings and news reports: and thirdly, the impacts of deliberate policy interventions such as planning and urban design" (Alonso and Bea, 2012, p.313). On the grounds that cities compete against each other in order to attract "tourism, investment and talent, as well as to achieve many other objectives, the concepts of brand strategy are increasingly adopted from the commercial world and applied in pursuit of urban development, regeneration and quality of life" (Dinnie, 2011, p.3). According to Alonso and Bae, an effective place brand strategy is to have the desired brand place's image matching with the reality of the place. This image should be attractive, plausible, simple and most importantly distinctive (Alonso and Bea, 2012, p.314).

Place branding faces a large number of challenges, the biggest one revolves around the issue of "how to develop a strong umbrella brand that is coherent across a range of different areas of activity with different target audiences, whilst at the same time enabling sector-specific brand communications to be created" (Dinnie, 2011, p.5). The target audience includes a wide range of people: the residents, the potential investors, the international stakeholders etc. In order to build a strong place brand "a clear set of brand attributes that the city possesses and which can form the basis for engendering positive perceptions of the city across multiple audiences" should be identified (Dinnie, 2011, p.5). The best place brand attributes are the ones that powerfully express the unique character of the place. As the globalization process has led up to a cultural homogenization, nowadays cities compete with each other in order to obtain differentiation so that they can acquire competitive advantages. The competition between them is extremely hard, so original and creative ideas in place branding are crucial (Alonso and Bea, 2012, p.315).

5. Place Branding on the Internet

Nowadays the most important influence in decision making in most markets for customers is represented by the information found online. According to Alonso and Bae "the possibilities offered by the use of the Internet for city management not only as a channel of distribution but also as a communication channel for urban market have already proved their effectiveness" (Alonso and Bea, 2012, p.315).

The Internet has made possible a more varied and detailed form of information for destination places: cities, regions and countries than it had ever existed before. Because the Internet is an interactive medium, it enables social communication through forums, blogs, social networks and so on. As a result, the visibility of place brands has increased noticeably (Alonso and Bea, 2012, p.316). "Websites are fundamental tools for communication for place brands. They persuade, convince, help in decision making and finally allow making reservations and purchases" (Alonso and Bea, 2012, p.315). The official website of a destination is useful for travelers "at the time of exploration and selection of the destination, in the planning stage of the journey, when booking services, during the visit and in the subsequent phase" (Alonso and Bea, 2012, pp.315-316).

An important aspect of the destination's website is symbolized by its aesthetics. Aesthetics can be divided into two main categories: classical and expressive. While, classical aesthetics applied to websites translates into visual clarity (clean, clear and symmetrical), expressive aesthetics applied to websites translates into originality and creativity (special effects and sophistication). Website aesthetics include: pictures, colors and graphical layouts. These items may enhance "visual appeal and information transfer (e.g. attraction photographs, logos and slogans; colors that match logos; destination-related backgrounds; online video clips; newsletters and brochures) and visitor's experience and website reliability (e.g. site map, home buttons, search tools, memorable URL, non-graphical version, accurate links, correct spelling, clear and readable text and organized layout)". They are visual elements that are meant to raise interests in the traveler (Luna-Nevarez and Hyman, 2012, p.95).

A great destination website should be attractive, organized and consistent in style, colors and language. In addition, it should use distinctive hot buttons; proper graphics, fonts, colors, page length and multimedia; have a graphic-text balance and use good labeling (Luna-Nevarez and Hyman, 2012, p.95).

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, branding is a complex phenomenon that can be applied anywhere: to a physical good, a service, a store, an organization, an idea or a place. Branding is all about creating difference. These can be functional, rational and tangible or symbolic, emotional and intangible. It is to be noted that brands have deeper meanings for consumers than the basic characteristics of the product or service being offered.

Major changes occurred in the branding process because of the Internet. The former model of communication, one-way, was replaced by a two-way communication model. Now the consumer does not just receive information about the brand, he or she can also

create or share content. The brands are now trying to build a relationship with the customer and make emotional connections. Online brands are more transparent. Therefore, it is crucial that the brand promise is delivered impeccable.

Tourism means making available a diverse range of locations to potential visitors. Even though relatively new to the filed, the concept of place branding has become a trend adopted by places all over the world. Place branding refers to enhancing the brand image of a place in order to gain a large number of advantages: improvement in the development of a region or country in terms of leisure, tourism, attracting investors, new residents, new jobs and skilled workers. Place branding does not involve tourism only. It also involves the economic and socio-political sector as well as the historical perspective of the place. Because nowadays the most important influence in decision making in most markets for customers is represented by the information found online, place brands should use the Internet in order to gain visibility. Websites are fundamental tools for communication for place brands. For this reason, they should follow certain rules such as: be consistent in style, colors and language, be organized and most importantly be attractive.

Acknowledgements

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