A BRIEF HISTORY OF BRANDS AND THE EVOLUTION OF PLACE BRANDING

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Abstract: *The present work synthesizes the main proofs related to the fact that the brands and the process of branding are as old as the human civilization, initially through the appearance and use of the "proto-brands" concept ever since the beginning of the human existence, and then, in different forms and different historical periods, brands show a dynamic of their existence. It is highlighted the aspect according to which brands, in different historical periods, have two invariable characteristics related to information transmission to the interested parties: information related to the quality and information which indicates the origin of the product (that sometimes includes differentiated information in order to help the marketing process, such as assortment, storage, transport, etc.).*

Key words: *proto-brands, marks, place branding.*

1. Introduction

The *brand* term has been used very often in the specialty literature, but the given meanings have varied with time. It derives from the word "brandr", from the old northern Scandinavian language, which means "to burn" (Khan and Mufti, 2007, p.75). It refers to the producers practice to engrave the brand on their products. In English vocabulary, the word brand initially referred to anything that was hot or burning, like a piece of "firebrand" (Rajaram and Shelly, 2012, p.100). So, looking back centuries ago, the proof of brand existence is founded in the spaces or locations that usually the selling of the cattle was expected, in places where people were drawing certain representative symbols of those animals. Starting with the 14th century, when the international commerce has bloomed, lots of branding forms have been born or developed (the consumer, products, services, corporative or place branding), and the owners of goods used certain symbols to differentiate and promote their products..

2. The valences of marks and brands from a historical perspective

For the beginning, we can consider desirable the observation through which, at the common knowledge level, it is appreciated that "the mark and brand tend to have similar definitions" (Yang *et al.*, 2012, p. 315), but the similarities are just on the surface, these are apparent since "mark usage can be traced back to the 5.000 BC, much earlier than the

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birth of brands. The mark origin was evidenced in the Lascaux Caves of Southern France were ownership marks with symbols were found" (Yang *et al.*, 2012, p. 315). Brands and the process of branding are as old as the human civilization, first under the "proto-brands" or ancestral brands (Moore and Reid, 2008, p. 5), being assimilated to the meaning that we give today to marks (Yang *et al.*, 2012), followed by their transformation "with the birth of mass marketing in the 1870s when packaged products became popular" (Yang *et al.*, 2012, pp. 315-316).

The historical perspective of brands evolves "from focusing on ownership to emphasizing quality" (Yang *et al.*, 2012, p. 316) and the information which indicates the origin of the product (Moore and Reid, 2008, p. 6).

From the oldest times, people have used different engraves in order to recognize their cattle. For almost 4000 years, brands have been used in order to establish the cattle livestock, and this procedure had started approximately in the year 2000 BC. The term maverick which initially meant unbranded calf, "comes from Texas rancher Samuel Augustus Maverick who, following the American Civil War, decided that since all other cattle were branded, his would be identified by having no markings at all", explain Rajaram and Shelly (2012, p. 100).

The cave paintings from the south-western Europe, from the Stone Age and Early Bronze Age, show branded cattle, as well as paintings and Egyptian funerary monuments, approximately 4000 years old. Initially, "the brands were painted on with pine tar or paint in early history. Later, when the vast trail herds of cattle were driven north to market, hot iron brands were used". (Rajaram and Shelly, 2012, p. 101)

Brands were used also to identify goods property. Chinese ceramic goods, but also Indian, Greek and Roman objects had different engravings to identify the ceramic type, and information related to the property, the source of the materials and the period of realization. "Some of the earliest examples of marked pottery appeared in China 4.000 – 5.000 years ago. Marks placed on Greek vases could denote not only the makers of the pieces but also the merchant who bought the items `wholesale` and then sold them to others in the marketplace. Archaeologists have identified roughly 1.000 different Roman potters' marks in use during the first three centuries of the Roman Empire, which would seem to indicate that a large number of individuals were each producing a relatively small number of goods" (Rajaram and Shelly, 2012, p. 101). Other different proofs that testify the existence of the first branded objects also appear outside the Roman Empire: "There were trademarks on pottery in Mesopotamia (now Iraq) dating as far as 3000 B.C. At the time of the Pharaohs to identify their own products, brick makers in ancient Egypt placed symbols on their products. Quarry marks and stonecutters' signs have been discovered on materials used in Egyptian buildings as much as 6.000 years ago. These marks and similar markings on ancient buildings in Greece, Israel, Syria and Turkey seem to have more closely resembled modern trademarks in terms of their function. Quarry marks indicated the source of the stones used in buildings, and stonecutters' signs, which might helped workers, prove their claims to wages. Medieval stonemasons in Germany developed a very elaborate system for crafting individualized marks that identified their work, but the purposes underlying the markings were the same. Bricks and tiles from Mesopotamia and Egypt bore inscriptions indicating the name of the monarch who had commissioned the structure or who held power during the time of its construction. In contrast, Roman builders stamped their bricks and tiles to indicate the source of the raw materials used or to identify the person who either made the object or built the house in

which it was used. Even the signatures on paintings of famous artists like Leonardo Da Vinci can be viewed as an early branding tool." (Rajaram and Shelly, 2012, p. 101)

That is why, in this context, in the 12th century, England asked the producers of bread, gold and silver to print unique or personal symbols on their own products, mainly to make sure about the measurement's honesty. In the Medieval period, printing houses, paper producers and other members of other guilds have begun to use watermarks (Rajaram and Shelly, 2012, p.101). In 1618, it's recorded a case in the English justice that brought the problem to a different level, showing the connection between the brand and quality: "an owner manufacturing quality cloth took a rival to court for using the mark in their low-grade fabric" (Yang *et al.*, 2012, p. 317).

People also have been branded over time. Fugitives, slaves of the galley, gypsies, people without shelters and hooligans have been marked with different "symbols of shame" (Rajaram and Shelly, 2012, p. 101). "Between 1600s and 1800s, criminals were branded (again literally), as a form of punishment and identification. For instance, in England, they branded an S on a person's cheek, while in France, they branded a fleur de lis on the shoulder" (Rajaram and Shelly, 2012, p. 101).

We consider that "proto-brands" represented the attached information or the form of packaging of the object or the product, expressing one of the three characteristics: place of origin (expressed by a mark, signature or even by the physical properties of the used raw material), the achievement of a basic function of marketing (assortment, transport and storage) and the highlighting of the products quality.

The factories established during the Industrial Revolution time introduced the mass production of goods, requesting a larger marketplace for the buyers who were used to local products. In this context, "it quickly became apparent that a generic package of soap had difficulty competing with familiar, local products" (Khan and Mufti, 2007, p. 78).

In the 19th century, in parallel with the development of packaged goods, "industrialization moved the production of many household items, such as soap, from local communities to centralized factories." (Khan and Mufti, 2007, p. 78). When transporting these goods, the factories were branding their own marks on the used barrels, this way expanding the meaning of the term early brand to trademark (Rajaram and Shelly, 2012, p.102). These new packaged products had to convince the market that the users or the consumers could have the same amount of trust in these foreign, non-domestic products: "Campbell soup, Coca-Cola, Juicy Fruit gum, Aunt Jemima and Quaker Oats were among the first products to be 'branded', in an effort to increase the consumer's familiarity with their products. Many brands of that era, such as Uncle Ben's rice and Kellogg's breakfast cereal furnish illustrations of the problem." Rajaram and Shelly, 2012, p.102).

This new phenomenon created or determined a glut of branded products, of high quality and having identical sizes and shapes „after the 1862 Merchandise Marks Act and the 1875 Trade Marks Registration Act. [...] Bass & Company, the British brewery, claims their red triangle brand was the world's first trademark. Lyle's Golden Syrup makes a similar claim, having been named as Britain's oldest brand, with its green and gold packaging having remained almost unchanged since 1885. Another example comes from Antiche Fornaci Giorgi in Italy, whose bricks are stamped or carved with the same proto-logo since 1731, as found in Saint Peter's Basilica in Vatican City" (Rajaram and Shelly, 2012, p. 102).

According to Keller (1998) the branding process faces three different stages in the

twentieth century, i.e., the predominance of the commercialized brands (1915 - 1929), the challenges for the brand producers (1930 - 1945) and the establishment of the standards regarding the brand management (1946-1985) (*apud* Khan and Mufti, 2007, pp. 78-79).

3. The dynamic of branding perspectives

Ever since 1970s the managers related upon a cognitive model of branding, named by Holt (2004) *mind-share branding* (of mental associations) or by other authors *positional branding* (Pryor and Grossbart, 2007, p. 295), and only from 1990 a series of experts have transformed this model, on emotional and relational basis, into what today we know as *emotional branding*. Only with the growth and the influence of the internet it develops a third model, the *viral branding*. Together, these three models could include, from a theoretical point of view, almost any attempt of branding by any agents, consultants, holders, etc.

In the next table (adapted after Holt, 2004, p. 14) are compared the characteristics of this different perspectives on branding, alongside with the forth one, the *cultural branding* model, proposed by Holt (2004).

The four branding model axioms comparison   Table 1

	Cultural Branding	Positional Branding (*Mind-Share Branding*)	Emotional Branding	Viral Branding
Key Words	Cultural icons, iconic brands	DNA, brand essence, genetic code, USP benefits, onion`s sheets model	Brand personality, experiential branding, brand religion, experience economy	Stealth marketing, cool hunt, meme, grass roots, infections, seeding, contagion, buzz
Brand Definition	Performer of, and container for, an identity myth	A set of abstract associations	A relationship partner	A communication unit
Branding Definition	Performing myths	Owning the companies, associations	Interacting with and building of relationships with customers	Spreading viruses through top customers
Brand Success Exigency (Required for Success)	Performing a myth that addresses an acute contradiction in society	Consistent expression of the associations	Powerful interpersonal connection	Mass traffic of the virus
Most Appropriate Applications	Identity categories	Functional categories, low-involvement categories, sophisticated products	Services, dealers and retailers, products and special services	New fashion, new technology
Holder's or Company's Role	Author	Steward: consistent expression of DNA in all activities over time	Good friend	Hidden master of puppets: motivates certain consumers to

	Cultural Branding	Positional Branding (*Mind-Share Branding*)	Emotional Branding	Viral Branding
				promote or advocate for the brand
Source of the Consumer`s Value	Buttressing identity	Simplifying decisions	Commit to the brand, relationship with the brand	Being cool and fashionable
Consumers' Role	- Personalizing the brand`s myth in order to fit personal or individual biography - Ritual action to experience the myth when the product is being used	- Ensuring that benefits become salient through repetition - Perceiving benefits when buying or using the product	- Interaction with the brand - Building a personal relationship	- "Discovering" the brand as their own, DIY - Word of mouth

4. Conceptual delimitations and historical perspectives of place branding

Branding of different places, locations and spaces, term associated to the post-modern period, has European roots, with a powerful practical load and theoretical evolution from British pioneers S. Anholt, K. Dinnie and W. Ollins.

The concept of country branding is also a practical opportunity for branding agents and a scientific research field multi and inter-disciplinary, with an alternative often met in the specialty literature as nation branding, which is, in turn, subsumed to a larger area, known as place branding.

Despite the recent waves of interest and discussions, at national and international levels, both from the academic environment, the practitioners, the responsible figures from the public sphere and the ones targeted by the implementation of this phenomenon, the research and the establishment of universal valid criteria, at least to the defining level of this field of interest, of the notions that compose it and differentiate it from other related fields (*e.g.*, destination branding, place marketing, etc.) and some applicable and functional methods and techniques, haven't succeeded by now to cover the whole knowledge area, this construct still being a very hazy one.

In addition, at the same level for this discussion, in the academic discourse are to be found we can find other concepts, synonyms with place branding: thematic branding, regional branding, geographic branding or geo-brands.

Therefore, from the first few steps, where usually we should have certainty or to know the concepts that we are about to follow, to operationalize other concept, we are confronted by inaccuracies, by valences, by an incapacity to classify, insertion or grouping, because of the multitude of approaches, incongruities, haziness and, specially, a confusion in defining these branding forms - as a prominent lineage of a field (even with theoretical background or having practical valences) still in evolution.

5. Conclusions

We can observe a gradual transition and evolution of brands, from communicating the information, having a utilitarian nature, regarding the origin and quality (to reduce the risks and the haziness in the first human civilization periods – *i.e.*, highlighting the transactional side of the brand), to the addition of more characteristics, over time. Modern human civilization brands include both the informational characteristics of proto-brands and the ones associated to the building of an image (including status, power and intrinsic value) and brand personality - *i.e.*, emphasizing the transforming side of brands, as "the postmodern consumers are into a process of continuous search for experiences" (Nechita, 2014, p. 270). In addition, the dynamic of the brand term involves an ever growing complexity, including images or meaning (power, value and/or personality) alongside other initial elements. In this way, "since the 18th-century England and France, there has been a massive development of the knowledge, procedures, and theories within branding. Contemporary branding theories have their origin and evolutionary starting point in the mid-20th century, primarily due to the development of commercials in mass media" (Hampf and Lindberg-Repo, 2011, p. 1). A different aspect in this paper targets the confusions that are made between marks and name-brands, but, following the purpose and the value chain of these, we can conclude that: "a mark represents a legal claim of exclusive ownership right for an entity (*e.g.*, company, organization, individual, product or service). It tends to be grouped together with intellectual property and used as an expression by the mark authority […] As for a brand, while securing the ownership is the foundation, its emphasis is on the market awareness, reputation, and prominence and their implications for the firm" (Yang *et al.*, 2012, p. 317).

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