Towards a network place branding through multiple stakeholders and based on cultural identities
The case of "The Coffee Cultural Landscape" in Colombia

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to analyse the creation of a place brand for Colombia's coffee region, within the framework of the evolution of place branding from traditional, one institution-led marketing approaches towards a more modern concept of network branding involving multiple stakeholders. The production of quality coffee in this region has been complemented with the development of coffee-themed rural tourism, which helps Colombia to enhance the value and positionings of its resources in the context of the economic and cultural exchanges inherent in globalisation.

Design/methodology/approach – Following a theoretical and conceptual analysis of place branding, this paper explores the case of the Coffee Triangle, examining the network of interrelationships involved in the process of business-led coffee branding and place branding by public institutions to achieve a dynamic identity asset shared by various parties. This study entailed fieldwork in Colombia to visit the region and hold meetings with managers in public administration, representative companies in the region and various social groups and entities.

Findings – Following a conceptual analysis which attempts to demonstrate the evolution of place branding towards a more holistic, multi-party and networked approach, the case study confirms the formation of complex interactions between stakeholders and public and private institutions at the local, regional, national and even international level.

Practical/implications – This successful initiative can serve as an example for other food production regions in emerging countries, helping them to improve their positions in global scenarios and enhance the value of their physical products through a heightened awareness and appreciation of the culture associated with these natural environments and landscapes. Synergies between business and place branding are also analysed.

Originality/value – This paper looks at an instance of place branding involving multiple stakeholders and on the basis of cultural and dynamic identity. It comprises an inter-regional case study in Colombia. South America is a sub-continent where some interesting and successful place projects are being implemented that add nuances to global economic and cultural dialogue, which has probably focused mainly on the Western world and the industrial nations of Asia.

Keywords Multiple stakeholders, Cultural identity, Colombia, Coffee Cultural Landscape, Network place branding

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Over the past decade, place branding has become a multidisciplinary area of academic knowledge and practice that encompasses the fields of town planning, applied geography, urban sociology, strategic business management, territorial policy and government, rural economics, urban agglomerations and public diplomacy. A review of the literature conducted by Lucarelli and Berg (2011) evidences a surge in research on the subject, and many local, regional and national institutions have clearly adopted a cross-border international or inter-regional scope (Zenker and Jacobsen, 2015). A wide variety of place marketing strategies have been proposed to improve place positioning; competitively attract investment, tourism and talent; and generate awareness in national and international scenarios.

However, quite often, initiatives have lacked a theoretical foundation as regards a strategic approach, and have been designed from a traditional promotion approach, normally by public institutions responsible for the political government of a territory, with a view to promoting the image of a place through messages that have tended to focus on using communication elements such as logos, catchy slogans and advertising campaigns (Ashworth and Kavaratzis, 2009). Such approaches encounter difficulties when attempting to communicate a place identity effectively (Kalandides, 2011) without oversimplifying or targeting only one of the various audiences involved in the territory – usually external stakeholders – and therefore losing credibility among internal audiences.

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Consequently, there is a clear need to move towards a more holistic and complex place branding perspective by analysing and communicating identities. Rather than being simple and static, place identity is eminently heterogeneous and dynamic, addressing a range of target audiences, in which the various stakeholders involved in the place increasingly become co-participants in the branding value (Kavaratzis, 2012). As these multiple stakeholders become co-creators of a brand, that is not conceived as the outcome of a plan but as a process of continuous multi-party dialogue, a networked approach to place branding emerges with multiple stakeholders forming *service eco-systems* (Maglio and Spohrer, 2008). This gives rise to complex socioeconomic interactions, horizontal relationships of competition and cooperation between local institutions (Pasquinelli, 2015a) and vertical relationships with other institutions and social organisations. Thus, there is a need to gain a deeper understanding of the complex socioeconomic interactions between stakeholders entailed in branding processes (Molainen, 2015).

Here, we apply this conceptual framework to an analysis of branding development in Colombia's coffee region, which constitutes a notable example of inter-institutional cooperation between business branding and place branding, focusing on a series of complex cross-cutting exchanges that transcend traditional sector-based marketing approaches – the production of quality coffee on the one hand, and experiential rural tourism in the region on the other – to combine both dimensions in a cross-sectional coffee-themed *service logic*.

From traditional one-way place marketing plans towards modern place branding processes

The underlying arguments behind place management approaches stem not only from the government and administration of an institutional territory, but also from attempts

to endow geographical *spaces* with a social identity that transforms them into *places* which inspire a sense of human belonging or attachment to each territory. This has aroused debate in the field of applied geography about how to confer an emotional sense (Yi-Fu Tuan, 2001) to spaces that are no more than geographical concepts defined by human beings, about the relationships that combine a space with its social implications (Jessop *et al.*, 2008) and about how a place brand projects and communicates the concepts of identity and perception of a space (Warnaby, 2009).

Place marketing has emerged over the past decades from historical attempts in recent centuries to attract potential settlers to the last territories on the planet to be discovered and colonised; to sell industrial places and, most recently, to attract visitors, which has fuelled a vast tourist industry; and to market proposals of economic, business or public interest (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008). Subsequently, constant initial indications about the differences between marketing a corporate business or a place have led to the consolidation of place branding, with multidisciplinary contributions from urban studies, tourism, geography and marketing (Lucarelli and Berg, 2011).

There is no consensus on the distinction between place marketing and place branding. Traditionally, corporate brand marketing has been defined as the analysis and projection of the corporate brand image to potential customers and consumers through its tangible and intangible elements. As Kavaratzis (2012) has indicated, place marketing falls within this scope (Kotler *et al.*, 1993; Braun, 2008), the final phase of which would be a branding as an outcome. However, the general focus of corporate branding is switching from brand image as the primary driver of the brand's value to the customer, towards a more interactive and relational co-creation process between the firm and its customers (Merz *et al.*, 2009). Place branding is also evolving towards processes between various stakeholders (Hankinson, 2010).

In the past, place marketing plans generally focused on urban areas, and messages attempted to project an image of a city (Kavaratzis, 2004). Within this conceptual framework, place branding was no more than an outcome of the plan, and attempts were made to create place brands from plans implemented by a single institution, usually a public institution with responsibility for the place in question. However, such implementation has presented significant shortcomings; managers in the public sector often have limited knowledge of marketing approaches (Ashworth, 2011), and quite often, plans have generally been based on mere advertising campaigns entrusted to consultancy agencies. In turn, these latter have frequently replicated more or less standard messages or formulas with only minor modifications which are basically aimed at a specific audience, usually tourists (Govers and Go, 2009). A number of place branding academics rightly suggest that the main target audience should be the resident citizens, and consequently, the desirability has now been recognised of also trying to convey the image to various audiences.

This kind of place marketing, proposed by a single institution and taking the form of sequential plans or phases directed at one or more audiences (target place consumers), probably reflects a stage in which the fundamental point of reference was corporate business marketing; a period that was limited to the last decades of the twentieth century. However, early twenty-first-century place marketing is widening its scope to encompass a more comprehensive and holistic approach and is moving towards the concept of place branding, which when applied in urban areas is called city branding (Kavaratzis, 2004; Dinnie, 2010). Kavaratzis has indicated that in cities:

> […] branding implies a significant change of perspective on the marketing approach; city branding is understood as the means both for achieving competitive advantage in order to increase inward investment and tourism, and also for achieving community development, reinforcing local identity and identification of the citizens with their city and activating all social forces to avoid social exclusion and unrest.

Thus, whereas place marketing essentially constitutes strategies and actions for promoting or *selling* a place – a city, region or country – determined by the governmental institution, place branding entails a broader approach that encourages various communities and social groups to identify with their geographical territory. This emotional identification or bonding arises as a result of complex cultural processes that imply moving from a mere geographical space to a place identity.

Although place branding represents a powerful tool for public management with social and political implications (Kavaratzis, 2012) and contributes to the progress of places by improving their visibility to attract socioeconomic flows, it is not a panacea for place governance (Ashworth, 2011). We believe that in addition to communicating a quality and creative place identity message, the place branding process should be imbued with an ethical and social vision. We agree therefore with Ashworth (2011, p. 250), who has indicated that place branding should form a:

> […] part of policies aimed at fundamental economic restructuring, social inclusion and cohesion, political engagement and participation, the physical and psychological well-being of citizens, and more laudable goals.

Furthermore, in line with Houghton and Stevens (2010), we also think that the evidence suggests that the most effective place branding initiatives are those in which a wide range of local stakeholders are involved and empowered.

Towards place branding approaches based on dynamic identities, where various stakeholders are involved

There has been an evident conceptual evolution in the past decade from *place marketing* towards *place branding* (Kavaratzis, 2004), with a generalised consolidation of the latter concept. According to Govers (2015), the distinction between the two is that a "marketing approach to place branding is likely to fail" due to the complexities arising from the network of associations that consumers form about place perceptions based on diverse sources of information from "various channels (influenced by the media, friends, relatives, personal experiences, popular culture, etc.)". As Figure 1 attempts to show, the view taken here is that place branding is configured towards a more general and holistic vision, bringing in complex, dynamic identities. In contrast, place marketing tends to be identified conceptually with plans to provide an image for a place through communication actions, undertaken by the institutions in that place which are responsible for administration.

Figure 1 shows the processes in place branding with a starting point that includes two previous considerations: the importance of place identity to branding, and the view that institutionally established places are complex systems of exchanges. With regard to place identity (the top left part of the diagram), it was felt that the views of Warnaby (2011), based on Agnew (1987), were appropriate. They first take the geographical area, which provides a framework and milieu for social interactions, and then its institutional
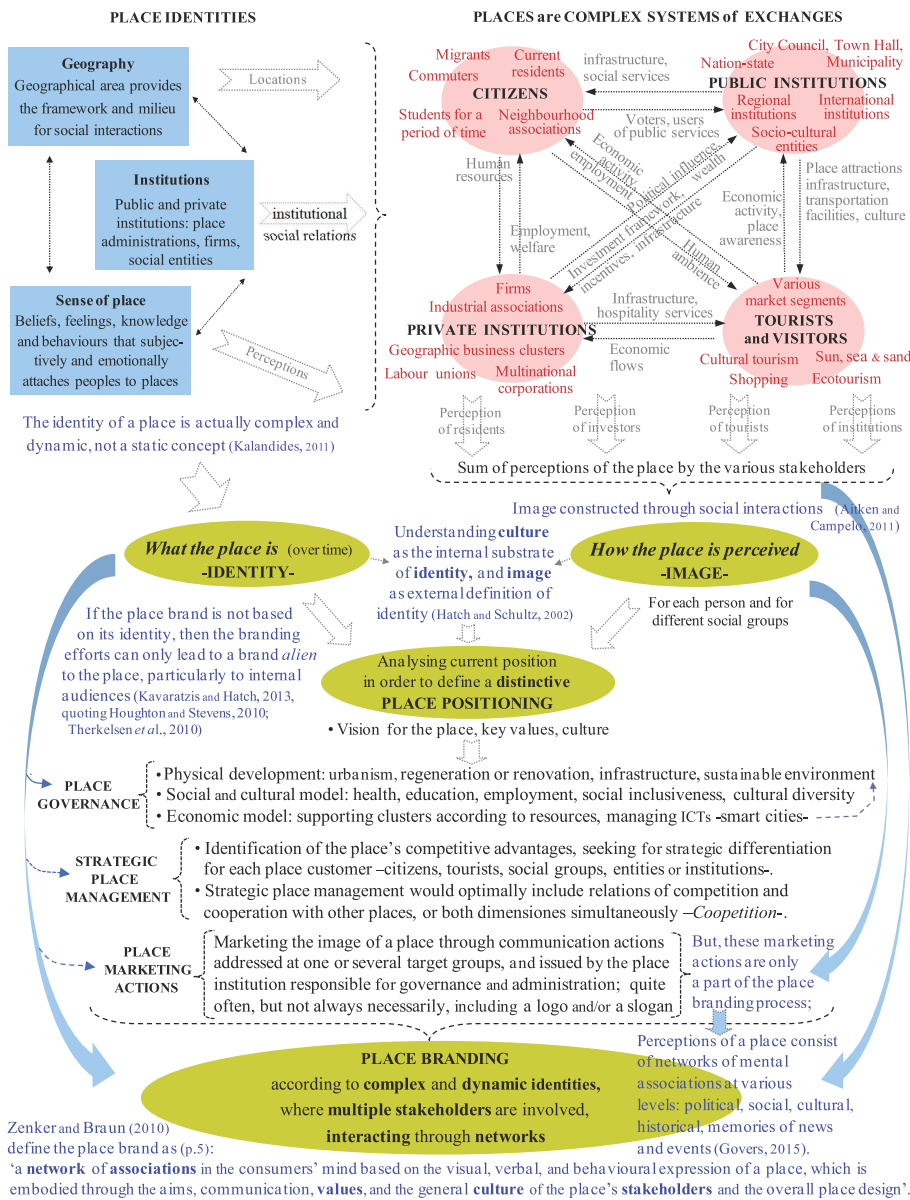
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PLACE IDENTITIES

Geography
Geographical area provides the framework and milieu for social interactions

Locations

Institutions
Public and private institutions: place administrations, firms, social entities

institutional social relations

Sense of place
Beliefs, feelings, knowledge and behaviours that subjectively and emotionally attaches peoples to places

Perceptions

The identity of a place is actually complex and dynamic, not a static concept (Kalandides, 2011)

PLACES are COMPLEX SYSTEMS of EXCHANGES

Migrants
Commuters
Current residents
CITIZENS
Students for a period of time
Neighbourhood associations

infrastructure, social services

City Council, Town Hall, Municipality
Nation-state
PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS
Regional institutions
International institutions
Socio-cultural entities

Voters, users of public services

Human resources

Economic activity, employment
Political influence, wealth
Investment framework, incentives, infrastructure
Human ambience

Employment, welfare

Place attractions infrastructure, transportation facilities, culture

Economic activity, place awareness

Firms
Industrial associations
PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS
Geographic business clusters
Labour unions
Multinational corporations

Infrastructure, hospitality services

Various market segments
TOURISTS and VISITORS
Cultural tourism
Shopping
Sun, sea & sand
Ecotourism

Economic flows

Perception of residents
Perception of investors
Perception of tourists
Perceptions of institutions

Sum of perceptions of the place by the various stakeholders

Image constructed through social interactions (Aitken and Campelo, 2011)

What the place is (over time)
-IDENTITY-

Understanding **culture** as the internal substrate of **identity,** and **image** as external definition of identity (Hatch and Schultz, 2002)

How the place is perceived
-IMAGE-

For each person and for different social groups

If the place brand is not based on its identity, then the branding efforts can only lead to a brand *alien* to the place, particularly to internal audiences (Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013, quoting Houghton and Stevens, 2010; Therkelsen *et al.,* 2010)

Analysing current position in order to define a **distinctive PLACE POSITIONING**

• Vision for the place, key values, culture

PLACE GOVERNANCE
• Physical development: urbanism, regeneration or renovation, infrastructure, sustainable environment
• Social and cultural model: health, education, employment, social inclusiveness, cultural diversity
• Economic model: supporting clusters according to resources, managing ICTs -smart cities-

STRATEGIC PLACE MANAGEMENT
• Identification of the place's competitive advantages, seeking for strategic differentiation for each place customer –citizens, tourists, social groups, entities or institutions-.
• Strategic place management would optimally include relations of competition and cooperation with other places, or both dimensions simultaneously –*Coopetition*-.

PLACE MARKETING ACTIONS
Marketing the image of a place through communication actions addressed at one or several target groups, and issued by the place institution responsible for governance and administration; quite often, but not always necessarily, including a logo and/or a slogan

But, these marketing actions are only a part of the place branding process;

Perceptions of a place consist of networks of mental associations at various levels: political, social, cultural, historical, memories of news and events (Govers, 2015).

PLACE BRANDING
according to **complex** and **dynamic identities,** where **multiple stakeholders** are involved, **interacting** through **networks**

Zenker and Braun (2010) define the place brand as (p.5):
'a **network** of **associations** in the consumers' mind based on the visual, verbal, and behavioural expression of a place, which is embodied through the aims, communication, **values,** and the general **culture** of the place's **stakeholders** and the overall place design'.

Source: Own research, based on Muñiz-Martinez (2009)

Figure 1.
Place branding processes based on systems of exchanges between stakeholders, place identity and image

structure, which shapes formal and informal institutional social relations. Finally, they consider the *sense of place*, because beliefs, feelings, knowledge and behaviours subjectively and emotionally attach people to places. Nevertheless, the identity of a place is in fact complex and dynamic, not a static concept (Kalandides, 2011).

Top right of Figure 1 **aims to illustrate** that spatial entities such as cities and nations are complex systems of exchange among various stakeholders, termed service systems (Maglio and Spohrer, 2008). Stubbs and Warnaby (2015) identify as the stakeholders of a place brand, residents, politicians, government organisations, promotion agencies, cultural and sport bodies, academic organisations, universities and schools and religious groups. It would seem acceptable, for the purpose of simplifying the diagram, to reduce stakeholders to four groups: public institutions, private institutions, residents and visitors or tourists. Between these, there are two-way interchanges, which delineate complex systems of exchanges and interactions. Recent studies have developed further into this aspect, and for example, Van Gelder (2010) has called attention not only to the stakeholders involved in place branding, but also to the partnerships that revolve around inclusiveness and representativeness, long-term commitment, shared vision and responsibility, trusting each other and engaged, aligned communicating as one, taking "on-brand" decisions and actions, making investments and willingness to evaluate impact and effectiveness.

At times, imbalances occur in place eco-systems; for example, the massive influx of tourists in some parts of Barcelona is a source of conflict with residents of the city, who complain about overcrowding in certain popular streets (i.e. Las Ramblas), markets (such as La Boquería, where large groups of tourists taking pictures make it difficult for locals to do their shopping) and local attractions (i.e. Parc Güell, where the authorities have been obliged to charge admission and maintain some areas of Gaudi's works under surveillance). The problems engendered by popularity with tourists are especially evident in Venice, a city which has become a crowded destination hosting a massive influx of tourists, rendering life difficult for the Venetians (Ross, 2015). It is therefore important to try to find a balance between these complex flows and exchanges between stakeholders.

Just as the stakeholders involved in a place may have different demands and interests, so perceptions may also differ from one group of stakeholders to another, and thus there may be various perceptions of the image of a place. Place marketing strategies have focused primarily on developing actions to project the image of a place, but have neglected to conduct an analysis of place identity. Govers and Go (2009) have indicated that if the brand is not based on an identity, then branding efforts can only lead to a brand alien to the place, particularly to internal audiences (Houghton and Stevens, 2010; Therkelsen *et al.*, 2010). Thus, the model proposed considers next (Figure 1) a comparison of a place's *identity* (what the place is), and the perception of its *image* (how different stakeholders perceive the place) (Dinnie, 2010, p. 41), which provides a good starting point for analysing a place's current positioning and subsequently tries to project a place positioning strategy. For Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013), identity and image should be thought of as two sides of the same coin, as culture is the context of internal definitions of identity, while image is the site of external definitions of identity, and how these two concepts influence each other is the process of identity (Hatch and Schultz, 2002).

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However, whereas the concept of promoting the image of a place has formed the core of place marketing approaches, the concept of identity has received less attention, being sometimes limited to an objective reality opposed to place image, and often in conjunction with tradition (Kalandides, 2011). According to Aitken and Campelo (2011), image is the common sum of individual perceptions of a shared reality, dynamically constructed through social interactions, and as these are continuous, so too is the formation of place branding as an interactive and evolutionary process. These processes evolve like fluids – rather than linear or sequential – according to a modernity that has been defined as *liquid* (Bauman, 2000), and which emphasises evolution and change over that is not permanent, because basically nothing in the natural or social sciences is static. Consequently, a need was subsequently identified to incorporate a deeper and more dynamic analysis of place identity to place branding, reflecting an evolution to *processes* rather than *plans*; the result of complex interactions between the individual and the collective, between the physical and the non-physical and between the functional and the emotional (Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013). These authors suggest that cultural geographers and environmental psychologists have demonstrated the dynamic nature of places and identities, and Kalandides (2011) has also observed that places are not a static construct; places do not have single fixed identities, as they are full of internal conflicts. Unquestionably, the concept of identity is too complex for the traditional place marketing approach to address in any other than a simplistic way, where identity is something that is tapped, defined and then manipulated or quite often simplified (Govers and Go, 2009). Thus, a multidisciplinary vision has emerged (Hankinsson, 2010) of multifaceted identities, and of images that are more consistent with these identities.

Hence, it would appear that consideration of place identity, which is dynamic over time and complex, and of image, shared by various stakeholders, is suitable for the process of place branding, with a view to determining the positioning of places in the future. Stubbs and Warnaby (2015) also see place positioning as based on a shared vision and engagement among stakeholders, with place branding formed through a process of constant dialogue and interaction between internal and external stakeholders (Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013). Following an analysis of identity and image through the culture of a place, we propose an approach to place governance by public institutions that involves management with social and political implications, and decision-making based on the social model of the territory, town planning and an economic model. Any institution responsible for a territory must implement its governance jointly with other stakeholders and institutions.

At the level of place management, more and more places are adopting strategic approaches. Complex relations of competition and cooperation between cities, regions and countries are emerging in today's modern globalised scenarios, that are becoming more and more competitive and globalised for territories, obliging place institutions to implement partnership cooperation to face external competition from other cities, regions or countries seeking their own competitive advantages in an increasingly globalised world (Porter, 1990). The concurrent existence of these two dimensions has given rise to the neologism *Coopetition* (Brandenburger and Nalebuff, 1996) to describe the simultaneous cooperation and competition of organisations such as companies, museums, universities and sports associations. It has already been suggested that this concept should be applied in the field of place management (Pasquinelli, 2015a).

Benchmarking analyses fall within this framework, comparing cities through key activities for urban improvement, and cities and other places also form networks to cooperate. There are several cases worldwide in this area. *European Cities Marketing* is a non-profit organisation aimed at improving the competitiveness and performance of around a hundred leading cities in Europe. This network provides a platform to exchange knowledge and best practices. The *CittaSlow* (Slow Cities) network promotes a peaceful lifestyle with a philosophy of sustainable management and respect for natural production traditions, cuisine, crafts and architecture, etc. Top ten museums in four of The Netherlands' major cities – Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and the Hague – came together in 2009 and 2010 to set up *Holland Art Cities* to promote their art collections; while the 15 UNESCO *World Heritage Cities* in Spain have created a group to cooperate and market their heritage.

In the present model, these levels of place management might culminate in a phase of marketing the image of a place through communication actions aimed at one or several target groups, and undertaken by the place institution responsible for governance and administration. These quite often, but not necessarily always, include a logo, a slogan or both. The process is brought to a close, in the model proposed, but not without stressing that these marketing actions are only a part of the place branding process, as perceptions of a place consist of networks of mental associations at various levels: political, social, cultural, historical and memories of news and events (Govers, 2015). Thus, the model being put forward ends by considering place branding as in accordance with complex and dynamic identities, where multiple stakeholders are involved, interacting through networks. On these lines, it seems, as Zenker and Braun (2010, p. 5) believe, that a place brand is "a network of associations in the consumers' minds based on the visual, verbal and behavioural expression of a place, which is embodied through the aims, communication, values, and the general culture of the place's stakeholders and the overall place design".

In the following paragraph, a place branding practice is analysed, where various public and private stakeholders are involved; a practical application where a shared cultural identity plays a key role in an inter-regional place branding.

The place branding process in Colombia's coffee region involving various stakeholders and based on a cultural identity

Colombia has generated a country brand in relation to the theme of coffee (Kotler and Gertner, 2003). *The Coffee Triangle* involves the districts of El Quindío, Caldas and Risaralda. These, together with the north of the Cauca Valley, form the *Coffee Cultural Landscape*, which has developed an interesting case of inter-regional place branding. Although this striking example began with the production of quality coffees, in recent years, it has also expanded to include rural and experiential tourism based on the theme of coffee. As the region became a popular tourist destination, especially El Quindío district, the authorities, in mutual agreement with local coffee producers, tourism and academic bodies, decided to embrace a more complex place branding process, based on a cultural identity.

Tourism emerged as a strategy of business diversification, following a period of crisis in coffee production prices in the early 1990s. In a context of decreasing profitability of coffee growing arising from overproduction worldwide, when subsidies were offered to uproot coffee plantations in the region, the then Tourism Councillor by

the district of El Quindío, Mr Luis Fernando Ramírez Echeverry, who had observed the development of rural tourism in Spain and France, had the idea of suggesting that rooms could be adapted on some of the coffee-growing farms to accommodate visitors for the first time. This proposal was initially rejected by the advisors from the Colombian Ministry of Tourism, but those responsible for governing the district of Quindío went on, calling about 40 coffee growers to a meeting to put the idea forward. Only ten of those invited actually attended, and of these, only two eventually carried out small modifications to the farmhouses to accommodate tourists. There was no need for major work, as the aim was to preserve the traditional architecture and display the authenticity of the coffee culture. The experiment was an immediate success. Today, El Quindío district is an established tourist destination, the second most popular in Colombia, having available more than 1,000 spaces in hotels and other types of accommodation. A theme park called the *Parque del Café* (the Coffee Park) has also been built, which combines leisure attractions with a route explaining the origins of coffee, its history, the varieties grown, the production process, ethnographic aspects of coffee culture and the landscape. Thematic routes have also been designed that allow travellers to learn about coffee production, harvest a few berries from the plants and simulate processing. Overall, there are 5,507 coffee growers. Around 30 farms have combined coffee production with providing lodgings for tourists. Some avant-garde firms put on coffee-tasting experiences on panoramic terraces looking out over the scenic landscape, or guided tours; others explore folk or innovative art activities relating to the coffee culture, and some run restaurants with coffee exhibitions and sales.

The process of building up a place brand in this region evolved from branding based on geography and farming towards a more complex cultural identity by adding the theme of attractive landscapes. Indeed, this Colombian regional project, after initiative proposal by the *Universidad Nacional de Colombia* (city of *Manizales* campus), on the 25th June 2011, was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site, named the *Coffee Cultural Landscape*. In relation to place branding based on the concept of place identity, we can underline that while the initial *Coffee Triangle* logo was symbolizing the geographical location and the main agricultural product, the *Coffee Cultural Landscape* symbolises an identity that combines various human, cultural, wildlife, landscape and natural elements in the region, as can be observed in Figure 2. This reveals a dynamic process that denotes institutional place branding based on place cultural identity.

The importance of landscape has also become clear in emerging wine-producing regions that are attempting to bring to mind an almost vintage traditional rural wine-growing culture (Duarte-Alonso and Northcote, 2009). Rural areas can create value by linking rural branding and local development, as proposed in a region of Catalonia (Spain) which sought new positionings through exploring values related to *quite places* (Eugenio-Vela and Barniol-Carcasona, 2015). The *Coffee Cultural Landscape* represents a place brand based on its human, productive and landscape identity that is associated with values of sustainability and authenticity of the coffee culture. This process has contributed towards generating economic development and employment in the region (Uribe-Galeano and Velandia-Silva, 2014).

The process of branding this region has involved cross-institutional collaboration between firms and place institutions, including local municipalities, governments for the four districts and the national Government of Colombia. The left-hand side of Figure 3 shows corporate business branding in relation to coffee, while the right-hand side
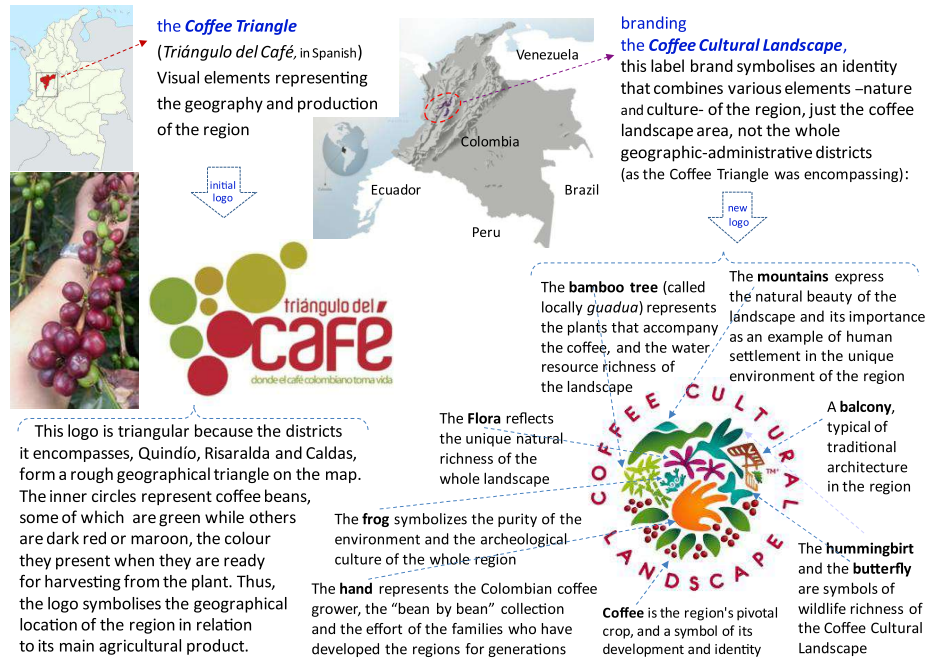
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the **Coffee Triangle**
(*Triángulo del Café*, in Spanish)
Visual elements representing the geography and production of the region

initial logo

branding
the **Coffee Cultural Landscape**,
this label brand symbolises an identity that combines various elements –nature and culture- of the region, just the coffee landscape area, not the whole geographic-administrative districts (as the Coffee Triangle was encompassing):

Venezuela
Colombia
Ecuador
Brazil
Peru

new logo

This logo is triangular because the districts it encompasses, Quindío, Risaralda and Caldas, form a rough geographical triangle on the map. The inner circles represent coffee beans, some of which are green while others are dark red or maroon, the colour they present when they are ready for harvesting from the plant. Thus, the logo symbolises the geographical location of the region in relation to its main agricultural product.

The **bamboo tree** (called locally *guadua*) represents the plants that accompany the coffee, and the water resource richness of the landscape

The **mountains** express the natural beauty of the landscape and its importance as an example of human settlement in the unique environment of the region

The **Flora** reflects the unique natural richness of the whole landscape

A **balcony**, typical of traditional architecture in the region

The **frog** symbolizes the purity of the environment and the archeological culture of the whole region

The **hand** represents the Colombian coffee grower, the "bean by bean" collection and the effort of the families who have developed the regions for generations

Coffee is the region's pivotal crop, and a symbol of its development and identity

The **hummingbirt** and the **butterfly** are symbols of wildlife richness of the Coffee Cultural Landscape

Figure 2.
Elements of identity that form the basis of the *Coffee Cultural Landscape* branding in Colombia

Note: Branding the *Coffee region*, also know as *The Coffee Growing Axis* (*Eje Cafetero*), Colombia, North West of South America

Source: Own research, and cafedecolombia.com. Picture by the author

depicts national and regional place branding. These coffee-producing businesses compete among themselves, but can also co-operate in generating a shared regional brand identity. Local government authorities in the districts involved similarly participate in generic competition to attract investment, improving the social and economic circumstances of residents, but they would also have to co-operate with other districts in the coffee region to consolidate identity and brand on this theme. Meanwhile, the national branding of Colombia is shown at the top, while regional initiatives are depicted at the bottom of the figure. These relationships have given rise to complex synergies that constitute a business and place branding network. The *Juan Valdez* brand of coffee acts as a label guaranteeing the authenticity of the coffee culture. The character was designed by the National Federation of Coffee Growers to act as an ambassador of the coffee culture in Colombia and abroad. *Juan Valdez* therefore represents an umbrella of trust (Anholt, 2004), an umbrella branding for small, quality coffee brands, which when implemented through sub-brands should continue to be developed creatively while at the same time exploring synergies with other cross-cutting economic, social and cultural elements. The year 2002 saw the creation of a Juan Valdez franchise, with more than 200 shops in America, Europe and Asia. It is a corporate branding, and also a state project.
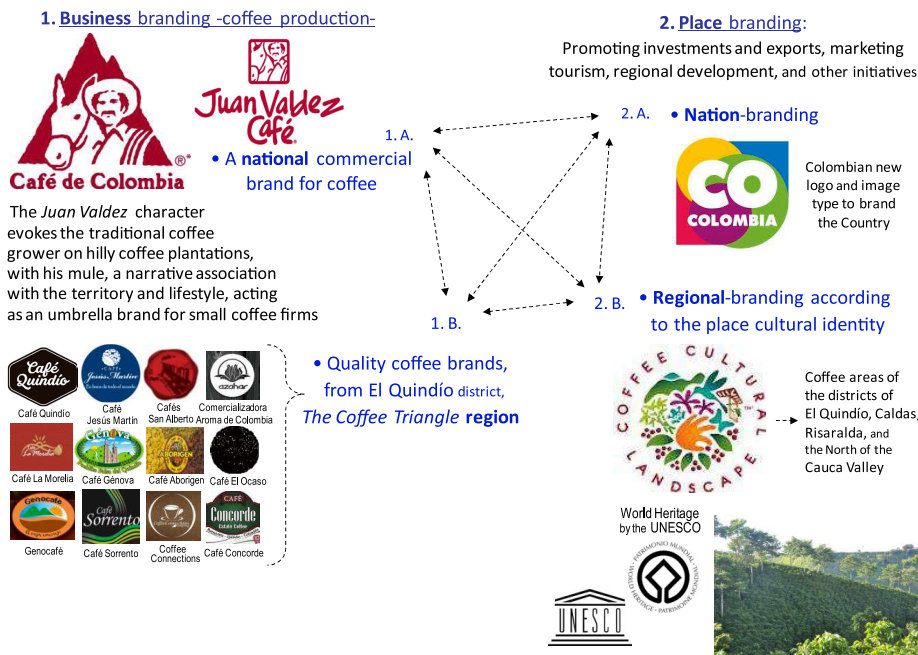
Figure 3. Synergies between business branding and place branding at *Coffee Triangle* region and Colombia as a country

Source: Own research; picture by the author

This region grows one of the best coffees in the world. Of particular note in the cultivation and production of coffee are some small firms whose brands are positioned as being of high quality, gourmet or premium. Unlike other tropical or sub-tropical regions in the world that produce coffee, cocoa or various food commodities, which essentially supply raw materials to industries in developed countries and where most of the value is obtained through corporate branding, the Coffee Triangle generates value in relation to the production of its resources and marketing of its products. For example, countries such as Belgium or France, and multinational Swiss corporations such as Lindt or Nestlé, have a strong tradition of chocolate-making, where the raw material comes from countries such as Ivory Coast or Ghana, which do not have any significant manufacturing activity. The difficulty entailed in marketing quality products from emerging or less developed countries due to the lack of prestige of the corporate brand and the country of origin has been called the *provenance paradox* effect (Deshpandé, 2010).

Network place branding is emerging among different public and private stakeholders at the local, regional, national and international level, which together form a network of complex *many-to-many marketing* exchanges (Gummesson, 2004), with demands from various types of users – coffee consumers, tourists interested in coffee, new residents and institutions that are potential clients of the value propositions offered by the supply stakeholders. These various stakeholders are increasingly participating in *networking place branding* (Pasquinelli, 2015b), through a network of relationships and social interactions among the eco-system of all stakeholders (Merz *et al.*, 2009). Networks of many different kinds are inherent in the economic and cultural flows that permeate

modern societies in *the information age* (Castells, 1998). Figure 4 attempts to show how the place brand "Coffee Cultural Landscape" is an asset shared by multiple socioeconomic actors.

The region has begun to attract other kinds of users, such as Colombian citizens returning to their country after a period as immigrants in Europe or the USA, who are seeking for a more peaceful way of life than that inherent in the big cities, and is also a focus for internal migration. Colombian residents are choosing to move to this region because it has not suffered the problems of violence witnessed in other parts of the country. Colombia is experiencing economic growth as the country stabilises, thus attracting foreign investment. The *Coffee Cultural Landscape* place brand is a collective, economic, social and cultural asset. Unlike the business brand, which, although it too represents a social value, is owned by a company, a place brand is an asset shared by various *stakeholders*: government bodies, businesses, other private or social organisations, visitors and the local residents themselves. This is the reason that Stubbs and Warnaby (2015) raise the question of ownership of a place brand, pointing out the differences in these lines from business brands. The increasing participation of diverse social groups and institutions has given rise to the concepts of stakeholder involvement in place branding (Van Gelder, 2010) and even of stakeholder engagement (Houghton and Stevens, 2010).

The process of creating a place brand with the topic of coffee has some parallelisms with the approach of various wine-growing areas, whether in the Northern Hemisphere (France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, California, USA, south-western Germany), or the Southern (Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Chile, Argentina). Wine has
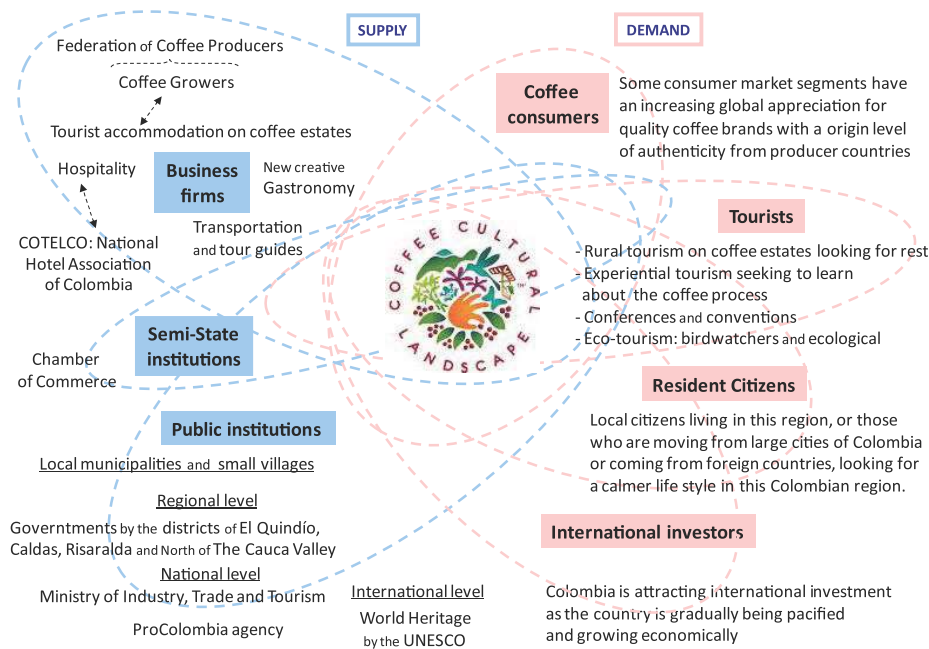
Figure 4.
Branding *the Coffee Triangle* (Colombia), a network of socioeconomic stakeholders involved

Source: Own research

traditionally been an agricultural product closely linked with its place of origin (Bruwer and Johnson, 2010). There are strong brand associations between some agricultural products, particularly drinks, and the territories where they are produced, such as whisky with Scotland, champagne with the Champagne region and tequila with Mexico. Moreover, there are a range of designations of origin for wines, both in countries that are historical producers, for example Rioja, Rivera del Duero and Sherry (Spain); Port (Portugal); Bordeaux or Burgundy (France); and Piedmont or Tuscany (Italy), and in emerging wine regions, such as Stellenbosch (South Africa), Mendoza (Argentina), Napa Valley (USA) and Hunter Valley (Australia). As wine production has spread to several continents, and wine consumption has become consolidated around the world, there has been a noticeable move away from looking at the country of origin (Thode and Maskulka, 1998) towards considering the context of the exact origin. As wine is increasingly combined with new gastronomic and tourist proposals, this has led to much wider views of place branding, going far beyond the classical discussions of the relevance of the effects of the country of origin.

The bringing in of tourism that tries to understand how these products are made, whether wines or, in the area of Colombia under consideration, coffee, opens up the prospect of transverse inter-relationships between production or manufacturing activities and service provisions. In the past, these have usually been analysed sector-by-sector and almost in isolation by academic disciplines in the economics and business fields in general and by marketing in particular under a *goods-dominant logic*. Now, however, a *service-dominant logic* is emerging (Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2014), an holistic paradigm that promises new transverse perspectives on business and place practices and in academic research. On these lines, O'Neill *et al.* (2002) indicate in the field of wine, how to vineyards, which may yield experiences that later have a positive repercussion on the purchase of tangible products. In other words, this is an integrated concept that combines the intangible with the tangible through service experiences.

Nonetheless, coffee does show some differences from wine. First and foremost, they are obviously different products or beverages. Secondly, coffee is grown in tropical or subtropical regions, in countries that generally have developing economies, and hence are usually suppliers of raw materials for companies in more industrialised countries, which tend to add value through sophisticated worldwide business branding. Thus, this practice experiment in creating a brand in Colombia's coffee region constitutes a noteworthy case in the context of tropical countries, which may serve as a benchmark for other zones and products.

On the other hand, coffee has emerged globally as a beverage related to consumer spaces that sell an atmosphere of cosmopolitan modernity, and in some more economically and socially advanced areas of the world such as Scandinavia (Kjeldgaard and Ostberg, 2007) or Japan (Grinshpun, 2013), there are segments of consumers in urban lifestyle environments which are attracted to the consumption of products associated with concepts of authenticity (Grayson and Martinec, 2004), connoisseurship of culture and a narrative of ethical consumption.

Conclusions and discussion
Place branding is being consolidated both as a multidisciplinary academic subject, and in practice, a growing number of cities, regions and countries that are seeking to improve their place positioning on a national or international level. Place branding is

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evolving towards processes based on dynamic identities. There should be a better understanding of the cultural dimensions of a cultural identity, as a conceptual basis for more holistic and integrated place branding, not seen as merely marketing by a single institution. In these complex processes of place branding, various stakeholders are involved, both public and private bodies, linked together in governance networks and in socio-cultural and financial relationships. These entities often compete horizontally and the ideal would be for them to engage in inter-institutional co-operation, so as to build up a joint place branding, both business and place.

The process of creating a place brand in the coffee region of Colombia constitutes a striking instance of development in a tropical zone of the world, integrating business branding by coffee firms with place branding by public institutions. When the coffee price crisis occurred in the early 1990s, attempts were made to diversify production activities by adding to them rural tourism that allowed visitors to sample the authenticity of coffee estates. Despite initial reticence from the national government, the initiative was a success, setting up experience-based tourism that offers not just relaxation but also a chance to understand how coffee is produced in the beautiful landscape where it is grown. Regional and national bodies have recently been striving to achieve a more sophisticated place branding. Local university circles played a major socio-cultural role by proposing that the place identity based on the *Coffee Cultural Landscape* should be designated a World Heritage by the UNESCO. On the one hand, this designation implies support and a raised international profile for the process, whilst on the other hand, it involves protection that requires the environment and landscape to be respected, setting some limits on what other economic activities can be undertaken. This process is currently under way, although there could be more systematic co-operation between institutions that share the asset provided by place branding, especially in the shape of collaboration between the administrations of the four districts concerned, and between them and other private bodies and social groups. Likewise, the region's place branding might also be capitalised upon by the main cities in one or more of these districts, particularly the city of Armenia that is the capital of the El Quindío region. It could position itself as the *capital of the coffee cultural landscape*, an ideal branding, preferable to just occasional advertising campaigns more or less lacking in content.

The country, cities and regions of Colombia need to be further promoted, because as Ashworth (2011) has indicated, place branding should generally be applied when the place is improving but continues to have a low profile elsewhere, and is still associated with a poor, unknown or negative image. Following periods of great difficulty, Colombia is endeavouring to raise its profile in the world to improve the marketing of its resources, using goods such as coffee. The leading position which this product clearly holds due to its quality distinguishes it from mass-produced coffees without much differentiation or quality coffees from countries such as Brazil, Vietnam, Ethiopia or Indonesia, the value of which still requires enhancement through business and place branding. As developing countries gain global economic power, the *provenance paradox* of quality products that lack the good reputation associated with business or place branding is becoming the marketing challenge of the coming decade.

There is a need to broaden the geographical perspective of place branding, which at the moment is probably excessively dominated by the views of Western or industrial nations. With emerging countries slowly beginning to participate in global economic exchanges, exciting new perspectives are opening up as more nations, regions and cities

find original context-specific solutions to their own unique challenges (Dinnie, 2010). Although analyses of notable cases outside Europe, North America or the industrialised countries of Asia are beginning to appear in academic books and journals, we need greater knowledge and understanding of other areas of the world. Countries that have historically been suppliers of raw materials possess the potential to generate value with their economic and cultural resources and production, and to develop an approach to place branding that explores new initiatives (Anholt, 2002) and would help to enrich economic and cultural dialogue in the world.

Directions for future research

The application of the emerging socioeconomic *service-dominant logic* paradigm (Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2014) in the field of place branding (Warnaby, 2009) represents a promising line of future research, as there is a confirmed trend towards more complex place branding processes which are evolving towards inter-institutional participation and multi-stakeholder interactions. Service logic is a more holistic and general paradigm of exchange than the *goods-dominant logic* model that dominated economic and business thinking in the twentieth century. Since the early twenty-first century, territories have moved from simply being places for the production of goods whose marketing essentially only consisted of plans or campaigns to promote an image that would attract tourism and investment and boost exports, towards a concept of places as actors immersed in complex networks, which Maglio and Spohrer (2008) have termed service eco-systems.

Further in-depth studies are also required of the interrelations between place and business branding, as these generate synergies derived from provenance associations as core values of umbrella place branding (Iversen and Hem, 2008). Partnerships between stakeholders can lead to favourable associations, consistency and brand strength. We need a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of value co-creation among stakeholders involved in cities, regions or countries, and of the growing inter-regional and cross-border intersections, to better analyse complex systems of multiple *many-to-many marketing* exchanges from the joint perspective of supply and demand. Another line for further research would be to study synergies between business and place branding, and with other social entities, and also exploring the connections between economics and culture, which involve tangible and intangible dimensions. More case studies are required that combine theory and practice to understand how theoretical approaches emerge according to the different geographical settings of each socio-cultural and human context.

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