

An Initial Framework for Understanding the Concept of Internal Place Branding

Emphasizing the internal stakeholders' importance in the processes of place branding is increasingly gaining popularity among theoreticians and practitioners, however the unique understanding of the concept of internal place branding is still absent. This paper aims to provide an initial conceptual framework and to contribute in amplifying the knowledge of the concept.

Keywords: internal place branding, place branding, internal stakeholders.

Vidinių interesų grupių svarba vis dažniau akcentuojama įvairių autorių teoriniuose ir praktiniuose vietovės ženklo darbuose, tačiau vietovės vidinės ženklo koncepcijos samprata dar nėra nusistovėjusi. Šiuo straipsniu siekiama prisidėti prie vietovės vidinės ženklo koncepcijos pažinimo gilinimo ir apibrėžti pradinę jos sampratą bei logiką.

Raktiniai žodžiai: vietovės vidinė ženklo darba, vietovės ženklo darba, vidinės interesų grupės.

Introduction

Research problem. When talking about place branding, an increased attention is given for the internal stakeholders. The crucial importance of their support has been emphasized in the works of different authors. Several aspects of the related researches have been distinguished: authors try to find the most effective way to measure citizens' satisfaction, to optimize their participation, to analyse identity building process or the importance of coherent

messages sent by different stakeholders' groups. Even though the concept of place branding with various geographical references has been widely discussed by researchers and practitioners in recent years, limited attention has been given to the internal place branding perspective except of the popular notion of crucial meaning of internal stakeholders' involvement. Thus **the object of this paper** – the concept of internal place branding – remains vaguely described and understood. Accordingly **the aim of this paper** is to reveal more

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detailed understanding about the internal perspective of place branding and to provide an initial framework for understanding the concept of internal place branding.

Research methods. After a review of the literature on place branding with the focus on internal issues was made, a comparative analysis of the elements of existing place branding models was executed. According to the results of the analysis that provided approximate groundings for the conceptualization of the internal place branding a Delphi expert opinion survey was implemented. The opinion expressed by the experts highlighted the main aspects of the concept.

This paper is an attempt to contribute in the clarification and amplification of the understanding of the concept of internal place branding. The framework is presented as a tool to understand what aspects are the most important in the process of internal place branding and subsequently as primary guidelines to embody the idea practically.

Theoretical backgrounds

In the global world people have increasing possibilities to choose their place of residence avoiding unattractive places and choosing the ones that offer the best opportunities (Anholt, 2003), that is why flows of migration, as well as investment and tourism towards attractive places are inevitable. People tend to choose places where according to their opinion they could develop their knowledge and skills, expand interests and be proud of themselves and their country (Kotler, 2004).

In the year 1993 Ph. Kotler with colleagues identified four key audiences in

place branding: visitors, residents and workers, businessmen, exporters. If a large portion of academicians' and practitioners' attention is dedicated to visitors, businessmen and exporters, residents gained increasing but fragmented consideration only in the recent years – M. Kavaratzis (2012) points out that the internal audiences' role is still underestimated as most of the place branding campaigns demonstrate a clear orientation to develop external investment and tourism. This trend leads to the implementation of place branding campaigns that are completely extraneous to local people and their interests (Kavaratzis, 2012). As it is stated by R. Aitken and A. Campelo (2011), such campaigns lead to the lack of "sense of place" and understanding of communication, relationships, and networks that determine the collective community. The resulting lower level of identification with a place and its brand does not stimulate authenticity, recognition, acceptance and commitment among the population. The notion that place branding should seek not only to attract tourism and investment, but first of all to meet the needs of the population and to fulfil a social function is stressed by G. J. Ashworth and H. Voogd (1990), but followed by a relatively small number of authors: A. Insch, M. Florek (2010), M. Kavaratzis (2012), M. Trueman with colleagues (2010), S. Zenker, N. Martin (2011), S. Zenker, A. Seigis (2012). Most of these authors also stress the lack of conceptual and empirical research on internal issues of the place branding and identify them as a priority for the future works (Kavaratzis, Ashworth, 2008; Zenker, 2011; Zenker, Beckmann, 2013). A. Insch and M. Florek (2010) goes even further assuming that if one of the goals of place branding is to

meet the desires and needs of the population, it is necessary to develop a lacking understanding of how residents perceive their place, and what determines their satisfaction with the place.

It is noted, that internal stakeholders of a place are not only an important group of place consumers (Ashwort, Voogd, 1990; Van den Berg et al., 1990; Kotler et al., 1993; Insch, Florek, 1999, 2008; Kotler, Gertner, 2002; Braun et al., 2003; Rainisto, 2003; Braun, 2008; Zenker, 2009; Zenker, Peterson, Aholt, 2012); but also a significant group of brand formers (Braun, 2008; Kavaratzis, 2008; Kavaratzis, Ashworth, 2008; Freire, 2009; Zenker, Peterson, Aholt, 2012) and ambassadors (Trueman, Klemm, Giroud, 2004; Braun, 2008; Zenker, Peterson, Aholt, 2012). According to K. Braun, S. Schultz (2010), these roles make internal stakeholders the most important group in terms of place branding, however, as it was already noted, still poorly known.

Generalizing it could be said, that in the growing body of literature and discussions about the concept of internal place branding most of the authors emphasize the internal stakeholders' importance, try to measure their satisfaction or perception. However, only a few authors use the terms "internal place branding" (Hall, 2008; Colomb, Kalandides, 2010; Müller, Schade, 2012; Pasquinelli, 2012), "internal country branding" (Roll, 2006), "internal nation branding" (Dinnie, 2008; Lebedenko, 2008; Kemming, 2009), a lack of understanding about the concept and inconsistency of the terminology remains. In practice however countries continuously use the solidarity appeals for their citizens in order to strengthen the unifying national pride that can help to govern a country (Mayhew, 1997).

A concept of place branding

A place is complex entity, influenced by many different factors and actors, perceived by different audiences in different contexts and thus so difficult to define in terms of branding. Assumption that internal place branding logically is a part of overall place branding leads to the supposition that the understanding of the former might be grounded on the basis of knowledge about the latter. That's why seeking to deepen the understanding about the concept of internal place branding a decision was made firstly to investigate the literature aiming to explain the essence of place branding.

The literature provides a wide range of approaches. The concept of place branding is understood as a process of formation of country's reputation through direct and indirect experience in the consumers' minds (Anholt, 2005); development, planning and communications of the name and identity of a country in order to create and manage its reputation (Anholt, 2005); development, monitoring, proactive evaluation and management of public images in order to improve country's reputation in the foreign target markets (Fan, 2009); soft power, in the public diplomacy counter weighing military, economic and natural resources (Metzl, 1999; Nye, 2004; De Grazia, 2005); the use of branding tools to positively change the identity and image of a country (Gudjonsson, 2005); the use of branding and marketing communication tools in order to promote country's image (Fan, 2006); strategic presentation of a country stimulating economic, commercial, political and social interest within and outside with the aim to create reputational capital (Szondi, 2008), etc. It is obvious, that the conceptions

are not equivalent defining place, nation or country branding as “use of tools” or “overall policy”, opponent understandings of purposive and spontaneous process has been provided. The confusion in the terminology however is already described in the M. Kavaratzis’s (2005), H. Skinner’s (2008), S. Hanna, H. Rowley’s (2008), G. Hankinson’s (2010), J. Hildreth’s (2010) works. What is more, Y. Fan (2006) identified at least six levels of the understanding about place branding from a visual substance to a manner to enhance a national identity. The clarification of the concept is certainly an issue of essential and urgent researches.

Analysing different theoretical thoughts of place branding and assuming that they might be relevant to internal place branding it was noted, that several issues are remarked as important by most of the authors providing different place branding models. Table 1 presents this trend in terms of the most frequently repeated elements, obtained during the analysis of different place branding models and distinctions of its dimensions.

As it is seen from the table, showing the attributes that are present within more than one third of analysed publications, the trend is quite clear. Cultural and environmental aspects of a place, followed by business, people, infrastructure and less frequently government seem to be recognized as the most important dimensions of the models. However, these are the most frequently mentioned elements from the understanding about place branding, not internal place branding, thus, cannot be taken for granted while building the knowledge of the latter. That is why in order to further examine internal place branding – a complex and yet poorly studied concept, to deepen the

knowledge, obtained from the analysis of scientific literature, an expert opinion survey was executed.

Research methodology

Evaluations made by experts are indispensable for dealing with informal scientific research tasks; in addition, this method is suitable for situations where it is difficult or impossible to apply an objective or empirical methods, or simply where a lack of information is evident. For these reasons it was decided to deepen the knowledge using the experts’ intuitive reflections on the internal place branding concept. An expert evaluation is understood as summarized opinion expressed by a group of experts according to their knowledge, experience and intuition. Although the validity of results obtained by an intuitive process is still being tested, it is argued that the Delphi method allows generating the most accurate results, what is more, the expert opinion is close to the actual solution of the problem (Helmer, 1967; Rowe, Wright, 1999, 2001).

The method was used for one of the situations where the expert conclusions were inevitable, because of the lack of systemized knowledge about the object. The participating experts recognized that the method is suitable and effective in order to obtain the relevant information in a collective process.

The survey was executed in the months of October and November of the year 2012. Invitations to participate in the survey were sent to preselected individuals, a cover letter with the hyperlink to the questionnaire – only for those willing to participate. Since the aim of the study was

Table 1

The most common elements among the place branding models

Authors \ Elements	Culture	Environment	Business	People	Infrastructure	Government
Anholt, 2004	•	•	•	•		•
Anholt, 2006	•	•	•	•	•	
Cheng, Taylor, 2007	•	•		•		
De Carlo et al., 2009	•					
Fan, 2006	•	•		•	•	•
Future Brands, 2012	•	•	•			
Grabow et al., 1995	•	•	•			
Hankinson, 2005		•		•	•	•
Herstein, Jaffe, 2008		•		•		
Jaffe, Nebenzahl, 2001	•	•	•	•	•	•
Kerr, Johnson, 2006	•		•		•	
Laaksonen et al., 2006	•	•	•			
Lee, 2010	•		•	•	•	•
Merilees et al., 2009	•	•	•	•	•	•
Pryag, 2010	•	•			•	
Vaidya et al., 2009	•	•	•	•	•	
Vanolo, 2008	•			•	•	
Zenker et al., 2009	•	•	•			
Frequency	88.9 %	77.8 %	61.1 %	61.1 %	55.6 %	33.3 %

to clarify the essence of the concept of internal place branding, the invitations to participate in this research were sent for the researchers having published five or more articles in the field of place branding as well as for the practitioners having run place branding campaigns. The experts were divided into two groups, for both of them separate but identical questionnaires were provided. 36 experts – 16 practitioners and 20 academicians participated in the survey. This number of experts allows claiming, that the solution obtained is almost 100 % precise (Libby, Blashfield, 1978). The experts were asked if they would like their opinion to stay anonymous or be published at the end of

survey. Two academicians – M. Kavaratzis and S. Zenker as well as five practitioners – M. Allen, M. Andersson, D. de Jong, J. F. Torres and R. H. Griffiths, or relatively more practitioners desired their opinion to be public.

Since the method is well adapted for the remote consultations and allows including geographically distant experts, the survey was carried out using the method of an online inquiry by e-mail and the system “apklaua.lt”. Questionnaires prepared in accordance with the recommendations made for online surveys were used (Birnbaum, 2004; Kraut et al., 2004). Before launching the survey questionnaire was tested using different browsers

and different screen resolution settings to ensure that it looks and functions in the same way (Reips, 2002). Measures to avoid online survey deficiencies (Tourangeau, 2004) have been taken seeking to ensure that the data obtained would be of high quality and reliable.

The number of questions was minimized to 7 in order to optimize the study. Each multiple-choice question included also an open field. Two rounds of the survey were executed. The data obtained were analysed in the groups and together. First, to determine the overall trend all of the responses were analysed jointly, after that – separately in order to highlight the differences between practitioners' and academicians' opinion.

Results

The results of the expert opinion survey revealed that the concept of internal place branding is certainly worth of scientists' attention not only because of its importance, but also because of disagreement on fundamental issues.

First, the experts were asked about the nature of process of internal place branding. The review of scientific literature revealed three approaches – one of them focuses on purposive branding activities; the other concentrates on spontaneous part of the process and the third considers both aspects.

As it is shown in the Figure 1, expert opinion is mostly divided between the first and the third choice. Note that the spontaneous part of the place brand formation process is mostly chosen by the practitioners: more than a half of them said that both the purposive efforts, as well as the spontaneous processes are equally important, in addition 12.5 % think that internal place branding is an entirely spontaneous process. To academicians' opinion internal place branding is a matter of purposive actions, to a lesser extent the importance of both aspects is recognized. Summarizing the responses of both groups of respondents ($\rho = 0.85$) it can be said that internal place branding should be understood as a dual process overwhelming both purposive activities and spontaneous formation.

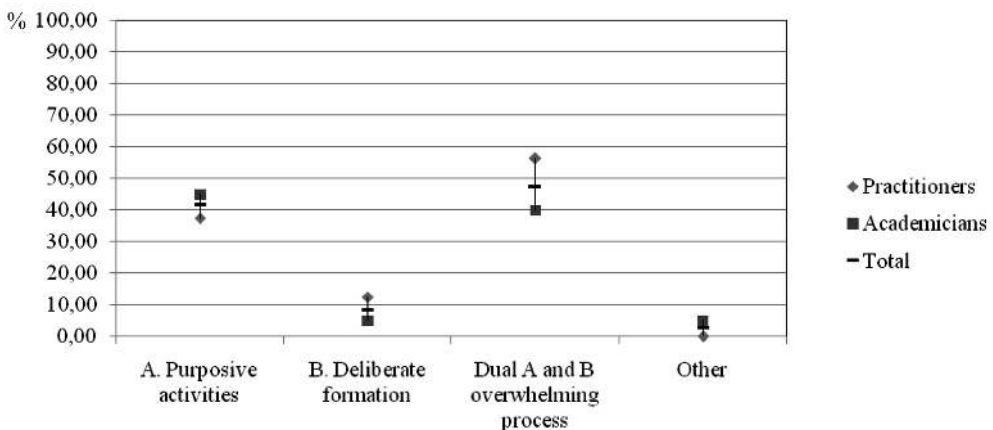


Fig. 1. Distribution of the experts' opinion about the essence of internal place branding

According to M. Andersson and D. de Jong internal place branding is purposive activities, S. Zenker and J. F. Torres told it was a spontaneous formation of a brand, M. Kavartzis, M. Allen and R. H. Griffiths chose the option of dual process.

As it was already noted, different authors propose different definitions of place branding. Figure 2 demonstrates the experts' opinion ($\rho = 0.80$) about the concept of internal place branding.

The figure 2 clearly shows that according to the majority of experts (44.44 %) internal place branding is best described as a strategy of development. The second most common (41.67 %) choice and the first academicians' (55.0 %) choice was communication. Not surprisingly most of the respondents were consistent and chose a corresponding set of answers of the first and second questions – those mostly telling that internal place branding is a dual process described it as a strategy of development, comprehensive policy, motivation, partnership etc., the others, that

chose the option of purposive activities in the second question preferred answers like communication, public diplomacy, marketing campaign and propaganda.

Almost all the experts wanting their opinion to be public agreed and told it was a strategy of development; J. F. Torres however added motivation, S. Zenker – communication. Only according to R. H. Griffiths internal place branding was a public diplomacy.

Analysis of the scientific literature revealed a great variety of different elements of internal and place branding models – with the ones suggested by experts during the survey 59 elements were included into the questionnaire. Every element was chosen by at least four experts. Most of the experts (55.56 %) picked heritage and leadership (the first choice for practitioners – 68.75 %; and the third choice for academicians – 50.0 %). Half of the experts (50.0 %) evenly picked three elements – people (the third practitioners' choice, 56.25 %), infrastructure and

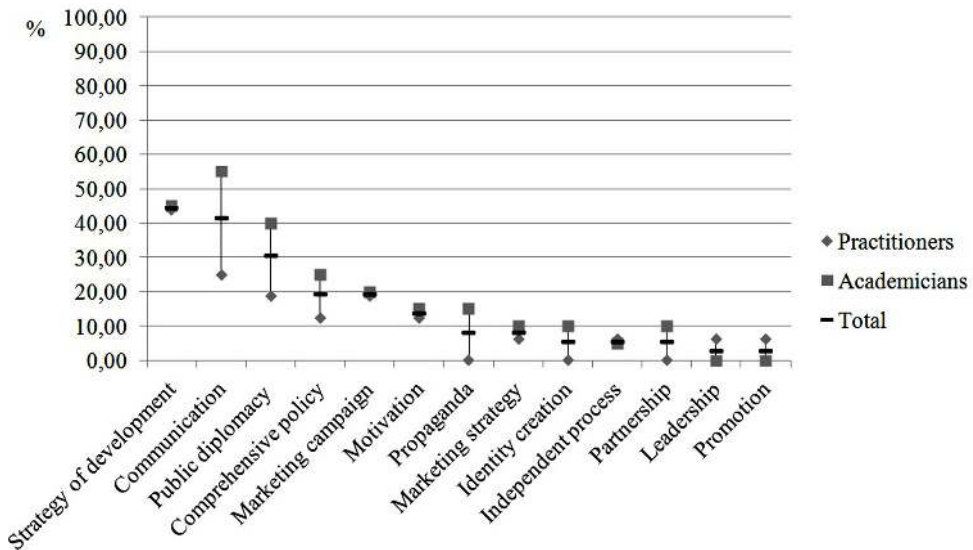


Fig. 2. Distribution of the experts' opinion about the concept of internal place branding

culture (the second academicians' choice, 55.0 %). The first academicians' choice (60.0 %) was community, picked however only by 31.25 % of practitioners. In picking this element practitioners' and academicians' disagreement was the strongest. Two other elements – government and events – got the same experts' attention (44.44 %). 41.67 % of the experts chose history and perceived value of being resident, the former was more frequently selected by practitioners, the latter – by academicians. Another five elements – social conditions, public services, stories, business and environment – were selected by 30-40 % of respondents. Figure 3 illustrates the most frequent choices made by both segments of the respondents.

Interestingly practitioners and academicians had quite different preferences ($\rho = 0.70$). If according to practitioners the most important elements are leadership, heritage and people, academicians' most frequent set was society, infrastructure and culture, they also tended to choose

more options. It is obvious however, that to people related elements are seen as crucial by most of the experts.

M. Andersson as internal place branding elements picked leadership, government, business, infrastructure, history, heritage, citizenship, people, stories, networks, public spirit. M. Allen's selection was social conditions, leadership, government, business, local products, infrastructure, public services, culture, history, heritage, local investment, immigration, people, perceived value of being resident, sense of community, stories, networks, workforce, legal system, healthcare, economic conditions, talented people, standards of living and job opportunities. To D. de Jong's opinion internal place branding elements were economic conditions, geopolitical situation, environment, infrastructure, public services, events, heritage, architecture, perceived value of being resident, stories, workforce, talented people, job and housing opportunities. J. F. Torres as place branding elements

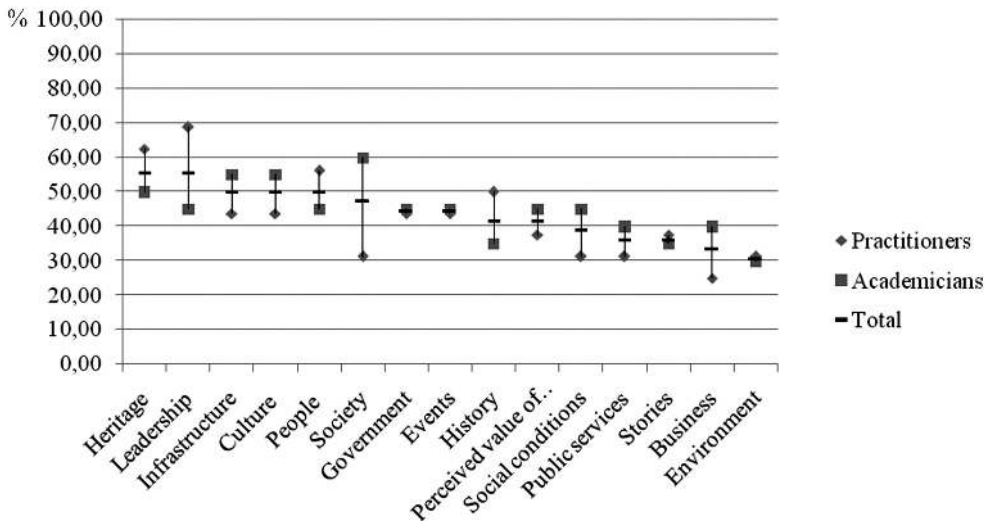


Fig. 3. Distribution of the experts' opinion about the elements of internal place branding

chosed economic conditions, leadership, government, business, technologies, local investment, talented people and international recognition. R. H. Griffiths picked fewer items to be internal place branding elements: patriotism, people, media, sense of community, public spirit and sovereignty arguing that “they relate to the will of the people to see a brand flourish”. M. Kavartzis selected these potential internal place branding elements: social conditions, foreigners’ approach, public services, culture, local investment, people, sense of community, stories and standards of living. S. Zenker’s selection was made with the goal for internal place branding “to enable people to become an active part of the place”: citizenship, perceived value of being resident, people, sense of community and identification.

This issue was probably the most problematic to define, since the analysed models were quite different. All the elements were provided for the experts’ selection in

order to clarify also the trend of internal place branding model. It was noted, that most of the experts chose elements mostly describing fields of activity or sources of experience of a place.

Analysing the dimensions of various place branding models it was noted, that some of them define rather transitional objects as investment, tourism, immigration, various forms of communications, etc. These objects were assumed to be channels of direct and indirect experience about an internal place brand, not the actual brand elements. According to this assumption the experts were also asked to identify factors that influence the spread of the brand the most, or in other words place branding process enabling channels. The distribution of experts’ opinion is reflected in the figure 4.

Clearly the largest group of experts (66.67 %) supports the word-of-mouth communication. This choice was made by 70.0 % of academicians and 62.5 %

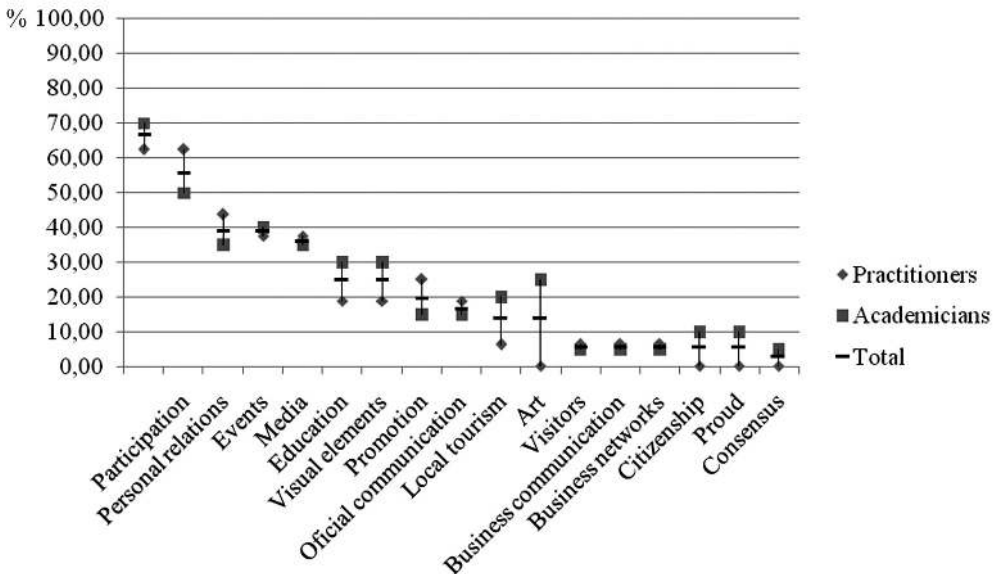


Fig. 4. Distribution of the experts’ opinion about the spread channels in internal place branding

practitioners. The same number of practitioners as well as 50.0 % academicians (55.56 % in total) selected the choice of participation. Other choices received considerably less experts' attention: 38.89 % selected personal relations and events, 36.11 % picked media, even less frequently (25.0 %) was mentioned education and visual elements. The practitioners' and academicians' opinion in this regard was very similar ($\rho = 0.89$).

In this regard M. Andersson picked these channels: participation, word of mouth communication, personal relations and education. M. Allen instead of education proposed business communication. R. H. Griffiths reduced this selection to participation, media and official communication. To J. F. Torres's and academician M. Kavatzis's opinion, the most important are participation and word of mouth communication. To this selection S. Zenker only added events. D. de Jong instead of word of mouth communication chose personal relations.

All the obtained results are summarized in the table 2. All the experts that kindly agreed to participate in this survey faced a challenging task from the broad set of provided options to pick only the most important aspects related to internal place branding. Their valuable time however did not get wasted, their opinion indicated some valuable insights for the conceptual framework of internal place branding.

The conceptual framework of internal place branding

Firstly, it is important to define that internal place branding should be understood as a dual process overwhelming purposive activities as well as unruled formation of a brand within the place. This observation

emerged analysing the scientific literature and was affirmed by the experts that clearly recognized the spontaneous part of the process. This notion does not contradict to experts' preferred option of internal place branding as strategy of development. The second most frequently picked option of communication in this regard is considered as not fully appropriate, since it does not overwhelm the process of formation and impact of objective aspects of internal place branding. Thus the strategy of development provide the direction for the process, its course however obey not only to guidelines of management. This notion provides the understanding that places not having implied a strategy of development are also subjects of spontaneous branding.

As it is seen from the experts' answers the primary internal place branding model tends to be constituted mostly from the elements that define sources of experience about the place or the fields of activity. Most of the experts provided the selection of heritage, infrastructure, culture, government, history, public services, stories, business and environment as well as mostly to people related aspects of leadership and society. Events are considered to be a channel of experience, perceived value of being resident and social conditions are seen more as sequential not causal issues in the process of internal place branding. To authors' opinion some of the previously described issues are similar and complementing each other, thus it is considered that their integration is an effective way to simplify the model. In this regard these elements are distinguished: history and heritage (including stories), infrastructure and public services, culture and sports (assuming sports as a manifestation of culture), government, business, environment, people (including society),

Table 2

Generalization of the experts' opinion on internal place branding related issues

Internal place branding					
Total	%	Practitioners	%	Academicians	%
strategy of development	44.44	strategy of development	43.75	communication	55.00
communication	41.67	communication	25.00	strategy of development	45.00
public diplomacy	30.56	public diplomacy	18.75	public diplomacy	40.00
comprehensive policy	19.44	marketing campaign	18.75	comprehensive policy	25.00
marketing campaign	19.44	comprehensive policy	12.50	marketing campaign	20.00
motivation	13.89	motivation	12.50	motivation	15.00
Internal place branding elements					
Total	%	Practitioners	%	Academicians	%
heritage	55.56	leadership	68.75	society	60.00
leadership	55.56	heritage	62.50	infrastructure	55.00
infrastructure	50.00	people	56.25	culture	55.00
culture	50.00	history	50.00	heritage	50.00
people	50.00	infrastructure	43.75	leadership	45.00
society	47.22	culture	43.75	people	45.00
government	44.44	government	43.75	government	45.00
events	44.44	events	43.75	events	45.00
history	41.67	perceived value	37.50	perceived value	45.00
perceived value	41.67	stories	37.50	social conditions	45.00
social conditions	38.89	society	31.25	public services	40.00
public services	36.11	social conditions	31.25	business	40.00
stories	36.11	public services	31.25	history	35.00
business	33.33	environment	31.25	stories	35.00
environment	30.56	business	25.00	environment	30.00
Channels of internal place brand spread					
Total	%	Practitioners	%	Academicians	%
word of mouth	66.67	word of mouth	62.50	word of mouth	70.00
participation	55.56	participation	62.50	participation	50.00
personal relations	38.89	personal relations	43.75	events	40.00
events	38.89	events	37.50	personal relations	35.00
media	36.11	media	37.50	media	35.00
education	25.00	promotion	25.00	education	30.00
visual elements	25.00	Education / visual elements	18.75	visual elements	30.00

leadership. These elements correspond significantly with the ones identified analysing the literature – culture, environment, business, people, infrastructure, government.

People and leadership however with their nature differ from all the other elements. Being a part as well as an

influencing substance of every other element people and leadership are considered as central elements of the model. If all the elements are valid for the directed as well as spontaneous process, leadership in terms of branding is considered to emerge only when the process has a purpose part.

It is suggested to girth both of the central elements with the ring of channels of influence and experience: direct (participation, events) and indirect (word of mouth communication, media, education).

Following the example of some place branding theorists' (Anholt, 2004; Lee, 2010) for the internal place branding model a form of regular polygon was chosen. This form is considered to effectively express the entirety as well as the results of any future researches in a radar chart.

As it was already mentioned, internal place branding is understood as dual process, overwhelming purposive and spontaneous parts. This duality is represented by the figures 5 and 6. The figures provide a visual representation of the differences and the elements of the purposive and spontaneous internal place branding.

This model provides an initial framework for understanding of the process of internal place branding, its elements and logic. Undoubtedly it calls for further research and revision, however, it is a starting point of the knowledge building about the increasingly emphasized object.

Conclusions

Even though recent years has brought many manifestations of crucial internal stakeholders' importance for the process of place branding, an overall understanding of the internal place branding concept is still absent. Trying to contribute to an increasing body of literature analysing various internal aspects of place branding, this paper aimed to provide an initial framework for understanding of the internal place branding.

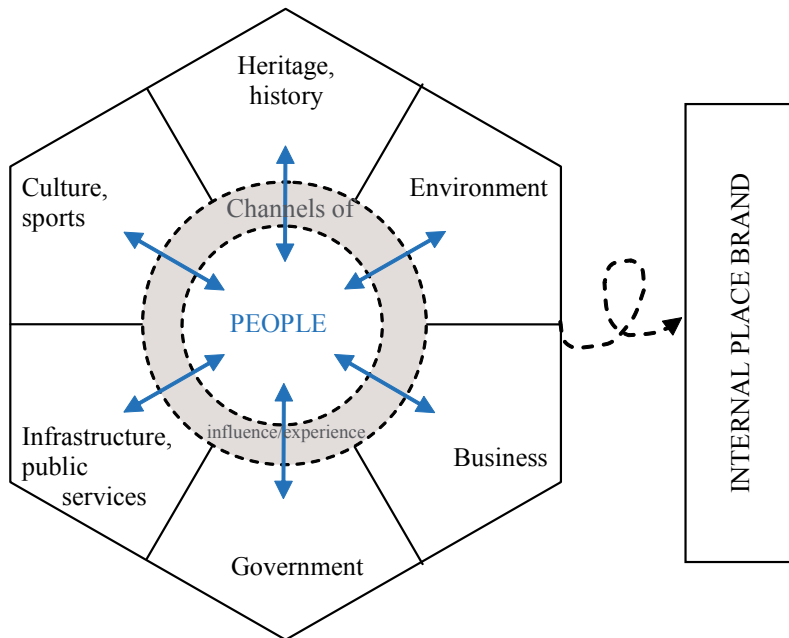


Fig. 5. Illustration of spontaneous internal place branding model

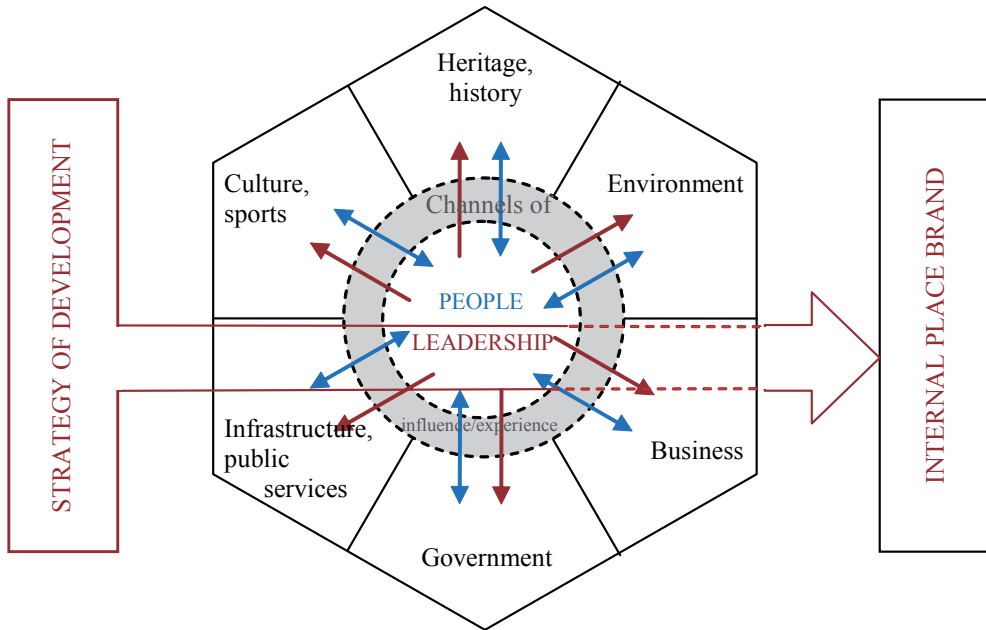


Fig. 6. Illustration of purposive internal place branding model

First of all a review of the related scientific literature was made. Many authors agree that in literature of place branding exists inconsistent use of terminology. Several streams of understanding are identified. This of course makes the conceptualization of internal place branding even more difficult. Notwithstanding the complexity and inconsistency of the concept, it is nevertheless possible to identify the most frequently repeated elements of various place branding models. These are culture, environment, business, people, infrastructure, government.

Given that the object of place branding is of high complexity, not yet fully clarified and, what is more, the object of internal place branding is still unexplained, it was decided to implement a Delphi expert opinion survey. The invitations to participate in the survey were

sent to academicians having published no less than five articles on related thematic as well as to practitioners, having run or participated in place branding campaigns. 36 experts – 16 practitioners and 20 academicians agreed and participated in the survey. This number of participating experts allows arguing that their common opinion is a nearly precise solution of the problem. This number of experts also confirms the object of internal place branding to be in a need of conceptual explanation. Seeking to include geographically distant experts the survey was implemented online using the inquiry system “apklaua.lt”. Two separate but identical questionnaires were provided for both groups of experts. The respondents were asked to define the nature of internal place branding process, its concept and the most relevant elements.

The analysis of scientific literature and expert opinion survey helped to clarify the basic frames of the concept.

Even though it contradicts to some authors position emphasizing only the purposive part of the process, according to the experts' opinion it is argued that internal place branding is a dual process overwhelming purposive activities as well as spontaneous formation of a place brand internally. The purposive part in the suggested framework is considered to be the strategy of development providing the process with direction: without it the process as well as the brand is understood as unruly and formed spontaneously. Heritage and history, environment, business, government, infrastructure and public services, culture and sports are indicated as the elements of the model. These elements similarly to the results of the literature analysis were identified by

the experts. People and leadership are proposed to be central elements of the model being experiencing and influencing part of all the other elements. According to authors' opinion the influence and experience of the central elements are considered to be transmitted mostly through the word of mouth communication, media, education, participation and events.

All these elements and the logic of the process are integrated into an initial framework for a better understanding of the concept of internal place branding. Amplifying the knowledge of the concept the framework may also serve as guidelines to embody the idea of internal place branding practically. As it was already mentioned, this framework is one of the first attempts to conceptualize internal place branding and calls for further researches and clarification of its logic, elements and form

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PRADINĖ VIETOVĖS VIDINĖS ŽENKLODAROS KONCEPCIJOS SAMPRATA IR LOGIKA

S a n t r a u k a

Tyrimo problema. Įvairūs vietovės ženklodaros tematika rašantys autoriai vis didesnę dėmesį savo darbuose skiria vidinėms interesų grupėms. Išskirta keletas šių tyrimų krypčių: bandoma identifikuoti veiksmingiausius piliečių pasitenkinimo vertinimo būdus, optimizuoti interesų grupių įtraukimą ir dalyvavimą, analizuoti tapatybės kūrimo procesą ar išryškinti įvairių šaltinių siunčiamų žinučių nuoseklumo svarbą. Vis dėlto, vieninga nuomonė apie vietovės vidinės ženkloros sampratą dar nėra nustatėjusi, todėl šiuo straipsniu siekiama pagilinti

vietovės ženkloros vidinės perspektyvos pažinimą ir pateikti pradinę šio darbo objekto – vietovės vidinės ženkloros koncepcijos – sampratą ir logiką.

Tyrimo metodai. Visų pirma buvo atlikta susijusios mokslinės literatūros apžvalga. Jos metu nustatyta, jog daugelis autorių sutinka, kad analizuojant su vietovės ženkloros susijusias problemas vyrauja nenuoseklus sąvokų ir sampratų vartojimas. Vis dėlto, nepaisant sudėtingumo ir nenuoseklumo, atlikus įvairių vietovės ženkloros modelių analizę

buvo išskirti daugiausiai autorių dėmesio sulaukę komponentai, tai yra: kultūra, aplinka, verslas, žmonės, infrastruktūra, valdymas.

Dėl vietovės ženklo daros koncepcijos sudėtingumo ir nuostatų nenuoseklumo bei nesusiformavusios vietovės vidinės ženklo daros sampratos buvo nuspręsta atlikti ekspertų nuomonės apklausą *delfi* metodu. Kvietimai dalyvauti apklausoje buvo išsiųsti mokslininkams, paskelbusiems ne mažiau kaip penkias susijusias tematikos publikacijas, bei vietovės ženklo daros kampanijose dalyvavusiems ar joms vadovavusiems praktikams. 36 ekspertai – 16 praktikų ir 20 mokslininkų, išreiškė susidomėjimą ir dalyvavo apklausoje. Didelis apklausoje dalyvavusių ekspertų skaičius leidžia teigti, jog jų bendra nuomonė yra artima tikrajam problemos sprendimui. Ekspertų susidomėjimas taip pat patvirtina vietovės ženklo daros sampratos konceptualizavimo poreikį. Siekiant į tyrimą įtraukti geografiškai nutolusius ekspertus apklausa buvo atlikta internetu naudojant sistemą apklausa.lt. Mokslininkų ir praktikų ekspertų grupėms buvo pateikti atskiri, tačiau identiškai klausimynai. Respondentai buvo paprašyti apibrėžti vietovės vidinės ženklo daros proceso esmę, sampratą bei svarbiausius komponentus.

Tyrimo rezultatai. Nors dauguma autorių akcentuoja tikslinę vietovės ženklo daros prigimtį, apklausoje dalyvavusių ekspertų nuomonė patvirtino, jog vietovės vidinė ženklo daros laikytina dualiu procesu, apimančiu tiek tikslines veiklas, tiek ir savaiminį ženklo formavimąsi. Tikslinis proceso komponentas siūlomoje sampratoje laikomas vystymo(si) strategija, suteikiančia savaiminiam procesui kryptį. Vietovės vidinės ženklo daros komponentų identifikavimo klausimu ekspertų nuomonė buvo panaši į vietovės ženklo daros modelių analizės rezultatus. Atsižvelgiant į tai buvo išskirti šie svarbiausi vietovės vidinės ženklo daros komponentai: istorija ir paveldas, infrastruktūra ir viešosios paslaugos, kultūra ir sportas, valdymas, verslas, aplinka, žmonės ir lyderystė. Žmonės ir lyderystė laikomi centriniiais elementais, likusiuosius elementus patiriančiais ir darančiais jiems įtaką šiais kanalais: komunikacija iš lūpų į lūpas, žiniasklaida, švietimo įstaigos, dalyvavimas bei renginiai.

Visi šie elementai ir proceso logika yra integruoti į pradinį sampratos modelį, padedantį geriau suprasti vietovės vidinės ženklo daros koncepciją. Pagilindamas koncepcijos pažinimą modelis taip pat gali atlikti gairių funkciją, įgyvendinant vietovės vidinės ženklo daros idėją praktiškai.