The placement of country reputation towards place management

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Abstract

Purpose – Until now, scholars have devoted insufficient attention to theories of place reputation – at the city, region and country levels. Furthermore, the literature does suggest a theoretical link between country reputation and country-of-origin (COO). To foster an alignment between country reputation and place management, this paper aims to trace the advance of country branding and nation branding, as deriving place management recommendations from studies on country reputation. Therefore, this work is grounded on the consistent principle in the current literature – that a place must first improve itself via development and management before it can create a positive reputation via communications; it is fundamental, geographically, to work on the development initiatives towards the improvement of a place.

Design/methodology/approach – This is a conceptual paper based on literature search on country reputation published in the past decade (2005-2015).

Findings – The analysis indicates that nine papers have been published on country reputation since 2005, but none of them deal with principles of place management. This paper also consolidates the field's decades-long theoretical evolution into a visual diagram. To close, it concludes by highlighting the need for theoretical and managerial advancements involving principles from place reputation and place management, which could help countries achieve sustainable prosperity.

Research limitations/implications – As limitations, this conceptual paper lacks review of each country in the evolutionary timeline regarding country branding and nation branding. As another limitation, this paper focused specifically on theoretical contributions and did not address the administrative challenges implied by the sub-themes. Indeed, there is much complexity involved with aligning government policies with internal and external stakeholders.

Social implications – Inspire academia, government and citizens to be engaged with the sustainable prosperity of their country through initiatives of place management and development.

Originality/value – The present study provides additional evidence with respect to the evolution of COO to country reputation, considering studies on nation branding and country branding, towards place management. To date, this is the first publication that offers an extensive examination of country reputation. Thus, the principal theoretical implication of this study is that place management and place reputation can be aligned to develop and improve places (cities, regions and countries) for sustainable prosperity.

Keywords Country-of-origin, Place management, Nation branding, Country branding, Country reputation, Place reputation

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction

Due to the distinctive role of each country in the global economy, there has been increasing research interest in how a country's image affects its reputation and by extension its status quo in terms of governance, prosperity and competition. However, country reputation "is a diverse topic with many intertwined levels, disciplines and theoretical perspectives"

(Newburry, 2012, p. 3). This conceptual paper thus focuses on the evolution of the country reputation construct and its potential alignment with place branding and management.

There are some compelling reasons to pursue this alignment. First, the situation with country reputation parallels that of place reputation. In the realm of place image, for instance, "the field has not reached a point where we can say that a robust theory is under construction" (Warnaby and Medway, 2013, p. 349); the same can be said about country image. Likewise, there are relatively few studies on the topics of country reputation (Mariutti, 2016; Newburry, 2012) and place reputation (Bell, 2016; Pike, 2015). Nevertheless, research does strongly suggest that a country's reputation can be understood as a brand image (Andéhn and Zenker, 2015; Anholt, 2007, 2010; Dinnie, 2016; Fan, 2008, 2010; Govers and Go, 2009; Ham, 2008; Newburry, 2012). In fact, there is evidence to suggest a theoretical interrelation between the significance of said brand image and the country's reputation (Bromley, 1993, 2002). This would seem to parallel Andéhn and Zenker's (2015, p. 28) argument that the reputation of a place is the same as "the nation's image or brand". However, this paper posits that country brand image (or nation image) is a fundamental element of a country's reputation – neither an interchangeable concept nor a completely separate construct. Further discussion between these concepts is beyond the scope of this paper's structure.

To fulfil this argument, it is necessary to define some of these terms. Several authorities agree that "image" is an element of the "brand" (Aaker, 1992; de Chernatony, 1999; Fill, 2013), and thus, it follows that "country image" may be part of a country's "brand", which then informs the reputation. Yet, there is inconsistency in the literature over the use of these terms. For instance, most references to "country image" derive from country-of-origin (COO) studies, while "country brand image" or "nation brand image" stem from country branding or nation branding studies. Furthermore, literature reviews have regularly used the constructs "country brand" and "nation brand" interchangeably, despite the arguable differences between them (e.g. "country brand" usually concentrates on branding theories and strategies, while "nation brand" focuses on policies that involve governmental participation and citizen engagement).

Despite the importance of understanding place reputation, the literature lacks ample studies on the topic. This existing debate contributes to these emergent trends for theorising the conceptual linkages between place reputation and place management as the aim of this paper rethinks and exemplifies relationships between place reputation and place management, based on country reputation studies and COO's principles.

Given the above, place branding and place reputation stand to gain from one another. According to Bell (2016), place branding traces a path towards place reputation as a more comprehensive conception. Place branding needs innovative theorization about the geographical dimensions of brands (Pike, 2015), while country branding needs to understand how the management of reputation can affect international perceptions of the country image.

However, the literature has no extensive research on reputation of countries. Thus, this paper explores country reputation studies to rethink the relationship between place reputation and place management. To this end, this conceptual paper features three sections: the literature review, which synthesises a debate over four sub-themes (COO, place branding, place reputation and place management), followed by the discussion and then the conclusion.

Literature review
Understanding the rise and basis of country reputation
Country reputation research has received renewed interest due to recent progress in the field of nation branding, particularly regarding country image. This topic has, for instance, permeated studies on communication, branding and public relations (Buhmann and

Ingenhoff, 2013, 2015; Jain and Winner, 2013; Kang and Yang, 2010; Lambkin, 2012; Newburry, 2012; Passow *et al.*, 2005; Yang *et al.*, 2008; Yousaf and Li, 2015); on political, economic and diplomatic topics (Anholt, 2007; Aronczyk, 2013; Ham, 2001, 2008; Rojas-Méndez, 2013); on the culture of governance and the common good of humanity (Anholt, 2010); and, more recently, on place management (Kalandides, 2013; Mariutti, 2016). However, just as place branding and place reputation cannot be easily decoupled (Bell, 2016), the same may apply at the country level. This can be addressed to a country context and its geographical spaces, such as communities, neighbourhoods, villages, towns, cities, regions, even islands. Therefore, to deepen this discussion around country reputation, the following sections – COO, place branding, place reputation and place management – are pondered.

Country-of-origin. In the field of place branding, place image is a complex research topic due to its multidimensional nature, interdisciplinary roots and multiple stakeholders. Several authors in place branding debate the impact of this concept at the levels of cities, regions, and nations (Dinnie, 2016; Fan, 2008, 2010; Govers, 2015; Kavaratzis, 2010; Mariutti and Tench, 2015; Warnaby, 2009; Warnaby and Medway, 2013; Zenker, 2011).

Most investigations of country image are grounded in the theory of COO, which dominates the discipline of international business (Peterson and Jolibert, 1995) and international marketing (Kotler and Keller, 2012; Papadopoulos and Heslop, 1993; Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 1992; Schooler, 1965; Usunier, 2006).

Since the 1960s, research on COO has intensely studied the application of country image to specific industries, using quantitative methods to assess specific markets and business purposes. Nonetheless, the fixation on COO's effect on consumer behaviour has failed to spur broader discourse on branding (Pike, 2015). For instance, Dinnie (2005, 2016) highlights a lack of exploratory research into COO's multidimensional nature in terms of nation branding.

While researchers have suggested a variety of definitions of "country-of-origin" over the past 50 years, this paper specifically uses Bannister and Saunders' (1978, p. 562) definition that COO represents the "generalised images, created by variables such as representative products, economic and political maturity, historical events and relationships, traditions, industrialization and the degree of technological virtuosity". This description seems the best aligned with the principles of country reputation theory.

Place branding. Since the 1990s, the place marketing discussions initiated by Kotler and Levy (1969), Ashworth and Voogd (1990) and Kotler *et al.* (1993) have given rise to place branding research (Govers and Go, 2009; Kavaratzis, 2010; Warnaby, 2009). Indeed, "the concept of place branding is well established as a place marketing practice" (Medway and Warnaby, 2014, p. 155), with Govers and Go (2009, p. 230) arguing that "place branding should inform place marketing and function as a strategic compass". Similarly, Lucarelli and Brorström (2013, p. 75) claim that place branding "puts forward a way to tackle interdisciplinary research and offers insights and ideas to develop the field of place branding further".

The concept of place branding has evolved to be distinct from product marketing and corporate branding (Kavaratzis, 2005; Kotler, 2009). Dinnie (2005; Szondi (2009) and Zenker (2011) align with the definition offered by Bellini *et al.* (2010, p. 90) that place branding is "the practice of applying brand strategy and other marketing techniques and disciplines to the economic, social, political and cultural development of cities, regions and countries". Likewise, Lucarelli and Brorström (2013, p. 65) understand place branding "as the general phenomenon of marketing, branding, promoting, and regeneration of a particular city, region, and/or location". There is an intuitive link between a place's "regeneration" and its management and development.

The expansion of place branding led eventually to "nation branding", a term coined by Anholt in 1996 to describe a place's identity, image and reputation more so than the

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branding strategies themselves. Researchers associate the concept with the political, economic and diplomatic applications (Anholt, 2007; Aronczyk, 2013; Rojas-Méndez, 2013), also using public administration. Moreover, nation branding has attracted the attention of place branding academics (Andéhn and Zenker, 2015).

Concomitantly, Hart and Stachow (2010) state that a place brand image can be created, evaluated and proactively managed to enhance the place's reputation among a target audience (a claim supported by Fan, 2010 and Govers and Go, 2009). Some countries (e.g. Scotland, Germany and South Korea) have advanced in applying nation branding principles, although scholars have only specifically investigated a few nations. Since the mid-1990s, there has been a growing trend towards branding a country (Andéhn and Zenker, 2015; Fan, 2008; Ham, 2001; Kaneva, 2011; Szondi, 2009; Warnaby and Medway, 2013). This can be observed after 2000, when most country branding research expanded, such as Poland (Florek, 2005), England (Wetzel, 2006), Zimbabwe (Matiza and Oni, 2013) and Colombia (Echeverri et al., 2014). In the early 2000s, business consultants created country brand indexes from certain country dimensions as an alternative way of understanding the country brand or nation brand. Still, these efforts have inspired business consultants and researchers to develop country and nation brand indexes as a way to metrically understand the nation brand.

Place reputation. There is evidence in the literature that little is explored on place reputation, as mentioned previously. For Bell (2016, p. 1), place reputation "can be understood in the context of a lack of a geographical understanding of the reputations of cities and regions". In fairness, country reputation is still developing as a research domain.

Moreover, Pike (2015) introduces and advances an innovative angle for acknowledging and elucidating the geographical associations constructed by stakeholders related in spatial paths, such as producers, circulators, consumers and regulators. He points out that they try to cohere and stabilise meaning and value in goods and services brands and their branding in particular spatial and temporal market contexts. Therefore, by geographically connecting political and cultural economy issues, Pike's (2015) philosophy on place reputation addresses critical interrogations about how, why, where and by whom goods and services brands are associated with specific and particular geographical attributes and characteristics of spaces and places.

Likewise, as Bell (2016) highlights that "there has been an adjustment of place branding's role and a repositioning of the concept in relation to place reputation". Taking this theoretical link, which is related to the aim of this paper, indicates that redesigning a place – in terms of planning, managing, developing and improving its spaces geographical attributes, is followed by enhancing its reputation by branding and promoting its characteristics and potentials.

Place management. There is a growing recognition that particular places need new approaches to addressing major issues and delivering appropriate responses (Walsh, 2001). In this light, place reputation research emerges as a powerful platform for guiding the activities of place management using principles of place branding, perhaps, vice versa. However, the literature lacks a consensus regarding the most suitable place management perspective. According to the Institute of Place Management (IPM, 2015), which follows Kalandides and Kavaratzis' definition, place branding "is a particular tool of place management and development which seeks to enhance a place's reputation by influencing the symbolic dimensions of place". Accurately, Walsh (2001, p. 3) stated that place management is ultimately about "the need to improve coordination and administration of public, private and community sector activity, particularly in areas experiencing high levels of economic and social disadvantage". In other words, place managers should undertake activities to develop the place, satisfy its residents and enhance its reputation. Similarly,

Zenker (2011) has argued that a place's development is related to its residents' satisfaction. Likewise, Omholt (2013) stated that effective place management and development involve collective intermediations among place stakeholders.

In searching for new ways of addressing their problems and delivering responses, places have begun looking at marketing as "a philosophy of place management" (Ashworth and Voogd, 1994, p. 39). Furthermore, preliminary reflection on place management was undertaken by Kalandides (2013), who stated that place branding, place management, place marketing, strategic spatial development, public–private partnerships and town teams – are all substitutes when describing the application of business principles to place. Nevertheless, applying their own theoretical directions, methodological approaches and dynamic implications. Furthermore, according to Walsh (2001), policy implications for governments in accepting a place management approach is a core complementary requirement to support place managers and developers. However, this is yet to be adequately explored in relation to countries.

In short, both the academic and corporate domains have published a considerable amount of literature on "branding a country" in recent decades. However, this body of work largely aligns with two research spheres: the COO (international marketing), which focuses on country image, and on country brand image, which focuses on place branding. To establish a theory of country reputation, it is necessary to uncover where the two research streams converge.

Understanding the image and reputation concepts
To further our understanding of country reputation, scholars need to forge a deeper theoretical link between country image and country reputation, uncovered by the literature, as follows. For decades, scholars have extensively debated the notion of corporate reputation (Fombrun, 1966). In 1999, de Chernatony proposed a model for organisations that relied on the idea that stronger brands result from a homogeneous brand identity. "By auditing the gaps between brand identity and brand reputation", de Chernatony (1999, p. 157) argued, "managers can identify strategies to minimize incongruence and develop more powerful brands". In her conclusion, she affirmed that "the concept of brand image has not been negated; rather it has been argued that brand reputation is a more powerful concept" (p. 173). When forming brand perceptions, people draw on many sources at different points in time; the result is a brand reputation (Fill, 2013; Kapferer, 1992). It is possible that Kapferer's (1992, p. 30) suggestion – that "changes in reputation affect all stakeholders" – could be expanded from the company context to a country context.

Frandsen and Johansen (2014) offer a major and more recent discussion about corporate image and reputation differences in a chapter from *Exploring Public Relations* (pp. 181-192). For them, "an image is not a unitary, monolithic phenomenon"; rather, a corporate image is a global evaluation comprising a set of beliefs and feelings that a person has about a product and/or an organisation (p. 184). Meanwhile, they argue that reputation is a value- and time based-construct based on the relationship between the organisation and its multiple stakeholders (p. 192). Hitherto, Fill (2013, p. 366) makes a similar distinction: "reputations are developed through time, whereas images can be instantaneous and relatively superficial". The brand is simultaneously the immediate image put forth by the country and the stakeholders of a country and its own reputation. Thus, it is possible for a country to have a strong brand, yet a weak reputation, and vice versa. By extension, as a company does (Roper and Fill, 2012). In short, perceptions at one point in time constitute an "image", while perceptions spanning across time constitute a "reputation".

The work of Bromley (1993) helps to move the discussion of reputation beyond businesses organizations to a place scope. The present paper specifically adopts the notion that "reputations depend on the process of communication and influence whereby people

form and share impressions about matters that interest them" (Bromley, 2002, p. 65).
However, in terms of countries (or any place), it is apparent that effective management and
development must happen first to give credibility to communications.

Advancing on country reputation
As mentioned in the Introduction section, there is some inconsistency in how authors
understand the constructs of country reputation, country brand and country image. Thus, the
following discussion reviews the debate to highlight their similarities and differences.

At this point, it is possible to synthesize the above discussion to form some initial ideas
about country reputation. First, this paper sides with Yousaf and Li (2015, p. 400) in arguing
that country reputation, while similar to nation branding and often related to country image, is
"clearly distinguishable" from those constructs. Fan (2010, p. 102), for instance, points out that
identity, image and reputation are related to "mental associations generated by knowledge and
past experience" with the country. By contrast, she argues, a nation image refers to what is
projected to the other target-country or stakeholder, whereas reputation is the feedback
received by others concerning the credibility of the nation's identity claims. Fullerton and
Kendrick (2014) agree: "The images and actions are functions of nation branding, but the
impressions they produce in people's minds are, in fact, the country's reputation". However, in
terms of the end result, Ham (2008, p. 128) argues that there is no substantive distinction
between the image and reputation of a country: both are an essential part of the country's
strategic equity, built as they are on factors such as trust and satisfaction.

This latter point – about seeing residents as the consumers, or internal stakeholders,
of a place – is significant for country reputation. As Passow *et al.* (2005, p. 312) point
out, the most relevant difference between the reputation of a corporation and a country
is that "a country is not generally free to choose its internal audience". Compounding
this problem, Yang *et al.* (2008, p. 424) notes that "obtaining favourable reputation in a
short period of time is difficult, because the process requires repeated, cumulative
organization-stakeholder interactions". Despite this challenge, Govers (2015) pointedly
asserts "that to change reputation is to contribute to humanity" – and that change
begins with the brand. In other words, the key function of branding is not simply to
make a country more externally appealing but also to "control people's satisfaction
with their place, or (to turn the phrase) to keep them in their place" (Kaneva, 2011,
p. 123). Anholt (2007, 2010) reinforced this idea, asserting that:

> [...] brand is a word that captures the idea of reputation observed, reputation valued and reputation
> managed, and we live in a world in which reputation counts for a great deal (Anholt, 2010, p. 20).

Using the above as a foundation, Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2013, 2015) developed a new
theory-grounded approach that clarifies the dimensionality of the country image construct
from a public relations perspective. Subsequently, a measurement model supports
evaluating image-related communication strategies in international settings. According to
Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2013, p. 67):

> [...] a multidimensional model of reputation needs to differentiate it by adding a dimension that
> captures beliefs regarding the aesthetic qualities of a country that is its beauty and attractiveness
> as a cultural and scenic place.

From this study, while country reputation is understood as "the public estimation by
(generalised) others", country image has "strategically communicated self-representations"
(Buhmann and Ingenhoff, 2013, p. 6).

Thus, this last section of the literature review has showed that country reputation also represents the value of country's brand in terms of achieving sustainable prosperity possible through place management and development.

Discussion

Whereas the previous sections conceptually revealed the core terminology on debates around country reputation, the present section reviews the studies that best reflect the construct's evolution. As previously pointed out in this paper, few studies to date have investigated place reputation, although some initial theorizing in this regard has appeared in contemporary studies on country reputation (Jain and Winner, 2013; Newburry, 2012; Passow *et al.*, 2005; Seo, 2013; Yang *et al.*, 2008; Yousaf and Li, 2015). Together, those few studies slightly suggest that a country's reputation is a theoretical offshoot of the COO theory, aligning with the principles of nation branding and country branding, but not really applying the tools of place management (Kalandides, 2013; Walsh, 2001) and place reputation (Bell, 2016; Pike, 2015). The criteria for these selected publications was the keyword "country reputation" in the titles of English academic articles available via Web of Sciences and Google Scholar. Figure 1 presents the reviewed studies and illustrates the chronological lineage between COO theory and country reputation studies.

From left to right: the first column reflects the "Country-of-Origin" concept, which has been investigated primarily by researchers of international business and international marketing since the 1990s. The second column, "Nation Branding", addresses the intense debate on the "nation brand" concept that started in the mid-1990s. The third column, "Country Branding", displays studies that deal with country-specific branding efforts (the abbreviation NB means a focus on "Nation Branding", CB means "Country Branding" and "both" reflects a use of both principles, as highlighted in the Introduction section). The fourth and last column, "Country Reputation", captures those studies that arose in mid-2000 from Europe and Asia.

It is worth noting that, of the 10 studies published on country reputation as of October 2016, only five were chosen for discussion. Two studies dealt with sports mega-events and were thus excluded. The other three studies were left out due to their specific aim or lack of theorising around country reputation. Thus, the following paragraphs discuss the five selected publications on country reputation. Mariutti's (2017) thesis has prompted the present paper and is cited thought this debate.

The first mixed-methods research into country reputation arose from a model used for Liechtenstein. The authors developed their Country Reputation Cockpit as an instrument for measuring a country's reputation and developing a strategic framework for effective reputation management (Passow *et al.*, 2005, p. 309). In 2002, the authors adapted six dimensions from the Country Reputation Index (Passow *et al.*, 2005) to form a new instrument that investigates internal and external stakeholders' perceptions of the country. The model analyses a country's reputation in three stages – identity analysis, image analysis and coherence analysis – based on six dimensions of reputation (financial, leadership, emotional, physical, cultural and social appeals; Passow *et al.*, 2005, p. 313). With this model, it was argued, "governments will gain valuable insights into which aspects in the perceptions of external target groups drive the overall reputation of their country" (Passow *et al.*, 2005, p. 325).

Another significant investigation into the multiple dimensions of country reputation was applied to South Korea (Yang *et al.*, 2008). The research used a quantitative approach – confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation models – to the country reputation and corporate reputation of South Korea using samples of US citizens from 33 states. Their research had four aims:
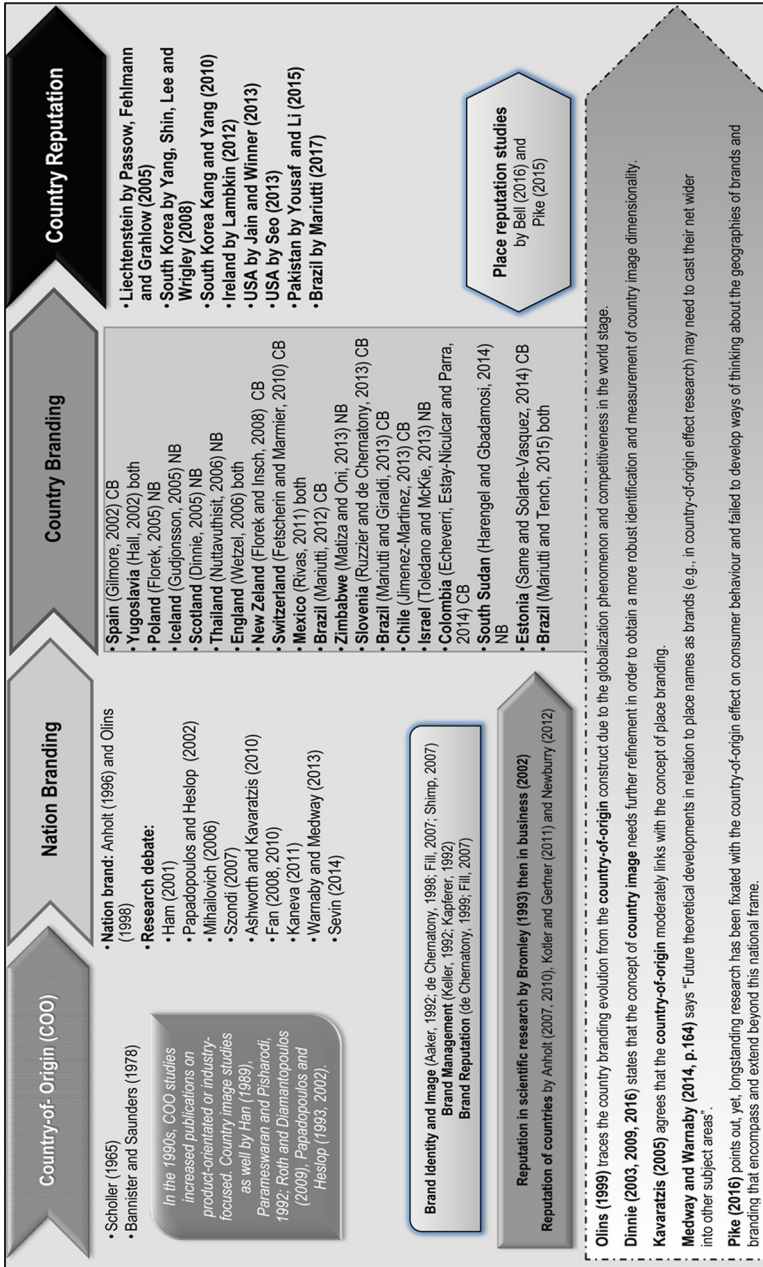
Country-of-Origin (COO)
- Scholler (1965)
- Bannister and Saunders (1978)

In the 1990s, COO studies increased publications on product-oriented or industry-focused. Country image studies as well by Han (1989), Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 1992; Roth and Diamantopoulos (2009), Papadopoulos and Heslop (1993, 2002).

Nation Branding
- Nation brand: Anholt (1996) and Olins (1998)
- **Research debate:**
- Ham (2001)
- Papadopoulos and Heslop (2002)
- Mihailovich (2006)
- Szondi (2007)
- Ashworth and Kavaratzis (2010)
- Fan (2008, 2010)
- Kaneva (2011)
- Warnaby and Medway (2013)
- Sevin (2014)

Country Branding
- Spain (Gilmore, 2002) CB
- Yugoslavia (Hall, 2002) both
- Poland (Florek, 2005) NB
- Iceland (Gudjonsson, 2005) NB
- Scotland (Dinnie, 2005) NB
- Thailand (Nuttavuthisit, 2006) NB
- England (Wetzel, 2006) both
- New Zealand (Florek and Insch, 2008) CB
- Switzerland (Fetscherin and Marmier, 2010) CB
- Mexico (Rivas, 2011) both
- Brazil (Mariutti, 2012) CB
- Zimbabwe (Maitza and Oni, 2013) NB
- Slovenia (Ruzzier and de Chernatony, 2013) CB
- Brazil (Mariutti and Giraldi, 2013) CB
- Chile (Jimenez-Martinez, 2013) CB
- Israel (Toledano and McKie, 2013) NB
- Colombia (Echeverri, Estay-Niculcar and Parra, 2014) CB
- South Sudan (Harengel and Gbadamosi, 2014) NB
- Estonia (Same and Solarte-Vasquez, 2014) CB
- Brazil (Mariutti and Tench, 2015) both

Country Reputation
- Liechtenstein by Passow, Fehlmann and Grahlow (2005)
- South Korea by Yang, Shin, Lee and Wrigley (2008)
- South Korea Kang and Yang (2010)
- Ireland by Lambkin (2012)
- USA by Jain and Winner (2013)
- USA by Seo (2013)
- Pakistan by Yousaf and Li (2015)
- Brazil by Mariutti (2017)

Place reputation studies by Bell (2016) and Pike (2015)

Brand Identity and Image (Aaker, 1992; de Chernatony, 1998; Fill, 2007; Shimp, 2007)
Brand Management (Keller, 1992; Kapferer, 1992)
Brand Reputation (de Chernatony, 1999; Fill, 2007)

Reputation in scientific research by Bromley (1993) then in business (2002)
Reputation of countries by Anholt (2007, 2010), Kotler and Gertner (2011) and Newburry (2012)

Olins (1999) traces the country branding evolution from the country-of-origin construct due to the globalization phenomenon and competitiveness in the world stage.

Dinnie (2003, 2009, 2016) states that the concept of country image needs further refinement in order to obtain a more robust identification and measurement of country image dimensionality.

Kavaratzis (2005) agrees that the country-of-origin moderately links with the concept of place branding.

Medway and Warnaby (2014, p.164) says "Future theoretical developments in relation to place names as brands (e.g., in country-of-origin effect research) may need to cast their net wider into other subject areas".

Pike (2016) points out, yet, longstanding research has been fixated with the country-of-origin effect on consumer behaviour and failed to develop ways of thinking about the geographies of brands and branding that encompass and extend beyond this national frame.

Figure 1.
Timeline of the
evolution of country
reputation

(1) demonstrate a reliable and valid measurement model of country reputation in multi-dimensions;

(2) examine the effects of individual experience with, and awareness of, the country-on-country reputation;

(3) assess the effects of country reputation on foreign publics' supportive intentions towards the country; and

(4) explore strategic communication (Yang *et al.*, 2008).

Additionally, the researchers explored respondents' preferences for various communications channels (e.g. online media, cable TV, etc.). It was concluded that public awareness was "the key mediator between individual experience and country reputation" (Yang *et al.*, 2008, p. 435).

In an interesting reversal of the previous article, an investigation on the relationships between South Koreans' online social networking and their consequent favourability ratings of the USA (Seo, 2013). The intention of this research was to assess how information obtained through the new channel of social media influences individuals' perceptions of other countries. It was concluded that South Koreans who already held positive attitudes towards the USA were more likely to seek out information from US news sites; the more frequent visitation of such sites then positively correlated with the respondents' ratings of the USA's reputation. On the other hand, Seo (2013, p. 864) cautioned that "online interactions may complement offline interactions but cannot replace them".

Taking a different tack, Pakistan was investigated through how a country's relative global status influences its internal reputation and the resulting social cognitions of its citizens (Yousaf and Li, 2015). The study was grounded on theories of social identity and collective self-esteem, contending that evaluations of a country's reputation are regulated by social concepts and vice versa. A quantitative approach to a convenient sample of citizens, executives and post-graduate students was used across eight cities of Pakistan during a two-month period. It was found out that "if a country is negatively stereotyped on the global stage, it weakens the ability of people to live their nation's brand. A formidable nation's brand can only be constructed if people are deeply involved and committed to it" (Yousaf and Li, 2015, p. 408). In Pakistan, specifically, a weak nation brand "led to the internalization of pessimism among Pakistanis, which eventually affected their sense of belongingness and their conduct as Pakistani citizens" (Yousaf and Li, 2015, p. 408).

Collectively, these studies illuminate the importance of developing models tailored to the specific features of a given country. However, none of them offer concrete recommendations on place management. Importantly, they collectively reveal that country reputation is still not sufficiently acknowledged as a theory. This makes it more challenging to expand on tools of place management aligned to the place reputation without a robust theory of country reputation.

Conclusion

Social science research recognises many conceptual interconnections between the various sub-themes related to country reputation as discussed here. Nevertheless, there remains a robust debate around certain theoretical links, such as that between the COO and nation brand constructs (Dinnie, 2016; Fan, 2010; Fetscherin, 2010; Olins, 2002, 2005, 2013), or the interaction between the COO effect and commercial/political images and reputations (Ham, 2008, p. 129). Dinnie (2016, p. 139) states that COO is a related field that "underpins the concept of nation branding, yet rarely have the two fields been integrated". Likewise, Kavaratzis (2005) highlights that country image studies need to develop more sophisticated ways of identifying and measuring the dimensions of the country brand.

In terms of limitations, this conceptual paper lacks a comprehensive review of each country in the evolutionary timeline regarding country branding and nation branding. As another limitation, this paper focused specifically on theoretical contributions and did not address the administrative challenges implied by the sub-themes. Indeed, there is much complexity involved with aligning government policies with internal and external stakeholders. For this reason, future research on country reputation needs to delineate conceptual principles, expand theoretical consistencies, and probe methodological approaches, particularly in accordance with place management and development. It is possible that theoretical advancements will inspire innovative actions among place managers and developers. However, it is also apparent that effective place management requires government support (Walsh, 2001) for enhancing a country's reputation.

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