

## **The Brand Management: A Theoretical Contribution In Special Interest Tourism**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The main objective of this study is to analyze the brand management approach applied to specific tourism contexts. Thus, in particular, the research proposed aims to present a contribution to the study and management of the brand in a perspective applied to special interest tourism, in particular on physical and psychological brand identity. The brand management is one of the aspects on which many researchers have dedicated attention, as this was something that in addition to facilitate recognition, improving the loyalty and increasing notoriety. It is of course an asset for the company, which will allow products that identify and differentiate them from the competition. Besides the undeniable connection with the component product (marketing mix), the study of the brand requires attention to various kinds of concepts, no less important (e.g. image, notoriety or identity). Recently have been new approaches and new contributions in this regard. In terms of methodology, this theoretical study aims to analyze and understand the key issues associated with the brand in the context of special interest tourism (SIT) companies, products and services. Special Interest Tourism (SIT), both as a product or sector in its own right and as a distinct entity within the overall tourism spectrum, has been largely ignored as an important area of study within the tourism field in general. For this to be the lifting elements and sub products, with a view to analysis and understanding of key issues related to the brand management (case study) in a qualitative approach (i.e. focus group). This theoretical paper presents and systematizes some of these contributions, with application in special interest tourism contexts.*

**Keywords:** *brand management, identity, marketing, niche tourism*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Until the end of the 1980s, discussion of branding was not considered fundamental in the literature of marketing. It was only from last decades onwards that it really became a central concept (Aaker, 1991; Low & Fullerton, 1994; Rubinstein, 1996; De Lencastre & Côte-Real, 2010). In a global economy with changing market dynamics and growing competition, the role of brands has never been as important as now. The brand management is unquestionably one of the aspects on which many researchers have dedicated attention in recent years, as this was something that in addition to facilitate recognition, improving the loyalty and increasing notoriety. It is of course an asset for the company, which will allow goods that identify and differentiate them from the competition. In this context, and according to Brothertow and Himmetoglu (1997), Special Interest Tourism (SIT), both as a product or sector in its own right and as a distinct entity within the overall tourism spectrum, has been largely ignored as an important area of study within the tourism field in general.

### **II. BRAND MANAGEMENT**

According to De Lencastre & Côte-Real, 2010, Levitt used the term “marketing myopia” to explain the limited vision of marketing, when it fails to consider that a marketing product is not merely a technology, but a benefit. The benefit, not the technology, is the essential part of a product when it is put on the market. So, we can also consider “branding myopia” as a limited vision of branding, when it forgets that the brand, more than a distinguishing label, is what the label refers to, and how this relationship is interpreted by its publics. A brand “is a distinguishing name and/or symbol (such as logo, trademark, or package design) intended to identify the products or services of either one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate those products or services from those of competitors” (Ghodeswar, 2008, p.4). According to Weilbacher (1995), a brand provides the basis upon which consumers can identify and bond with a product or service or a group of products or services. Brands serve as a guiding map to purchasing behavior and, when managed correctly, often result in significant value for their holders (Brymer, 2004; Anholt, 2005). Assets of the company, it is not surprising that step by step and has gained the attention of marketers, also because beyond the financial value of brands there is no less important social value. Brands “are not just a sign. Brands are not just elements that position products and companies. For many years, brands have been regarded as links between products/companies and their customers” (Brito, 2010, p.49). According to Pires (2002), the brand is an identifier of a product that

distinguishes from others. Apart from being an aid in the purchase decision process, responsible who produces or sells the product (improving confidence). The main sources of the value of a brand is the reputation, the loyalty, the perceived quality and the legal ownership. According to Bennet (1995), brand is a company value, a name, a term, a sign, symbol or combination of these that serves to identify company assets but also to distinguish them from the other competition, creating value not only for consumers but also for the company. Sometimes consumers are more emotionally attached to a brand than the company. Nowadays, brand is a more than a plentiful supply of books, journals and articles about branding, but its incorporation into the conceptual structure of marketing has still not been consolidated (Stern, 2006; De Lencastre & Côte-Real, 2010). From the point of view of marketing, the notion of brand is more comprehensive because it is not limited to a set of signals that serve to distinguish products and services (Elliott & Percy, 2007; Brito, 2010).

Another aspect, equally important, concerns the development of new products, which ensures the survival and growth of the company. Sometimes they are required to replace products that have reached the final stage of its life cycle, however it is not easy to define what is a new product. It may be similar to existing products, but with different brand or a new package to existing products or to an existing product in a new market. Strong brands “enjoy customer loyalty, the potential to charge premium prices, and considerable brand power to support new product and service launches. Companies need to have thorough understanding of customer beliefs, behaviors, product or service attributes, and competitors” (Ghodeswar, 2008, p.4). The task of developing new products is the responsibility of marketing but must do so in collaboration with other functional areas of business. Helping the client in the process of purchase decision, the brand is inscribed within a logic of differentiation of the offer. The company has the ambition to better meet the expectations of a particular clientele and focuses to give him steadily and repeated the combination of tangible and intangible, functional and hedonistic, visible and invisible attributes (Kapferer, 2001). When the brand is the focus of study arises, naturally, need and interest to understand and distinguish some concepts which sometimes can be mistaken. Are mentioned, particularly, brand identity, as a concept of the issuer, which seeks to answer the question “*what the brand is*”, deriving from a physical aspect, but also the character and values of the brand. Have the image, by contrast, results from the receiver, more precisely how the brand is identified. Likewise, well known is a concept of the receiver is, however, associated with the storage of the brand name. Finally, the position is related to the “*as intended that the brand is known*” and is a concept of a strategic nature, defined by the company (in this case being connected to the brand positioning). It has identity (emitter), image and reputation (receiver) and positioning (strategy) as the three roles that structure political brand (Lindon, Lendrevie, Lévy, Dionysus & Rodrigues, 2004).

**2.1. The functions of a brand and its benefits**

A brand is not limited to creating value for the consumer, but also for the company, becoming an active, having a social value and financial value (table 1). Overall, much of the value of a company is of intangible assets. The brand is a special intangible aspect. In many companies is to the asset (or aspect) most important (Keller, 1998; Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Cunha, Duarte, O’Shaughnessy & Marcelino, 2004; Lindon et al., 2004; Clifton & Simmons, 2005; Kapferer, 2012). Building a brand driven culture is a lifelong commitment to a mindset and a way of life that takes time, planning and perseverance that produces intangible outputs which include greater customer satisfaction and loyalty (repetition), reduced price sensitivity, fewer customer defections, a greater share of customers’ wallets and more referrals (Knapp, 2000, Ghodeswar, 2008; Baumgarth & Schmidt, 2010). According to Aaker (1991), a brand thus signals to the client the source of the product, and protects both the customer and the producer from other competitors who would attempt to provide products that appear to be identical or similar. However, the brand is also important: for society (globally) because it contributes to better quality products, fosters innovation and provides information about the product, but also for distributors (is a relevant aspect to ensure loyal consumers).

**Table 1 - The benefits of a brand**

|                                       |   |  |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Creates value for the consumer</b> | brand is a contract                                       | gives confidence to the consumer, reduces the risk   |
|                                       | brand identifies  | are landmarks, help in the process of making purchasing decision   |
|                                       | brand differentiates the product and gives them direction | brand transmits its identity to people, brand values who consumes, reflects value  |
|                                       | other benefits  | brand helps assess the quality and call attention to the existence of new products   |
| <b>Creates value for the company</b>  | brand has a commercial value                              | brand is a competitive advantage, allows the possibility of selling more expensive, a force against distributors                         |
|                                       | brand has an institutional value                          | brand develops feelings of belonging among employees, a strong brand helps in recruiting and financial market performance                |
|                                       | other benefits  | brand helps in introducing new products, facilitates promotional communications, contributes to the loyalty and ensures legal protection |

Source: based on the authors (Aaker, 1991; Cunha et al., 2004; Lindon et al., 2004)

## 2.2. The brand identity

Since 1990s brand equity has been the subject of increased academic studies and progresses (e.g. Aaker, 1991, 1996; Kapferer, 2001, 2004; De Chernatony, 1999; Gladden & Funk, 2004; Madhavaram, Badrinarayanan & McDonald, 2005; Baumgarth & Schmidt, 2010; Coleman, de Chernatony & Christodoulides, 2011, Vásquez, 2011, Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2012). However, despite the various perspectives on brand identity, there is a consensus as to its importance and the need to be the company to define it. The analysis of the elements of the brand shows that despite the specific nature of each element, the brand's success is closely linked to its careful selection and harmonious integration and interaction. One should not forget that the positioning seems to be the expression of the combination of the elements of the brand in its market adaptation (Biel, 1997; Duarte, 2005).

According to Ghodeswar (2008, p.5) brand identity "is a unique set of brand associations implying a promise to customers and includes a core and extended identity". Core identity is the central, everlasting essence of the brand that remains constant as the brand moves to new markets and new products or services. Extended identity is woven around brand identity elements organized into adherent and meaningful groups that provide brand texture and completeness, and focuses on brand personality, relationship, and strong symbol association.

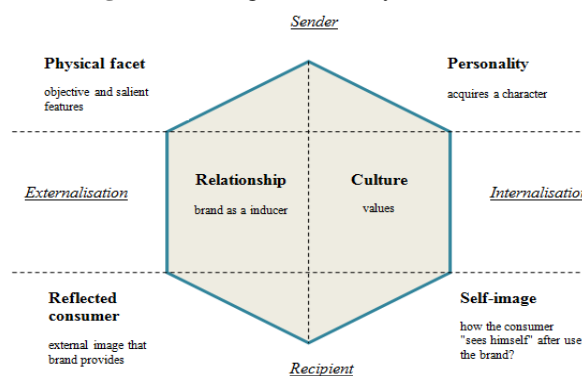
Brand identity is a key brand management aspect, looking into a few lines to answer the question "Who am I?", "What are my particular signs?" compared with an identity card. The concept of identity that may suggest that through the multiplicity of signals, messages, products, appears to come from a single sender (company) (Kapferer, 2001, 2004). Through its identity, brand specifies its meaning, its project.

Brand identity is based on a thorough understanding of the firm's customers, competitors, and business environment (macro, specific and micro environment). The brand identity needs to reflect the company strategy and the willingness to invest in the programs needed for the brand to live up to its promise to customers. To be effective, a brand identity needs to resonate with customers, differentiate the brand from competitors and represent what the organization can and will do over time (Ghodeswar, 2008, Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2012).

According De Chernatony (1999), there are several helpful models that enable managers better appreciate their corporate identity (e.g. van Riel 1995; Balmer and Stotvig 1997; Creedon, 1998, McDaniel, 1999). A particularly insightful brand-based view of identity was presented by Kapferer (2001). His Hexagonal Identity Prism Model "is a powerful tool to understand the essential difference between a brand and its competitors and is based on six central components: physique, personality, culture, relationship, reflection and self-image" (De Chernatony, 1999, p.165). In other words, Hexagonal Identity Prism model conceptualizes brand identity via six different but complementary facets. The brand identity is inherent to the size of messages issued by the brand, where the aim is to specify the direction, design and concept that it must itself (Kapferer, 2000). So the dimensions of brand identity, represented in Kapferer model, are developed from the set of elements. The ideogram is the diagnosis of the identity of a mark, as proposed by Kapferer, is composed of a physical element and the personality (emission).

At the reception, the ideogram consists of a reflection and the self-image, and relationship with the brand culture to ensure the connection between the elements of the emission and reception (Duarte, 2005).

Figure 1: Hexagonal Identity Prism model



Source: adapted from Kapferer (1997)

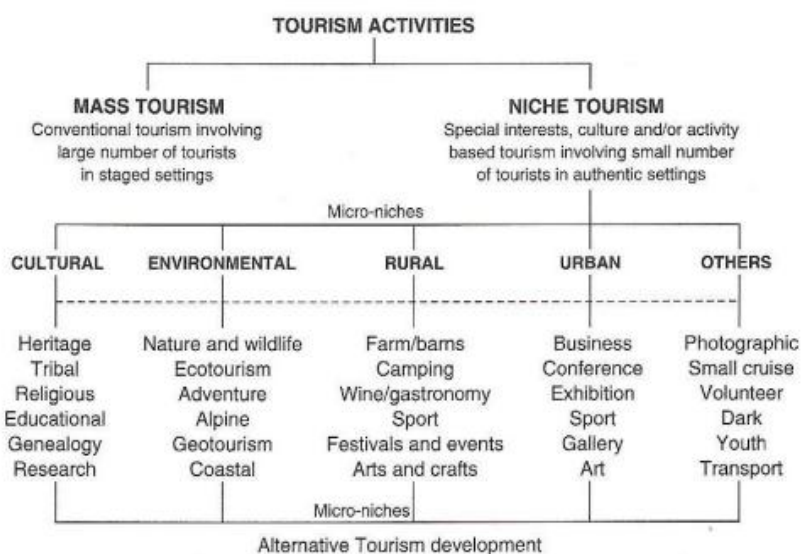
### III. SPECIAL INTEREST TOURISM

Tourism activities are amongst the most relevant drivers of economic development and growth in various economies (Sousa & Simões, 2010). Every year, competition increases amongst tourist destinations (Becken & Simmons, 2002). Such relevance is reflected in the proliferation of studies conducted within the over-arching theme 'tourism', under various perspectives and backgrounds. For example, previous research addressed tourism planning from a local development perspective, environmental impact, destination branding and consumer loyalty (e.g., Getz, 1986; Embacher & Buttle, 1989; Backman & Crompton, 1991). The tourism

marketing field faces increasing challenges triggered by the diversity of markets calling for new marketing approaches. Trends in global tourism demand suggest the emergence of sophisticated consumers looking for new, different and specific tourist experiences (Sousa, 2015; Sousa & Simões, 2010; 2012).

In this context, and according to Brothertow and Himmetoglu (1997), Special Interest Tourism (SIT), both as a product or sector in its own right and as a distinct entity within the overall tourism spectrum, has been largely ignored as an important area of study within the tourism field in general. Several authors, therefore, point towards people’s desire for quality of life and escape from the “pluralisation of lifeworlds”, and “rationalization of contemporary urban life” as major push factors and motivators for travel (Trauer, 2006). According to Trauer (2006), Brotherton and Himmetoglu in their attempt to conceptualize and define SIT comparing existing typologies and frameworks, including those by de Grazia (1964), Kelly (1983) and Iso-Ahola (1983) in the leisure context, and Plog (1974—psychocentrics/allocentrics), Cohen (1972—explorer/drifter), Gray (1979—sunlust/wanderlust) and Dann (1977—push and pull factors) in the tourism context. They concluded that neither appeared applicable to the concept of SIT, but pointed out that these were influential in their development of a theoretical framework (Trauer, 2006). They put forward the notion that the questions a tourist would ask in the decision-making process are: a) General Interest Tourism GIT—where would I like to go? b) Mixed Interest Tourism MIT—where do I want to go and what activities can I pursue there? c) SIT—what interest/activity do I want to pursue, and where can I do it? According to Robinson and Novelli (2005) there are two different types of tourism activities: niche tourism and mass tourism. Niche tourism has a variety of subdivisions or subtypes, Robinson and Novelli (2005) refer to as macro-niches and micro-niches (Figure 1). A macro-niche the authors define as the larger niche market segments (e.g., rural tourism, sports tourism, environmental tourism) and micro-niches are the larger segments broken down even further and are normally the activities practiced by those in that particular group (e.g., cycling tourism, geo-tourism, gastronomy tourism).

Figure 1: Niche Tourism Components



Source: Robinson & Novelli (2005)

According to Francioni (2012), the term niche tourism refers to designing a specified destination to meet the motivations of a certain group or market segment. Niche tourism focuses on the individual tourist’s interests and travel desires making it, the destination, more unique and marketable (Robinson & Novelli, 2005). Some examples of niche or special interest (these two words can be used interchangeably) tourism markets include: photographic tourism, geotourism, youth tourism, dark tourism, genealogy tourism, transportation tourism, and gastronomic tourism (Robinson & Novelli, 2005; Trauer, 2006). Also, although SIT segments are separated and discussed along specific descriptors, it is important to note that within the realm of tourism overall and SIT in particular, the segments at all levels are not necessarily mutually exclusive and often overlap (Hall, 1992, Trauer, 2006). An example would be adventure tourism at SIT level, which includes adventurous sports activities such as sailing, mountain biking, and hang gliding (sport being denoted by “competition” compared to “risk” in adventure (Kruger, 1995)), and environmental tourism such as volunteer research expeditions with Earth watch (which are not free but have to be paid for by the participants) to a remote location (Trauer, 2006).

#### **IV. CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND NEXT STEPS**

In an increasingly global world, which tends to predominate competitiveness and change, the difference is the ability to create discontinuities in the external environment. In this study, we presented a theoretical contribution (i.e. brand management in special interest tourism contexts). The brand is a company value, a name, a term, a sign, symbol or combination of these that serves to identify company assets but also to distinguish them from the other competition, creating value not only for consumers but also for the company. Our purpose was based on the idea that its practice analysis will hardly be dissociated from the study of brand management, becoming important to develop future research. This paper presents some scientific limitations. Besides not being possible to generalize these results, this paper includes an earlier version of marketing elements, which have already been changed by the company. Currently we consider that perhaps the marketing strategy is different, so this could be an important vector for developing other findings in future steps, constituting a limitation but also a development point. Hereafter, it will be relevant to measure the extent to which various strategies in this area influence the reader and consumer satisfaction and in which direction and to analyze which determinants that, in different contexts facilities, may affect the brand management and their specificities in niche tourism products. Future research would be relevant to identify other examples of brand management with applicability to specific products and services in tourism (e.g. Caminos de Santiago, Pilgrimage, Ecotourism, Health Tourism and Wellness). It will be our intention to study the impact of satisfaction on a possible brand loyalty in the special interest tourism contexts.

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