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# The importance of the Brand to promote tourist destinations: the cases of Porto (Portugal) and La Paz (Bolivia)

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**Abstract.** Destinations brands have a huge impact in tourism sector, since it allows to identify the most important valuable items for these destinations in terms of cultural, historical and touristic perspectives. This article pretends to recognise the impact of city brands on the tourism sector in Porto (Portugal) and La Paz (Bolivia), through a research conducted using secondary data sources namely the bibliographic review of scientific articles, websites containing information of Porto and La Paz cities brands, its elaboration, meaning and value. Through this analysis, it was possible to conclude that both brands highlight in a simplified and abstract way the symbolic richness of the cities, one mostly through the architecture and cultural heritage of the city and the other one more directed at the natural wealth and also the cultural heritage.

**Keywords:** City Brand, tourist destinations, visual identity, culture, creativity, communication, iconography.

## 1 Introduction

In November 2020, the city of La Paz and Porto brands received the first and third place respectively at the Ibero-American Design Biennial in Madrid, Spain, in the city image category, promoted by the Union of Ibero-American Capitals (Ibero-American Design Biennial, 2020). Both cities, with very different identities, seek from visual communication and design, to generate a sense of identity and belonging with their brands. Supported in a transdisciplinary way with areas such as communication, marketing and tourism; they seek to respond to the need to gather their citizens under an identity and attract the attention of foreigners and visitors.

Comparing the use of conceptual and graphic resources for the same purpose with totally different results helps us to understand the richness and complexity of the language of image and visual communication and its impact on the promotion of tourism.

City Brand is an important for destination development and promotion around the world. It has several positive impacts on the city in terms of economic, social, cultural development, as well as an attraction for the visitors (Alperytė & Išoraitė, 2019). The city brands elaborated not only as a marketing tool, but also shows an identity, the unique and authentic attributes that distinguish it from the rest of the world. Consequently, the visual quality, the meaning behind it and its interpretation can affect the external perception of it. There are nowadays several rankings that represent a city's brand place, and the higher and better the ranking, the more successful the city is in terms of attracting visitors and investors.

In this context, this research work was developed in order to understand the impact of the city brands on the tourism sector in both cities under study and make comparative analysis in terms of the impact of the brand on tourism development.

Following this introduction, we review the literature on some concepts related to the city brands, the creation of city brands, the impacts of city brand for tourism sector and its promotion. Further we present the methodology used and the results and discussion section. Finally, the main conclusions of the study are presented, as well as its limitations and directions that research in this field may take in the future.

## 2 Literature Review

A brand can be understood as a graphic sign of identity and belonging with the clear objective of becoming a functional information instrument. Brands in general involve a double process, involving on the one hand a creative, conceptual and graphic development and on the other hand a communicational development, promoting universal accessibility (Garcia, 2005).

In the tourism context, "*Branding has become a key tool for tourism destinations to make explicit the complexity of experiences to be expected by tourists visiting a destination.*" (Almeyda-Ibañes & George, 2020:9). Nevertheless, this is a subject that is still unexplored in the literature (Rather, Najar & Jaziri, 2020), despite having already been addressed in the 90<sup>th</sup> of the last century by researchers such as Ritchie & Ritchie and Gnoth, as Almeyda-Ibañes and George (2020) identify. It is also important to refer that destination branding was the central theme of 1998's Travel & Tourism Research Association Annual Conference (Almeyda-Ibañes & George, 2020).

Placebranding consists of a structure that not only has an impact on tourism, but also has economic, social, political and historical repercussions (Gnoth, 2002). Thus, the parameters that make a territorial brand to be considered good are: it must respond to characteristics that make it institutional; it must be emblematic, it must be acceptable to all the people who live in the place, they must feel identified with the visual signs that form the brand; it must be long-lasting, it must last a long time; it must be catchy

(it serves as a signature, and appears accompanied by other brands); high graphic quality, it must be well done; it must be conventional, there is a general agreement that it reflects what the city is (Chaves, 2020).

In the case of city brands, they should serve as a reference and orientation for users and contribute to the identification and recognition of the city. Any brand of a region, city or country should be established based on several dimensions, such as the values and attributes of the place and the cultural heritage (FutureBrand, 2022). Creating a brand for a city is a process that includes research, strategic thinking, design and project management skills (Wheeler, 2013), and requires an orderly, systematised methodology so that the application of visual communication is coherent, functional and clear.

Every city brand is born from the need to communicate an identity, from the unique and exclusive attributes that separate and distinguish it from the rest of the world and from the external perception that it has in relation to other cities. In the tourism sense, the city brand fulfils the function of being a "guarantee" for visitors (Valenzuela, 2015). It should play the role of a seal of quality that encompasses what it is and what is expected of it.

Globalisation and internationalisation have forced cities to compete and oblige them to enhance and develop their competitive advantages (Saez, Mediano & Eizagarate, 2011). In this way, cities have been transformed into products with tangible and intangible attributes, with which they seek to convince the user of a different promise and a higher level of satisfaction compared to the competition, as can be seen in rankings such as the Bloom Consulting ranking (<https://www.bloom-consulting.com>).

The language of image and graphic design plays a decisive role in differentiating one city from another. A good professional brand, whether logo, isotype, imago type, or other, is the first form of identification. Any graphic variation always contemplates what in design is called graphic space (Costa, 1987), whose elements such as colour, typography and/or image and composition, are chosen with precision and interact with hierarchies and clear intention to visually communicate a concept and attributes in a creative, original and innovative way, in order to attract attention and convince the user of the differentiation and value offered. The graphic brand is composed of primary and secondary identification elements, which will enrich the significant resources to satisfy the desired identification needs (Chaves & Bellucia, 2003). In the case of a city brand, these identification elements can be extremely rich and diverse, and the work of the visual communicator will then be to edit all the visual information to obtain the best possible result, achieving the identification of the city, the graphic representation of the city, the understanding of what it wishes to convey and the visual attraction of the viewer.

### **3 Methodology**

This study was conducted using secondary data sources through the bibliographic review of scientific articles, websites containing information of Porto and La Paz cities brands, its elaboration, meaning and value. Due to the lack of published articles on this topic, newspaper articles were also considered. These secondary sources of information

are based on the data analysis of the visual identity that the brand promoted improved activity of tourists and locals in the face of the two cities under study – La Paz and Porto. The Bloom Consulting website was consulted to understand the evolution performance of territorial brands in the case of Portugal with a special focus on Porto city at the national and regional levels.

For the realization of this document, the design processes of the city of La Paz brand and the city of Porto were registered, the comparison of both allows to establish the points in common and differences that both graphic identities have. The conceptualization will be the common point between the visual language and the tourist promotion of both cities.

## 4 Importance of brands for cities - comparative analysis of the cities of Porto and La Paz

### 4.1 Porto city

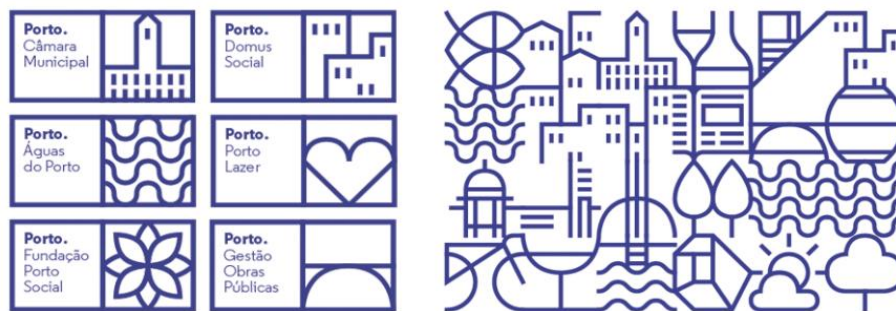
On September 9, 2014, the Porto City Council presented the first graphic brand of Porto city, designated by "Porto.". This unfolds in the corporate identity of the municipality and its municipal companies. It is designed by the White Studio agency aiming to create a set of icons representing different city symbols (White Studio, 2014). Each item has an important value for the city in terms of cultural, historical and touristic perspectives. Its creator, the designer Eduardo Aires, explains the foundation of the brand's graphics in the following way: *"The basis of our work is very focused on what is the visual expression of the city itself, which are the people, obviously, the stories, the iconographic places, such as the bridges, such as the Crystal Palace, the Clérigos Tower, the Lello Bookstore, the Town Hall itself, the river... But it is also very much what the city itself has and, if we keep an eye on these details, we realize that the tile, although something very recurrent, spends this idea. (...) The city has two moments: One is Porto Ponto that defines the character. Porto has character, Porto is defined as a space of affirmation. Porto is Porto dot, that is, it is not discussed. Everyone knows that Porto is Porto, it has character. Icons allow you to interpret aspects of another nature, places. Icons represent bridges, gastronomy, music, represent many things, leisure."* (JPN, 2015).



**Fig. 1.** Port Brand. Source: White Studio.

Like any other brand, it has a Guide to use institutional logos, whose essential points refer to their use, positioning, size, among other elements. To highlight the various variants of the logo related to the various areas and municipal companies, as shown below

(Figures 1 and 2) Thus, when used in a poster, flyer, or other elements of dissemination of events, the institutional logos of the companies of the Municipality of Porto must obey the hierarchy of logos. This hierarchy places the "**Porto.**" logo above any company, in a degree of importance. It should also be noted that in an event supported or organized by a municipal entity only, its institutional logo should be placed. In an event supported or organized by more than one municipal entity, the "Porto" logo should be placed (Aires, 2017).



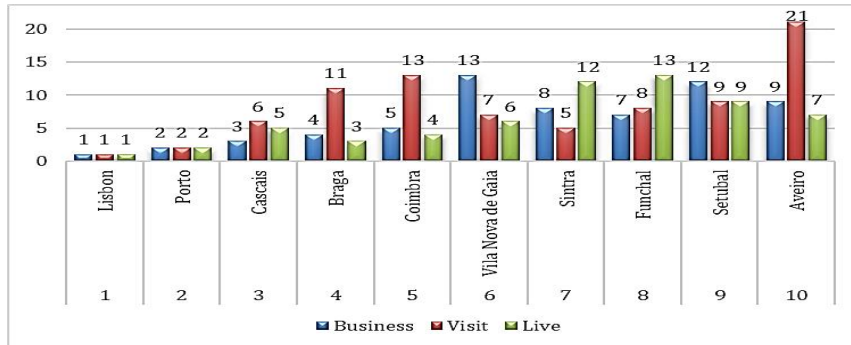
**Fig. 2.** Institutional municipal brands (left) and icon pattern (right) Source: Ibid.

Indeed, the deep character of the city of Porto, comes from its history, from the people who made this history and who support the memories created and that are being created and its architectural and urban structure. These elements remain through the ages and are also the foundation of the brand and the evolution and exponential growth of tourism in the city of Porto.

Currently, the brand is seen internationally as a successful case study in city brands, being presented worldwide. It has won several international awards, such as a Graphis (New York), a Pencil from the D&AD Awards (London) and two "gold" trophies at the European Design Awards (Istanbul), in the branding implementation and best of show category, in 2015, among others such as the one mentioned in 2020 at the Ibero-American Biennial of Diseño, in Madrid.

Regarding the national branding, Portugal City Brand Ranking concern with the importance of the city brand in the country. The Bloom Consulting developed since 2003 is exclusively dedicated to the area of Place Branding to understand the evolution performance of territorial brands. Since 2014, it started to work with Portugal City Brand Ranking, which aims to stress the value of city brand, and to demonstrate the 308 city brands performance in the country in the areas of tourism, business and talent. They are 3 variables used in this context, related to statistical data of a municipality, digital Demand - D2© that measures all the online searches about each municipality and the online performance of all platforms and social networks of the municipalities (Bloom Consulting, 2022).

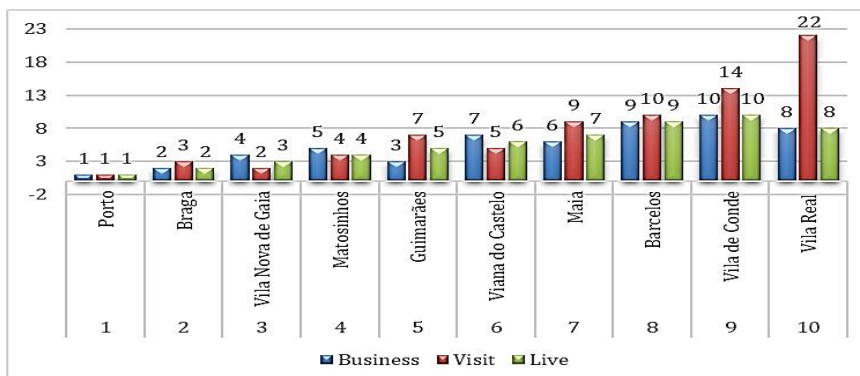
In the national positioning the 2022, the Figure 3 demonstrates that Porto received the 2nd place in terms of the variables such as business, visit and city to live. The figure presents only 10 cases among 308 published on the site of Portugal City Brand Ranking. The detailed information can be found on the site <https://www.bloom-consulting.com/pt/bloom-consulting-portugal-city-brand-ranking/posicoes/>.



**Fig 3.** National Positions 2022. Source: Bloom Consulting, 2022

Analysing the North Region cities (Fig. 4), it can be seen that Porto is in the 1st place among being selected as the best place in the North in terms of doing business, living and visiting. The city brand perception affects its attractiveness to visitors, better the perceptions higher the number of the visitors. Analysis tourism demand during last years, it can be observed a continuous growth of tourism in Portugal.

Between 2015 and 2019, the number of international arrivals (overnight visitors) to Portugal increased from 11723 million to 17174 million, with an average annual growth of 10%. In this period, the average length of stay in all Portuguese commercial accommodation establishments rose from 3.00 – 3.32 nights (UNWTO, 2020).



**Fig 4.** North region positions 2022. Source: Bloom Consulting, 2022.

#### 4.2 La Paz

La Paz is a city located at 3650 m of altitude, with an area of 2012 Km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 1 million inhabitants, it is the seat of government and the financial capital of the country. It has a peculiar topography, being immersed in a hollow in the Bolivian altiplano and surrounded by snow-capped mountains.

The graphic identity of the city of La Paz has been related to anniversaries (Fig. 5 a), awards (Fig. 5 b) and municipal governments (Fig. 5 c & d). The city brand La Paz city of the sky (Fig. 6) was developed to create a city identity independent from the

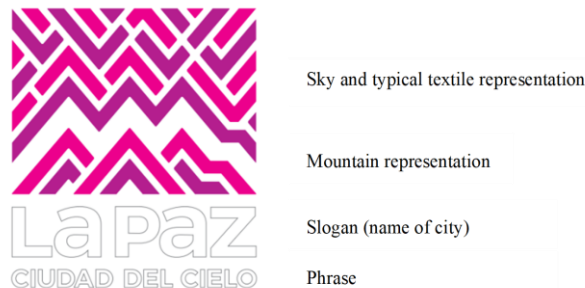
image of the municipal government and was realised in the framework of an institutional synergy between the public, academic and private spheres.

The brand La Paz City of the Sky was generated by the master's degree in Intelligent Communication at the Bolivian Catholic University and the Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona. According to the Master's study, one of the problems with the city's image was that it was little known or attractive, especially outside the country. It was perceived as a chaotic city with a living indigenous Andean culture, backward and rural, full of uncertainties and not associated with concrete attractions, and this perception was not very favourable for tourism, business or investment (Alaix, et al., 2018). This stereotypical image contrasts with the fact that in 2014, the city of La Paz competed among 1200 international cities, being among the 7 wonder cities of the world (<https://cities.new7wonders.com/>).



**Fig 5.** City brands used in La Paz, Bolivia.

a) Brand used by the Municipal Government to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the city's liberation; b) Commemorative brand used in honour of the city's designation as a wonder city; c) Brand used by the Municipal Government between 2010 and 2021; d) Brand used by the Municipal Government at the present time.



**Fig 6.** Characteristics of the Brand "Ciudad del Cielo". Source: Manual de Identidad Visual, 2018.

By establishing the slogan "La Paz city of the sky", the master's degree laid the foundations for a proposal with strategic elements to represent the city of La Paz. In this brand construction, conceptual work was developed, including a brand identity, storytelling and identity design. It was established that the city of La Paz showed opportunities due to its unique features and attractions, street life, gastronomy, culture and tourism.

In August 2018, the Municipal Secretariat of Cultures of the Autonomous Municipal Government of La Paz, as a stakeholder in this process, called advertising, marketing and design agencies, established in the country to participate in the municipal competition for the development of the graphic and creative line for the brand of the city of La Paz. The project was awarded to the company Gramma S.R.L. Design and Marketing.



In the design process, a bi-media message was established, where text and image had to translate the whole creative and conceptual process based on the context study developed by the master's degree in intelligent communication. The identity proposal had to contemplate a complex communication, due to the cultural diversity, the different languages spoken in the territory where the city is located, and clearly had to consider the inhabitants of La Paz, national audiences and finally international audiences. According to the guidelines of the Municipal Autonomous Government, in psychographic terms, the proposal had to focus on the so-called millennials, as the primary audience, men and women between 25 and 39 years old, liberal professionals, working in middle management, residents of La Paz, the country and the world in general (Alaix, et al., 2018). In this sense, the strategic orientation was that the city brand should make La Paz a well-known city, with a mental and physical image built from icons that define it, shaped by respect and the coexistence of cultures, oriented towards sustainable progress, with cultural diversity, open and democratic, connected to cultural trends, lifestyles, education, technology and opportunities for economic progress. Therefore, the communication proposal had to connect with the curiosity that the city awakens among internal and external tourism, the reaffirmation and pride of its inhabitants for who they are, for their achievements, for the image that their city projects for themselves, the rest of the country and the world.

The essential idea was to convey that La Paz is a city that surprises because it can satisfy the curiosity, the reaffirmation of the pride of its inhabitants and their motivation to continue building a unique and sustainable city for the future. Therefore, the message was "La Paz, city of the sky", with iconographies, words and concepts that help to build that "sky", that surprising city. Based on the interpretation of the diagnosis, the strategy and the communication approach, the Gramma Publicidad S.R.L. team in charge of developing the proposal established the basic premises to guide its creative proposal, communicating the essential idea and the main message (Carriquiriborde, 2022). "La Paz, city of the sky", the slogan that would accompany the brand, was chosen by the citizens of La Paz, among other alternatives, through a public vote, developed by the Municipal Government (Alaix, et al., 2018).

The development of the image in the brand "La Paz, city of the sky" refers to the most iconic and representative mountain of the city, the Illimani, which is represented with its three peaks and has a thicker stroke. Above the iconography of the mountain is a texture, which represents the permanent ups and downs that the city's inhabitants experience every day on the streets of La Paz, due to its distinctive topography. However, in this city loaded with ancestral culture, and thanks to a controlled polysemy, the texture is also a fabric, a cultural and traditional object very common in the city, the "aguayo". The overall composition is stable, solid, complex and ordered. As for the color, a lively, dynamic chromatic palette was used, which contrasts with the brick colour of the city. The typography is a sans serif, which plays with highs and lows, generating a block of text with a friendly, jovial, solid and legible perception. City of the sky serves as a base and counterpoint of balance by colour and position with the image above.

The city brand La Paz Ciudad del Cielo was officially presented on 29 October 2018, during the administration of Mayor Luis Revilla, the corresponding work was carried out to position it, it was used in social networks. The effect of the brand on tourism is

difficult to analyse, as there was basically only one year to see the impact. In 2019 there was no increase in the number of visitors to the city of La Paz, while due to COVID 19 the flow of visitors in 2020 and 2021 was severely affected.

However, this was not the only drawback, the appropriation of the brand was affected by the change of mayor in May 2021, who, due to political differences with the previous municipal government, used a new city brand.

## **5 Discussion and conclusion**

In both brands, from visual communication and graphic design, complex creative and conceptual processes can be observed that manage to successfully translate the established requirements. All brand design methodologies have differences, but they start from the same basic structure made up of research, conceptualisation, design and in some cases the management of the proposal.

In the case of the Porto brand, management is clearly perceived and in fact forms part of the direct contribution to the city's tourism. On the other hand, in the case of the La Paz brand, the management of the graphic proposal was non-existent, so that the brand is not currently being used as a visual representation of the city. This is because political and economic conditions take precedence over communication and tourism. The management after the design is fundamental for the design to work, especially when working in relation to brands such as the city brand, which contains all the city's institutions underneath it. Design by itself does not work if an implementation strategy, contact points, timing, costs, etc. are not defined. It is important to compare both cases, where the conceptualisation and graphic proposal are strong, provide an innovative look at the cities, enrich their identity because they respond to good research. But only one case is applied in the city and the other remains archived as a great proposal that has not yet been fully implemented.

In relation to the handling of graphic elements, comparing both brands it is interesting to highlight the following characteristics: both brands use sans serif typography, which is robust, stable, striking, solid and contemporary; both brands develop thick stroke images with a level of simplicity and strikingness that allow the recognition of structures, objects or iconic spaces of the cities; they share a complex composition of elements that result in powerful brands.

For this reason, despite the obvious differences between the two cities, design with its multiple tools is used in a similar way, highlighting the professional and academic use where the same resources supported by knowledge and creativity achieve very different and attractive graphic results.

Both brands highlight in a simplified and abstract way the symbolic richness of the cities, one mostly through the architecture and cultural heritage of the city and the other one more directed to the natural wealth and also to the cultural heritage. It is interesting to note that both brands are based on the landscape of the cities in a subtle and concrete way, but do not neglect the manual production of their inhabitants (tiles and textiles).

It is stated that the Porto brand makes creative use of the secondary identifying signs, through the use of different figures that make up infinite patterns. The chromatic management is simple and limited to a single colour - white and blue, characteristic of the tiles on the façades of the city's houses - which makes it, together with the typography, the primary identifying symbols. On the other hand, the La Paz brand relies more on the primary identifying signs, typography and symbols and plays with colour as a secondary element, which makes it a dynamic brand. In both cases, the need to give dynamism to the brands is highlighted, allowing the play of colours or shapes, which helps them to have life, as it is a city, full of movement and life, it is not static<sup>1</sup>.

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