The Nature of Local Place Branding Strategies:
The Cases of Almaty (KZ), Belo Horizonte (BR) and Wroclaw (PL)

Andrzej Sztando

Wroclaw University of Economics and Business, Poland

e-mail: andrzej.sztando@ue.wroc.pl

ORCID: 0000-0002-6204-9884

João Paulo Moreira Silva

Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais – PUC Minas, Brazil

e-mail: joao.msilva@live.com

ORCID: 0000-0002-9470-2905

Aizhan Kazybayeva

Almaty Management University, Kazakhstan

e-mail: ai.kazybayeva@almau.edu.kz

ORCID: 0000-0001-5391-5034

Abstract

Aim: The aim of the research was to identify and evaluate the features of place marketing strategies of Almaty (Kazakhstan), Belo Horizonte (Brazil) and Wroclaw (Poland), as methods of stimulating sustainable economic development.

Methodology: The research employed a comparative case study methodology.

Results: The research showed that although all the place marketing strategies studied are aimed at stimulating local economic processes, they lack features that ensure the sustainability of these processes.

Implications and recommendations: The results indicate limitations and tensions in the area of place branding strategies in the scope of their impact on sustainable economic development thus motivate representative research and the search for more sustainable solutions.

Originality/value: The literature query did not reveal any previous examples of such research, and the methodology was partly original. The article provides new information on the place marketing strategies used in different countries and evaluate them in relation to the paradigm of sustainable development.

Keywords: place marketing strategy, sustainable economic development, Almaty, Belo Horizonte, Wroclaw

1. Introduction

The current socioeconomic and environmental changes have compelled various social actors to devise novel strategies and practices to navigate the turbulent context. Among the strategies to develop planning around an inclusive socioeconomic development that sustainably engages with the environment, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) proposed by the United Nations in 2015 have emerged as a prominent example. A number of the various proposed goals stand out, including the focus on fostering entrepreneurship and innovation, and the prominent role of cities in local economic development (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor – GEM, 2023; Klopp & Petretta, 2017; United Nations, 2015).

At the same time, cities are being perceived as the locus of the search for development, with consequences that extend beyond their physical boundaries (Klopp & Petretta, 2017). This includes the development of environments that foster entrepreneurial activities, which generate economic, social, and environmental impact (Wurth et al., 2022). Such activities include tourism (Sharpley & Telfer, 2015), a relevant economic activity that stimulates the local economy, improves the quality of life of residents (Krishnan, 2016), and can preserve and develop the local natural infrastructure (Ogonowska & Torre, 2016).

In the context of tourism, one of the most prevalent strategies employed by localities to enhance their distinctive attributes and attract investors, businesses, and visitors is Place Branding [PB]. This strategy is defined as "a compendium of discourses and practices aimed at reconstituting nationhood through marketing and branding paradigms" (Kaneva, 2011, p. 188). Cities, the area selected for this study, utilise PB to achieve tourism-related objectives, including those associated with contemporary tourism, such as personalised urban tourism experiences (Duignan & Pappalepore, 2023), mundane (Edensor, 2007), and sustainable in character (Ogonowska & Torre, 2016). By promoting sustainable development through tourism and entrepreneurship, a location can position itself as a destination that is both environmentally responsible and economically vibrant.

In contrast, PB has the potential to generate images and representations that are largely disconnected from local contexts (Kaneva, 2011) or that operate independently of traditional nation-states (Tammpuu & Masso, 2018). Consequently, PB strategies may be conceptualised as occupying a spectrum between objective characteristics, which exhibit a clear technical-economic bias, and subjective ones, where cultural considerations play a more pronounced role. Strategies that occupy a position between the two extremes represent the paradox of PB, arising from the difficulty in creating a message that faithfully represents the locality. Furthermore, this paradox makes it challenging to advance the nascent body of literature on this topic (Kaneva, 2011).

The objective of this study was to identify and assess the nature of PB strategies in three distinct cities located in different parts of the world: Almaty (KZ), Belo Horizonte (BR), and Wroclaw (PL). The specific aims of the research were twofold: firstly, to analyse how the three cities articulate concepts such as

sustainable development and entrepreneurship in their place branding strategies; secondly, to examine the relation between the strategies and the categories proposed by Kaneva (2011) for discussions on place branding. To this end, a comparative case study was conducted, using secondary data and documentary research.

The operationalised strategies of cities demonstrate a natural tension inherent to the practice of PB. These strategies exhibit a pronounced technical-economic nature, with an evident distancing from aspects of sustainable development, such as community action and direct entrepreneurial actions, as well as the preservation of the natural infrastructure. Two of the cities, Almaty and Belo Horizonte, utilise the local culture as a primary element in their branding strategy towards stakeholders. However, their objectives are not solely based on cultural considerations. Instead, they pursue ephemeral associations and, ideally – numerous and significant ones – with the aim of enhancing their regional influence. Another city under consideration, Wroclaw, employs a distinct approach, prioritising the political aspects of PB, while excluding the technical-economic considerations from its strategy. This approach may result in a discrepancy between the development of the locality and its environmental resources.

This study demonstrates a disconnection between PB strategies at local level and the sustainable development goals. The paradox of PB was observed not only regarding economic and cultural aspects, but also by taking a position distinct from sustainable and environmental considerations. The practical implications were also addressed.

2.   Literature Review Creating Theoretical Framework

2.1. Sustainable Development Goals and Local Development

In 2015, the United Nations [UN] launched the Sustainable Development Goals [SDG] (United Nations, 2015). Among the 17 goals and 169 targets, the SDGs are, in their purest form, "universal goals that set targets for everyone, not just poor countries, and are relevant to both the US and Liberia" (Fukuda--Parr, 2016, p. 2). Cities, in turn, lacked a specific objective in the goals previously set by the UN (World Health Organization, 2018). From the perspective of the SDGs, cities should become inclusive, resilient, and sustainable through smart urban planning that, among other alternatives, promotes local entrepreneurship and is concerned with the use of natural resources and waste management (United Nations, 2015).

For the purposes of this study, two goals have marked relevance nos. 8 and 11.

Table 1. Goals 8 and 11 in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Goal	Description
8 – Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.	Economic growth should be a positive force for the whole planet. This is why we must make sure that financial progress creates decent and fulfilling jobs while not harming the environment. We must protect labor rights and once and for all put a stop to modern slavery and child labor. If we promote job creation with expanded access to banking and financial services, we can make sure that everybody gets the benefits of entrepreneurship and innovation.
11 – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.	The world's population is constantly increasing. To accommodate everyone, we need to build modern, sustainable cities. For all of us to survive and prosper, we need new, intelligent urban planning that creates safe, affordable, and resilient cities with green and culturally inspiring living conditions.

Source: United Nations (2015).

Both stated goals are consistent with the underlying principles of fostering and supporting innovative, technological, and entrepreneurial initiatives within the community. These principles are also reflected in the other 15 goals. The rationale behind them is based on the understanding that entrepreneurial

activity does not occur in isolation (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor – GEM, 2023) and is a factor of social development and a wealth generator capable of promoting the achievement of the 17 SDGs, with particular attention to small businesses, which are engines of local economic development, including entrepreneurship in its various facets, of an innovative or non-innovative nature (Gimenez, 2022).

2.2. Entrepreneurship and Economic Development

The literature on entrepreneurship has consistently identified locality as a central focus of entrepreneurial activity, with classical economists first establishing this perspective. However, the advent of the knowledge economy (Audretsch et al., 2019) has led to a renewed emphasis on the role of regions in entrepreneurial activity, with regions now considered a crucial element in the development of economic and innovative capabilities for countries. During the 2010s, nations began to pursue their own development and foster local entrepreneurial activity (Wurth et al., 2022). However, such initiatives were not without errors, such as the mere copying of economic activities that had no connection with the locality. Consequently, the importance of cultural and contextual aspects for entrepreneurship became evident. For instance, developing economies exhibit institutional void (Cao & Shi, 2021) that presents numerous challenges to local entrepreneurs. This is precisely where the relevance of the SDGs and the concern with the recognition and development of local enterprises becomes evident. The promotion of local entrepreneurship provides wealth generation within the community itself (United Nations, 2022), thereby reinforcing a 'virtuous circle' of employment and income.

In terms of locality, it can be observed that cities play a significant role in this context. Over time, they have evolved from being primarily associated with heightened levels of consumption and the generation of waste into becoming key drivers of sustainable development (Klopp & Petretta, 2017). Today, "cities are where critical battles for sustainable human development are to be waged, battles with impacts far beyond cities themselves" (Klopp & Petretta, 2017, p. 92). This is related to the growing realisation that places close to individuals, such as cities, are where growth, development, and change occur (Rodríguez-Pose & Wilkie, 2017). The predominant economic activity in a locality may shape the future economic development planning of that location by understanding the factors present there (Rodríguez-Pose & Wilkie, 2017). Among the potential economic activities, tourism is one that merits consideration (Sharpley & Telfer, 2015).

2.3. Tourism and Entrepreneurship

The contemporary relation between entrepreneurship and tourism can be broadly classified into two main categories: (i) the emergence of new ventures within the tourism industry, which generate income and may facilitate economic development in regions, and (ii) the innovations that emerge from various economic actors within the tourism chain, including those technological innovations that have become a topic of debate in the context of the competitiveness of current tourist locations (Cavalheiro et al., 2020; Njoroge et al., 2020; Sharpley & Telfer, 2015). Finally, as Sharpley (2015, p. 4) pointed out, "tourism is not only a social phenomenon; it is also big business."

Tourism entrepreneurship has the potential to stimulate economic growth in a number of ways. Firstly, it can create new businesses and jobs, thereby increasing the number of people in work. Secondly, it can attract investment, which in turn can generate income and tax revenue. Entrepreneurs in the tourism sector can develop new products and services, such as ecotourism, adventure tourism, and cultural tourism. These can attract more visitors to a region and increase spending in local businesses. Furthermore, they can lead to the development of infrastructure and amenities, such as hotels, restaurants, transportation, and entertainment facilities. This can stimulate the local economy and improve the quality of life for residents (Krishnan, 2016), through competition among destinations, for example (Cavalheiro et al., 2020). Moreover, tourism entrepreneurship can facilitate sustainable

development by creating opportunities for local communities to participate in the tourism industry. Access to natural resources, often considered a key factor in the success of tourism activities and the generation of economic benefits for local communities (Sharpley & Telfer, 2015), requires the promotion of activities that foster the preservation and maintenance of this natural infrastructure (Ogonowska & Torre, 2016). Overall, tourism entrepreneurship can be a powerful tool for economic development. However, it is essential to balance economic growth with sustainable development and community involvement. By doing so, tourism can be a positive force for economic and social progress in a region. Sustainable entrepreneurship, for instance, allows the creation of enterprises that are economically viable, while also contributing to environmental and social protection. This is, however, its most significant advantage over other forms of entrepreneurship (Gast et al., 2017; Muñoz & Cohen, 2018), which connects it to the SDGs.

2.4. Place Branding

Place Branding [PB] is a marketing approach applied by cities, regions, and countries to promote their distinctive characteristics and attract visitors, investors, and businesses. As defined by Kaneva (2011, p. 118), PB is "a compendium of discourses and practices aimed at reconstituting nationhood through marketing and branding paradigms". Nevertheless, such discourses and practices can be employed to create images and symbolism that do not align with the local reality (Kaneva, 2011), or that are distinct from the traditional nation-state (Tammpuu & Masso, 2018).

PB can be understood as the soft power of a geographical location. It is expected to enhance the state's image and facilitate economic growth and the well-being of its residents. To attract investments, tourists, and/or gain political power, numerous countries with similar features must compete. In the context of globalisation, where borders are increasingly de-constructed, the imperative to integrate nations has led to the conclusion that branding is a necessity. Consequently, countries must adopt a strategic approach to managing, improving, and leveraging their brand equity (Van Ham, 2008). By managing the state's brand equity, government officials can achieve two primary objectives – on the one hand, the generation of overall economic or political advantage is achieved by attracting a greater number of customers, charging higher prices, and expanding the market, whereas PB facilitates the enhancement of citizens' sense of identity and self-concept, thereby fostering feelings of well-being and confidence (Van Ham, 2008).

In essence, PB epistemological narratives may be situated on a continuum, with discussions situated at either end representing two distinct approaches. At one end of the continuum, narratives are more objective, with a technical-economic bias, while at the other end, they are more subjective, with a greater cultural bias. Those situated between the two extremes represent what Kaneva (2011) considered the paradox of PB, recognising the difficulty in creating a message that faithfully represents the locality. Cities employ PB strategies to achieve development objectives through tourism. Some strategies interrelate with those typically observed in country-coordinated strategies, such as the use of iconic figures and symbols to leverage tourism at the local level. Additionally, symbolic aspects, such as those related to soft power, are also employed (Duignan & Pappalepore, 2023).

In this manner, sustainable development can serve as a potent instrument for the advancement of a location's distinctive natural and cultural endowments, while ensuring their preservation for future generations as entrepreneurship itself. In the context of PB, entrepreneurship can facilitate the generation of novel economic opportunities and the stimulation of innovation within local industries. The combination of these two concepts can result in the formulation of a highly effective strategy for local development and PB. By promoting sustainable development and entrepreneurship, a location can position itself as a destination that is both environmentally responsible and economically vibrant. Such an approach can attract visitors, investors, and businesses that are interested in supporting sustainable development and contributing to the local economy.

Table 2. The categories of Place Branding studies

Categories	Observation	Examples	Orientation
Technical--economic	Conditions for economic growth, efficiency, and capital accumulation	Marketing, management, and tourism subjects	Objective
Political	Impact of national images on nation-states' participation in a global system of international relations	International relations, public relations, and international communication	Objective/ Subjective
Cultural	Implications of nation branding for national and cultural identities	Media and cultural subjects	Subjective
Technical--economic	Conditions for economic growth, efficiency, and capital accumulation	Marketing, management, and tourism subjects	Objective

Source: elaborated by the authors based on Kaneva (2011).

3.   Methodology

This study is classified as a qualitative study. Qualitative studies are recommended for the creation of theories in fields of study still under development or in a state of diffuse development (Edmondson & Mcmanus, 2007), such as the literature on PB (Kaneva, 2011). They are especially suitable for uncertain contexts and emerging markets with low-income populations (Halme et al., 2022).

The methodological approach employed was a comparative case study. Its objective was to identify and analyse the phenomenon in its totality and in its diverse cultural manifestations. To this end, three cities were selected as case studies: Almaty (Kazakhstan), Belo Horizonte (Brazil), and Wroclaw (Poland). The three cities were selected based on three fundamental criteria: (i) significant economic influence at national level and the pursuit of international integration; (ii) development of activities that foster entrepreneurship and innovation, with particular focus on tourism activities; and (iii) selection based on convenience and data availability to the authors of the study.

Table 3. Almaty, Belo Horizonte and Wroclaw: an overview

Cities	Country	Area	Population (approx.)
Almaty	Kazakhstan	682 km²	2.100.000
Belo Horizonte	Brazil	331 km²	2.500.000
Wroclaw	Poland	293 km²	674.000

Source: elaborated by the authors.

The data collection process was guided by a set of tools that were designed to translate qualitative data, which included the use of documentary research (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). To this end, a selection of official documents was made for each city, which comprised various forms of published material, including news items, and economic development plans. This approach corresponds with that outlined by Tammpuu (2018) in his own study. Furthermore, secondary data, including descriptive statistics and papers published in recognized journals, were collected. For the analysis, the categories of PB narratives developed by Kaneva (2011) were taken into consideration and contextualised at city-level. Initially, the data were analysed by the researchers individually, in an exploratory manner. Subsequently, individual contributions were prepared in English, using content analysis, which allowed for the review of the co-authors in each of the analyses created. The data underwent an inductive analysis, resulting in the development of a data structure at the conclusion of the comparative analysis (Gioia et al., 2013). The objective was to approach the epistemological categories proposed by Kaneva (2011). The constructs applied to direct the data analysis were discussed throughout the theoretical framework, and are presented in the research map (Figure 1).
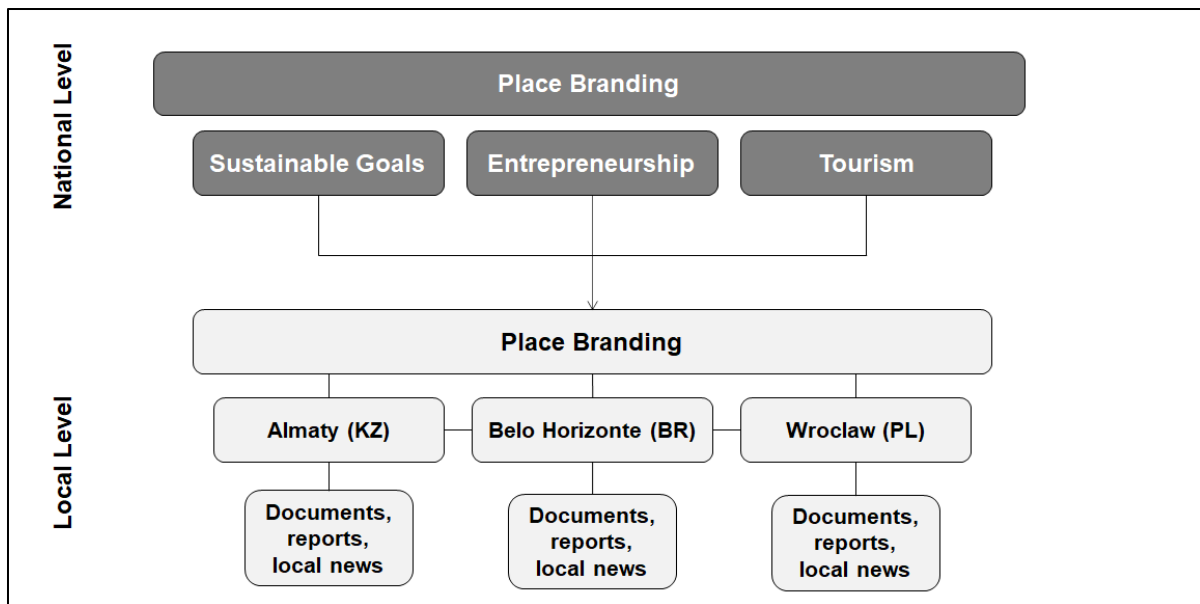
Fig. 1. Research map

Source: elaborated by the authors.

4. Results

4.1. Almaty, Kazakhstan

Almaty is the largest city in Kazakhstan in terms of both territory and population. It is situated in the southeastern part of the country, at the foot of the Ile Alatau Mountain Range (the Northern Tian Shan Mountain System). Almaty is an important cultural, economic, and educational centre of Kazakhstan, which served as the country's capital until 1997. The city's service sector is a significant contributor to the local economy, accounting for approximately 20% of GDP, over a quarter of budget revenues, and a third of Kazakhstan's trade operations. Almaty, the most developed city in Central Asia, is the primary destination for foreign tourists arriving in Kazakhstan. Almaty's distinctive geographical position, rich historical legacy, and multiculturalism present a significant opportunity for the city's tourism sector to flourish. The estimated potential audience for tourism in Almaty is 3.2 billion people, residing within a seven-hour air accessibility radius. However, Almaty is among the most polluted cities in the world due to the intensive consumption of coal for power and heating (Kerimray et al., 2020). The expansion of human and transport activities has intensified the difficulties encountered in the domains of infrastructure, ecology, economy, and security within the city. The city has been actively promoting itself as a tourist destination, with the introduction of a new tourism brand and marketing campaign in 2019.

To facilitate the growth of tourist traffic, Almaty requires a comprehensive development plan that will elevate it to the status of a world-class tourist destination. This will ensure the provision of a high-quality tourist experience and a high level of comfort in the urban environment, which can be achieved through the implementation of the "Almaty – megapolis at the foot of the mountains" concept. In light of the significance of Environmental, Social and Governance [ESG] principles, it is crucial to recognize the pivotal role of developing approaches to the system that prioritise the preservation of ecological attractiveness within the territory.

The Almaty Development Programme outlines the requisite steps for the advancement of the city of Almaty as a world-class tourist destination. To ensure the effective planning of limited areas within the city and to maximise the multiplied effect for the city, the city administration plans to develop tourist infrastructure by consolidating resorts and ski resorts into a single complex. This initiative is designed

to increase the tourist capacity of the mountain cluster, which will require significant private and public investment. To foster the growth of entertainment tourism, the establishment of a comprehensive calendar of events is proposed as a means of distributing the burden on the infrastructure in Almaty in a more even manner. As part of the tourism brand, digital maps and applications will be created to enhance the quality of service and facilitate navigation for tourists. The overarching objective of the plan is to establish a tourist cluster in Almaty with a high degree of added value by 2025. This will be achieved through the development of a range of tourist products in the following areas: mountain activities, MICE events, sports - including golf, art, and wellness.

In summary, the proposed plan appears to be comprehensive in its consideration of various aspects of tourism development, including ecological preservation, tourism experience, and destination promotion. The focus on digitalisation, management, and event planning also suggests a forward-looking approach to tourism development. Furthermore, the Almaty Development Programme would benefit from a more detailed discussion of the potential challenges and limitations of PB. This should include an examination of issues related to the sustainability of branding efforts and the potential for unintended consequences, especially in relation to the development of new structures, which are prerequisites for the reception of new tourists in relation to the strategic areas mentioned above.

4.2. Belo Horizonte, Brazil

Belo Horizonte is the capital of the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais, the fourth largest in terms of land area and the second largest in terms of population. Minas Gerais is located in the southeastern region of the country, adjacent to major urban centres such as São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and the Federal District. The city of Belo Horizonte was established with the objective of serving as the political and administrative hub of the state. During the 20th century, the city underwent considerable expansion, becoming the reference point r of a large metropolitan area encompassing 34 municipalities which exert direct influence on the city of Belo Horizonte and are, in turn, influenced by it. The municipality's current economic activity is primarily derived from the service sector. Recently, the city of Belo Horizonte was recognised by the national government as a Smart City and by UNESCO as a Creative City for its gastronomy. Despite such indications, and national and international recognition, the economy of Belo Horizonte experiences recurrent instability, with stagnation and reduction in the participation of its main economic activities. Additionally, there has been a growth in negative socioeconomic and environmental indicators, including a decrease in the share of local GDP in the state GDP, an increase in the local unemployment rate, and a worsening of air quality.

The municipal tourism agency has as its objective the promotion of the city as a tourist attraction with national and international visibility, recognising tourism as a "transversal activity", and the fact that the "competitiveness" of a tourism destination – national or international – is not an end in itself, but rather a means of achieving other objectives. As a preliminary step in the formulation of local tourism development strategies, local stakeholders have prepared a comprehensive sustainable tourism development plan in conjunction with a tourism marketing plan for the city. A fundamental premise underlying the current tourism strategies is the gradual resumption of tourism-related economic activities following the global pandemic. The primary objective of the city's principal marketing and promotional strategy is to "promote and commercialise the destination competitively." This approach has led to the consolidation of the city of Belo Horizonte as a "relevant, sustainable, and especially safe" destination, fostering entrepreneurship and appreciation of local culture. In light of the aspiration to transform Belo Horizonte into a prominent tourist destination, a pivotal cultural element emerges: gastronomy. Local authorities are aware that the gastronomy of the city of Belo Horizonte encapsulates, or represents, the gastronomy of the entire state of Minas Gerais.

It is important to note that the urban planning strategies for the Brazilian city of Belo Horizonte take into consideration the potential for attracting tourists to its surrounding municipalities, which are themselves renowned for their cultural and historical significance. In addition, these municipalities

possess the potential to leverage cultural and environmental experiences. Furthermore, among the strategies for communication and promotion of local tourism, it is observed that the attractions of sustainable aspects are presented with a lower level of prominence when compared to cultural aspects. It can be noted that the sustainability that reinforces tourism in the city of Belo Horizonte is linked to neighbouring municipalities or, for example, to specific aspects of entrepreneurial activities in the fashion industry.

4.3. Wroclaw, Poland

Wroclaw is the third largest city in Poland, in terms of population, and the capital city of the Lower Silesian Voivodeship, a region located in the south-western part of the country, that borders the Czech Republic and Germany. The history of Wroclaw dates back over 1,000 years. The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1989 enabled Poland to embark on a process of democratic transformation, economic and political integration with the West, and market liberalization. These developments have resulted in a rapid shift towards modernity.

The City of Wroclaw is currently home to a diverse range of industries, including the production of modern electronics, buses, home appliances, and a variety of software. It is widely recognised as one of the most innovative Polish cities. Additionally, the city plays host to a number of other industries, including those related to film, media, gaming, and other forms of audio-visual production, as well as professional sports of international importance. As a major transport hub, Wroclaw is a hosts for multitude of logistics and commercial centres. In 2022, the city welcomed approximately 6 million tourists. Moreover, Wroclaw is renowned for its vibrant nightlife. The city was also been nominated as a European Capital of Culture in 2016, a World Book Capital, and a UNESCO City of Literature.

Wroclaw is facing several significant challenges, including the effects of road traffic, and emissions of individual heating systems on air quality. Furthermore, traffic congestion and the lack of sufficient public transportation to match the city's growth are also issues that need to be addressed. Another concern is the high cost of real estate, which is a barrier to affordable housing. Finally, the city's rapid suburbanisation is a complex phenomenon that requires careful consideration.

The primary plan guiding the development of the city is its development strategy, entitled "Strategy Wroclaw 2030", and sets a single strategic objective, namely, "strengthening solidarity and creativity, improving the quality of life throughout the city and improving Wroclaw's position in global networks." The city's priorities are: mobility, the quality of the environment and urban space, entrepreneurship, a creative and innovative economy linked to science, healthy and active residents, an open city, and governance. Wrocław's values include being a beautiful, smart city, a wealthy place that unites and inspires.

Consequently, the "Wroclaw 2030 Strategy" does not include any priority directly related to tourism, nor does it provide for the development of a separate, subordinate programme for the development of tourism in Wroclaw. It has been postulated that the advancement of tourism will serve as a catalyst for the sustainable and globally integrated growth of the city's economy and social and environmental spheres related to the economy. Rather than constituting a distinct development objective, tourism is expected to facilitate the formation of supra-local relations within the city, particularly international ones, that are directly or indirectly linked to a sustainable economy. The long-term sustainability of this economic growth is expected to be contingent upon the continued support of other pillars. As an illustration of activities consistent with this approach to tourism, there are hundreds of MICE tourism projects involving thousands of participants from around the world, organised by the municipal government in collaboration with domestic and foreign companies and universities. These projects are typically oriented towards innovative, environmentally responsible industries and the financial sector. Another example is the implementation of cultural projects by municipal authorities, designed to engage both residents and tourists. These initiatives have the potential to attract artists to the local film industry, music, video games, and other creative fields.

5.   Discussion and Conclusions

To comprehend the political dimensions of branding a place and preserving its history, it is essential to acknowledge the difficulties inherent in such endeavours. In the realm of marketing, PB is regarded as a comprehensive process that encompasses not only the promotional actors but also other stakeholders, such as the media and word of mouth. For PB to be effective, the images and ideas associated with a place should be consistent and reinforce the same narratives. However, achieving coherence is difficult and often results in clichéd and generalised ideas. Figure 2 provides a visual representation of the themes and constructs that emerged during the research, as well as their relationship with PB at local level.

The challenges associated with the implementation of PB strategies at local level are particularly pronounced in the former areas of Soviet domination, where the political, economic, and social changes that have occurred since 1991 have led to the formation of new democratic states and the rebranding of nations and cities. This has resulted in the necessity to create a new image and legitimate a new social order, which is represented by the implantation of new infrastructure and special attention to the events tourism movement, as well as gaining influence in the region. Such a strategy underlines the importance of considering tensions and incoherence in PB efforts (Yusupova & Pfoser, 2023). To enhance the efficacy of the Almaty branding strategy, it is essential to adopt a more personalised approach and to highlight the city's distinctive character.

In relation to Belo Horizonte, as expected, the city identifies tourist activity as a generator of wealth and development (Sharpley & Telfer, 2015). This includes terms related to "smart destinations" (Cavalheiro et al., 2020) and sustainability (Klopp & Petretta, 2017; Ogonowska & Torre, 2016). It can be inferred from the city's tourism development strategies that there is a great appreciation for the cultural and subjective/affective aspects of local culture (Kaneva, 2011). This is evidenced by the promotion of the city's everyday culture (Edensor, 2007). Furthermore, the city of Belo Horizonte's surrounding areas, which are home to numerous culturally rich cities and diverse natural ecosystems, appear to be highly relevant to the city's own promotion efforts. The focus of this analysis is on two aspects: the promotion of the city of Belo Horizonte due to its convenient access to surrounding areas and the utilisation of these areas for more practical purposes. This fact places the sustainable aspect of local tourism in a more peripheral position, with minimal discussion in institutional plans and specific mention only in relation to a small group of companies that operate in the region and have a sustainable bias (Gast et al., 2017).

Furthermore, managerial marketing aspects are at the core of the strategies, such as the mentioned locality's competitiveness (Cavalheiro et al., 2020) in relation to other Brazilian tourist centres. It is important to highlight that, within the planning activities, the socio-cultural aspect remains present. It can be concluded that – for the city of Belo Horizonte – there is a conflict between the market/economic aspects, which are objective, and the cultural aspects, which are subjective. This represents the paradox of place branding at local level (Kaneva, 2011).

Although tourism represents a significant source of income for Wrocław, the city's local government does not prioritise the traditional development of tourism. Instead, its approach to tourism is utilitarian and horizontal, aiming to position it as a generator of supra-local relations that benefit the city's economy and sustainable development. This approach is in line with the theoretical frameworks of urban development based on networking, as elucidated by Batten (1995), Pflieger & Rozenblat (2010), and Pumain (2021). Additionally, it resonates with the conceptualisations of the supra-local perspective of local development strategic governance, as described by Sztando (2017). Consequently, the pro-tourist activities of the city government do not prioritise the creation of conditions conducive to the growth of jobs in tourism and the profits of tourist enterprises. Instead, they adopt a strategy of scenario, whereby tourists are encouraged to engage with the city's residents, institutions, history, culture, science, etc. . Such a strategy not only builds the city's brand as an entrepreneurial

and sustainable city, but above all stimulates its entrepreneurship and sustainability by transforming some tourists into stakeholders, as well as their places and organizations of origin into exchange partners. This is a local branding strategy that integrates this location through tourism with other, distant ones.
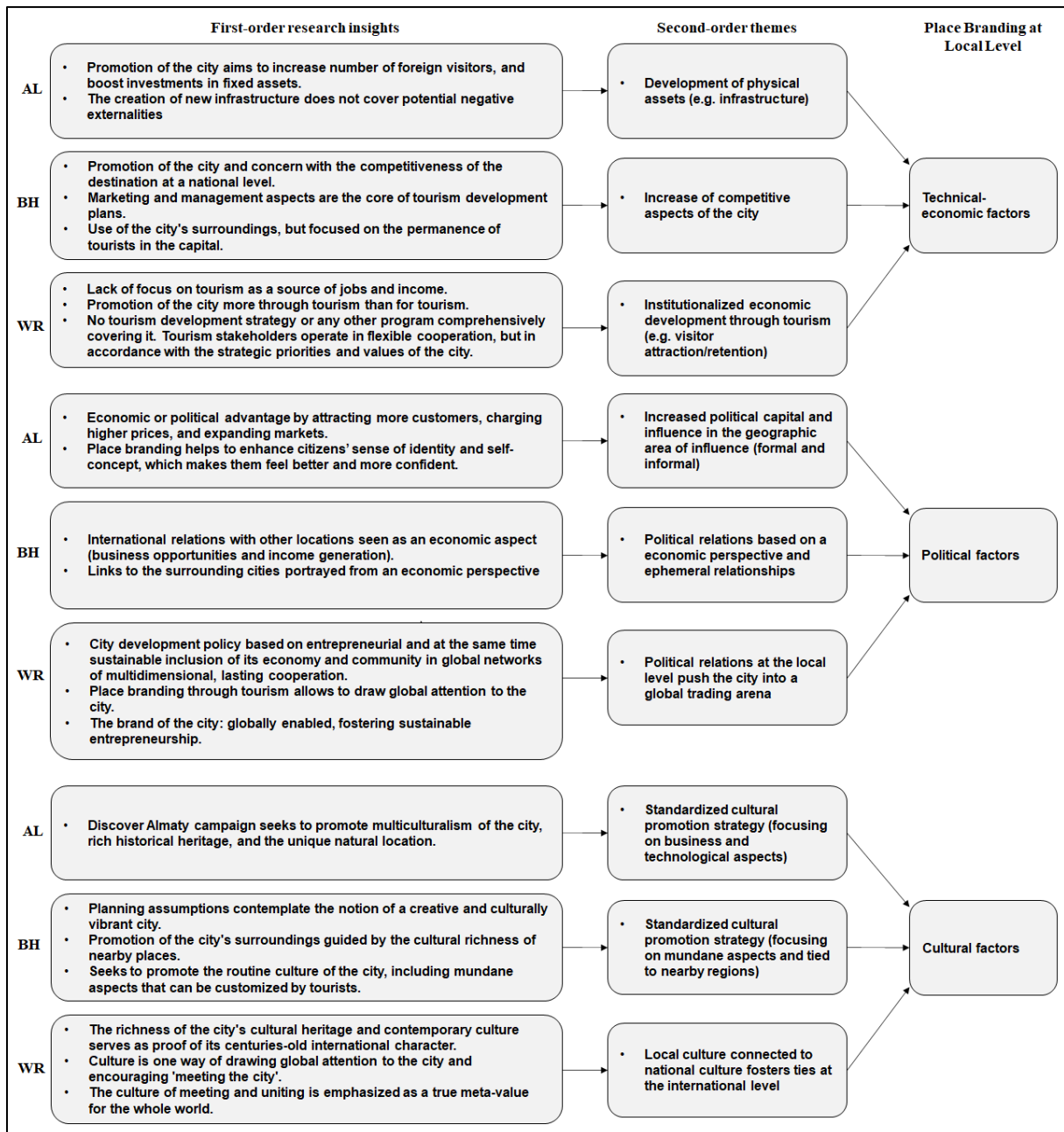

Fig. 2. Data structure framework: themes and constructs that emerged during the research

Source: elaborated by the authors.

The strategy of Wrocław, as a document, omits managerial marketing aspects. It is assumed that the aforementioned aspects will be operationalised flexibly and in a decentralised way by institutions and companies belonging to the city self-government as well as by partnering business and NGOs. This assumption places high expectations on the managers of these entities, which frequently reduces the effectiveness of their activities. Furthermore, the strategic approach of Wrocław's self-government to tourism only partially encompasses the city's agglomeration surroundings, despite the fact that the

city itself constitutes a strongly connected socio-economic system with it. The economy of the surrounding area benefits from this strategy, but at the same time the processes of suburbanisation of Wrocław contribute to the unsustainable development of this area – evidenced by the chaotic development, exerting pressure on agricultural areas and valuable ecosystems (Różycka-Czas et al., 2021).

The findings indicate a lack of alignment between the strategies implemented at local level and the SDGs associated with sustainable economic development. The cities have instituted direct community participation in the economic process and access to natural resources (which are recognized as natural infrastructure) in addition to their preservation (Ogonowska & Torre, 2016; Sharpley & Telfer, 2015). However, there is little emphasis on entrepreneurship of a sustainable nature and its socio-economic gains.

Similarly, the tensions that exist between the narratives of PB (Kaneva, 2011) become even more intricate at local level. In particular, with regard to Almaty and Belo Horizonte, connections with other regions and localities are observed from an economic bias prioritizing the generation of ephemeral and hopefully numerous transactions, despite being guided by the cultural aspects of the cities. In contrast, Wroclaw maintains a connection between national and local culture, considering network connections as a means of acquiring important resources for local entrepreneurship and the socioeconomic development of the region. However, there is a lack of clarity regarding economic development strategies through ordinary local entrepreneurship, as well as an absence of awareness of the consequences of spatial development that impact the environment itself.

Despite the global dissemination of the SDGs, local place branding strategies remain largely unconnected to these objectives. In practice, local sustainable development is often obscured by the technical and economic nature of the strategies and objectives employed. Consequently, it is presumed that the support of governments at regional and national levels is essential for localities to be able to implement the principal objectives of the general goals, including the construction of support networks and mutual growth among different cities. With regard to the cities under consideration, the relation between sustainable development and local entrepreneurship appears to be somewhat disconnected.

This study sought to identify and assess the nature of PB strategies communicated in three distinct cities located in different parts of the world – Almaty (KZ), Belo Horizonte (BR) and Wroclaw (PL). The documentary research enabled an evaluation of local PB strategies and their relations with entrepreneurship, tourism, and sustainable development. The analyses demonstrated the idiosyncrasies of each locality, as well as the tension between the objectives of the PB strategies. This encompassed the conflict between an economic bias and cultural perspectives. Additionally, the necessity for greater connectivity between place branding initiatives and sustainable development goals was highlighted, with the observation that environmental considerations, such as sustainable entrepreneurship, were notably absent from the analysed strategies.

It is expected that this study will contribute to new discussions about place branding strategies at local level. Its limitations concern data collection in a vertically structured format. Given the dynamics of the current business environment, it is possible that historical aspects associated with local place branding have not been fully addressed. Furthermore, the study was conducted in cities that are part of the network of influence of global metropolises, yet do not fully benefit from their features. Consequently, it is recommended that similar studies be carried out in heterogeneous localities, such as megalopolises. Does the complexity of the locality, such as the global metropolis, exacerbate the tension between the categories of place branding? This is considered to be a pertinent research question, which also opens the possibility of commencing quantitative studies.

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Charakter lokalnych strategii marketingu miejsc:
Studium przypadków Ałmatów (KZ), Belo Horizonte (BR) i Wrocławia (PL)

Streszczenie

Cel: Celem badań była identyfikacja i ocena cech strategii marketingu miejsc trzech miast z różnych części świata, tj.: Ałmaty (Kazachstan), Belo Horizonte (Brazylia) i Wrocław (Polska), jako metod stymulowania zrównoważonego rozwoju gospodarczego.

Metodyka: W badaniach zastosowano metodykę komparatywnego studium przypadków.

Wyniki: Badania wykazały, iż choć wszystkie z badanych strategii marketingu miejsc ukierunkowane są w jakiś sposób na stymulowanie lokalnych procesów gospodarczych to brakuje im cech zapewniających zrównoważenie tych procesów..

Implikacje i rekomendacje: Uzyskane wyniki badań wskazują na znaczące ograniczenia i napięcia w zakresie strategii marketingu miejsc, a przez to motywują do badań reprezentatywnych oraz do poszukiwania bardziej zrównoważonych rozwiązań.

Oryginalność/wartość: Kwerenda literaturowa nie wykazała pierwowzorów przeprowadzonych badań, a zastosowana w nich metodyka miała częściowo autorski charakter. Artykuł dostarcza nowych informacji o strategiach marketingu miejsc stosowanych w różnych krajach i wartościują je w odniesieniu do paradygmatu rozwoju zrównoważonego.

Słowa kluczowe: strategia marketingu miejsca, zrównoważony rozwój gospodarczy, Ałmaty, Belo Horizonte, Wrocław