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261 Material Design in Visual Analytics: A Systemic Design Approach to Data.
Laura Sadanha

267 The active archive: new strategies for protection and fruition.
Ana Gallo

273 Using virtual environments in basic design education.
Ana Glória and Emília Duarte

281 PARALLEL SESSION 7 »»» BRAND DESIGN

Panel chair: Daniel Raposo

283 Developing a brand experience: the step “X” of TXM Branding Methodology.
Valéria Casaroto Feijó, Luiz Salomão Ribas Gomez, Pablo Eduardo Frandoloso and Marília Matos Gonçalves

291 The Brand JIT Model: Just-in-Time Sync Metrics for Brand Development and SMEs Innovation.
Carlos A. Rosa

299 The P&G's Brand Purpose Communication in Digital Advertising.
Dayane A. Lopes, Sarah S. Schmiegelow, Luiz Salomão R. Gomez and Richard Perassi

307 Narrative constructions for brand: the use of archetypal storytelling in branding.
Dayane Alves Lopes, Luiz Salomão Gomez and Marilia Gonçalves

314 City Brand Experience: Urban Trends and Aesthetic Experiences from the Perspective of City Branding.
Priscilla G. Lopes, Clarissa Martins Alves, and Luiz Salomão Ribas Gomez

322 Achieving the Place Brand DNA – the case of Florianopolis’ innovation sector.
Laryssa Tarachucky and Luiz Salomão Ribas Gomez

329 PARALLEL SESSION 8 »»» DESIGN AND EDUCATION

Panel chair: Helena Souto

331 Neutral Spaces. The Close Relationship Between Professional and Educational Spaces.
Roberta Franceschi, Lucinda Morrissey, Adolfo Jordan and Maria Jesús Triviño

339 Coworking as a Stigmergic and Informal Learning Space.
Fernando Mendes and Carlos Duarte

346 Design Research Diagnostic Practice Implementation in Classroom Context.
José M. Gago Silva

Achieving the Place Brand DNA – the Case of Florianopolis' Innovation Sector

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ABSTRACT

Places also concern about communicating with their audiences. Cities around the world are applying branding techniques as a way to respond to the pressures of territorial competitiveness, both in case this response is prepared under a touristic perspective or even with the intention of stimulating domestic audience. Tourism plays a very important role in the economy of Florianopolis, Brazil. However, the seasonality of this activity – particularly intense during the summer months and milder in the rest of the year – causes an imbalance between supply and demand throughout the year. As an alternative to summer tourism, the city government has been investing in actions that encourage tourism to a diverse audience, focused on attracting investors and members of the creative class. This article presents territorial branding as stimulus to urban development through the analysis of the case "Projeto Rota da Inovação" (PRI) and the apprehension process of the concepts of the brand that will represent the technological and innovative face of Florianopolis. It exposes the methods and tools used and, as a result, it discusses the process and the final concepts, generated through a co-creative methodology, as well as their meanings. In conclusion, this study underlines the main adaptation needs to the application of a business branding methodology to the urban branding context.

Keywords: Place Branding; Brand DNA; Brand DNA Process; Urban Development; PRI.

INTRODUCTION

Interest in city branding has increased during the last decade and it has become a recurrent practice all over the world. One of the reasons for this success is its potential to attract new tourists, foreign investments, business and foreign knowledge workers. According to Gomez et al (2012), branding refers to the development and management of a specific brand, aiming at building a coherent identity and loyal position with its audience, meeting desires, expectations and creating a solid reputation towards consumers in a cocreative process. When designing and managing the image of territories, to a greater or lesser extent, branding can be understood as a set of techniques and strategies that empower people from a place to think about their common goals, to create meaning to their current identity and to build a desirable common future. Another of its functions is to influence the audience to think and act positively in relation to products and services associated to a specific place.

Tourism plays an important role in the economy of Florianopolis, Brazil. However, the seasonality of this activity - particularly intense during the summer months and milder in the rest of the year - causes an imbalance between supply and demand throughout the year. This situation led to expressive changes in Florianopolis' economic scenario. During the past decade new business models related to technology, information and communication emerged and exceeded the tourism sector, assuming the first place in terms of gross domestic product and leading authorities to seek new ways to unite the strengths of both sectors in order to promote the development of the city as a whole.

The aim of this study is to describe the process of defining the guiding concepts of the brand strategy for Florianopolis' innovation sector besides presenting the singularities that were considered to be praised and

stimulated in order to contribute to the development of local innovation sector. Aiming to create a clear picture of Florianópolis' innovation context and, therefore, explain the basis of the branding process, this study describes the recent changes in the city's economy and tries to list the environmental factor that influenced this change.

Since the purpose of this paper was to understand and find certain factors in decision processes regarding urban development initiatives, a case study approach was chosen. The selection of procedures and intellectual operations was made in order to ensure rational observation of facts and enable the interpretation and adequate explanation of the relationship between the knowledge areas addressed and generate a body of rational, systematic and verifiable knowledge that will contribute to the improvement of the design of city brands aimed at fostering innovation in urban areas. This research has provided four stages, namely: planning, data collection, data analysis and writing the report.

BRANDING FLORIANOPOLIS AND THE CITY'S INNOVATION SECTOR

Florianópolis is the capital city of Santa Catarina, one of the three states that form the southern region of Brazil. The city – which is composed of one main island, a small continental portion and several smaller islands – has a population of 460,000 inhabitants. Considered as one of the 10 most dynamic cities in the world (FOROCHAR, 2006) and known as the Brazilian capital with the highest Human Development Index score, its economy is heavily based on information technology, tourism and services.

In the beginning of 2013, a project called “Projeto Rota da Inovação” (PRI) grew out of a partnership between LOGO/UFSC and the city's department of science, technology and sustainable development - SMCTDS. Its initial proposal was to strengthen the concept of Florianópolis as a reference in innovation through the implementation of branding strategies and by promoting innovation points located in a specific urban route present in the city (figure 1). The main demand was to develop a visual identity to be used in urban and social actions related to this route in order to create a common vision of the character and innovative potential of Florianópolis as well as promoting it regionally and globally. These actions should also serve as funding instrument to business tourism and attract foreign investment to the city.



Figure 1: PRI zones

The methodology used for the initial phase of the project is called Brand DNA Process. According to Tarachucky (2015), aiming to represent the idiosyncratic characteristics of the brands, some authors allude to the DNA - deoxyribonucleic acid - of living beings: just as the biological DNA, the brand's DNA the core of its

differentiation and brings the set of distinctive and defining information that form it and that need to be transmitted from one mind to another in order to remain 'alive'. Based on studies of Govindarajan and Trimble (2005) and in line with the placement of Nworah (2011) when he says that each position, concept, reaction or image transmitted to society are reflections of their DNA, Gomez et al (2012) states the components of the brand DNA: technical, resilient, emotional, marketing and integrator component.

Brand DNA Process was developed and validated by LOGO/UFSC researchers and, as a design methodology, it consists of a set of co-creative principles and tools that allows a group to define and manage a brand in an empathic and organized way. It is divided into five steps. The diagram below (figure 2) demonstrates the specific stages of data analysis and the information provided by the end of each stage.

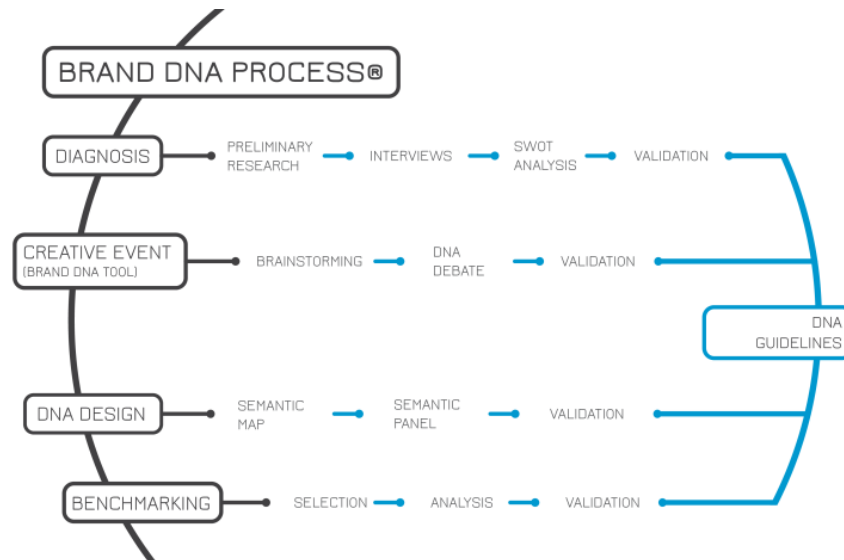


Figure 2: Brand DNA Process

The preliminary research and the interviews were made simultaneously. The briefing guided the definition of the initial research tracks: innovation, territorial branding and Florianopolis. Research on innovation led to the identification of two premises for disruptive innovation: (1) the ability to perceive subtle changes in slow culture and anticipate future scenarios, and (2) creativity. The first premise led to studies on trends, culture and prospective methodologies, while the second one led to a conceptual and historical exploration of creativity, also investigating places and specific periods with recognized creative impetus. The study of external references listed places of outstanding innovative potential like Medellin, Barcelona, Silicon Valley, Malta and Hong Kong. The second research track focused on reviewing branding and territory separately before studying territorial branding. As the concepts of branding and city were being related we could realize that PRI should not only be a tool for economic and touristic development of the city, but also be used to facilitate social and cultural development issues. Finally, a photographic marathon started the immersive research on the Florianopolis innovation environment, which began with a general recognition of the area followed by the exploration of each single "node of innovation" separately. Twenty-one stakeholders and opinion-makers were interviewed in the meantime.

The resulting material of this first stage led to the analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to the city brand, as shown by Tarachucky et al. (2013). These data were presented to both internal and external public of the brand along ten creative events. Creative event is the name given to the moment of meeting the various decision-makers in order to think about the essence of the brand being created and establish its DNA. Originally, the Brand DNA Process provides a single creative event for defining the corporate DNA. This step had to be adapted to PRI. Due to the dynamics of the activity, it was considered impossible to carry out a creative event with over forty participants and it was considered interesting to hold sessions in various points of the route in order to ensure the seizure of opinions and perceptions of a representative portion of the cultural diversity present in the city. In addition to the events held in Florianopolis, the latest edition was held in Belem, the capital of the state of Para, and had the exclusive participation of people who until then had not been in Florianopolis, so we could cover part of the representations formed about the city in the imaginary of the external community. The final definition of the brand DNA was done during a meeting where stakeholders and opinion makers were assembled to study the set of elements collected during the previous stages.

THE BRAND DNA OF FLORIANOPOLIS' INNOVATION SECTOR

The brand DNA consists of five concepts that should guide all its positioning. They are: technical, resilient, emotional, marketing and integrator.

The technical component of the brand DNA refers to the main feature that the brand "product" has to offer. The creative environment existing in Florianopolis was perceived as the city real product delivered to the innovation sector. The high-tech sector present in the city have a common root: the desire to remain on the island. The interviews helped us to outline a profile of local businesses. In general, the owners of large companies based on the island came from other cities of the country to study. When they were finishing their studies, the local economy allowed two main activities: general services for touristic sector, extremely seasonal, or the public service, which was deeply limited. The alliance of technology and talent allowed them to continue living in a culturally diverse place, with great flow of people, in which it was possible to establish the so-called ephemeral tie more easily. This example illustrates how the three conditions for creativity offered by Florida (2011) - technology, talent and tolerance - are historically observed in Florianopolis.

The Brand DNA resilience factor is related to the flexibility and adaptation capabilities of the brand to scenario changes. The concept chosen to set the resilient character of Florianopolis innovation brand is sustainability. Although the city still bears the consequences of a poorly planned development, it was classified by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics as the third place among Brazilian cities in possession of the best Human Development Index (IBGE, 2013) and it was considered by the United Nations as the capital with the best quality of life in Brazil (UN, 2012). In addition to this, a significant portion of the city's population is characterized by the adoption of alternative lifestyles, directed towards a greater contact and care for nature and for building a conscious and egalitarian society.

The emotional element features the characteristic of the interaction between the public and the brand. In the case of a territorial brand, this factor shows the predominant emotion while experiencing the place. The emotional concept that marks Florianopolis is its quality to be inspiring. Its built environment coupled with the natural environment, cultural miscegenation, learning opportunities, work, leisure, nightlife and openness to differences makes Florianopolis a plural, engaging and exciting space, suitable for the observation and having different experiences.

The marketing factor is how the brand will present itself to the market. This factor is the strategic image in which the city will be disclosed to its stakeholders and it is responsible for stimulating a sense of belonging and appreciation of their local community and ensuring a competitive advantage among other cities in terms of attracting people, capital and investments. The seized DNA indicates that Florianopolis shall be disclosed by the concept "Globalized". That statement must strengthen a new positioning of the city's image to the external public, showing that Florianopolis is poised to be the point of convergence of different networks, whether technological, economic or cultural; and turn special attention to the internal community, awakening it, preparing it and connecting them to the dynamics of local development.

The components of the brand DNA should work together, being combined and recombined. The integrator term interferes on each of the other four concepts in order to ensure the authenticity of the brand management. A new and effective positioning for the creative and innovative networks of Florianopolis should rely on collaboration. This condition, whose influence can be seen in each of the other concepts, was elected as the key concept to approach and to establish the links between innovation actors, government managers, cultural institutions, businesses and citizens.

The DNA guidelines set out all indications seized by applying the Brand DNA Process and guide all other stages of the brand construction and ongoing management. It is clear that the creation and management of PRI brand should be a sponsor of the endogenous development potential of Florianopolis, attracting external looks due to a stimulating and receptive internal environment.

The strategic objectives linked to the concepts of brand DNA respond to the needs identified early in the project and the perceived purpose. They aim to map geographical, cultural and emotional information, filter data and cross-reference information, and connect people, institutions and spaces. Every action taken in the following steps - eXperience and Manage - should seek constantly reinforce the strategic objectives presented in Table 1.

Table 1. PRI's strategic objectives.

Concept: Adjective	Strategic Action
Technical: Creative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to use and to disseminate local cultural manifestations and traditions; - to reposition the city and to use the idle workforce in a process of creating value for the market; - to use the miscegenation of cultures in order to foster the city's creative potential;
Resilient: Sustainable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to mobilize and to educate citizens from communities; - to disseminate knowledge and to promote intellectual cooperation; - to encourage the development of independent media; - to promote universal access to information, focusing on new media technologies;
Emotional: Inspiring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to create and to strengthen research spaces and creative development; - to promote cultural events targeted to the interests mapped within the public; - to adopt municipal public policies encouraging the academic talents; - to revitalize the natural urban spaces, promoting free cultural events in public spaces;
Marketing: Globalized	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to combine local knowledge and resources with global issues; - to preserve local culture and to use its capacity to adapt to different scenarios; - to disseminate Florianopolis' image as a creative city;
Integrator: Collaborative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to build a platform that unites managers of institutions, entrepreneurs and citizens of Florianopolis in a co-creative collective action; - to research, to map and to foster regional events; - to integrate physical and virtual spaces in order to facilitate the visitors and locals experience in the city, promoting the technology produced locally; - to stimulate the reinterpretation of the city by its own residents; - to create links with institutions and projects that enhance the creative city program.

The perception of creativity as the basis for the emergence of good ideas guided all the other activities of the process, and the urban development model called creative city, its philosophy and techniques for creating and encouraging a creative ethos in the city, among the studies of current urban policies - including smart city and the city for people - appeared as the most appropriate model to meet the purpose and the initial demands of PRI.

CONCLUSIONS

Environment shapes men, who, in turn, shapes back the environment. Although endless discussions about the degree of importance of the active factors in the man-environment interaction (social organization, specific events and environmental conditions, to name a few), the previous statement is common to many fields of study, including environmental determinism, the historical ecology and environmental psychology. Hall (2005) says that man has created another dimension, the cultural dimension. In the relationship between man and this new dimension, the stimuli to which the environment conditions the man are determinants of his evolution. That is, a creative environment stimulates the development of creative people.

Branding should not be concerned only with the production of a "salable" image but also rethink the dynamics of interaction between the different actors of the city and adapt the strategies of the brand to these new forms of interactions, considering a collective identity and a common purpose. It is noteworthy that the emotional side of the city can be as important to its development as its physical elements, since there is a fine line between emotion and cognition in the various forms of interaction between humans and the living environment.

Owning an image of innovative city can be undoubtedly a decisive factor for a competitive advantage. According to this author, this happens because the term "innovative" entails only positive connotations to the people's mind. In the case of PRI, it was noticed a different behavior. While the advantages of communicating the image of an innovative city are undisputed, the use of the term "innovation" was perhaps the greatest impediment to the process of calling the population to participate in the project. This led to the use of the term "creativity".

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