

The Botero Museum and Bogotá: Branding History and Place.

Abstract

Place branding is an increasingly important driver of local, regional and national positioning and economic prosperity. Key to the success of place branding is a strong, identifiable, recognisable and sustainable focal point of interest or experiential value add. The current study reports on the Botero Museum in Bogota Colombia that is dedicated to the country's most famous and internationally successful artist. We report on a series of qualitative interviews that explored tourists' perceptions of Colombia in general and Bogota in particular as a result of their museum experience. Results showed a positive change of country and city perception.

1. Introduction

One of the most visited museums in Bogotá is the Museo Botero (Botero Museum). Located in a renovated colonial house in the heart of Bogotá's historical center, it offers visitors a collection of unique quality. The museum is one of the highlights of the city and a popular tourist attraction. The quality of the collection includes, not only Botero's pieces, but it also several works by Picasso, Chagall, Renoir, Monet, Pissarro, Dali and Miró.

This paper examines the impact and effect of the museum on tourists' perception of the city of Bogotá and more broadly, Colombia. It investigates whether the museum has a direct impact on the city's place branding. Place branding, the process of image communication to a target market regarding aspects of a place, can be seen as public administration's efforts to facilitate, create and develop place brands or harness and consolidate these networks of place associations in a target group's mind. In this study, we explore foreigners' perceptions of a museum's cultural offer, the city of Bogotá and Colombia.

2. Literature Review

Branding, as Vuignier (2016) states, is a marketing tool that involves perception, image and associations with a target group. For branding to occur, the brand must exist or be under development. When associated with a place (an identity incorporating assets such as culture, perceived qualities and physical places) added value and/or similarities must exist. Thus, place branding is a strategic issue for countries, regions and cities that rely on their place assets and resources and the "interactions and exchanges of values created and owned by all stakeholders" (Campelo 2017) in order to create positive associations with the place. In the field of 'destination and tourism marketing', place branding is a vital strategy that must be implemented (Foroudi, Gupta, Kitchen, Foroudi, & Nguyen, 2016). For this reason, we analyze further, the particularities of place branding and their specific impact in tourism.

Fernando Botero

Fernando Botero was born on April 19, 1932 in Medellin, Colombia. Along with his formal education, Fernando Botero trained as a Bullfighter. In this early period of his artistic career, his painting was associated with bullfights and lifestyle.

However, his style shifted and by 1948, at the age of sixteen, he launched his first exhibition with a new inspiration from Mexican artist Diego Rivera's 'Spanish Colonial Art'.

He moved to Paris in 1973 and began working in sculpture, technique through which he "extended the foundational themes of his painting" (Fernando Botero Bibliography, 2014) focusing once again on "rotund subjects" (Fernando Botero Bibliography, 2014). By this time, he had held several successful exhibitions including the 'Roman Soldier' (1985) and the 'Left Hand' (1992). During the 1980s, he had not only defined and perfected his style but had also branded himself and his works. During this time, and for more than a decade, Botero's works recreated scenes of violence, narcotics and of the illegal-drug industry, reflecting the difficult period Colombia faced. He painted works such as 'The Death of Pablo Escobar' in 1999 and his more recent work the 'Abu Ghraib' series (2004) where he depicts images of the war between the United States and Iraq.

Museo Botero in Bogotá

Museums have become spectacular landmarks of cities, tools in their development, and assets in the world competition for investment and tourism (Tzortzi, 2015). The Botero Museum, located in the center of Bogotá, the sixth largest city in Latin America, has produced peculiar urban forms, and in recent years has seen important developments in the fields of decentralization and urban management (Skinner, 2004). This museum however, did not date back to the same time period as the other museums in the area. Rather, all the artwork in the museum was a donation, in 2000, from Fernando Botero himself, and includes his private collection of personal artwork as well as works from other recognized artists such as: Dali, Renoir, Monet, Chagall, Manet, Bonnard, Miró and Picasso among others.

The inauguration of the museum took place the same year as the donation, and at this event, the artist delivered these touching and emotional words:

"It is for me an infinite pleasure to know that these works of art belong to Colombia today; to know that the students that come into this building will be in touch with the most significant artistic pieces of our times, being able to contemplate, on a permanent basis, original artwork made by great masters; and to know that lovers of painting and sculpture can come visit this haven of peace and stroll quietly through the halls, allowing themselves to be enveloped by modern aesthetics."

Today, the museum is considered one of the greatest gifts to Colombia by one of its citizens and still exhibits all 208 masterpieces that include 123 artworks by Botero and 85 others from his private collection.

Museo de Antioquia - Sala Fernando Botero in Medellin



Conversely, the 'Museum of Antioquia' is located in the capital of the Antioquia region, Medellín. The museum is not only one of the most important tourist attractions but also plays an important role in the city's history. The city has gained international recognition as very "innovative" after it had once been considered the "murder capital of the world" in the 1990's (Garcia, Smith, Coupe & Rivera, 2018) . The 'Museo de Antioquia' was founded in 1881 in the Municipal Palace of Medellín and contains 5000 paintings, 4244 historical objects and 1566 precolonial indigenous art pieces. The paintings are held in 15 different collections that date from pre-Hispanic art to contemporary art. Two of these collections consist of donations by artist Fernando Botero. In 2000 and 2004 Botero donated of 32 paintings and several of his sculptures.

In front of the 'Museo de Antioquia' is Plaza Botero. Plaza Botero is a city garden or plaza located in the city center of Medellín consisting of 23 large bronze sculptures of the Medellín-born Botero. Plaza Botero is considered one of the main attractions in Medellín, where you can admire Botero's masterpiece *'The Hand'*, or emblematic artworks such as *'Eve'*, *'Maternity'*, the *'Man on Horseback'*, and the *'Roman Soldier'*.

MoMA, New York

According to Art History of Modern Art Insight, since its foundation in 1929 the Museum of Modern Art of New York "has continually redefined the idea of the museum in contemporary Western culture" (ArtStory.org). However, although it was founded in 1929, it was not until 1952 that the museum established a permanent collection. Nowadays, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)'s artworks are of diverse styles such as sculpture, painting, and visual arts, and are from diverse artists from the 19th century up to the present day. Having artworks from artists such as Van Gogh, Monet, Klimt, Gauguin, Picasso and Botero, the Museum of Modern Art has always tried to maintain its mission and purpose "encouraging and developing the study of Modern arts" (ArtStory.org). In fact, the museum was the first art institution in the US whose artworks and exhibitions consisted exclusively of modern art.

Today, after the expansions of the 1950s and 1960s, the MoMA contains a collection of 200,000 paintings, sculptures, drawings, prints, photographs and visual arts (MoMA). Fernando Botero is one of the 90,000 artists whose works are displayed in the museum, including artworks such as: 'The Presidential Family' (1967), 'Mona Lisa Age Twelve' (1959), 'Woman in a Bathtub' (1974) and 'Painter on Still Lifes' (1975) which were first shown in the *Recent Acquisitions* exposition in 1961–1962 and 1968. Furthermore, he has contributed to eight exhibitions at the museum.

Image Communication

Image compression, image streaming and visual representation come under the umbrella of 'Image Communication'. According to René Rosenbaum (2009), it is used to describe the handling and processing of image data in remote environments. Image communication, especially visual representation, is likely to affect the decision processes that marketers and consumers commonly face, particularly those that involve the analysis or synthesis of substantial amount of data (Lurie & Mason, 2007). However, this concept can introduce some bias, created by the perception of the consumers, and affect the way the information and data are managed, selected and transformed.

Place branding

According to Van Ham (2008) place branding has become an increasingly integral part of local and regional economic development strategies in the global competition for business investment. In a globalized economy, it is not just countries but cities and regions that face aggressive international competition, trade barriers, and new competitive markets. As a result, economic, political and social measures have been put in place but also place branding has been increasing on both local and regional scales to attract businesses (Cleave, Arku, Sadler, & Gilliland, 2016) and has actually been improving local and regional competitiveness in the global market.

Place branding, as its name states, is reputation building or a set of place-based elements in which the range of territory varies in size. It can be implemented in cities, regions and countries. Similar to 'regular product' branding, place branding uses promotion and other marketing tools to ensure an effective strategy for a targeted market or sector (Briciu, V. 2013). However, place branding is not only much harder to implement effectively, it is built around the sense of ownership and the environment in which it exists (environment may include attractions, nature, government, and language). As a result of this sense of belonging, "the use of place-branding policy influences how effective the place will be at attracting and retaining business" (Cleave, Arku, Sadler, & Gilliland, 2016). In conclusion, in order to achieve their objective of establishing a consistent reputation, destinations must "identify their most potent appeals, seek the essence that makes them different and attractive to visitors, and consistently promote this essence through all marketing communications and behavior" (M. Kravitzis, 2004, p.10). Developing a common component or common appeal in a region is difficult as it covers an area considerably larger than a city.

Art impact in place branding

Returning to the question about the potential impact of art and museums on place branding, Plaza, Haarich and Waldron (2013) built a strong argument to support this connection by referencing the case of Picasso's famous *Guernica*. Although the original work of art is housed at the Reina Sofía Museum in Madrid, Spain. It is located more than 500 kilometers from the town of Guernica, but the place and the painting continue to hold an undeniable connection in the collective mind that has withstood the passage of time. *Guernica* has been responsible for popularizing the homologous town's name around the world, in turn leading it to become a significant attraction for tourists, history aficionados and high-end Picasso connoisseurs.

Academic literature on place branding spans a variety of specific interests and fields. On one hand, researchers such as Jacobsen (2017) have attempted to analyze the museum and its purpose from an architectural standpoint, exploring how "architecture can condition and create effects [sic] and sensations, which immanently connect the social agendas of art institutions to the museum experience," (Jacobsen, 2017, p. 15). Following a similar line, Quinlan-Gagnon (2016) examines which tangible elements related to internal ambiance and physical construction that may have a significant impact on visitors' experiences within a museum. Developing this idea further, Fangqing (2012) conceives architecture as a tool for visual storytelling, grounding this idea through an investigation that focused on the impact of one specific architectural feature on the overall museum experience. Supporting the latter, Ashworth (2016), enlists "signature urban design" and "signature districts", defined as "the visual qualities of buildings and urban design" (Ashworth, 2009, p. 9) as one of the three main place branding instruments that are employed on a global scale.

Country Place Branding

In order to apply brand strategy and inscribe symbols and images correctly in a country, it is necessary to determine certain behaviors about tourists and the way they perceive places. Initially tourists have some basic information and opinions about countries before they visit that they develop into experimental and relational themes. Such basics include the weather, things to do, people, and logistics (Swanson, 2017). Then, when the person has chosen a country to visit because of these basics, experimental themes such as having new experiences or escaping from monotony, and relational themes such as family and friends, are responsible for creating a "destination love" before visiting it. (Swanson, 2017). This is when good outcomes are co-created and highly influence visitor's attitude to, and expectations of the destination country.

The challenge here is how to create a good perception and image of the country with these basics. The mix between culture and other disciplines may be the answer. Some famous tourist destinations such as France and Italy take advantage of their history and architecture, to create a "signature" of their unique identity, perceived by almost everyone around the world. (Scaramanga, 2012). Moreover, besides buildings and historical constructions (which not all countries have), there can be cultural activities created to promote a country's image. A good example is Spain where Barcelona was transformed into a

multicultural city by creating sports and other events, and consequently changing tourists' perception of its culture (Ulldemolins and Zamorano, 2013). For example, Hernández García (2012) explores the potential of informal neighborhoods and settlements as a cultural asset to promote tourism and thus, contribute to a place branding strategy. Echeverri and Rosker (2011) contrast the Canadian and Colombian country brand construction processes. In relation to this, the motto that defined Colombian's country brand for many years, "Colombia is Passion" as developed and adapted by government entities including the national authority for foreign investment and tourism promotion, relied heavily on an intangible cultural aspect inherent in Colombia: the passion inherent in the Colombian population.

In a similar vein, Ashworth (2009) explains how a trend that emerged among European nations during the 19th century, which sought to group state-sponsored cultural institutions in specific city areas, came to be as a result of a widespread interest in supporting promotional activities and strengthening the concept of city branding itself, rather than from a more functional standpoint. Ashworth cites examples such as "London's South Kensington Museum complex, the Rijksmuseum complex in Amsterdam [sic] and the Brussels Kunstberg museum and gallery complex," (Ashworth, 2009, p. 17) as indicative of this current. As such, it may be stated that these renowned cultural institutions appeared as consequence to a trend whose main essence was based on the existence of a linkage between art or cultural institutions and place branding.

3. Methodology

The current research seeks to explore the importance of cultural artist Fernando Botero and the Botero Museum in Bogotá on place branding and meaning. The following section presents the methodology that was applied during the data collection and analysis phases of this study.

A qualitative approach

The general subject and research question carry an intrinsic connection with the concepts of art and culture. The definitions for these two notions can be open-ended and are highly dependent on who defines them. To adopt the definition developed by UNESCO, that states culture is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of society" (Brunett, 2016). Likewise, art, as defined by the Oxford Dictionary, is "the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2017).

Given the predominance of art and culture as high-level concepts in the context of the current investigation, and drawing from the generally accepted definitions previously articulated, it is evident that the current research project is humanistic in its nature. In specific terms, the close linkage observed between the research object (the Botero Museum in Bogotá) and the field of the arts, suggests the existence of a fundamental connection with human perception and abstraction. In the context

of the current research, the latter suggests a significant reliance on subjective or qualitative data. Consequently, it was determined that a qualitative research approach would be the most appropriate data collection method to follow.

Qualitative research is characterized by its reliance on data which has not resulted from statistical processes and that is strongly linked with opinions, personal beliefs and experiences, motivations, emotions and feelings, social movements, interactions between nations and cultural phenomena (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

The use of in-depth interviews as a data collection method provides several useful advantages. First, it grants the interviewer the ability to probe further by asking additional questions that may not have been initially considered, but that could prove to be highly enriching and relevant in context. Secondly, it allows the detection of behaviors and the deciphering of body language and other non-verbal cues (Burns and Bush, 2014). Thirdly and to complement the latter, Alshenqeeti (2014) notes high response rates, fewer incomplete answers, the ability to maintain realism, a controlled answering order and flexibility as the quintessential advantages of interviews as a data collection method.

McCracken (1998) suggests a four-step pattern for conducting in-depth interviews. The authors' approach was inclusive, as it encompassed every step from questionnaire creation to interview analysis. As per McCracken, the first two phases should consist of a review of analytical and cultural categories which would serve to inform the interview design. The third step is to conduct the actual interview and the discovery of other cultural categories. Lastly, the interviews were analyzed, allowing for the identification of other cultural categories.

Ultimately, the decision to follow the approach outlined by McCracken (1998) satisfied two main criteria. First, the investigators determined that in-depth interviews allowed for such a degree of flexibility that could be adapted to different types of research fields and subjects. Second, the model had already been employed, with success, by other academic investigators that relied on open coding, as demonstrated by Westberg, Stravros and Wilson (2011) and Volo (2011).

In order to facilitate and streamline the data-collection phase, an interview protocol was developed, which would serve to guide the conduct of in-depth personal interviews on-site, at the Botero Museum in Bogotá.

To fulfill the objective of gathering a significant volume of high-quality responses, the investigation defined the pool of international tourists attending the museum as its main source, rather than broadening the scope to conduct interviews with both domestic and foreign tourists (Volo, 2011; Matteucci and Filep, 2017). The decision was due to two main factors. First, it was highly likely that domestic tourists would already have a preconceived notion of Bogotá, the surrounding region and the artist Botero, based on the cultural beliefs and notions prevalent in their own places of origin. Second, after a preliminary visit to the museum, it was observed that there typically was a considerable number of international visitors at the premises on any given day of the week. This provided a valuable pool of respondents to work with.

Preconceived beliefs do play a major role in an individual's construction of an opinion about a place. In this sense, domestic tourists' previous notions about Bogotá and the region could potentially have tainted their total perceptions about the city, and thus, the link between the Botero Museum and Bogotá's overall level of place branding. In contrast, international tourists were less likely to have had preconceived notions about Bogotá or Colombia in general, thus allowing them to communicate more reliable, unobstructed and fresh views.

No limitations were drawn regarding the demographic composition of the interviewee sample. In this sense, no minimum requirements related to gender, age, nationality or other factors, were imposed. Consequently, as reflected in the Table of Respondents, the interviewee sample contained a wide variety of age groups, nationalities of both gender

Rather than preparing a short survey of closed questions to be randomly distributed at the location for participants to complete, investigators prepared the preliminary version of a thematic unstructured guideline, comprising approximately twenty broad themes with six closed-ended questions, for demographic categorization purposes. This was in line with the qualitative research methods set out by traditional theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Burns and Bush, 2014; Alshenqeeti, 2014; McCracken, 1998). To have opted for an interview protocol comprised entirely of closed questions would have significantly simplified answer tabulation and overall response analysis. However, the free-flowing responses obtained by way of open-ended questions facilitates a meaningful exploration of the linkage between cultural assets and place brand. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, the open-ended format would enable interviewers to ask additional questions, bypass irrelevant ones and follow potentially interesting leads during the interview.

This preliminary version of the thematic unstructured interview protocol was refined according to feedback received from a panel of experts who had previous experience leading qualitative academic investigations (Khan and Batti, 2017). The process produced different iterations of the protocol, until it was possible to arrive at a definitive or final version, comprised of nineteen broad themes and six demographic questions. The principal priority considered during the elaboration of the final version was to achieve a logical flow from general "warm-up" questions related to past travels (e.g. Think of the best city you have ever visited (could be your own). Why is it your favorite? What makes it unique?) and previous expectations (e.g. What do you think is the general perception of Bogotá and Colombia in your country?), among other "light" topics to questions directly associated with the linkage between the Botero Museum and place branding (e.g. Do you think Bogotá's museum offer has impacted your trip/the way you perceive the city?), and thus the actual research objective. This is using to the "grand tour" approach employed by Beverland, Napoli and Lindgreen (2007).

Any questions that were deemed irrelevant, ambiguous, redundant or too complex for the average museum visitor to answer in a spontaneous manner were permanently eliminated throughout the iterative refinement process.

Interview protocol

The initial time estimate, prior to conducting the first round of interviews in the field, was that respondents would engage in the interview for approximately twenty minutes. However, it quickly became evident that the vast majority of participants were not keen on devoting twenty minutes of their time for this purpose. Such behavior can be attributed to the fact that the time tourists have to explore a city or region is often limited, and thus they probably already have some form of an itinerary in mind to follow before their departure. Most museum visitors that were approached by investigators agreed to participate in the interviews, given their time constraints. In general, there were few rejections or polite declines by museum visitors.

The interviews conducted during the first round had an approximate duration of seven minutes each, and subsequent rounds conducted by the investigators corroborated this finding. Faced with this situation, and in order to still be able to obtain a significant number of meaningful responses, the objective was adjusted to a quota of 40 interviews in total. Ultimately, 32 interviews were conducted over a four-week period in April 2017.

All the interviews were recorded in a standard audio format. The audio files were then transcribed and manually processed by the investigators

Table of Respondents

Respondent (RS)	Gender	Country	Age	Reason for Visit	Cultural Traveler
1	Female	Canada/Croatia	73	Tourism	Yes
2	Male	Chile	18	Tourism	No
3	Male	Chile	22	Tourism	No
4	Male	Chile	20	Academic	No
5	Male	France	23	Academic	Yes
6	Male	France	24	Tourism	Yes
7	Male	France	27	Tourism	No
8	Male	Germany	29	Business	Yes
9	Male	Germany	29	Tourism	No
10	-	Portugal	-	Tourism	-
11	Male	-	-	Tourism	Yes
12	Female	Italy	20	Tourism	Yes
13	Female	Italy	26	Tourism	Yes
14	Female	Italy	27	Tourism	Yes
15	Male	South Korea	30	Tourism	No
16	Female	South Korea	34	Tourism	No
17	Male	Mexico	49	Business	Yes
18	Male	Norway	38	Tourism	No
19	Female	Perú	37	Academic	Yes
20	Male	Spain	27	Tourism	No
21	Male	Spain	38	Tourism	No

22	Male	United States	72	Tourism	Yes
23	Female	United States	25	Tourism	Yes
24	Male	Thailand	24	Tourism	No
25	Male	Sweden	21	Tourism	No
26	Male	United States	30	Business	Yes
27	Male	Brazil	32	Tourism	No
28	Male	Panamá	37	Tourism	No
29	Female	France	22	Academic	Yes
30	Male	Brazil	26	Tourism	No
31	Male	Spain	28	Tourism	No
32	Male	United States	26	Tourism	No

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Blank cells denote demographic information the investigators were not able to gather during the data collection phase.

Table 1 above shows the interviewee profiles of the respondents for this research. Each one has been categorized according to the demographic information they provided. The binary value assigned to each respondent (Yes/No) under ‘Cultural Traveler’ category corresponds to either a direct answer that was obtained during the interview, or an investigator’s personal perception, following the entire interview.

All the interviews were transcribed and manually processed by the research team. The sample includes seventeen countries and ages ranging from 18-73 years with at least 90% of respondents aged between 20 and 40. The subjects were often friendly, but for various reasons most of them did not have enough time to offer more information on the topic.

4. Findings

In general, it was determined that the Botero Museum did affect, to varying degrees, tourists’ perceptions about Bogotá and Colombia in the context of their trips. The manual coding performed on the interview transcripts revealed the existence of five broad themes related to changing perceptions about Colombia, Bogotá and the city’s cultural and museum offers. Each theme and associated quotes helps to present a broad picture of the role played by Bogotá’s museum offer, and in specific, the Botero Museum, in tourists’ construction of a general perception of the city brand.

General perception of Colombia

Considering the violent history of Colombia in the last 25-40 years, which focused mainly on the drug cartels and the violence lived throughout the 80’s and 90’s, it is understandable that foreigners may already have a strong negative opinion or stereotype about the country. Many of respondents already knew or had heard about this issue in the past reinforcing the notion that many people have a negative image of the region. The following quotes illustrate this general perception of Colombia by foreigners:

“Of course, the drugs and stuff like that, and a lot of people still think that it is an insecure country to travel to... which doesn't reflect the reality at all.” **RS8 (29-year-old cultural male traveler from Germany).**

“Hmm, well. It is complicated. Colombians suffer, as Italians do too, of many stereotypes. For example, Sicilians are related to the Italian Mafia, while Colombians, I'm sorry but they are bound to the drug traffic business. These are horrible historical stereotypes that are no longer true. People should know the cities and forget about these things.” **RS14 (27-year-old cultural female traveler from Italy).**

“Hmm sometimes they said it was very insecure but now-a-days it's secure. So many travelers have come to Bogotá and it ok. For me it is big and organize” **RS16 (34-year-old female tourist from Korea).**

As shown, most foreigners believe Colombia is a very insecure and violent nation. Tourists have built this image because of the region's negative and notorious history of drugs during the 80's. However, this belief is changing as a result of people actually visiting and experiencing the nation for themselves.

Changed perception of Bogotá/Colombia

Colombia is an urban nation, with more than 80% of its citizens living in its largest cities and is therefore far more cosmopolitan than it may be perceived abroad. However, more important to Colombia's image abroad is the fact that Colombia is not a major drug-consuming nation, and most people reject their use. As highlighted before, it is evident that Colombia has built a negative stereotype involving violence and drugs. However, when asked if the participants had changed their perception about the country and city during their trip, all of them said “yes” and had something positive to say about it:

“I think that now the perception has changed, and people are more open about it and when we think about Colombia we think about James Rodriguez or Shakira which is a good image.” **RS12 (20-year-old cultural female traveler from Italy).**

“Hmm generally, people who don't travel that much think it is insecure... but once you travel you can see that is not true. And well, the things about drugs and girls, but I think there is more people traveling here right now and they go back to Spain completely happy” **RS20 (20-year-old cultural female traveler from Italy).**

“I've been here three months and my perspective has changed about the place I live in, because in general I had a very open perception, like it is a big city and that, but as I live in the Candelaria when I first arrived I thought it was more insecure, but it isn't at all.” **RS5 (23-year-old cultural male traveler from France).**

“In our country, a lot of people don't know about security, they don't know how secure it is and in fact they think it is insecure. But we've been two days here and we have felt very save. We have walked with no problem.” **RS8 (29-year-old cultural male traveler from Germany).**

With respect to changed perception, most of those who thought of Colombia as an unsafe place changed their mind as soon as they visited it. For those who have not travelled to the country, a bad perception is still prevalent even though public figures have communicated a more favorable image in foreign countries.

Cultural offer

The participants were attracted by the cultural offer that the region has. Some of them mentioned food and people as one of their interests on the region, others were more curious about the infrastructure and architecture. Even if the opinions vary, they are all related to the country's cultural aspects. For example:

"First of all, I take care of people's personality, of how organized is the city. Secondly the attractions it has, the food... etc."

RS3 (22-year-old male tourist from Chile).

"We look for a place to have areas of interest. So, it might be just cultural, like museums, or it could be just visual, you know like a very beautiful area... something that is unique." **S22 (72-year-old cultural male traveler from United States).**

"Yes, I think Bogotá is an artistic place where you have these museums that help to shape the cultural truism. And then you have the Candelaria that is so colorful with the graffiti's stuff and all that..." **RS20 (27-year-old male tourist from**

Spain).

"The sculptures. I mean I like paintings, but the sculptures are overwhelming. We have some of those in Spain and it is so valuable" **RS21 (38-year-old male tourist from Spain).**

Colombia is host to some well-known museums and two recurring topics were the artist Fernando Botero's museum and the museum of ancient craftsmanship and fables, especially related to gold.

Perception of the museum experience

One of Colombia's most famous artists is Fernando Botero, and one of the biggest names in the world of art and, thanks to his distinct style, is admired by both critics and the general public alike. When asked if the museum had influenced their view and perception of the region, very few replied in the affirmative. However, a few people did make a connection between Bogotá and the museum and said it somehow helped changed their view of the city:

"I love it, I think it is one of the best. Not only for Botero's collection, but also because they have a beautiful international collection." **RS17 (49-year-old cultural male traveler from Mexico).**

"Yes, I think it makes the good impressions stronger, it gives the perception of a cultural city that takes seriously those things." **RS18 (38-year-old male tourist from Norway).**

"Yes, I would, as I was saying they represent culture and Colombian history, and yes. I think it is a very different form of art than what you usually see so it is interesting. I would also recommend the other museums..." **RS23 (25-year-old cultural female traveler from United States).**

“It is nice, and I also think it is nice for people the fact it is free of charge, that is important, because if you think about the museum of New York, you may spend like 50 dollars, so that is nice. Also, the pictures of Botero are nice and some of his sculptures.” RS8 (29-year-old cultural male traveler from Germany).

Museums, including the Botero museum, create a cultural asset for foreigners who visit the country. The importance of Botero and other artists hosted at museums is that they give the country and the city the opportunity to place itself as a multicultural and artistic cluster that is essential to visit if traveling to Colombia.

Additional Analyses Coding software

In order to strengthen the general findings and theme clusters identified by the manual coding, the researchers used the software tool Leximancer, a sophisticated text analyzer. A condensed text version that consisted of all of the interview transcripts compiled during the data collection, was built as primary input for the software. As a result, it was possible to gain valuable insights through term recurrence, key ideas and concepts and connections among themes.

One of the strongest connections identified was a linkage between the concepts of “Bogotá”, “city” and “museum”. This supported the idea that a connection between Bogotá’s city branding and the Botero Museum exists.

To better understand the software and its interpretation of the research data, a brief explanation follows. The intensity of the circles in Figure 1 represents the relevance of the theme and in this case the concept "city" is the most relevant, followed by "Bogotá" and finally "museum". Secondly, the distance between the points within each circle shows how closely related they are to each other. For example, the concept "Colombia" is quite closely related to "perception" and less so, to the concept "people". What Figure 1 shows is that the concept of “museum” is far away from the concept of “city” and moreover from the perception of Bogotá.

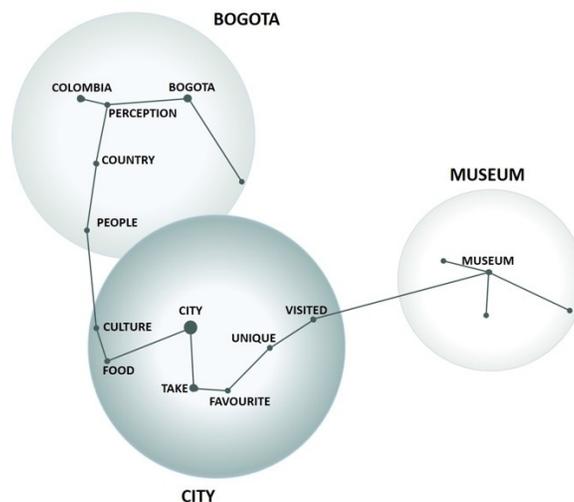


Figure 1. Leximancer linkage analyses

5. Discussion and Conclusions

Theoretical Contributions

This research contributes to the extant literature related to the linkage between museums and place branding. Additionally, because of its specific focus on the Botero Museum in Bogotá, Colombia, it provides insight into the perceptions constructed by international tourists about the city, the surrounding region and the country in general. Bogotá's cultural offer seems to be a significant factor in this process.

There appears to be a consensus among researchers of the linkage between architecture and museums. As a minimum, we can say that a museum's internal and external layout and disposition does contribute to the creation of its ambiance. In turn, this general ambiance has a direct impact on the museum experience. For the purposes of this research, the notion that there is a prevalent linkage between a museum's architectural properties and visitors' experiences and perceptions, serves to support the fact that thinking about a connection between the Botero Museum and Bogotá's own place branding is viable.

To draw a parallel with a cultural scenario that differs slightly from that of museums and other similar cultural institutions, significant literature exists regarding the linkage between sports and sporting events and place branding. Irving and Shields (2007) attempt to explore the use of sporting events as a place branding strategy for developing nations, a point further endorsed by Kolamo and Vuolteenaho (2013), who focused on the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa, as a case study on the interplay between sporting and place branding. Once again, past investigations evidence the existence of a link between place branding and a city, region or country's cultural assets. Although a significant level of rigor, demonstrating this connection can be applied to a sports event, we postulate that the same rigor cannot be applied to the purported linkage between museums and place branding. As such, this investigation has contributed to strengthening the existing academic theories on museums and place branding at the broad level.

Having understood the existing connection between art and place branding, as Haarich and Waldron (2013) argued, perhaps one of the investigation's most interesting findings is the fact that art and museum managers should constantly monitor brand associations (via online methods such as Google News analytics, or any other), in order to identify valuable opportunities for brand strengthening.

A second main contribution is the fact that the body of academic knowledge built around the Colombian museum remains underdeveloped. In contrast, the European case emerges as perhaps the strongest corollary to this reality.

Managerial Contributions

As stated, visitors normally form an opinion of the city before visiting it, therefore, one of the most important contributions of this study to the management of the city tourism is to understand this issue and promote city and country culture in other parts of the world. In this way, foreigners will have other ideas of the place, in this case not just the history of violence that persisted in Colombia for many years. Placing the image of the country and the cities as the home of local artists in foreign

countries will capture a cultural tourist's attention. Many cities such as Bogotá are capable of this as they have a specific cluster of traditional and artistic resources that visitors can find to satisfy their demand for cultural tourism. As a secondary contribution, security is an important factor that has a direct impact in the cultural offer of places. City managers should pay attention to visitors' perception of security, which includes a good system of police patrols in streets and regulating touristic plans and other offers visitors might be exposed to during their stay.

Study limitations

The most significant limitation occurred in the data collection phase. As detailed in the methodology section, the average interview duration was shorter than originally expected; while the initial estimation was that each interview would last approximately twenty minutes, the actual average duration approximated to ten minutes. To help address this, more interviews were necessary in order to guarantee a larger pool of quality responses.

Opportunities for further research

Replicating the study from the Botero Museum in Medellín, in relation to this city's place branding could provide potentially interesting results. Similarly, the same could be done for other notable museums that were repeatedly mentioned by respondents as places of touristic interest in Bogotá, such as the Gold Museum and the National Museum. However, it is possible that the Botero Museum's linkage with place branding in Medellín is more notorious and pronounced in this city, given the fact that Medellín is the artist's hometown.

6. Conclusion

This study not only identified different factors that could alter a person's perception of a place or region, and in particular about Bogotá, Colombia and the artist Fernando Botero. Despite some limitations, the results were insightful, given our current limited understanding of the subject. As a general observation, tourists already have a pre-conceived negative perception of the country, given its history of violence and drugs. However, they all had something positive to say about the region after their visit to the city's landmarks, and most importantly, the Botero Museum.

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