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Cultural heritage and nation branding – multi stakeholder perspectives from Portugal

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to explore how cultural heritage knowledge leverage country branding and contribute to developing a competitive identity. More specifically, we try to understand the role of visitor experiences and the community's engagement in this dynamic process. The study focused on Portugal's country brand and the Portuguese cultural heritage market. Based on the content analysis of the interview scripts of public decision-makers, museum/site managers, academics, and a tourism entrepreneur, the study offers exploratory findings regarding the roles performed by public entities and other institutions and the means used to attract visitors to heritage sites and encourage the engagement of the different 'actors' in cultural heritage experiences. Results indicate that cultural heritage represents a dimension of country identity and a driving factor of the tourism sector for Portugal.

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Country branding; nation branding; archaeological and cultural heritage image; competitive country brand identity; community engagement; visitor experience

Introduction

The notion of nation branding gained attention in the last years when academics and policymakers started to approach country reputation in the same way as companies and products' brand images. Simon Anholt coined the concept of *nation branding* in 1996 (Dinnie, 2008). Later, Anholt (2008) refers to an abusive commercial appropriation of the term that excludes other important aspects of a national identity, which also contribute to the formation of a country brand image. Therefore, Anholt proposes the notion of *competitive identity*. The competitive identity concept represents a wide approach to the country image. It encompasses the interactions and dynamics between the political and economic competitiveness contexts. These interactions can be accessed into six dimensions – exports, government, tourism, culture, people, and immigration & investment – which constitute the 'Nation Brand Index' developed by Anholt in 2005. The Anholt's Nation Brands Index approaches country image by examining these six dimensions of 'national competence' (Nation Brands Index Report for Scotland, 2018). Each dimension contributes equally to the formation of the country brand reputation. In particular, the cultural dimension includes several aspects, namely global perceptions of a nation's heritage and the country contemporary culture. The dimension of tourism captures the motivations

essentially to visit the country. More specifically, its natural beauty, historic buildings, environment, and cities atmospheres.

While country branding studies usually focus on what public institutions and businesses do to improve the images of countries, as producers, exporters and tourism destinations (supply side perspective), country image research concerns to consumer and other stakeholders' perceptions (demand side perspective) and how they contribute to creating a nation brand (Papadopoulos & Hamzaoui-Essoussi, 2015). It is widely recognised that country image influences consumer behaviour and plays an important role in a dynamic identity building process. A place's general image (Sousa, Nobre, & Farhangmehr, 2019), product image and tourism image interact in several ways. Thus, country image/place image and country branding/nation branding are often used interchangeably (Papadopoulos & Hamzaoui-Essoussi, 2015). In times of globalisation, the competition among countries to attract foreign investment, business, tourism, and talented workers is fierce. Therefore, a strong, favourable, and unique image (see Keller, 1993) represents a competitive advantage for nations and countries. Several factors might contribute to the development of a country image. Among them, the economic system, political stability, people, place, culture/language, history, food, fashion, celebrities, and global brands. Policymakers and companies' managers must assess whether a country image is strong or weak, current or outdated, clear or vague, and focus on understanding the internal and external image of the country held by domestic and foreign individuals (Fan, 2010).

Yet, what really seems to make a difference to the images of countries is when they become dedicated to developing new ideas, policies, laws, products, services, companies, buildings, art and science ... the place produces a buzz, people pay attention and prepare to change their minds. (Anholt, 2008, p. 23)

Therefore, perceptions of culture constitute a good indicator or predictor of the overall strength of a country's reputation. The expressions of the nation's culture through its cultural heritage show how countries have been doing their cultural activities and operations. The countries with the strongest overall images are invariably the ones people perceive produce culture with some value (Anholt, 2011; Cull, 2019).

We consider the UNESCO definition of the term *cultural heritage* that encompasses several main categories of heritage, namely the *tangible cultural heritage* (e.g. movable cultural heritage—paintings, sculptures, coins, manuscripts; immovable cultural heritage—monuments, archaeological sites; underwater cultural heritage—shipwrecks, underwater ruins and cities), *intangible cultural heritage* (e.g. oral traditions, performing arts, and rituals), and *natural heritage* (e.g. natural sites with cultural aspects such as cultural landscapes, physical, biological or geological formation).

In the context of globalisation and cultural convergence, cultural heritage can be the last chance for a country to differentiate and compete in the global market. Cultural heritage can be used as a distinctive ground for creating identity and sense of community, building brand, impacting tourism and other economic sectors of the country or region (Poor & Snowball, 2010). To successfully build a unique nation brand that encompasses different dimensions that transmit cultural differentiation, it is important to understand how cultural heritage knowledge can leverage country branding and contribute to developing a unique nation identity (Anholt, 2008). How visitors' experiences and locals'

engagement contribute to this process also seems of paramount importance in this equation. The mix of values that describes heritage tourism contexts is complex, and branding is used to differentiate and capture the attention of potential visitors to the unique features of places (Mortensen, 2014).

Silberberg (1995, p. 361) defines *cultural tourism* as: 'visits by persons from outside the host community motivated wholly or in part by interest in the historical, artistic, scientific or lifestyle/heritage offerings of a community, region or institution'. Thus, heritage (or heritage tourism) assumes to be one of the main attractions of cultural tourism. According to Stylianou-Lambert (2011, p. 405), a *cultural tourist* is 'any individual who visits cultural institutions or places such as museums, archaeological and heritage sites, operas, theatres, festivals or architecture while away from home'. In this paper, we use visitor to refer any individual who visits cultural heritage sites and museums (Bonn, Joseph-Mathews, Dai, Hayes, & Cave, 2007), whether home or at a destination, and also cultural tourists interested in intangible heritage experiences. *Museums* are here defined as

a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment. (Sandahl, 2019)

This paper aims to explore how cultural heritage knowledge leverage country branding and contribute to developing a competitive country identity. The study focuses on the case of Portugal, a European country that competes directly with other destinations with a similar positioning (e.g. sunny with beautiful beaches and interesting history and heritage); but, in most of the cases, with stronger brand images (like Spain, Italy and Greece). Additionally, the paper purposes to identify co-creation activities (Vargo & Lusch, 2004) involved in building a nation's heritage identity. More specially, we try to understand the role of visitor's experiences and community's engagement in this dynamic process. Based on the content analysis of the interview scripts of some public decision-makers, museum/site managers, academics, and a tourism entrepreneur, this study investigates their perceptions about national heritage, its challenges, uniqueness and contribution to a Portuguese cultural heritage identity; the roles performed by public entities and other institutions; and the means used to attract visitors to historical and archaeological sites and encourage the engagement of the different 'actors' in cultural heritage experiences.

Portugal is one of the oldest countries in Europe, with an interesting history that had a major role in the age of maritime Discoveries. Portugal also has a particular geographic location, with a long Atlantic coast, situated further west of Europe. These aspects contributed to a rich and peculiar history and heritage reflected in historical and archaeological sites, monuments, architecture, and intangible heritage like *fado* (the national song). Nowadays, the competition is fierce, and visitors seek unique attractions (Eriksson, 2013). This pressures destination marketing organisations (DMO) to promote and develop the destination's attributes and unique characteristics to attract visitors (Alvarez, 2012). Notwithstanding this, it was a surprise for us to find that there is still a lack of research and academic publications on the link between a nation's heritage and country branding in the Portuguese context (Dinnie, 2008; Oliveira & Panyik, 2014).

Moreover, the study offers the perspective from the supply side, including policy and decision-makers, which represents another gap in cultural heritage (King & Halpenny,

2014; Pecot, Valette-Florence, & De Barnier, 2019; Timothy & Boyd, 2006) and cultural tourism studies (Ebejer, 2019). It is important to investigate further how resources are classified as cultural heritage and the specific challenges and solutions for managing different heritage sites.

We adopted an exploratory research design through in-depth individual interviews with a diverse group of participants, such as managers and directors of heritage sites and museums, academics and researchers linked to cultural heritage research centres, and policymakers. These participants were in a privileged position to see the big picture that includes the actual pace of Portuguese cultural heritage, the motivations behind the practices adopted, and how decision-makers use and drive culture and heritage to promote a national touristic image domestically and abroad. Our main purpose was to provide cultural heritage managers, researchers and policymakers with new information and specific cues and trends of the Portuguese market and country brand that deserve to be further analysed, and that can also be used by decision-makers in countries looking for understanding how cultural heritage can leverage a nation country image.

Theoretical background

The distinction between nation branding and place branding has not always been clear. Nevertheless, Olins and Hildreth (2011) state there is a difference in the focus of these concepts. From a political point of view, nation branding has an inward focus, and is more associated with nation-building, through ideology and praxis (Kaneva, 2011). Volcic and Andrejevic (2011) also refer that nation branding can strengthen a country's economic position. It is especially important in the promotion of small and peripheral nations. Despite the differences between place and nation branding, conceptual similarities prevail. Both concepts share a common purpose: the improvement of the attractiveness of a specific geographical location, the promotion of tourism and exporting industry, support to public diplomacy, and provide citizens with a sense of identity and self-esteem (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009). Policymakers ought to pay attention to how place images may affect consumer's behaviour, particularly when the place is considered the 'product' and the image is a determinant factor in attracting consumers (Papadopoulos & Hamzaoui-Essoussi, 2015). As Papadopoulos and Hamzaoui-Essoussi highlight, it is important to have a holistic view of these research streams to avoid 'silos of thought' and to take advantage of their synergies.

Nation branding is an output of the interaction between the fields of country-of-origin and national identity (Dinnie, 2008, p. 28). Aronczyk (2013) raises our attention about the debate on the factors that contribute to nation branding through a set of questions, such as:

is the nation a conscious construction, a modern exercise in social engineering devised by elites, intellectuals, and political leaders; or is it better seen as a palimpsest of older forms of social and cultural existence, which can only be uncovered through archaeological investigation and a view to the *longue durée*? Or is it something else altogether? (p. 15)

Based on research carried on several countries with different stages of economic development, and with different geopolitical and historical legacies (e.g. Botswana, Canada, Chile, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Jamaica, Libya, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and Uganda), Aronczyk offers the following definition of nation branding: 'the result of the interpenetration of

commercial and public sector interests to communicate national priorities among domestic and international populations for a variety of interrelated purposes' (p. 16). The concept emerges under the context of globalisation, which propels multiple economic, political, scientific, and technological development and cultural heritage interactions, and, simultaneously, a committed sense to preserve national identity.

While national identity has its foundations in political geography, international relations, political science, cultural anthropology, social psychology, political philosophy, international law, sociology, and history; country-of-origin (COO) is a concept forged in marketing, consumer behaviour, advertising and promotional management, brand management and export marketing. Despite the distinctive academic backgrounds, the globalisation of the economy pressured the intersection of these two fields. The decreasing of trade barriers between nations urged the development of nation branding theory and practice, as now countries have to establish their own country brand strategies to compete globally (Sousa et al., 2019). Besides the homogenisation of culture brought by globalisation, we are attending, on the other hand, to a growing sense of national identity in the last years (Brown, 2005). Constructs such as national stereotypes, ethnocentrism, expressions of culture, individualism versus collectivism, blurring of national identities and countries-of-origin, are common to national identity and COO. Dinnie (2008) emphasises that these constructs influence the development of a country image and shape the context in which a nation brand strategy is settled. He defines nation branding as 'the unique, multidimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences' (p. 15).

A brand might be described as 'an impression perceived in a client's mind of a product or a service. It is the sum of all tangible and intangible elements which makes the selection unique' (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009, p. 6). The benefits of a strong brand identity, image and communication must be recognised in branding countries and businesses. Yet, it is necessary to consider the challenges and uniqueness of a sustainable place branding, as it is a complex subject due to several stakeholders and little management control (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009). Olins (2002) discusses the evolution of nation branding and states that almost every nation has a brand strategy, whether influenced by the concepts of a national image or national identity. Countries always put efforts in branding their nations, and brand elements like national symbols, currency, anthems, names, etc. represent old practices. The application of nation branding theory advocates that the brand concept should remain invariant, that is, 'a cluster of values that enables a nation to make a promise about a unique and welcome experience' (Leslie de Chernatony in Dinnie, 2008, p. 16). The social and economic exchanges facilitate the absorption of the nation's core values. For the success of a nation brand, it is fundamental to get the key stakeholders, like the representatives from the government, commerce, non-profit organisations, tourism and media, engaged. It is important to understand and let them share their vision for the nation brand.

The development of a nation-brand image depends on several aspects. One of the most important is the personal experiences that individuals develop with the country. For instance, working or holidaying experiences, indirect contacts through the knowledge of political events, the information released by the media about the country, the quality of the domestic products/services, the performance of national companies, the people's

behaviour, and word-of-mouth (Ingenhoff, White, Buhmann, & Kiouisis, 2019). The interdependency of symbolic and economic value has become increasingly apparent in recent years. Nowadays, national culture is seen as a potential source of economic value (Yúdice, 2004). Governments, development agencies, marketing professionals, and other stakeholders seek to assess and capitalise the value of culture in concrete terms (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009). Thus, there is a need to segment the target audiences, and simultaneously assess and understand the nation-brand held by distinct consumers (Cai, 2009).

The process of building a nation-brand image involves different stakeholders (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009), and National culture demands a specific kind of knowledge and tactics that should involve and be accepted by the main stakeholders (Aronczyk, 2013). The cooperation between private, public, and non-profit sectors and between destinations is fundamental to achieving sustainable development in a context of cultural heritage (Boyd & Timothy, 2001; McKercher & Du Cros, 2002). Successful destination branding strategies might be forged on the collaborative work of different agencies, owners, and service providers, setting common goals and avoiding cross-purposes (Timothy & Boyd, 2006). Moreover, cultural heritage may represent an important asset in creating employment through increased cultural tourism (Ebejer, 2019). For instance, past tourism activity in Portugal was mostly based on the sun and sea. More recently, there have been efforts to promote other forms of tourism, namely the value of the territory, allowing the enjoyment of the historical and cultural heritage and preserving its authenticity. Another priority from 'Tourism Strategy 2027' relies on promoting urban regeneration and the economic empowerment of the natural and rural heritage to meet better demand (Araújo, 2017).

Despite the multiple benefits that cultural heritages bring to nation branding, there are also challenges that, if mismanaged, can become barriers to national branding, such as the homogenisation of sites and loss of the authenticity of local communities (Ermann & Hermanik, 2017). Another challenge concerns the sustainability of the places and the community resilience during spatial and cultural changes caused by mass tourism. Once heritage becomes a visitor attraction, meeting tourists expectations and managing a living heritage place for local residents might be an ambiguous task (Bui, Jones, Weaver, & Le, 2020; Timothy & Boyd, 2006). Considering the stakeholders' participation in decision making and planning within the context of heritage tourism, it is difficult to assure that each individual is empowered enough to contribute (Aas, Ladkin, & Fletcher, 2005).

Given the challenges that heritage management is facing, the new-dominant marketing logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004) might represent a ground to understand the dynamics that connect cultural heritage-related professionals with the commercial actors, public supporters and regulators, and the indigenous communities in pursuing sustainable practices that benefit all parties involved. 'The narrative of value cocreation is developing into one of resource-integrating, reciprocal-service providing actors cocreating value through holistic, meaning-laden experiences in nested and overlapping service ecosystems, governed and evaluated through their institutional arrangements' (Vargo & Lusch, 2016, p. 7). For tourism purposes, Ross and Saxena (2019, p. 3) define participative co-creation of archaeological heritage as a 'composite of activities that allow tourists and providers a greater role in crafting experiences that offer an outlet for their creativity as a means of making sense of historical sites and the past'. This means that regardless of the heritage

site in respect, the co-creation process should involve providers and visitors to create memories, stories and transform archaeological sites into resources for cultural and creative tourism.

In a value co-creation and relational approach to the brands, Payne, Storbacka, Frow, and Knox (2009) state that brand interactions, brand experiences, and brand relationships, represent a source of brand meaning co-creation (see Merz, He, & Vargo, 2009; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). In the same way, the experiences, and any form of value co-creation activities, that citizens, communities and visitors (tourists included) develop with archaeological and historical sites, museums, collections, and other cultural heritage can represent a source of value and meaning that contributes to community identities and nations' narratives (see Gould, 2017). To sum up, we assume that engaging communities and visitors in experiences with cultural heritage might represent a way to co-create meaning to place and site brands. In this study, we are particularly interested in exploring from the perceptions of heritage decision-makers how this meaning contributes to establishing a competitive national heritage identity.

Methods and results

This exploratory study seeks to bring light on the link between a nation's heritage and country branding, in the Portuguese context. The study followed a qualitative design through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with seven participants. This group included three directors and one manager of the most important or representative museums, historic buildings, and archaeological sites in Portugal (some of them have been on the boards of governmental agencies); one Coordinator of one Research Centre in intangible heritage in Portugal; and two academics (archaeologists) that have expertise in the communication and promotion of national heritage. One of these archaeologists was a tourism entrepreneur in an area of Portugal rich in cultural heritage listed by UNESCO (see Appendix). The participants were, in general, very knowledgeable of the Portuguese cultural heritage panorama from both supply and demand sides. Due to their roles and public positions, we adopted a strategy of individual in-depth, semi-structured interviews that offered room for open and free conversations on the topic. The location of participants is absent from the paper to guarantee their anonymity. Portugal is a small country, and the community of public heritage decision-makers and academics, and museum directors is also small. We wanted to guarantee maximum spontaneity in responses, which would only be possible under the anonymity of participants' identities.

Interviews were collected in person or through skype and recorded. After a first personal contact by phone to introduce the research and inquire about their interest and availability to participate in the study, participants received an invitation to be interviewed by email with detailed information on the study's objectives and procedures. Data was collected between December 2018 and February 2019, and the duration of the interviews was 40 minutes up to 1 hour and 20 minutes. Data were transcribed and then codified by researchers. The software *Online Tone Generator* was used during the transcription process for changing the time of audio files without affecting the understanding of the real content of interviews.

The study followed a deductive-inductive thinking approach (DePoy & Gitlin, 2015). We established an initial set of exploratory research questions grounded on the literature

and practice: (1) Can cultural heritage contribute to create a competitive identity domestically and abroad?; (2) What are the ways to get visitors and locals engaged in co-creation activities with national heritage?; and (3) what is the link between tourism and a competitive heritage identity? Each of these themes offered a set of sub-themes that represented the guidelines for the interview script, as presented in [Table 1](#).

After the transcription process, we analysed the content of the interview narratives through the procedures of open coding. The first level of themes emerged from this inductive process: (1) heritage practices for education, community engagement, visitor experience and tourism promotion; (2) visitors' motivations; (3) obstacles and limitations to the development of a Portuguese cultural heritage image; (4) the use of marketing tools to promote a cultural heritage identity; (5) how Portugal is different and unique; and (6) Portuguese historical sites and other cultural heritage attractions. The open coding involved axial coding, in which we classified and related the emerged themes in codes and sub-codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). During this process, we constantly compared the interview transcriptions and added and adjusted codes as they showed up from the reading process in order to ensure a complete and consistent axial codification of the data (Veréb, Nobre, & Farhangmehr, 2020). [Table 2](#) presents the full list of the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the inductive phase.

Discussion of results

Heritage practices for heritage education, community engagement, visitor experience and tourism promotion.

There was relative consensus regarding the importance of engaging people and communities, locals and visitors, in excavations and other heritage-related (tangible and intangible) activities. Participant F was involved in a project related to preserving a performative practice typical from an ex-Portuguese colony. The ethnographic fieldwork took place in a Lisbon's neighbourhood (mostly formed by descendants from

Table 1. Initial themes gathered through a deductive thinking approach.

Initial themes	Sub-themes
The contribution of cultural heritage to a competitive identity, domestically and abroad.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) the most representative Portuguese heritage sites; (2) the practices and means used to promote them; (3) their contribution to the Portugal country image domestically and abroad; (4) the role of governmental institutions and academy on that; (5) the unique aspects of the Portuguese cultural heritage.
The engagement of visitors and locals in co-creation activities with national cultural heritage.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) the importance to engage visitors and locals in archaeological practices and other experiences with cultural heritage; (2) the ways to engage visitors and communities in co-creation of cultural heritage knowledge; (3) the importance of social media in the process of building a nation's heritage image.
The interdependence between tourism and a competitive heritage identity.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) the impact of cultural heritage on the Portuguese tourism sector; (2) the role of visitor's feedback in the promotion of heritage sites and museums; (3) the contribution of visitors for the process of building a Portuguese heritage identity.

Table 2. Themes gathered through an inductive thinking approach.

Themes	Sub-themes
Heritage practices for heritage education, community engagement, visitor experience and tourism promotion.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Involving people and communities in heritage-related activities; (2) Partnership with schools; (3) Recognition, dissemination, and brand building heritage projects; (4) Visitors' feedback.
Visitors' motivations.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Go to the origins; (2) UNESCO recognition; (3) Education of the future generations; (4) The level of preservation, beauty and quality of the infrastructures of the heritage sites; (5) Feel the city environment; (6) Availability of resources to travel and visit the historical sites and engage with heritage projects.
Obstacles and limitations to the development of a Portuguese cultural heritage image.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Lack of institutional collaboration; (2) Distance between people/communities and the academy; (3) Bureaucratic obstacles, financial limitations and lack of resources; (4) Inexistence of public policies; (5) Lack of skills and educated human resources in tourism; (6) Inaccessibility of the heritage sites.
The use of marketing tools to promote a cultural heritage identity.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Museum's website and social media presence; (2) Get people engaged; (3) Visitors' feedback; (4) Traditional media.
How Portugal is different and unique.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Geography; (2) One of the oldest borders in the world; (3) Authenticity, unexplored areas, and natural landscapes; (4) Diversity of the landscapes and ancient culture; (5) Security and tranquillity; (6) The interaction between people, the natural environment and the heritage; (7) Gastronomy; (8) Unique architectural style: maritime Discovers.
Portuguese historical sites and other cultural heritage attractions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Heritage sites and museums; (2) Intangible cultural heritage.

that colony) that attracts a lot of domestic and foreign visitors. The process of intangible heritage classification and dissemination was only possible due to the contribution of the local community.

Participant A was also involved in a project responsible for strengthening the relationship between the community and heritage education through the establishment of a pre-historic park, the first in Portugal:

I am doing a prehistory park, with the aim of fighting the excessive use of digital. Basically, there is a certain agreement with parents (...) we have to get them off the tablet a little bit (...). I built a Neolithic hut, like the fortifications of the copper age, I made a fortification, you can feel it, smell it, be inside.

Another theme that emerged as consensual from the interviews was the partnership with schools to promote museum or excavation sites' visiting. During the school visit, the students and teachers, usually, are invited to participate in interactions activities with the heritage site and elements and required to give feedback.

We are doing an excavation and we can open it for visitors. They are not there to dig. It is for them to visit, and we explain what we are doing and what is the importance of the things that they are seeing (...) this interaction is important. (Participant B)

In general, Portuguese heritage managers encourage tourists and other visitors to give feedback on their experiences with museums, historical sites, and collections:

These books ... called honor books, I am always replacing them because they fill up quickly with the observations of tourists from all over the world, and we see there in a very informal way what the monument and the visiting experience is revealing. (Participant D)

Regarding the importance of investing in recognition, disseminating heritage knowledge, and brand building heritage projects, reflected in several public policies and programs, the UNESCO endorsement emerged from all the interviews as the most impactful on international recognition, site brand building and, even, in attracting visitors. Participants also noted the important role that social media can have in this process.

The number of domestic visitors, the increase of foreign tourists, and the awareness among visitors on our cultural identity emerged as measures to assess the success of the heritage dissemination programs. The national and international press seems to be paramount in the dissemination and recognition of cultural heritage:

In the context of the celebrations for the 100th anniversary of Fátima, we had Brazilian televisions ... I immediately saw the effect of more Brazilians, after a few months. It is already the second time that Korean televisions come to the Monastery. I immediately saw the increase of Koreans and Japanese too. (Participant D)

Social media represents one of the best ways of getting visitors' feedback nowadays. However, the museum managers mainly track visitors' feedback based on satisfaction surveys and physical books for collecting suggestions and critics. Participant D also referred to the importance of collaboration with bloggers. More specifically, he noticed the importance of the work developed by the Regional Agency for Tourism Promotion Center of Portugal in partnership with the bloggers.

Visitors' motivations

Regarding this theme, most of the participants mentioned the importance of the UNESCO's recognition as one of the factors responsible for the attraction of visitors (e.g. Monastery of Jerónimos, Monastery of Batalha, Monastery of Alcobaça, Convent of Christ). Another aspect referred by Participant A, C, D and E, concerned the level of preservation, quality, and beauty of the historical heritage:

I'm trying to understand what attracts them to Portugal. I would say that for Americans, including Brazilians and South Americans, I have also guided Ecuadorians, and such, it is this antiquity that they feel because they are in general descendants of Europeans that they belong. We have antiquity here everywhere, there is here an ancestry (...) they see Portugal as an old country. (Participant A)

We are talking about a heritage that is mostly rural, and peripheral, and that is also good, due to the contact with nature, with the contact with traditional ways of life and also for a greater geographical sustainability of tourism, that is, pull people outside those big centres to areas that are less visited. (Participant E)

A consensual topic within participants was the education of future generations since an important part of visitors are families concerned with the education of their children. Participant B referred the curiosity that visitors show and the effort made to engage these individuals into experiences with the site and collection. The interactions with the heritage contribute to visitors' memories that will support the dissemination of information through their social networks. Participant G also highlighted the value of feeling and experiencing the city's environment and its influence on visiting selected heritage sites and historic buildings.

Regarding the visitors' profile, it varies accordingly to the heritage site or museum. Participant A referred that most of the visitants are from Brazil and America. Participants C and D also referred the importance of the Brazilian public. Participant B, Director of one of the most important archaeological sites and museums in Portugal, mentioned that, although during the last 5/6 years there has been an increase in the number of foreign tourists, his museum is an exception, since 60–70% of its visitors are domestic. Participant D, Director of an important monument in Portugal endorsed by UNESCO, offered a clear profile of the visitants of this historic building: 25% of visitors are Portuguese and 75% foreign (besides Brazilian visitors, the other most representative countries are Spain, France, Italy, United Kingdom, Germany, Netherland, Japan, and Korea). Participants E and G highlighted the importance of the public made up of school children. Regarding tourists, Participant G referred the increase of French visitors because they are interested in heritage related to the former French colonies. Participant E also referred:

In the case of Guimarães [a historical city in the North of Portugal considered the birth of the nation] there have been some groups of North Americans, usually older groups (...) and Spanish and French, due to their [geographic] proximity.

Obstacles and limitations to the development of a Portuguese cultural heritage image

Regarding this theme, participants showed distinctive opinions and emphasised different issues. One of the most recognised archaeological sites (domestically and abroad) in Portugal is 'Vale do Côa' (Côa Valley). However, participants A and C highlighted the difficult access of this site, located in a remote place in Portugal, as a major issue for visitors. Two of the obstacles that were frequently mentioned by participants, as responsible for restricting the development of Portuguese cultural heritage, was bureaucratic processes and lack of resources to manage social media presence:

The hardware, the infrastructures are terrible (...) but why am I obliged to have that computer, with that program that was bought in Lisbon and that I can't put anything in there, otherwise I have to ask the informatics, and the answer usually is we don't have a license. (Participant C)

Another important limitation referred by Participants A, B, and C concerns the inexistence of public policies and investment. More specifically, some problems were mentioned, such as several monuments being on private property, and there are no public initiatives and negotiations to acquire the lands. On the other hand, less known historical and archaeological sites are neglected by public entities. They could serve, for instance, as an anchor to promote other domestic sites. Participant D showed a different point of view

regarding this theme and called into attention the need for a holistic perspective. The fault must not rely solely on the public system but also on the citizens, who should be more informed and engaged with the patrimony and cultural heritage.

Participants A, D, E and G also mentioned that the lack of investment in public archaeology is responsible for the distance between communities and academy. Participants specify the lack of communication between academy and citizens and the absence of education for heritage in order to engage the community in archaeology:

(...) in fact, as any specialist in an area tends to be very elitist and creates a very specialized discourse, and here there is a barrier, because a specialized discourse is (...) not to the ordinary citizen. (Participant E)

Another obstacle referred by most of the participants concerns the lack of institutional collaboration between different organisations, being even more challenging when it occurs the change of government:

The inter institutional collaboration, in Portugal is a lie, does not exist, it is a notion. (Participant C)

Some of the participants highlighted the role of the local tourism industry, and the importance of the investment in high skilled and talented human resources, in attracting visitors to the heritage sites and museums. Moreover, Participant A and Participant C referred this as a limitation of the Portuguese heritage and tourism market.

The use of marketing tools to promote a cultural heritage identity

Considering this theme, almost all the participants recognised the role of social media as an important mean for communicating a cultural heritage identity. Although all the Portuguese museums have a website, many of them are outdated, and, usually, museum and site managers deal with the lack of resources to improve the situation. To overcome this obstacle and promote the interaction of visitors, each museum represented in the study sample manage their social media presence, using Facebook (Participants A, B, C and G), Twitter, and Instagram (Participants B, C and G):

We have a website that (...) is outdated, because [public agency] has stopped supporting its maintenance. (Participant B)

Participant B also referred the importance of traditional media to communicate Portuguese cultural heritage identity, establishing partnerships with the local and national press. Participants C and D highlighted the benefits of the news in the international press in attracting more visitors.

How Portugal is different and unique

In regard to this theme, there was some consensus. Participants see Portugal as presenting differentiator elements, such as: a special geographic and cultural situation; one of the oldest countries with stable borders in the world, with an ancient culture, authenticity and unexplored areas; diversity of natural landscapes, where heritage is still integrated in the interaction with people; tranquillity and security; and gastronomy. Participant A,

Participant G, and Participant B also referred, as a unique element of the Portuguese cultural identity, the architectural style of the time of Discoveries, called 'Manuelino' style.

Portuguese historical sites and other cultural heritage

Participants showed a diversity of opinions when asked about the main heritage sites and monuments that could represent the Portuguese identity and have the ability to attract visitors, mainly when referring to foreign publics. This diversity of opinions reflects the lack of a consistent strategy for building up a Portuguese archaeological and cultural heritage identity. With few exceptions as the Menhirs in the South of Portugal, most of the references were related to buildings under the umbrella of UNESCO (e.g. Monastery of Jerónimos in Lisbon, the Monastery of 'Batalha', the Monastery of 'Alcobaça', the Convent of the Christ in Tomar, and the Côa Valley) with more international recognition. In general, they agreed that we do not have a unique site or building that *per se* could attract foreign tourists. Usually, tourists visit Portugal for feeling the environment, because of the sun and the beaches, to enjoy the food and landscapes, and heritage seems to be only a part of it. Participant G mentioned that international tourists visit us because of the country and its culture, which can trigger trips to places with specific heritage; or, to experience the atmosphere of a city, which again can trigger specific visits to cultural heritage inserted in that geographical area.

In contrast, domestic visitors can show a particular motivation to visit a specific historic building or site, mainly in what concerns school visits and families with children. Regarding intangible cultural heritage, the reference to Fado (the national song), the Discoveries, and even the food constitute a pattern in most responses related to the unique and recognised elements in the Portuguese heritage identity. Participant A also referred the 'Castros', a kind of small houses that, even nowadays, characterises the Portuguese landscape, mainly in the country and small towns.

Conclusion

This exploratory study seeks to shed light on the link between a nation's heritage and country branding, more specifically, Portugal nation brand. Portugal is one of the oldest countries in Europe, with an interesting and unique history. However, Portugal's country image and its touristic image are much associated with the beaches, *fado*, and football, and less with its ancestry and patrimony (Custódio & Gouveia, 2007). As the studies specifically focused on the Portuguese context are still scarce, it was important to learn from the empirical experience of these cultural heritage decision-makers and their perceptions forged on the direct contact with tourists and visitors. This can also be a contribution of interest for managers of other countries in the process of building a strong nation brand image. Therefore, our purpose was to explore this link and decipher some avenues for future research.

Despite the small number of participants, this work represents a unique opportunity to learn from the perspective of knowledgeable and experienced heritage and/or tourism agents (supply side), which represents another gap in the cultural heritage (King & Halpenny, 2014; Pecot et al., 2019; Timothy & Boyd, 2006) and cultural tourism studies (Ebejer, 2019). We adopted a research design (in-depth individual, semi-structured;

interviews) that allowed inquiring professionals linked and/or responsible for important elements of the Portuguese cultural heritage. This research strategy aimed to gather the unique nuances that are only perceived by people on the ground, in direct contact with visitors, which are not compiled yet or treated but can provide cues about 'what is going on' and future trends. This group included some cultural heritage managers of the most representative museums and sites in Portugal, one coordinator of a research centre on cultural heritage, and professionals working directly with national touristic areas with important historical heritage. Although rich and diverse in terms of culture and history, Portugal is a small country that still fights for a unique touristic and heritage image in the European context. Thus, at an exploratory phase, this data helped decipher directions for future investigation, and offered cues regarding existent elements of our national culture and how they can contribute to building a nation country image able to attract tourists and visitors.

This study offers exploratory findings regarding the contribution of public entities, universities, and communities in building an archaeological and cultural (tangible and intangible) heritage Portuguese identity. The discussion also analyses the resources available and used to attract visitors to sites, the obstacles and limitations that institutions and visitors face, and how policymakers, museum and historic building managers, and other heritage-related leaders encourage the engagement of the different 'actors' in cultural heritage experiences. As previously highlighted, it is important to focus on the uniqueness of cultural heritage to market advantage in fields such as tourism, urban and rural development. The place branding strategies help create value for cultural commodities by establishing associations that represent the basic cultural form (Mortensen, 2014). Findings corroborate the results of previous studies (Aronczyk, 2013), which showed heritage activities as promoters of 'a net willingness to cooperate through the creation of stronger group identities and confidence' (p. 113). The study also contributes with new insights about the role of the visitor and the importance of engaging the community in co-creation activities involved in building a heritage country image. Participants in this study agreed that cultural heritage might represent a dimension of country identity and a driving factor of the tourism sector. Visitor experiences and interactions with historical and archaeological sites and cultural heritage, in general, seem to be the essential element of this equation.

At the level of visitor motivations, the authenticity, antiquity, exclusivity, and preservation, in particular for foreign visitors, of the sites and historic buildings emerged from the codifying process, also representing drivers of tourism economic activity. The UNESCO recognition was referred to as one most important factors in leveraging the country heritage branding. According to previous research (King & Halpenny, 2014), UNESCO World Heritage brand might help to promote sustainability, stimulate recognition and brand awareness (Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Meskell, 2014) in the visitor's mind, and encourage visitation to heritage sites. Moreover, the UNESCO recognition is also known as a standard certification of authenticity and quality, playing a major role in the sustainability of heritage sites and destinations (King, McCool, Fredman, & Halpenny, 2012) and at an economic level (Meskell, 2014).

The involvement of citizens and communities in archaeological knowledge production and heritage protection and preservation can influence positively the process of building a cultural heritage brand (Foxell & De Trafford, 2010). According to this perspective, users

can be seen as informal co-producers of archaeological knowledge and dissemination, and co-creators of innovative forms for management and communication of cultural heritage (e.g. 'open access knowledge sources', Memorandum of understanding of COST Action 15201, 2016), with impact on community participation and engagement, and on the way the citizens interpret the importance of preserving and protect their cultural heritage and identities (Brown, 2005). In respect to the co-creation activities and experiences with citizens and local communities, their participation and collaboration with institutions, including universities and research centres, in the preservation and classification of heritage emerged as one important dimension to build a heritage identity.

The educational purpose of young generations drives diverse, usually interactive, programmes that museums and other historical heritage sites develop. Usually, these programmes rely on collaboration with schools. It was also referred in interviews the segment of families as one principal regarding domestic visitors, normally associated with the education of their children. Besides the educational dimension, policymakers should also look at these activities as a source of heritage knowledge dissemination, contributing to the process of cultural heritage co-creation and dissemination. Another avenue of research concerns the influence of mobile digital technologies on tourists' visitation experiences and the analysis of how the authenticity of a place-based identity might be apprehended and expressed through a digital form.

The paper contributes to narrowing the gap between cultural heritage knowledge and country image and identifies key elements of the Portuguese heritage that can boost a competitive cultural nation identity. This study, however, presents limitations. Firstly, the research setting is limited to one country. A cross-nation study would improve the capacity of the generalisation of results. This could also help to identify elements for a competitive European identity. Secondly, a larger sample of in-depth interviews, including policymakers, managers, and academics with distinct backgrounds representing different cultural heritage fields (tangible and intangible), would improve the contributions of the study.

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Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Appendix. Participants' profile

Participant	Role	Type of affiliation
Participant A	Archaeologist Retired University lecturer Touristic entrepreneurship and guide.	Scholarly and own business
Participant B	Archaeologist Museum Director	Public Museum
Participant C		Public Museum

(Continued)

Continued.

Participant	Role	Type of affiliation
Participant D	Archaeologist	Public Museum
	Museum Manager	
	Former Museum Director	
	Heritage Manager	
Participant E	Museum Director	University
	Former Director of a Public Cultural Heritage Agency in Portugal	
	Archaeologist	
Participant F	University lecturer	University
	Researcher in cultural heritage	
	University Lecturer and	
Participant G	Responsible for a research centre in ethnomusicology	Public Museum
	Former National Delegate in an European Cultural Agency	
	Anthropologist	
	Museum Director	
	Member of a public heritage agency	