



“LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN”: CASE STUDY ON REGIONAL BRAND IDENTITY AND POSITIONING

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ARTICLE DETAILS

Received:
Oct 8, 2024Accepted:
July 22, 2025Available online:
Oct 15, 2024**Double Blind
Review System****Editor in Chief:**
Priscila Rezende
da Costa

ABSTRACT

Objective: The aim of this study was to resolve a decision-making dilemma regarding how to balance the brands of different nations within a geographically limited region. This would integrate the attributes of the competitive identity of the place brand of the Latin American bloc countries into a collective regional identity, ensuring a regional brand positioning that is globally competitive, yet regionally contributive and locally authentic. **Method:** This was a documentary study with a dataset based on secondary sources obtained from facts portals of Latin American countries that have official country brand programs, rankings of competitiveness of place brand value, content published by the media, and scientific production on the subject. **Main Outcomes:** The main outcome was identifying the best strategies for positioning the “Latin America and Caribbean” regional brand in a robust, cohesive, and strengthening way, focused on the economic, geopolitical, and sociocultural integration of Latin American nations. **Relevance/Originality:** This teaching case permeates the state of the art in addressing aspects of identity and positioning of the Latin America Y El Caribe brand, providing students and researchers with immersive theoretical-practical learning about place brand management. **Theoretical/Methodological Contributions:** The theoretical/methodological contributions include reflections and discussions about strategic brand management concepts applied to the visual identity diagnosis and the regional brand positioning decisions in the context of international competitiveness.

Keywords: Place Branding, Regional Brand or Region brand, Brand Identity, Brand Positioning, Latin America and the Caribbean.

“AMÉRICA LATINA Y EL CARIBE”: CASO DE ENSINO SOBRE IDENTIDADE E POSICIONAMENTO DE MARCA-REGIÃO

DETALHES DO ARTIGO

Recebido:
8 out., 2024Aceito:
22 jul., 2025Disponível online:
15 out., 2025**Sistema de revisão**
“Double blind
review”**Editora Chefe**
Priscila Rezende
da Costa

RESUMO

Objetivo: Solucionar um dilema decisório sobre o desafio de equilibrar cooperação e competição entre nações de uma região diversa a fim de integrar os atributos da identidade competitiva da marca de lugar dos países do bloco latino-americano à identidade coletiva regional, garantindo um posicionamento de marca-região que seja competitivo globalmente, mas autêntico localmente. **Método:** Documental com material fundamentado em fontes secundárias obtidas nos portais de informação dos países latinos que têm programas oficiais de marca-país, nos *rankings* de competitividade de valor de marca de lugar, em conteúdo divulgado pela mídia e em produção científica sobre o tema. **Principais Resultados:** Identificar as melhores estratégias para posicionamento de marca-região “América Latina Y El Caribe” de forma robusta, coesa e fortalecedora, focada na integração econômica, geopolítica e sociocultural das nações latino-americanas. **Relevância / Originalidade:** Este caso de ensino permeia o estado da arte ao abordar aspectos de identidade e posicionamento da marca “América Latina Y El Caribe”, possibilitando aos participantes um aprendizado teórico-prático imersivo sobre gestão de marca de lugar. **Contribuições Teóricas / Metodológicas:** Reflexões e discussões acerca de conceitos de gestão estratégica de marcas aplicados para diagnóstico de identidade visual de marca e das decisões de posicionamento de marca-região no contexto de competitividade internacional.

Palavras-chave: Place branding, Marca-região, Identidade de marca, Posicionamento de marca, América Latina e Caribe.

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INTRODUCTION

A place brand represents a network of cognitive and emotional associations in the minds of a target market. This is based on the visual, verbal, and behavioral expression of a place, which encompasses the purpose, communications, values, and general culture of its people, as well as the geographical area itself. The expression of a place brand's identity requires communicating tangible and intangible attributes with both practical and esthetic qualities, as well as rational and emotional benefits. This also involves providing engaging experiences at the location, prioritizing the existing resources. Therefore, nations, regions, and economic blocs compete with each other for the trust of investors, the choice of tourists, consumer preferences, media favoritism, and the location of organizations. Therefore, the place brand is a strategic asset and a valuable resource for indicating multifaceted confident evaluations, given the local attributes for building successful international partnerships.

Notably, the geographical attractions and natural beauty of preserved environments in Latin America and the Caribbean stand out as tangible attributes of their competitive identity. Consequently, over the years, the brand image of countries in the region has been projected toward the tourism market. Despite the global importance of the tourism economy for development, a shift can be observed in current nation branding strategies. Countries in the Latin American bloc are now seeking to diversify their intangible assets—place branding—and leverage a more varied image to attract resources and investment in a global competitive context. A regional brand or a region brand is created when a group of countries (or cities) that are geographically close to each other come together to promote a shared identity, economic cooperation, or regional affiliation.

In this intentional, forward-looking scenario of projecting a diverse international reputation for the various economies of the Latin American bloc, within its geographical delimitation, the newly created regional brand “América Latina Y El Caribe” seeks to position Latin and Caribbean countries abroad. It does this through a robust, cohesive, and strengthening regional brand-building strategy focused on the economic, geopolitical, and sociocultural integration of

Latin American nations. The launch of the regional brand, through its visual identity and global positioning, represents a distinctive symbolic initiative. It is a strategic move to leverage a broader brand management program in the marketplace for the region's international projection.

Despite this promising initiative, the management of the “América Latina Y El Caribe” brand faces the strategic challenge of expressing the diverse competitive assets of the countries that comprise it. In this context, it is necessary to understand the strategies used by Latin American countries in managing their own brands, as well as their evaluations and positions in international rankings. It is therefore essential to identify how these countries position themselves to differentiate their competitive advantages from one another and how these diversified differences can be integrated for a cohesive positioning of the “América Latina Y El Caribe” brand on the global stage. However, to project a solid image that finds balance, harmony, and alignment between the collective regional identity and the distinct national identities of each country, strategic challenges and theoretical-practical dilemmas arise, requiring complex, coherent, and assertive choices.

1. HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT OF NATION BRANDING IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Although the regionalization of Latin America and the Caribbean is not unanimously accepted across all 33 countries, it does encompass all American nations with the exception of the United States and Canada. In its first two decades, nation branding in Latin America was primarily associated with the interests of the governments in power. The authorities were designated as the main actors, often at the expense of citizens' perspectives. In this sense, nation branding strategies in Latin America favored limited versions of national identity that were perceived as appealing to international markets. Therefore, national brands have been political instruments, part of the material and symbolic arsenal of the authorities in control. While advertising agencies and international consultants have played an essential role in their implementation, governments have been key players, allocating budgets, creating legal and insti-

tutional structures, and making final decisions on strategies (Azpíroz et al., 2024).

The study by Azpíroz et al. (2024) analyzes and compares national branding strategies implemented by Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru, from their initial initiatives to 2020. Another text addresses the brands of Chile, Colombia, and Peru and recognizes nation branding as a reflection of modern colonialism in Latin America, through the lens of the literature on the colonialist of power and the duality between modernity and coloniality (Miño, 2022). This finding contributes to the cultural approach to nation branding, recognizing that brands also act as vehicles for the cultural meaning of ideas that are linked to the time frame in which they are inserted (Miño, 2022).

Brazil, the largest economy in the bloc, relaunched its country brand in 2022 to reposition its image as an international tourist destination, leveraging the traditional competitive assets of its identity, such as its culture, lifestyle, and natural environment (Visit Brasil, 2024). According to Ocke and Braga (2024), Brazil, whose economy is the largest in Latin America, attempted to leverage its brand awareness as a promising investment hub for a wide variety of sectors and add new attributes to the country's image, such as a strong, innovative, and sustainable economy, by undertaking country brand initiatives and hosting sporting mega-events as international promotional tools. However, the country has accumulated instability and turbulence over the years, which has discredited its reputation-building efforts. The lack of public financial management, the economic crisis associated with widespread corruption, inadequate responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, and a lack of environmental management have all negatively affected the country's image. Currently, the relaunch of “Marca Brasil” represents an effort to redefine its brand image based on a repositioning strategy aimed at positioning the country as a protagonist on the global stage, adding value to how the country is perceived. Other previous studies have dealt with the construction of Brazil's country brand identity (Mariutti et al., 2013), its country image (Souza et al., 2014), and its resources (Mariutti et al., 2024).

Bassols (2016) analyzes Colombia's brands at a design and marketing level, connecting brand development with promotional efforts over 50 years

of conflict in the country and among brand-building recommendations for Colombia. This conflict, which Colombia is still grappling with, began as a communist-oriented guerrilla rebellion led by the armed group Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), which operated mainly in rural areas, in a process similar to other Latin American countries. This inhibited tourism for decades. The author mentions that, although Colombia is still a long way from the best current tourism brands in the region, such as Brazil, Argentina, or Mexico, its consistent performance should be highlighted, as Colombia is enjoying its greatest expansion in the hospitality industry.

In the context of Latin American and Caribbean countries, it is important to consider the constant shifts in the left-to-right and vice-versa sides of the political spectrum. Ocke and Braga (2025) also highlight that business environment variables in developed economies, such as free markets, low corruption rates, efficient infrastructure, and limited government intervention, do not apply to the Latin American context in the same way. Conversely, in addition to its geographic distance from wars and severe geopolitical conflicts, Latin America boasts a multi-ethnic culture and is rich in commodities, minerals, and renewable energy. These factors give the bloc's countries a competitive advantage over major global political and economic forces.

2. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE REGION'S COUNTRY BRAND PROGRAMS

Given Latin America's natural attractions as a strong asset of its competitive identity, the brand identity of the region's countries has developed with a focus on the tourism market. However, Latin nations are now seeking to diversify their capabilities, despite their reliance on the global tourism economy. In this context, it is noteworthy that most definitions of country brand (Ocke & Platt, 2022) are anchored in an economic approach, viewing the brand as a strategic asset to make the nation more attractive and competitive with a favorable perception regarding exports, governance, tourism, investment, culture, heritage, and people. Thus, since the 2000s, various Latin American governments have launched nation branding campaigns to internationally promote their countries' exports, foreign direct investment, and tourism

offerings (Mariutti & Florek, 2022; Miño, 2022; Montanari & Giraldi, 2018).

While Colombia has promoted international and domestic tourism, aiming to improve its international image and citizens' self-esteem, Brazil has sought to stand out as a technological and innovative country. Mexico maintained its logo and strategy of promoting tourism, investment, and exports until the dissolution of ProMéxico under the López Obrador administration. The country benefits from its geographical proximity to the United States, which gives its country brand a competitive advantage in attracting visitors, investors, and foreign trade (Mexico Tourism Board, 2024). Peru has maintained a strategy focused on tourism and gastronomy. Additionally, by betting on culture as its main strategic asset, the Marca Peru, the oldest in the region, has also been well evaluated in international competitiveness rankings (Marca Peru, 2024). The same goes for Colombia and Bolivia, reinforcing this emphasis on the traditions and cultural heritage of their people (Future Brand Bolivia, 2025; Procolombia, 2024).

Costa Rica performs well in international brand value rankings through a sustainability focus and the promotion of its image as a sustainable economy (Essential Costa Rica, 2024). In turn, Chile has concentrated on promoting investment and exports while creating a national identity. The positioning of the Chile brand as "creating future" seeks results by attracting people and investments in science and technology (Marca Chile, 2024). Argentina has maintained a strategy focused on tourism but has undergone institutional and visual identity changes. Although the country has faced significant economic problems over recent years, its country brand (Marca Argentina, 2024) seeks to foster cooperation with its Southern Cone neighbors—Uruguay and Paraguay—and, like them, is concentrating its efforts on its sectoral brands (Uruguay XXI, 2024) aimed at a wide network of international target markets.

3. LAUNCH OF THE "AMÉRICA LATINA Y EL CARIBE" BRAND AND THE DECISION-MAKING DILEMMA

Following the logic of brand management with an emphasis on building a unique and integrated visual identity, a new regional brand including coun-

tries from Latin America and the Caribbean was launched and presented at the Memorial da América Latina (Memorial, 2024) on May 15, 2024, in São Paulo (SP). This ground-breaking initiative seeks to promote "a more unified, influential and recognizable presence of the countries on the international stage" (Memorial, 2024). After all, the brand, with the textual abbreviation ALC for América Latina y Caribe, "will help to promote investment, encourage tourism and reinforce its projection as a 'solution region,' which will be the image representing the bloc on international stages and at world-class events" (Gazzeta Paulista, 2024).

Through an international competition (PROPMARK, 2024), the winning logo (Figure 1) was created by a Brazilian graphic designer, Jean Guerreiro from Rio Grande do Sul, who lives in Porto Alegre (RS) and, due to the environmental tragedy in his state, faced personal challenges in participating in the project (Clube de Criação, 2024), and two Ecuadorians, Ana Belén Arregui and Alejandro Muñoz Bottas. In the visual identity design, the process of creating and developing the visual and graphic elements sought to represent the essence of the brand's personality. The selection criteria were identification with the region and suitability for the conceptual proposal, which was linked to development, adaptability, flexibility, and versatility.

A brand's visual identity refers to the set of visual elements that represent a brand's essence and personality. This concept encompasses all the visual elements or even experiences with the logo that contribute to the identification and recognition of the brand by the target audience or selected niches. These elements are essential for helping a brand to communicate its message in a strategic, cohesive, and visually impactful way, allowing the public to instantly identify the brand and associate it with its values, products, or services. In this context, the logo expresses the set



Figure 1. The Latin America and the Caribbean Logo.

of visible brand elements, such as the name, color, symbol, and graphic elements that identify and distinguish the brand in the minds of consumers or any group of involved stakeholders. These include:

- Logo: A representative icon as the main graphic symbol that represents the brand.
- Colors: The specific color palette associated with the brand, which helps create a consistent and recognizable visual identity.
- Typography: The style of lettering used in all of the brand’s visual communications.
- Images and Graphics: Additional icons or graphics that can be used to reinforce the brand’s identity.
- Visual Style and Campaign Concept: The unique, differentiated, thematic, and conceptual visual pattern that permeates all the brand’s marketing and communication materials, ensuring consistency and cohesion.

The presentation of the visual identity for the “América Latina Y El Caribe” regional brand is the start of a broader strategy for the global projection of the brand in an economic, geopolitical, and sociocultural context that can value the Latin American bloc, as well as the individual countries that comprise it. In this scenario, the country brand managers of Latin American nations are collaborating to develop a regional branding plan that promotes Latin America and the Caribbean as an integrated tourism, economic, and cultural destination. However, to achieve this goal, there are strategic challenges that require complex choices between balancing the collective regional identity and the distinct national identities.

This decision-making dilemma is the starting point for developing a branding plan for the “América Latina Y El Caribe” regional brand. At the heart of the plan’s development lies the need to identify the competitive and/or shared attributes of the countries that make up the bloc in order to shape a strategic position for the new brand in a context of contemporary challenges in the global market environment. In the case of the “América Latina Y El Caribe” regional brand, the dilemma reflects the challenge of balancing authenticity, cooperation, and competition between the nations of a diverse region with the aim of winning over markets, investors, talent, and visitors. Thus, the central objectives are to harmonize, balance, and align the collective regional identity with

national particularities, ensuring a globally competitive yet locally authentic position. The final decision on a strategic brand management plan will depend on the degree of trust and political alignment among national managers, as well as on financial investments and research incentives.

4. TEACHING NOTES

In the teaching notes section, the case’s lecturer/mediator will find the necessary guidelines for making the best use of this material. Following the proposed directives, participants will be led through a two-stage process. In the first stage, they will have the opportunity to learn about and discuss contemporary nation branding practices in Latin America, as well as the performance of Latin American countries in country brand competitiveness rankings. In the second stage, participants will be responsible for analyzing the brand identity of “América Latina Y El Caribe” and its interconnections with the national identities of the countries in the bloc. The goal is to create a value proposition for the regional brand that can position the brand in an efficient, well-adjusted, and authentic way.

The learning objectives are:

- strategic thinking in multicultural contexts;
- critical analysis of regional geopolitics;
- diagnosis of brand identity and proposition of a value for the regional brand;
- the ability to balance authenticity, competition, and cooperation.
- the suggested subject is Strategic Brand Management or Place Branding.

The target audience includes undergraduate and postgraduate students in business administration, public administration, marketing, branding, communication, economics, international relations, or tourism. For government officials, the course can be offered in seminar and workshop rounds.

As prerequisites, it is suggested that the case be applied after teaching the central concepts of strategic brand management and place branding knowledge, such as brand elements and touchpoints, followed by the brands’ scopes, such as identity, image, reputation, value, and positioning, as well as brand architecture, extension, associations, and strength.

In addition to the pre-reading of the case, participants are advised to familiarize themselves with the following material before the case is applied:

- video of the regional brand launch, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xjhb0wgm0Y>;
- panel on place branding held at the first Consumption & Branding Conference 2023, at the Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing, in São Paulo, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uFrwJ0IPdQ8>;
- guidelines for the regional brand, from the Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean, available at: <https://www.caf.com/pt/especiales/marca-da-regiao/caf-e-a-marca-regi%C3%A3o/>.

5. TEACHING CASE APPLICATION STRATEGIES

There are two stages, each with three sessions.

5.1. Stage 1: Nation Branding in Latin America: Research and Discussion

Objective: The aim of this stage was to provide participants with the opportunity to research and discuss the landscape of contemporary nation branding practices in Latin America, as well as to reflect on the performance of Latin American countries in country brand competitiveness rankings.

Total class time: 60 min, divided into three sessions.

Session 1: the lecturer/mediator introduces the case lasting approximately 30 minutes, writing keywords and terms on the board to encourage interaction from participants. Suggested topics include:

- the concept of nation branding and country brands;
- nation branding in Latin America;

- challenges and opportunities for the Latin America and Caribbean brand;
- place brand competitiveness rankings.

Session 2: focus of research on country branding, lasting approximately 30 minutes. The lecturer/mediator divides participants into themed teams (by country). Each team researches the following, as per Table 1:

- The brand strategies and actions adopted by a Latin American country with an official country brand management program.
- International competitiveness and brand value indices, including the rankings, indicators, and metrics for each ranking, to evaluate the performance of these nations.

Tables 2 and 3 provide recommendations for information sources for the themed teams. Participants may also cite any favorable or unfavorable journalistic content they find about the brand.

Session 3: presentation and discussion of research findings, lasting approximately 20 minutes. The lecturer acts as a mediator, using the board, to highlight key elements from the groups' presentations. They connect these findings to the case narrative and the theoretical concepts introduced earlier. The session concludes by promoting the integration of the teams' various points.

The expected outcome of Stage 1 is that participants will present a general overview of contemporary nation branding practices in Latin America, based on their analysis of information from official country brand channels. They should also reflect on international competitiveness rankings, focusing on country

Table 1. Research focus of each team.

Research Focus	
Country brand management programs	Place brand rankings indices
Brand identity and values	Purpose of the consultancy/organization
Brand governance and management structure	Services provided and customers served
Brand architecture and sector brands	Published rankings—general and Latin America
License, registration, and use of the trademark	Brand value assessment methods and indicators
Programs to attract companies, investment, tourism, and people	Competitive positioning of brands
Brand communication and positioning	Brand performance in the aggregate over time

Table 2. Official country brand portals: Management programs.

Brand Chile:	https://marcachile.cl/
Brand Uruguai:	https://marcapaisuruguay.gub.uy/
Brand Argentina:	https://www.argentina.b.ar/turismoydeportes/marca-pais
Brand Peru:	https://peru.info/es-pe/marca-peru
Brand Colômbia:	https://www.colombia.co/
Brand Costa Rica:	https://www.esencialcostarica.com/eng/
Brand México:	https://www.visitmexico.com/en/
Brand Brasil:	https://visitbrasil.com/pt/

Table 3. Institutions of place brand competitiveness indices: Brand equity rankings.

Bloom Consulting:	https://www.bloom-consulting.com/en/nation-branding
The Good Country Index:	https://index.goodcountry.org/
Brand Finance:	https://brandirectory.com/rankings/nation-brands/
Future Brand:	https://www.futurebrand.com/futurebrand-country-index https://www.futurebrand.com/country-brand-report-latin-america-2019-2020
The Place Brand Observer:	https://placebrandobserver.com/place-brand-rankings-indices/

brand value, evaluation methods and metrics, and the performance of Latin American countries within these rankings.

Key discussion points will include:

- **Country Brand Programs:** The strategies used by Latin countries to build comprehensive country brand programs; brand architecture and sectoral brands converging with the assets that form their competitive identity; and brand actions, activations, and touchpoints in terms of communication, advertising, public relations, and events.
- **Competitive Identity:** The constructs that form each country's identity; the diversification of competitive assets observed in the region's countries, such as culture, economy, business environment, politics, natural and human resources, infrastructure, and other assets.
- **Brand Positioning:** Points of parity and difference between the brands examined; brand positioning relative to target markets based on the competitive assets observed.
- **Competitiveness Rankings:** An introduction to the nature and purpose of credible rankings produced by reputable organizations, which are structured by robust, time-consuming, and expensive research.
- **Evaluation Metrics:** Most rankings are not comprehensive and are limited to economic indicators,

while the intangible characteristics of a place are difficult to evaluate and capture. A presentation of the method developed by each organization to determine brand value.

- **Performance of Nations:** A general description of the positioning of Latin American countries in the examined rankings or in a specific ranking.

5.2. Stage 2: The Decision-Making Dilemma: Positioning the “América Latina Y El Caribe” Brand

Objective: The aim of this stage was to provide participants with the opportunity to discuss the significance of the “América Latina Y El Caribe” brand, its identity, its main attributes, and its interconnections with the national identities of the bloc's countries. The goal is to create a value proposition for the regional brand that can position it in an efficient and authentic way.

Total class time: 60 min, divided into three sessions.

In session 1, presentation of the decision-making dilemma by the teacher/mediator lasting approximately 10 minutes, the lecturer or mediator uses the board to distribute keywords and terms related to the main aspects of the case dilemma, inviting participants to interact. The suggested topics are:

- the brand identity of “América Latina Y El Caribe” (Latin America and the Caribbean);

- the competitive identity of the countries versus the regional identity;
- positioning strategies for the regional brand;
- challenges and opportunities for the Latin America and Caribbean brand.

In session 2, analysis of the visual identity of the brand “América Latina Y El Caribe” lasting approximately 20 minutes, within the thematic teams determined in step 1, participants must analyze the “América Latina Y El Caribe” logo. Afterwards, the lecturer or mediator opens the discussion to the entire group. The lecturer acts as a mediator, using a projector, to highlight the analyses of the logo and the board to emphasize the main elements described by the working groups.

Possible points of analysis include:

- Elements of the brand’s visual identity: A representative icon is presented as the main graphic symbol. The green letter “y,” which means “and” in Spanish, symbolizes the local-regional, cultural, environmental, and sustainable concepts of the conglomerate of Latin and Caribbean countries.
- The region’s environmental and cultural diversity: This is the greatest strength and is united in the colorful graphics that form the letter “y.”
- Visual style: A unique visual pattern is signaled with graphic consistency of the integration symbol, with the letter “y” at the center and a black background.
- Coloration: A strong element of the visual identity composition is the use of colors associated with the brand to highlight the region’s richness. Emphasis is placed on the color green, which represents nature in the letter “y,” flanked by blue, red, and orange, which convey both the diversity and the unity of culture, people, and joy.
- Typography: A white font is used, a color that represents peace. The letters are sans-serif with parallel colored stripes whose linear and vertical graphics reinforce the brand’s identity.

The lecturer should conclude the session by highlighting that the brand is both figurative and nominative, with a geographical designation symbolically defining the represented countries. Therefore, the visual identity of the Latin America and Caribbean brand visually and strategically permeates the symbolic di-

mensionality of the purposes of this regional brand, which was recently launched globally. This structured process for creating a significant brand identity is perceived as a way to strengthen the brand’s presence and reputation by forming positive and lasting connections between these countries and other nations. This place brand uses vertical, parallel, and colorful visual signatures as its main metaphor, demonstrating a regional and continental bloc of countries that benefits brand recognition. Finally, the lecturer and students discuss the interconnections between the regional brand and the country brand that each team represents.

In session 3, strategic definitions for positioning the “Latin America and the Caribbean” brand, lasting approximately 30 minutes, within the thematic teams determined in stage 1, participants must discuss the following points:

- strategic positioning decisions for the “América Latina Y El Caribe” brand;
- developing a proposed slogan and branding program for the regional brand.

The lecturer acts as a mediator. For the first point, the lecturer should guide the groups to discuss the pros and cons of a positioning strategy that emphasizes regional unity versus one that highlights national diversities.

Possible points on positioning decisions:

- Positioning with an emphasis on regional unity:
 - o Pros: Creates a strong, cohesive narrative to attract investors, tourists, and global partners. It maximizes synergies between countries by highlighting shared attributes (such as biodiversity, vibrant culture, and hospitality).
 - o Cons: May dilute the unique characteristics of each nation, reducing perceived authenticity. Countries with already-established brands (e.g., Mexico, Peru, and Chile) might resist a generic approach.
- Positioning with an emphasis on national diversity:
 - o Pros: Preserves the uniqueness of each country, attracting specific niches (e.g., luxury tourism in the Caribbean and ecotourism in the Amazon). It avoids political or cultural conflicts between nations with distinct histories and images.
 - o Cons: Weakens the region’s global competitiveness, as other areas (like the European Union) promote themselves in a unified way.

It can also create redundancy or competition between country brands on the same level.

While there is no single “correct” approach, the lecturer should conclude the discussion by highlighting that a hybrid positioning strategy is often the best choice. A regional branding effort based on macro-attributes, complemented by modular sub-campaigns, can allow each country to highlight its unique selling points. The lecturer then moves the discussion to the final stage of the case study, encouraging participants to present their proposals for implementing a branding program for the regional brand.

For the second point, the lecturer should guide the discussion by proposing three possible theoretical frameworks:

- The Umbrella Brand Architecture Model (masterbrand+sub-brands): The main region brand, “América Latina Y El Caribe,” acts as an umbrella, while each country (or group of countries) maintains its own sub-brand with controlled adaptations.
- The Thematic Clustering System (grouping by niches): The region is divided into strategic clusters based on complementarities, not geopolitical borders.
- The Layered Branding Model (regional, national, and local): A multilevel approach where different messages are targeted to different audiences.

The three possible points on branding programs are:

- **Hybrid brand architecture model (masterbrand + sub-brands)**
 - o Unified narrative based on shared macro-attributes (e.g., “cultural diversity,” “lush nature,” “emerging innovation”);
 - o Regional logo and slogan, but with variations allowed (e.g., the Caribbean might emphasize “tropical paradise,” while the Southern Cone highlights “culture and adventure”);
 - o National Flexibility: countries can add local elements (e.g., Mexico includes references to Mayan/Aztec heritage and Brazil highlights cultural diversity);
 - o Governance Mechanism: a regional council defines minimum guidelines, but each national manager has the autonomy to adapt.

Among the advantages are:

- o Maintains global cohesion without stifling local identities;

- o Allows countries with strong brands (e.g., Brazil and Costa Rica) to maintain their equity;
- o Reduces political conflicts, as no nation is forced to dissolve completely.

These are the challenges:

- o Risk of disconnected messages if there is no strict alignment;
- o Need for shared funding for regional campaigns.
- **Thematic clustering system (niche grouping): Examples of clusters**
 - o The Caribbean+Central America: “paradise of beaches and sustainability”;
 - o Andean Countries: “Ancient Mystery and Extreme Adventure”;
 - o Southern Cone: “sophisticated culture and innovation”;
 - o Brazil+Ecuador+Colombia: “biodiversity and green energy.”

As cooperative management:

- o Each cluster has a steering committee with representatives from the countries involved;
- o Campaigns are launched in a segmented manner by target audience (e.g., premium tourism for the Caribbean and ecotourism for the Amazon).

Among the advantages are:

- o Maximizes synergies between countries with similar profiles;
- o Facilitates transnational partnerships (e.g., multicountry tour packages);
- o Reduces internal competition, as each cluster has a clear positioning.

These are the challenges:

- o Countries outside the predominant clusters may feel marginalized (e.g., Paraguay and Suriname);
- o Requires a high degree of logistical and diplomatic cooperation.
- **“Layered branding” model (regional, national, and local)**
 - o Global Level: generic campaigns to attract investors, residents, expatriates, and long-distance tourists (“Come to Latin America”);
 - o National Level: materials with content adapted to specific target markets (e.g., promotion from Mexico to the United States, from Brazil to Europe);
 - o Local Level: hyper-personalized content (e.g., gastronomic, cultural, or religious itineraries in Peru; adventure tourism in Patagonia, Argenti-

na; dance courses in Buenos Aires; science or literature in Chile; biodiversity in Costa Rica; and business or Spanish courses in Uruguay).

Coordination mechanisms:

- o Single Digital Platform: a unified portal (like “Visit Latin America”) with filters by country and interest;
- o Shared Marketing Fund: Contributions proportional to each nation’s tourism gross domestic product.

Among the advantages are:

- o Efficient segmentation without losing regional strength;
- o Scalability for different budgets (smaller countries do not need to invest as much).

These are the challenges:

- o Complexity in managing multiple simultaneous campaigns;
- o Risk of message overlap.

Regarding the considerations for the analysis, the best solution on which path to choose depends on the degree of political and economic integration in the region:

- If there is a strong desire for unity → hybrid model (masterbrand+sub-brands);
- If there are internal disputes, but complementarities → thematic clustering;
- If the priority is flexibility and segmentation → layered branding.

The ideal approach is to test all the three in pilot markets before full implementation, adjusting them based on data and feedback from member countries.

Related sub-dilemmas:

- Cost Versus Benefit: how to distribute investments between regional and national campaigns?
- Governance: who decides the predominant narrative (a central entity or a consensus among countries)?
- Target Audience: prioritize global markets (the United States and Europe) or regional ones (intra-Latin American tourism)?

Critical success factors for any solution:

- Clear Governance: create a regional branding authority (e.g., under the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States or the Development Bank of Latin America) to avoid disputes;

- Common Evaluation Metrics: define shared key performance indicators (KPIs) (e.g., growth in intra-regional tourism and increase in foreign investment);
- Equitable Financing: wealthier countries contribute more but have more influence in decisions;
- Brand Diplomacy: prevent historical, ideological, or political rivalries (e.g., Argentina × Brazil) from affecting the project.

6. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Brands constantly shape people’s thoughts and behaviors, consciously or unconsciously, generating motivations, attitudes, or learnings. Brands signal a widespread presence in consumers’ lives, prioritizing market exchanges and social interaction, as they continue to reveal different facets and direct and indirect effects on individuals’ decision-making. These social purposes of a brand (Aaker, 2023) and profitable driver (Oh et al., 2020) are also present in a place brand, through a robust identity and the consequent projection of a positive image of a locality to attract people, businesses, tourism, and investments. Therefore, geographical areas (nations, regions, and cities) also establish their brands (Oh et al., 2020) based on their own narratives about the place per se (Kavaratzis & Florek, 2021).

In brand literature, we are currently in the era of strategic brand management, with its third wave of evolution (Oh et al., 2020). The first wave is summarized by the brand as a differentiator, concerning the information relevant to the product or service it represents, its quality, and its role in identification for various audiences (competitors, consumers, and suppliers, among others), as well as the visual and textual ease of the organization’s or a locality’s communication. The second wave refers to brand attributes, signaling its characteristics and benefits, its personality, and possible consumer perceptions. Nowadays, the third wave of evolution, which began in the 2000s, points to the tangible and intangible values of the brand, accompanied by recommended or famous associations. These are the economic, financial, or perceptual values for the consumer or any audience, a perception that involves brand awareness, quality, and loyalty.

The theoretical principles of branding—for example, brand building, brand equity, brand communi-

cation strategies, and consumer relationships—are adapted when applied to a place. However, a place brand differs from a product or service brand due to its complexity (Kotler et al., 1993) and its potential (Oh et al., 2020). Kotler (1972, pp. 51-52) discreetly mentions the place as a possible type of marketing (nations, cities, regions, resorts, and properties). Later, the renowned author published a book on place marketing (Kotler et al., 1993), in which he states that the central principle of place marketing is that, despite the powerful internal and external forces that impact them, they have, among their collective resources and people, the capacity to improve their relative competitive position.

Over the last two decades of research, brands have demonstrated their richness in meanings and complexities of effects, acting as mediators or moderators in personal choices, whether for products, services, or places (Artêncio et al., 2020; Kavaratzis & Florek, 2021; Lu et al., 2020; Mariutti & Florek, 2022). For example, place brand preferences for a country to work in, a region to invest in, a city to study in, or even to visit and tour (Dinnie, 2015; Kavaratzis & Florek, 2021; Kilduff & Tabales, 2017; Mariutti & Florek, 2022; Montanari & Giralaldi, 2018).

A place brand represents a network of associations in the minds of the involved public based on the visual, verbal, and behavioral expression of a place. This encompasses the purposes, communications, values, and general culture of the involved public, as well as the local urban space (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009). After all, place brands seek to unite a sense of history and a connection to traditional cultures, regions, and fundamental beliefs, building a distinct identity to reinforce their market authenticity. To do so, treating the place brand as a set of actions aimed at building strong brands requires a collaborative public–private entity, consolidating essential activities at different brand levels (city, region, and community), in addition to a country (Mariutti et al., 2024).

Regarding brand building or management, Kapferer (2008) believes that for a deep brand identity, “a brand map, the perspective of its identity, the guarantee of its continuity, and the coherence imposed through the products it signs, the countries, and administrators” are necessary (Kapferer, 2008, p. 67). The concept of brand identity in

marketing is essential for defining a country brand and establishing guidelines for its management and development (Moraes & Strehlau, 2020). Furthermore, strong place brands progress with theoretical-methodological applications based on brand identity, cultural branding, and brand equity (Steenkamp, 2021).

Brand identity involves communication processes by representing one of the main touchpoints, and the logo is the visual synthesis of that identity (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). A brand’s visual identity is not limited to graphic design; it also influences the overall customer experience and the brand’s perception in the market (Oh et al., 2020). Brand identity is equivalent to the soul of the brand (Aaker, 1992; Kapferer, 2008; Steenkamp, 2021) and functions as a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aims to create or maintain. Such associations represent what the brand intends to achieve and imply a promise to customers or the public involved (Aaker, 1992; Keller & Aaker, 1992).

According to Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000), brand identity is the cornerstone of brand strategy, and the attributes and benefits of the product or place are identified there through touchpoints with the logo (Ashworth & Kavaratzis, 2009; Heilbrunn, 2006; Kapferer, 2008). However, previous studies in the place branding literature such as those by Ashworth and Kavaratzis (2009) and Mariutti et al. (2024) outline the convergences and divergences in the conceptual-practical construction of identity between the place brand and its own logo, in light of various theories and contextual conceptualizations.

From the perspective of Aaker’s (2007) brand identity structure, both a core and an expanded identity are presented. The core identity is the essence of the brand, its timeless purpose, with the unique attributes and dimensional elements of the brand identity organized into cohesive and meaningful groups, providing texture and integrity. The expanded brand identity is composed of four dimensions: the brand as a product, as an organization, as a person, and as a symbol. The last one, the brand as a symbol, was the conceptual choice for this teaching case and involves visual images and metaphors. These four perspectives are different from each oth-

er in considering the elements and patterns of the brand, which can help clarify, enrich, and differentiate an identity (Aaker, 2007), but they complement each other to then guide the decisive actions of planning and executing the creation of a reference framework and, subsequently, the communication and marketing plan.

The perceived brand image derived from its identity (created by brand strategists) pointed to the strategic relevance of cohesive communication between the touchpoints with its logo, its online or offline presence, its physical space, its service, and the product itself, among others. Thus, the brand image makes it possible for a brand to be an iconic organizational (or local) epitome, causing its products (or local resources) to be recognized or remembered in the market. Tangible and intangible resources of a locality function as strategic assets that, when properly aligned with the place brand's image, enhance the achievement of a competitive advantage (Mariutti et al., 2024). In the case of place brands, it is the dimensions related to the various cultural, social, geographical, political, economic, technological, and other attributes (Mariutti et al., 2024) that need to be considered to determine the orientation of the brand image to be projected. Recently, in a study on region branding, Almeida and Cardoso (2022) considered that, in addition to the region's brand, the following dimensions must be taken into account: the territory, cultural diplomacy, local governance, social actors, and regional development.

In turn, brand positioning, its value proposition, is based on its promise, interacting with bonds, experiences, and relationships. Kotler and Pfoertsch (2010, p. 177) recall that it is about the "positioning statement, category definition, brand name, etc. to place your products or services in the market," with brand strategy being "built from brand positioning, value proposition, and brand personality, as well as the brand promise and brand architecture."

Ashworth and Kavaratzis (2009, p. 528) state that in the context of place brands, "the starting point can be defined by the brand's personality, the brand's positioning, and the brand's reality." After all, on the one hand, we have the typological designations attributed to place branding allied with marketing, and on the other hand, the typologies attributed to local governance and often mixed with the territorial brand, but

without considering regional development (Almeida & Cardoso, 2022).

For Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000), the brand is the reference base, which, in the market reality of a place, requires a power of local influence to attract residents and investments, as well as to create memorable moments for consumers and others involved with the place brand. In this marketing context, there are key areas of practical-theoretical study related to brand management—two of them are technological advancements with artificial intelligence tools and the increase in the collection and analysis of automated data. At the same time, a third area of research wanders in the alignment between theory and practice based on a place brand of a city, region, or country, with varied purposes for attracting investment, tourists, and/or residents, in the pursuit of quality of life, cultural identification, entrepreneurial potential, security need, or sustainable priority.

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How to cite this article:

Ocke, M. & Mariutti, F. G. (2025). "Latin America and the Caribbean": case study on regional brand identity and positioning. *Internext*, 20(3), e829. <https://doi.org/10.18568/internext.v20i3.829>