

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN PLACE BRANDING – A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Purpose: The article aims to classify existing research on artificial intelligence in place branding and to identify emerging directions for future research.

Design/methodology/approach: The paper adopts a conceptual approach based on a systematic review of the existing literature and illustrative examples of AI applications in territorial marketing and city branding practices. A systematic literature review based on bibliometric analysis of Scopus and Web of Science databases was conducted for the study.

Findings: The review indicates that AI enables personalized marketing communication, the design of creative promotional campaigns, real-time monitoring of city image and effective stakeholder relationship management. These findings highlight the recurring trends and practical applications of AI in marketing and city and place branding identified across the literature.

Research limitations/implications: The study focuses on synthesizing insights from published research, suggesting directions for future investigation into AI's role in city branding and marketing innovation.

Social implications: AI-supported branding can improve citizen and visitor engagement, enhance communication and promote responsible use of digital tools in leveraging AI technologies to design innovative and data-driven branding strategies.

Practical implications: The findings offer guidance for city authorities and branding managers on how to leverage AI technologies to design innovative and data-driven branding strategies. They also provide insights into the challenges associated with the use of AI in city branding.

Originality/value: This paper contributes to the field by systematically mapping the role of AI in place branding and identifying key areas for application and development.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, AI, place marketing, place branding, city branding, destination branding.

Category of the paper: Literature review.

1. Introduction

In the digital era, artificial intelligence (AI) is recognized as a key technology driving business innovation (Yao et al., 2025). One of the most frequently cited definitions of AI describes it as the capability of a system to accurately interpret data from its environment, learn from it and utilize the acquired knowledge to achieve specific goals and tasks through flexible adaptation to changing conditions (Haenlein, Kaplan, 2019). AI plays a fundamental role in both transforming marketing processes and shaping the future landscape of the field (Grewal et al., 2025; Masnita et al., 2024). The rapid evolution of AI is also profoundly transforming contemporary approaches to brand image development (Hue, Hung, 2025). As emphasized by Kamkankaew et al. (Kamkankaew et al., 2025) the application of AI in online marketing strategies is expected to revolutionize the conduct of promotional activities and audience communication in the coming years. In light of data published by Semrush, AI adoption in marketing strategies has demonstrated a marked increase, highlighting its growing significance among both researchers and practitioners worldwide (Hue, Hung, 2025).

In light of data published by Semrush (Lahey, 2025), the global significance of artificial intelligence (AI) in both the economy and marketing is growing at a rapid pace. It is estimated that by 2030, AI technologies will contribute approximately USD 15.7 trillion to global GDP, while the value of the global AI market is projected to increase from USD 638.23 billion in 2024 to over USD 1.81 trillion by 2030. One of the fastest-growing segments is generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI). Its potential applications in content creation, communication and audience experience design are highly promising. Alongside technological advancement, interest in generative AI within the academic community is also increasing. Gen AI is defined as systems capable of generating novel content such as text, images, audio, video, or music, based on provided input data. Gen AI leverages advanced machine learning techniques, including, among others, large language models (LLMs) (Jang et al., 2024). This enables the generation of original materials that meet specific requirements and specifications.

In light of statistics, 88% of marketers already utilize artificial intelligence tools in their daily work, with more than half employing them for content optimization and the analysis of consumer behavior data (Lahey, 2025). Currently, its widespread application in digital marketing contributes significantly to the transformation of both content creation and user reception processes (Joshi et al., 2025). As noted by Grewal and colleagues (Grewal et al., 2025) over the coming decade, generative artificial intelligence is expected to influence how marketers interact and communicate with customers. Moreover, it will play a crucial role in supporting the creation and distribution of marketing content (including text, images, video) as well as contributing to the development of research methodologies and the design of new products and services.

From a marketing perspective, the application of generative artificial intelligence tools is associated with numerous benefits. AI-driven process automation allows for the reallocation of resources from routine tasks to strategic activities, minimizes the risk of human error, supports data protection and ensures operational continuity (Joshi et al., 2025). These technologies enable the personalization of marketing campaigns based on behavioral data, facilitate real-time decision-making and allow for the prediction of market trends. Key benefits include increased advertising process efficiency, optimized expenditures, improved profitability, precise alignment of content with individual consumer preferences and the enhancement of brand trust (Grewal et al., 2025; Islam et al., 2024; Joshi et al., 2025).

The use of artificial intelligence in marketing, as well as in business more broadly, is, however, accompanied by technological, organizational and ethical challenges (Syam, 2025). The integration of artificial intelligence systems with existing organizational structures requires systematic training and the long-term development of digital competencies (Yao et al., 2025). Striking a balance between process automation and human creative input represents one of the key priorities of contemporary communication strategies. From both a scientific and business perspective, this balance is essential for their effectiveness and innovativeness (Joshi et al., 2025).

Large language models possess advanced natural language processing capabilities and demonstrate significant potential as effective tools supporting a wide range of diverse fields (Cao et al., 2025). Researchers and practitioners recognize numerous opportunities for the application of artificial intelligence in marketing, as well as its growing significance in urban planning and management. This is particularly evident in areas such as smart cities, city management, marketing and place branding. The implementation of AI in the context of smart cities has contributed to increased efficiency, improved accessibility of services and enhanced quality of life for residents (Szarek-Orlecka, Cader, 2025; Szpilko et al., 2023). AI continuously drives innovations that enhance safety, efficiency and inclusivity, reflecting the evolving role of digitalization in shaping management processes in cities worldwide (Smart City Index 2024: How Cities Are Shaping the Future of Urban Life, 2024). The integration of branding with digital transformation and smart city initiatives enables the construction of a coherent and innovative city image, while simultaneously supporting sustainable development, citizen engagement and economic growth. A strong smart city brand enhances its attractiveness and draws residents, tourists, investors and professionals (Briana et al., 2025).

In the contemporary context, where data-driven technologies play a pivotal role across various domains, their application in place marketing and the development of cities and regions is of significant importance. This is particularly relevant for enhancing the competitiveness and attractiveness of different locations (Békési, Szöllösi, 2025). Artificial intelligence can serve as a tool supporting marketing activities and place brand management, enabling, for example, data analysis and the personalization of communication with residents and other stakeholders (Chen et al., 2024; Hakala, 2025). As evidenced in the literature, place brands are currently

undergoing significant transformations driven by artificial intelligence technologies (Chen et al., 2024).

Research on the direct application of artificial intelligence in place branding, however, remains in its early stages. The existing literature primarily consists of review-oriented studies, including hybrid-narrative analyses of the emerging field of place branding supported by human–AI collaboration (Chen et al., 2024). Concurrently, exploratory studies are emerging that highlight the potential of AI-based tools in the processes of urban creation and city identity management (e.g., Hakala, 2025). However, as noted by Corazza (Corazza, 2016), creativity evolves in tandem with profound technological transformations. In this context, artificial intelligence represents a significant shift, as it can exhibit creative capabilities either autonomously or by augmenting and supporting human creativity (Feuerriegel et al., 2024).

As with other technological tools, the effectiveness of AI deployment depends on the intentions and competencies of the entities implementing it. Place leaders and marketers should strive to identify forms and applications of AI that support their strategic activities, without replacing human creativity, reflection and interpretative capabilities. The potential of AI to support decision-making processes and enhance the coherence of place brand communication narratives is currently the subject of preliminary scholarly discussion. This underscores the need for a critical approach to integrating AI into marketing strategies, particularly in areas that require the cultivation of an authentic place brand image and stakeholder relationships.

The article aims to classify existing research on artificial intelligence in place marketing and branding and to identify emerging directions for future research. This study employs a systematic literature review to identify the most significant research on AI in place branding and indicate directions for development and uncover emerging topics for future investigation. The review highlights the extent and significance of AI applications in place marketing and branding initiatives, as well as the challenges and considerations they pose for urban stakeholders. A systematic literature review based on bibliometric analysis of Scopus and Web of Science databases was conducted for the study.

2. Literature review

Place marketing initially served as a framework for managing the attractiveness of territories, relying on marketing instruments and a market-oriented approach. With increasing competition among cities and regions, as well as the growing complexity of the needs of diverse stakeholder groups, this approach has evolved toward place branding (Boisen et al., 2018; Kumar, Panda, 2019; Zenker et al., 2017). Place branding extends place marketing by incorporating dimensions of identity, meaning and reputation. It focuses on a long-term vision and the consistent narrative of a place (Zenker et al., 2017). In the context of rapid urbanization,

city branding has evolved from a positioning tool into a strategic mechanism of urban governance and policy coordination (Le et al., 2025).

The literature indicates that branding does not replace marketing, but rather integrates and structures it at the strategic level (Boisen et al., 2018). Moreover, it increasingly influences the competitiveness and attractiveness of contemporary cities (Lemmettyinen et al., 2025). Research also emphasizes the importance of stakeholder co-creation of the brand and its embeddedness in the local social and cultural context (Eshuis, Ripoll González, 2025). According to the findings of Le et al. (Le et al., 2025) city branding is structured as a multi-phase process encompassing pre-branding, branding operationalization and post-branding stages. The authors emphasize co-creation, cross-sectoral coordination and feedback-based learning, while prioritizing alignment between strategic objectives and lived urban realities over external attractive image construction.

One of the fastest-growing areas of research is the application of artificial intelligence in marketing. This stems from its ability to analyze large datasets, automate decision-making and personalize communication in real time (Davenport et al., 2020). The literature emphasizes that AI is significantly transforming the way marketing strategies are designed, shifting them toward data-driven and behavior-prediction-based approaches (Huang, Rust, 2021). These processes can also be applied in the domains of place marketing and place branding.

As emphasized by Chen et al., (Chen et al., 2024) AI tools can assist in defining territorial brand narratives. Similarly to online marketing and corporate branding, AI can also support segmentation and the tailoring of communication to different stakeholder groups, thereby strengthening the coherence and effectiveness of place brand strategies. However, place and destination marketers often oversimplify the branding process by directly transferring mechanisms derived from corporate branding. This approach fails to account for the complexity of places and the heterogeneity of their stakeholders and, in effect, does not correspond to the specific nature of territorial brand development (Zenker et al., 2017). A similar risk is also associated with the application of generative AI tools in this domain.

The development of AI tools, however, has the potential to redefine the way cities design and manage their image. Digital platforms, municipal chatbots, intelligent service systems and personalized marketing communications now enable the creation of more personal and authentic relationships with audiences, both internal and external (Briana et al., 2025; Najah Mohammed Alrasheedi, 2025). As a result, the city brand can be understood as a set of experiences that adapt to different individuals, their needs and expectations in everyday situations. Algorithms, sentiment analysis and recommendation systems enable the continuous monitoring of social moods, multidimensional analysis of audience behavior and real-time assessment of their responses. On this basis, it becomes possible to design more coherent and adaptive communication strategies (*Bloom Consulting: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Place Branding*, 2025; Kumar, Panda, 2019).

From a theoretical perspective, a brand can be conceptualized as a symbolic construct whose primary function is to identify and differentiate a given place from others. The brand thus serves as a carrier of cultural and social meanings embedded in its visual and verbal elements. Brand symbols, such as logos, slogans and promotional taglines constitute central points of reference. Audiences interpret these symbols by attributing specific characteristics, values and associations to the place, which in turn shapes their perceptions and decisions (Eshuis, Ripoll González, 2025).

Existing empirical studies on the use of AI in place marketing and place branding are largely exploratory in nature. One of the few examples of AI application in this domain is a study that employed the language model ChatGPT to generate city slogans for the 20 largest municipalities in Finland. In this approach, generative algorithms analyzed input data and formulated slogan proposals, which were then subjected to qualitative comparative analysis against expert-created slogans and evaluated from the perspective of place branding practitioners. The study revealed both the potential of AI tools to effectively support the creation of communication materials and the limitations related to their ability to capture the unique characteristics of local identity. The authors emphasize that, despite the widespread use of AI in marketing, its creative capabilities in the context of generating marketing slogans still require further theoretical and empirical investigation. This is particularly relevant to the linguistic and semantic dimensions of promotional content, which play a key role in building recognition and differentiating places in the competitive territorial market (Hakala, 2025). AI tools are capable of generating an almost unlimited number of proposals, which accelerates the creative process and allows for time and cost savings. Implementation examples in cities such as Pori and Vantaa (Finland) demonstrate that AI-generated slogans can ultimately be perceived as effective and valuable in terms of strategic communication. At the same time, researchers highlight the limitations of these tools: the repetitiveness of used vocabulary and the difficulty in capturing human tone and cultural context (Hakala, 2025).

According to the literature, AI enables relatively effective alignment of strategies with dynamic socio-cultural and economic contexts. It processes vast datasets from social media and global media sources, making it possible, among other things, to monitor and forecast trends in the behavior of key city stakeholders, including tourists, investors and residents. However, there is a need for in-depth research on the interaction between technologically generated intelligence and the specific identity of a place (*Bloom Consulting: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Place Branding*, 2025).

Other approaches to defining a brand focus on perceiving it as a set of images and associations embedded in the minds of audiences, or on treating a place brand as a construct of experiences (Eshuis, Ripoll González, 2025). In the field of destination marketing and branding, as well as tourism research, artificial intelligence is increasingly recognized as a key tool for promoting and managing destination brands. AI supports tourism organizations and businesses in analyzing large datasets, creating personalized recommendations and automating

communication. It enables the management of the complexity of modern forms of tourism and economic development processes, while also revolutionizing interactions with visitors and investors. Contemporary urban marketing is increasingly moving away from one-way communication toward dialogue with city stakeholders. By leveraging artificial intelligence, cities (as well as other types of places) can respond more quickly and accurately to the needs of residents and visitors. AI-based tools, such as recommendation systems, chatbots, content generation and predictive algorithms, influence marketing strategies through dynamic capabilities to tailor messaging to consumer behaviors and preferences, while also building an attractive destination image across social media and digital channels more broadly (Najah Mohammed Alrasheedi, 2025).

In tourist destinations, AI is perceived as a multipurpose tool. Its applications encompass marketing, communication, analytical and strategic functions. AI offers a range of opportunities that have the potential to enhance the attractiveness and competitiveness of cities and regions. It enables effective information management, the creation of personalized experiences for visitors and the optimization of marketing processes. A key function of AI in destination marketing is transforming the way cities understand and communicate with their target audiences. By leveraging Big Data, AI-based systems facilitate real-time sentiment analysis. Such capabilities allow for the rapid adjustment of marketing strategies, the attraction of tourists and the improvement of a city's brand image. The implementation of AI technologies has currently created entirely new travel experiences and generated added value for tourists (Samara et al., 2020; Wang, 2025). Moreover, AI can support the creation of personalized content and travel itineraries based on visitor preferences. Generative AI also enables the delivery of one-to-one experiences, which was previously difficult to achieve in destination marketing practice. As a result, cities and regions can develop products and services through hyper-segmentation and hyper-personalization of content, adapting to the individual needs of different tourist groups (Samara et al., 2020).

An increasing number of destinations aim to promote artificial intelligence technologies with an emphasis on enabling tourists to perceive enhanced services and technological advancement within the destination, thereby fostering positive attitudes toward the place (Wang, 2025). Research indicates that a key issue is the perceived authenticity of AI-generated content, often referred to as AI thenticity. Whether AI-generated content is regarded by audiences as credible and consistent with the actual image of a place influences their trust and their intention to visit, particularly in the context of tourist destinations. The authors emphasize that maintaining the authentic character of communication remains a crucial element of effective place marketing, even when AI tools are employed (Bui et al., 2024).

Artificial intelligence can support the identification and communication of the unique identity of places (How to Future-Proof Digital Communications in Place Branding, 2024). Tools that analyze the distinctive features of a destination enable the tailoring of offerings to visitor expectations, while also facilitating collaboration between cities (e.g., by creating routes

connecting complementary locations). This approach can promote both the enhancement of tourist attractiveness and the development of a coherent place narrative.

In the realm of brand communication and creation, AI streamlines the processes of generating promotional content by offering scalability, efficiency and the automation of routine tasks (e.g., producing texts, newsletters, or marketing materials tailored to individual audience preferences). For example, AI-driven image generation allows marketers to transform abstract brand values into tangible experiences that travelers can see and share. Additionally, generative AI can be used to create unique, engaging content or to encourage users to co-create it. This adds originality to advertising campaigns and can help cities reach new audiences through creative formats and digital tools (European Travel Commission, 2025).

3. Methodology

The literature on the application of artificial intelligence in place marketing and branding was reviewed using a bibliometric analysis method. The quantitative analysis conducted enables an assessment of the current state of research and the identification of trends and changes in the number of publications within the studied area.

The literature review was planned and conducted in a phased manner to ensure systematic data collection and analysis. This approach ensures the consistency and transparency of the research process while allowing for the precise identification of trends and gaps in the existing literature (Ejdys, Szpilko, 2022; Gudanowska, 2017; Szpilko et al., 2023; Tomaszewska, Florea, 2018).

In the first stage, bibliographic databases providing access to high-quality scholarly sources were selected (I). Next, keywords enabling precise retrieval of publications related to the studied topic were identified (II), and search narrowing criteria were applied (III). The applied publication selection criteria allowed for the elimination of items not directly related to the research topic and ensured the relevance of the obtained results. Subsequently, a review and selection of data were conducted (IV). In the following step, a quantitative analysis of the selected publications was performed (V). Key research areas addressed in the literature were identified (VI), and thematic clusters were derived based on a keyword analysis (VII) (Table 1).

Table 1.
Methodology of bibliometric analysis

No.	Stage	Description
I	Database selection	Web of Science; Scopus
II	Keywords selection	“place marketing” OR “place brand*” OR “destination brand*” AND “artificial intelligence” in topic (Title-Abs-Key).
III	Criteria selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document types: articles, proceedings papers, conference papers, books, book chapters, review article, editorial materials, editorial, early access. • Search period: 2010-2025.
IV	Data selection and data extraction (removal of duplicates)	Deleting duplicates: DOI, title.
V	Quantitative analysis of the results	Scope: number of publications per year, type of document, main thematic categories, total number of citations.
VI	Identification of research areas	Visualisation of the most frequent keywords.
VII	Creation of thematic clusters	Identification thematic clusters.

Source: own elaboration.

For the bibliometric analysis, the two largest publicly accessible databases were selected: Web of Science and Scopus. The analysis began with a search for publications containing the following terms: „place marketing”, „place brand*”, „city brand*”, „destination brand*”, „artificial intelligence”. The search included publications up to 2025. The initial search encompassed publications containing these phrases (in quotation marks) anywhere in the document. In subsequent steps, the search criteria were narrowed to the presence of the aforementioned keywords in the title, abstract and keywords. Certain additional limiting criteria were applied. Various types of publications were included in the further analysis. In the Scopus database, the following categories were selected: Article, Conference paper, Book chapter, Book, Editorial. In the Web of Science database, the search criteria were narrowed to: Article, Proceeding Paper, Review Article, Book Chapters, Early Access, Editorial materials, Book. The analysis period was limited to publications from 2010 to 2025.

The preliminary search for terms in both databases was conducted using a combination of the following phrases across the entire document (ALL FIELDS): “place marketing” OR “place brand*” OR “city brand*” OR “destination brand*” AND “artificial intelligence”. The initial selection yielded 3078 records in Web of Science and 1527 records in Scopus. However, a preliminary review of the publications revealed that a significant portion was not directly related to the studied area. To improve relevance and identify publications specifically addressing the topic, the search was narrowed to include documents containing the specified phrases in the titles, abstracts, keywords (TOPIC/TITLE-ABS-KEY: “place marketing” OR “place brand*” OR “city brand*” OR “destination brand*”) and across the entire document (AND ALL FIELDS: „artificial intelligence”). A total of 2538 publications were retrieved from Web of Science and 106 from Scopus. The search criteria were then narrowed to include all phrases only in titles, abstracts and keywords. After applying the adopted limiting criteria (document type and publication date), 2260 records remained in Web of Science and 20 publications in Scopus. The results of the successive stages of the publication search are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.
Bibliometric analysis – search results

Stage of analysis	Web of Science	Scopus
<i>1st Research query</i>	ALL FIELDS: “place marketing” OR “place brand*” OR “city brand*” OR “destination brand*” AND “artificial intelligence”	ALL FIELDS: “place marketing” OR “place brand*” OR “city brand*” OR “destination brand*” AND “artificial intelligence”
Number of article before inclusion criteria	3078	1527
Number of article after inclusion criteria	2677	1426
<i>2nd Research query</i>	TOPIC: “place marketing” OR “place brand*” OR “city brand*” OR “destination brand*” AND ALL FIELDS: “artificial intelligence”	TITLE-ABS-KEY: “place marketing” OR “place brand*” OR “city brand*” OR “destination brand*” AND ALL FIELDS: “artificial intelligence”
Number of article before inclusion criteria	2538	106
Number of article after inclusion criteria	2261	96
<i>3rd Research query</i>	TOPIC: “place marketing” OR “place brand*” OR “city brand*” OR “destination brand*” AND “artificial intelligence”	TITLE-ABS-KEY: “place marketing” OR “place brand*” OR “city brand*” OR “destination brand*” AND “artificial intelligence”
Number of article before inclusion criteria	2537	24
Number of article after inclusion criteria	2260	20

Source: own elaboration based on the Web of Science and Scopus databases.

The bibliometric analysis was based on the results obtained from the third stage of the search. In the first step, files from both databases were downloaded and combined into a single aggregated file containing 2 280 records. Duplicates were then removed and a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the collected material was conducted. The analysis covered the number of publications during the studied period, publication types, main thematic categories and a detailed analysis of keywords. Based on this, a co-occurrence map of terms related to the application of artificial intelligence in place branding was created. The keyword co-occurrence map was generated using VOSviewer software (version 1.6.20). VOSviewer is a tool for creating and visualizing bibliometric networks. The results of the analysis allowed for the identification of thematic clusters representing the main and emerging research directions.

4. Results

In the initial phase of the literature review, an analysis of interest in the topic over the years was conducted. In the Web of Science database, the number of publications steadily increased from 2010, reaching a peak in 2020 with 224 publications. During the analyzed period, the annual number of publications ranged between 140 and 175 until 2025. In 2025,

154 publications were directly related to the studied area. In the Scopus database, relatively few publications directly addressing AI in place branding were identified, with growing interest in the topic only observed from 2020 onwards (Figure 1).

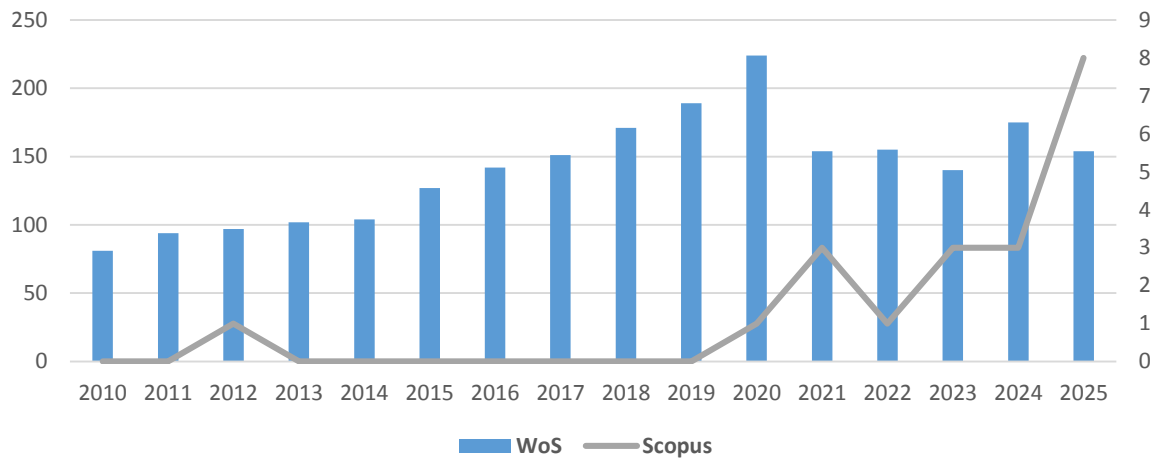


Figure 1. Number of publications in the field of artificial intelligence in place branding in the Web of Science and Scopus databases.

Source: own elaboration based on the Web of Science and Scopus databases.

The total number of citations for publications indexed in Web of Science amounted to 35,995, whereas in Scopus it was 241. In both Web of Science and Scopus, the majority of publications were articles (83.6% and 45%, respectively). A smaller portion consisted of editorial articles, book chapters and books. The distribution of publications by document type is presented in Figure 2.

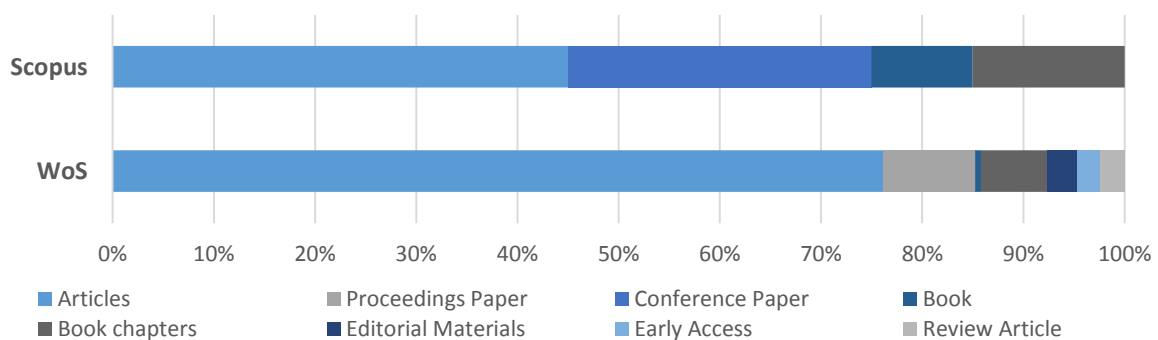


Figure 2. Type of documents of publications in the field of artificial intelligence in place branding in the Scopus and Web of Science databases (indexed from 2010 to 2025).

Source: own elaboration based on the Web of Science and Scopus databases.

The main thematic areas of publications in the Scopus and Web of Science databases were also identified. Initially, publications on artificial intelligence in place marketing and branding were scarce, classifying this area as an “emerging topic.” The majority of publications in the Web of Science database were assigned to the following WoS categories: Hospitality Leisure Sport Tourism (31%), Business (18%), Management (12%) oraz Urban Studies (12%). In the Scopus database, the largest number of publications were assigned to three areas, namely:

Business, Management and Accounting (18,8%), Social Sciences (16,7%) oraz Computer Science (12,5%).

As part of the bibliometric analysis, the most frequently occurring keywords related to artificial intelligence in place branding were identified. For this purpose, VOSviewer software was used. A co-occurrence analysis type was applied, employing the full counting method. The generated dataset initially contained a total of 221 keywords. Phrases used in the search and their abbreviations (e.g., AI), terms unrelated to the subject of analysis or irrelevant (e.g., analysis, method, country names), as well as synonymous terms and unrelated expressions, were subsequently removed. The final set comprised 101 keywords. For visualization, a minimum cluster size of 10 and the association strength method were applied. The keywords and the relationships between them are presented in Figure 3.

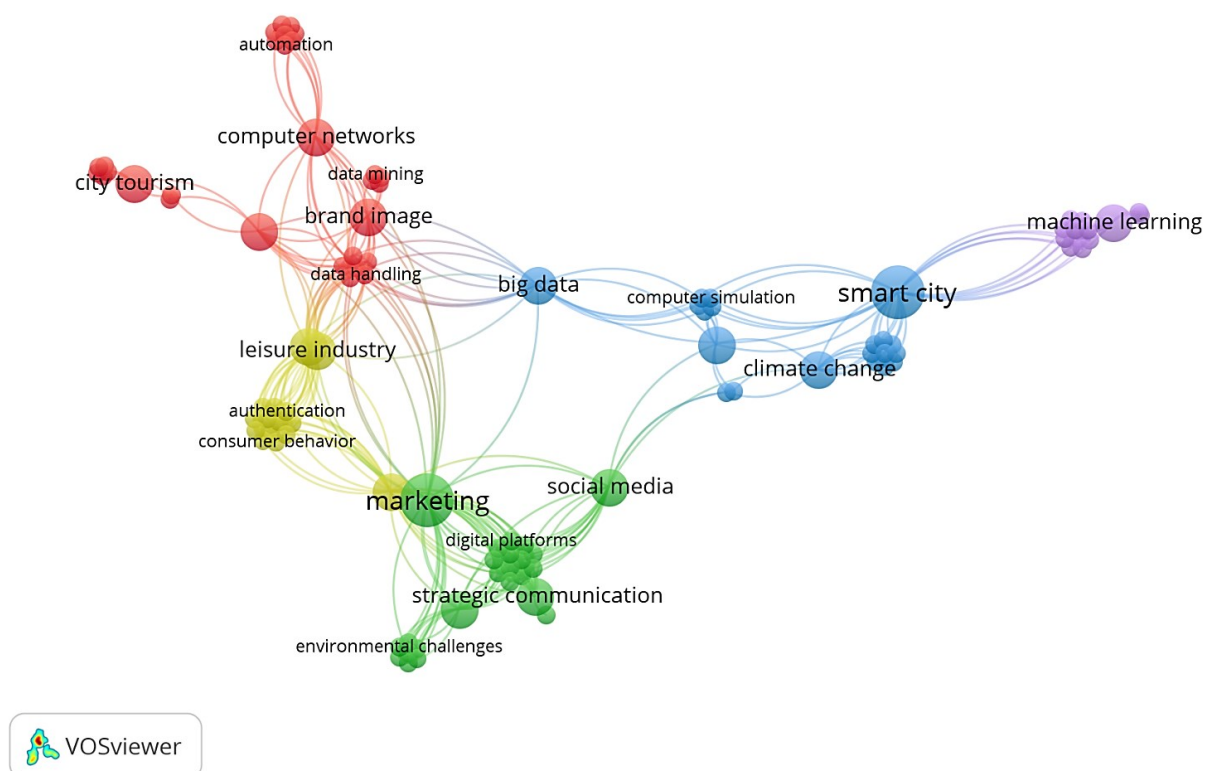


Figure 3. Keyword co-occurrence map of artificial intelligence in place branding.

Source: author's work using VOSviewer software.

Among the keywords related to AI in place branding, the following terms were identified: *marketing, social media, strategic communication, brand image, computer networks, city tourism, smart city, machine learning* and *Big Data*. It should be noted that these terms also exhibit the most connections with other keywords. Among the keywords most frequently appearing in publications from 2025 were: *digital platforms, digital technologies, digital marketing* oraz *sustainable city, environmental challenges, environmental technology, sustainable development*, as well as *authentication, consumer attitudes, data mining* and *local marketing* (Figure 4).

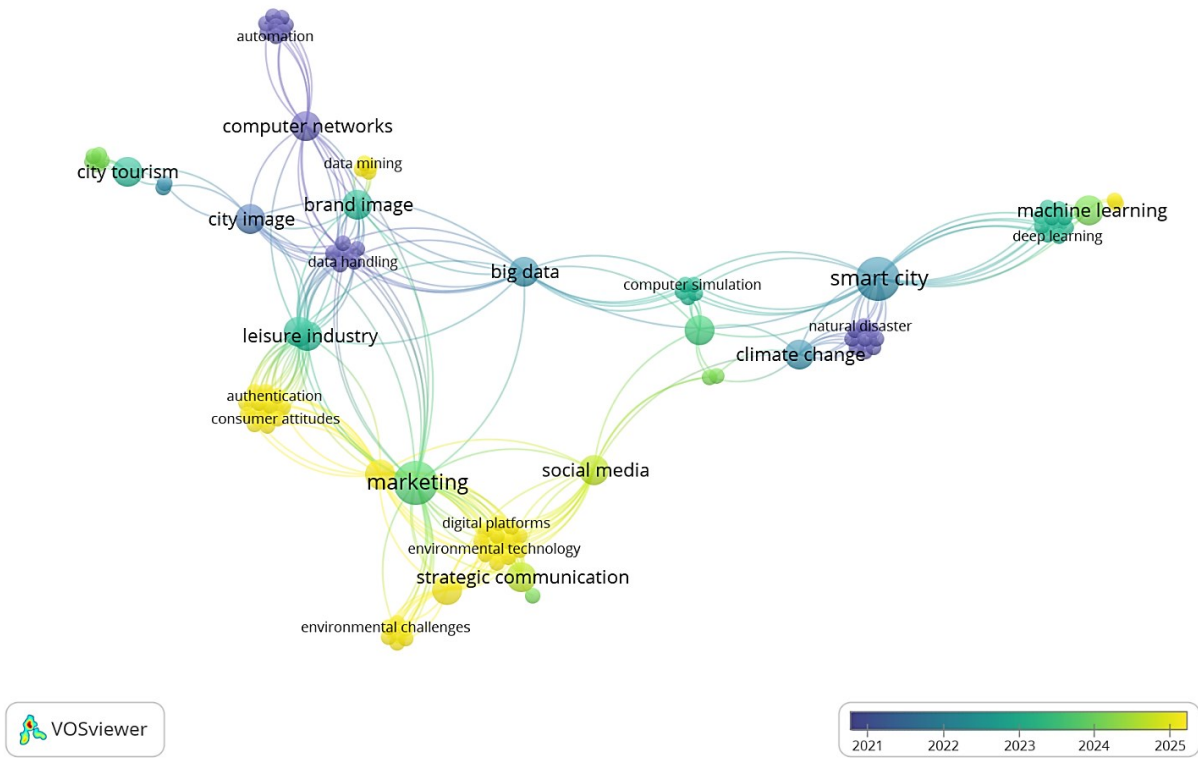


Figure 4. Keyword co-occurrence map of artificial intelligence in place branding.

Source: author’s work using VOSviewer software.

The keyword analysis allowed for the identification of five thematic clusters (Table 6).

Table 3.
Thematic clusters of artificial intelligence in place branding

No.	Cluster	Characteristic	Keywords	Examples of publications
1.	<i>Perception of city image and the management of its development in the era of artificial intelligence</i>	The use of AI and data analytics for monitoring the urban environment, detecting emotions and sentiments, analyzing the behavior of residents and tourists and managing the image of cities.	automation, brand image, city image, city of the future and city history, city storytelling, city tourism, computer networks, data handling, data mining, emotion recognition, image evaluation, intelligent monitoring, intelligent robots, living environment, location algorithm, marathon events, multi-source sensing technology, municipal economic development, national fitness, passenger flows, prevention and controls, sensing technology, sentiment analysis, sports, tourist intention, travel motivations, urban construction, urban myth, urban policy and urban development	(Cao et al., 2025; Chen et al., 2024; Klijn et al., 2012)
2.	<i>AI in digital communication and sustainable place branding</i>	The application of digital technologies and AI in place marketing and digital communication on social media, with an emphasis on building place identity, promoting sustainable development, fostering social cohesion	digital diplomacy, digital marketing, digital platforms, digital technologies, electronic commerce, environmental challenges, environmental sustainability, environmental technology, immersive, integrated marketing, marketing, marketing communication, place identity, sense of belonging, social and environmental, social challenges, social	(Alhaddar, Kummitha, 2025; Briana et al., 2025)

		and leveraging digital platforms.	cohesion, social media, strategic communication, sustainability, sustainable city, sustainable development, technology transfer, technology-driven	
3.	<i>Data and artificial intelligence in building the brand of a smart city</i>	The development of global cities and smart cities using big data, computer simulations and AI in urban planning, crisis management, climate change adaptation and the analysis of social perception.	artificially intelligent city, big data, cities, climate change, computer simulation, database, global city, globalization, humans, natural disaster, perception, public perceptions, smart city, smart urban technology, social implication, sustainable urban development, urban informatics, urban planning	(Albayrak Fakioglu, Oguztimur, 2025; AlShaan, Durugbo, 2025; Lu, 2024)
4.	<i>Virtual and immersive experiences in destination branding</i>	The role of AI, digital avatars and virtual reality in shaping tourist experiences, consumer behavior, the sense of authenticity, as well as social and parasocial relationships.	authentication, consumer attitudes, consumer behavior, cultural authenticity perception, digital humans, economic and social effects, human computer interaction, human engineering, leisure industry, para-social interaction, social interactions, tourism, tourism consumption, tourism industry, virtual reality	(Liu, Andriano-Moore, 2023; Wang, 2025)
5.	<i>Data-driven AI in place marketing and branding</i>	Technological foundations of AI: algorithms, machine learning, neural networks, IoT and networked systems supporting analytics, decision automation and place marketing strategies.	algorithms, artificial neural network, cognitive learning, data-driven decision making, deep learning, distributed networks, electricity design, internet, internet of things, local marketing, machine learning, natural language, networking	(Békési, Szöllösi, 2025; Kamkankaew et al., 2025; Syam, 2025)

Source: author's work using VOSviewer software.

The first cluster “Perception of city image and management of its development in the AI era” focuses on the use of artificial intelligence and advanced data analysis methods for monitoring and interpreting phenomena occurring in urban spaces. It encompasses topics such as emotion recognition, sentiment analysis, city image assessment and the study of resident and tourist behavior based on multi-source data. This cluster integrates sensor technologies, intelligent monitoring systems and data mining tools with the concept of urban narrative management, development policy and urban tourism. It constitutes a key pillar of research on city brand management in the digital environment.

The second cluster “AI in digital communication and sustainable place branding”, relates to the use of digital technologies and AI-based tools in marketing communication processes and place identity building. It emphasizes the role of digital platforms, social media and diplomacy in shaping city image, while simultaneously addressing environmental, social and cultural challenges. This cluster strongly highlights the integration of marketing strategies with the concept of sustainable development and the fostering of a sense of belonging and social cohesion.

The third cluster “Data and artificial intelligence in building the brand of a smart city”, covers topics related to the development of smart cities and global metropolises using big data, computer simulations and AI tools. It focuses on the application of data in urban planning, crisis management, climate change adaptation and social perception analysis. This cluster illustrates how advanced information and analytical systems form the foundation of modern city branding, positioning cities as intelligent, innovative and sustainable entities.

The fourth cluster “Virtual and immersive experiences in destination branding”, concerns the role of artificial intelligence, digital avatars and virtual reality technologies in creating tourist experiences. It encompasses research on tourist behavior, the perception of cultural authenticity, parasocial relationships and human–computer interactions. This cluster points to the growing importance of immersive technologies as tools for building an emotional connection with a place and enhancing the competitiveness of destinations.

The fifth cluster “Data-driven AI in place marketing and branding”, serves as the technological backbone of the entire research area. It focuses on algorithms, machine learning, neural networks, natural language processing and Internet of Things solutions that enable the automation of decision-making and analytical processes in place marketing. This cluster underscores the significance of digital infrastructure and data-driven systems as the foundation for modern, intelligent place marketing strategies.

The role of artificial intelligence in place marketing and branding encompasses supporting management and communication strategies, particularly through digital communication, the implementation of intelligent systems, data analytics and immersive technologies.

5. Discussion and conclusion

Digital place branding concepts focus on promoting the unique identity and attractiveness of a place through a variety of digital marketing tools. The strategic use of digital platforms allows for increasing place recognition, building a positive long-term image and engaging the community (Briana, Malindretos, 2025). Nowadays, digital technologies such as artificial intelligence, augmented and virtual reality (AR/VR), big data analytics, as well as social media and other digital marketing tools, enable the creation of immersive place-related experiences, the personalization of interactions with audiences and the co-creation of a place’s identity. In the context of digital place branding, both increasing visibility and actively engaging the community are considered crucial. This contributes to shaping a positive place image and to building and strengthening relationships with stakeholders based on narrative and authentic communication (Briana, Malindretos, 2025).

Despite growing interdisciplinary interest in the marketing literature, research on the direct application of artificial intelligence in the field of place branding remains insufficiently explored. The integration of artificial intelligence within place branding still constitutes a new, “emerging” research topic and direction, raising a number of questions, particularly regarding the emotional dimension of a place brand.

To date, research has primarily focused on the general applications of generative AI in marketing, while its specific implications for different types of branding, including place branding, remain largely underexplored. According to Davenport et al. (Davenport et al., 2020), in the future, artificial intelligence is likely to significantly transform both marketing strategies and customer behavior. The introduction of generative AI into place marketing and branding therefore presents a range of new challenges that require further in-depth analysis and an interdisciplinary approach. This concerns multiple aspects, such as creativity, alignment with brand identity and the development of long-term stakeholder relationships. As emphasized by Govers, artificial intelligence and social media currently exert a significant influence on the perception of places through the dynamic shaping of opinions. However, according to the researcher, a place brand strategy must remain rooted in the long-term identity and narrative of the place, with all digital technologies serving to express, rather than replace, that identity (How to Future-Proof Digital Communications in Place Branding, 2024).

Artificial intelligence is playing an increasingly important role, particularly in tourism research and practice, leading to changes in traditional methods of data analysis. The applications of AI therefore offer significant potential for strengthening destination branding (Al Balushi et al., 2024). Despite the increasing practical adoption of these technologies, there remains a notable scarcity of empirical studies that directly investigate their influence on destination brand image formation. The existing body of literature highlights the need for more comprehensive and longitudinal analyses of the implications of artificial intelligence for long-term place reputation and identity (Al Balushi et al., 2024). Destination branding should not be approached superficially as a collection of promotional slogans or marketing activities targeted exclusively at tourists. Instead, it should be understood as a strategic process that entails embedding local values, historical narratives and lived experiences within the urban fabric, thereby fostering an authentic brand image rooted in the distinctive identity of a place (Boisen et al., 2018; Briana et al., 2025; Lessa et al., 2025).

Global trends in tourism and place branding are evolving dynamically under the influence of changing consumer preferences, technological advancement and a growing awareness of the importance of sustainable development. A detailed review of the literature indicates an increasing interest in, among other factors, artificial intelligence-driven smart destinations. (ang. *AI-Powered Destination Intelligence*). According to experts, the application of artificial intelligence enables the generation of highly personalized visitor experiences as well as the execution of precise real-time demand forecasting. As a result, destinations can achieve

a significant competitive advantage in the management of tourist flows (Lisa Barrett on Rethinking Tourism at Destination Canada, 2025).

The literature on the future of digital communication in place branding is dominated by the view that artificial intelligence is redefining communication tools and currently underpins fundamental transformations in place brand-building strategies. Experts consistently emphasize that AI-based technologies are already becoming and will continue to be, crucial for the effective personalization of communication, the analysis of audience behavior and the integration of multichannel communication across diverse stakeholder segments, ranging from tourists to investors and residents (How to Future-Proof Digital Communications in Place Branding, 2024).

From the perspective of future directions in the development of artificial intelligence in place branding, several key areas can be identified. First, generative AI enables hyperpersonalization and the automated adaptation of content to the individual needs and expectations of audiences. The literature identifies this capability as a critical mechanism for increasing message relevance and enhancing stakeholder engagement. Second, immersive experiences represent a significant and increasingly important domain. The integration of AI with technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) creates new opportunities for presenting places to potential visitors. Through the application of advanced technologies and AI, the attractiveness of place brands is enhanced; for example, tourists may virtually explore destinations prior to making visitation decisions. Third, advanced AI tools facilitate data analysis and trend forecasting, including the modeling of future audience behaviors, thereby enabling proactive adjustments to marketing strategies. The literature further emphasizes that the growing deployment of AI must be accompanied by the preservation of the authenticity of place narratives and the ethical use of data. Failure to maintain this balance may result in the erosion of a place's unique identity and, potentially, its reputation (How to Future-Proof Digital Communications in Place Branding, 2024).

Ultimately, artificial intelligence in place branding holds significant potential to support both precise targeting and the narrative coherence of place brands within a complex digital environment (How to Future-Proof Digital Communications in Place Branding, 2024; Kavaratzis, 2024). In the context of destination brand building, artificial intelligence can support, for instance, the generation of insights, the personalization of communication, the analysis of audience perceptions and the examination of strategic data (Al Balushi et al., 2024). Despite its numerous advantages, experts emphasize that artificial intelligence in place branding remains a supportive tool rather than a substitute for human creative input (Hakala, 2025; Kavaratzis, 2024). While algorithms can generate multiple options, it is ultimately human actors who shape the final form of place branding strategies and brand narratives (*Bloom Consulting: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Place Branding*, 2025). Artificial intelligence continues to face certain limitations in capturing human tone, historical depth and contemporary cultural context. This underscores the necessity of maintaining a balance between

automation and human interaction in the creative process. The future of place brand building will be determined by the extent to which data-driven artificial intelligence is integrated with authenticity and human sensibility. By leveraging AI-based tools, cities may strengthen their brand image while simultaneously building global reputation and a distinctive local identity (*Bloom Consulting: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Place Branding*, 2025).

As indicated by Lessa et al. (Lessa et al., 2025) future research directions in place branding should encompass the expansion of methodological approaches, including the application of new technologies, artificial intelligence and big data analytics, which enable the creation of even more personalized and engaging experiences. Chen et al. (Chen et al., 2024) in turn, emphasize that in assessing urban competitiveness, effective AI-driven analytics requires a structured and systematic approach. Chotisarn i Phuthong (Chotisarn, Phuthong, 2025) argue that, in advancing the understanding of contemporary dynamics in place branding, further progress is increasingly associated with the implementation of artificial intelligence tools. An expanding body of research further suggests that effective planning and evaluation of place branding strategies require the integration of qualitative and quantitative data with AI-based analytical instruments. Such an approach has the potential to enhance analytical precision and to provide a methodological framework for adaptive place marketing strategies grounded in empirical data and responsive to the dynamic changes of the urban context (Békési, Szöllösi, 2025). In turn, Kavaratzis (Kavaratzis, 2024), drawing on content generated by ChatGPT, indicates that the application of artificial intelligence and data analytics in the development of personalized place branding strategies requires maintaining a balance between technological efficiency and the preservation of the human and authentic character of communication.

The literature review identified five key thematic areas shaping the current academic discourse on the application of artificial intelligence in place and city branding. First, research increasingly focuses on the perception of city image and its management through AI-based analytics, including sentiment analysis, monitoring of digital narratives and behavioral analysis of residents and tourists. Future studies should examine the reliability of AI-driven perception analysis and its long-term implications for city brand management.

Second, the literature highlights the role of AI in digital communication and sustainable place branding, where AI-supported tools enhance stakeholder engagement and personalized communication across digital platforms. Future research may explore how AI-driven communication strategies influence trust, civic participation and the promotion of sustainable urban narratives.

Third, studies on AI and data in smart city branding emphasize the integration of big data and AI in urban governance, planning, and crisis management, contributing to the positioning of cities as innovative and technologically advanced. Further research should investigate the relationship between smart city development and city brand competitiveness.

Fourth, the growing importance of virtual and immersive experiences in destination branding is evident, as technologies such as virtual reality and AI-generated environments shape tourist engagement and perceptions of authenticity. Future studies could explore how immersive technologies influence emotional connections with destinations and visitor behavior.

Finally, research highlights the technological foundations of data-driven AI in place marketing, including machine learning and IoT systems supporting advanced analytics and decision-making. Future research should address issues of transparency, algorithmic bias and ethical governance in AI-driven place branding.

Based on the findings of this review, further research is needed to conduct a more in-depth investigation of generative artificial intelligence applications in shaping and managing the brands of various categories of places. Additionally, there is a need to develop analytical frameworks to assess AI's impact on the coherence and authenticity of place brand communication, as well as on brand image perception among key stakeholders. From a practical perspective, these findings offer guidance for city authorities and branding managers on how to leverage AI technologies to design innovative, data-driven city branding strategies.

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