

Airport branding and stakeholders collaborative communication

Karina Putri Hanifah^{1*}, Susie Perbawasari¹, Hanny Hafiar¹

¹⁾ Faculty of Communication Science, Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung

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Abstract

This research discusses the role of stakeholder collaboration in airport branding using a bibliometric approach. It aims to provide an overview of the global trends of this topic, as well as identify the dominance of authors, co-authorship, institutions, countries, and publications that are most influential in this field. The data was obtained through the Scopus database through a relevant keyword search that resulted in 639 articles, and then data processing and analysis were carried out through the tools VOS Viewer, RStudio Biblioshiny, and ScientoPy. Modern branding today does not just rely on unilateral communication but becomes more cooperative by involving various stakeholders. However, there are limited studies that provide a comprehensive overview of this field. The findings show that branding and stakeholder collaboration are increasingly important in shaping corporate identity and reputation. Some of the dominant and influential authors and institutions in research in this area are from Europe, the United States, and Australia, but contributions from developing countries are still minimal. This study recommends further and in-depth research in this field with a focus on developing countries that still have great opportunities.

Keywords: Airport Branding; Corporate Branding; Stakeholder Collaboration; Stakeholder Engagement; Bibliometric Analysis

Introduction

Many companies realize stakeholder engagement is fundamental in helping to effectively build brands, particularly in the airport sector which functions as a composite brand where brand perceptions are collaboratively shaped by a diverse set of stakeholders (Henderson et al., 2024). Shaping brand identity and perception is no longer using the traditional one-sided approach but is turning into a more cooperative effort with the involvement of stakeholders, including investors, consumers, communities, and others. This change is in line with the increasing trend of stakeholder capitalism, where long-term benefits for all stakeholders are prioritized over only focusing on short-term benefits. So it is important to involve stakeholders in the branding process so that a sense of trust, loyalty, and sustainable relationships grows. Strong relationships between the airport and its stakeholders are essential to build trust and facilitate the development of partnerships that lead to mutually beneficial outcomes (Morehouse & Saffer, 2023). Stakeholder support, recognition and dialogue have a significant impact on airport performance, and implementing effective communication strategies fosters a purposeful environment that increases stakeholder engagement and overall airport success (Aksoy et al., 2022).

Airports need to engage stakeholders such as consumers, investor, local communities, and aero and non-aero business partners as well as local governments (Henderson et al., 2024). Engaging stakeholders in a systematic communication process can understand and fulfill their needs, expectations and interests (Estaswara, 2020). Effective communication with stakeholders helps understand perspectives and build mutually beneficial relationships. It is important to engage with stakeholders to ensure that the services provided are in line with needs (Freeman et al., 2004). This will also have an impact on the branding of airports that work together to create a positive image. In line with the growing emphasis on stakeholder collaboration, the traditional approach of unilateral communication is no longer reliable for brands, as it limits the flow of information where companies control the message without considering stakeholders' perspectives, feedback or needs. The rise of digital platforms and social media has changed the dynamics of communication allowing stakeholders, especially consumers to voice their opinions openly and influence brand perception (Vollero et al., 2016). Also branding is no longer just a tool to differentiate products and

*Corresponding Author:

E-mail: karina17001@mail.unpad.ac.id

services but is evolving into an overarching strategy that encompasses a company's identity, reputation, and engagement with its audience. In today's competitive environment, a brand is not just a logo or slogan, but the company's values, culture, and promises to stakeholders are also included (Aaker, 1996). Companies must engage stakeholders to co-create the brand, so as to ensure that brand messages are effectively connected (Kapferer, 2017). The company's communication activities in building, strengthening and raising the brand are referred to as branding, without having a communication or publicity stage, a brand will not develop and have meaning for potential consumers (Yuristiadhi et al., 2017). Brands have a role as an important component in shaping consumer perceptions, influencing purchasing power, as well as creating long-term loyalty, invisible values such as trust and authenticity are important for creating customer loyalty therefore branding can help communicate these values (Keller, 2013).

The main objective of branding is to create an image that influences visitors' decision to visit the destination (Perbawasari et al., 2019). Branding efforts aim to introduce brand potential to the outside world, enhance distinctive identity and attract public attention (Perbawasari et al., 2020). The branding stage involves establishing a distinctive image and reputation, and consistent communication, experiences, and interactions with customers can deepen this image (Kapferer, 2017). Communicating an identity aligned with consumer values and beliefs is the hallmark of a successful brand. As digital platforms become more dominant, branding also continues to adapt to involve online and social media that allow brands to connect directly with stakeholders in real-time (Brodie et al., 2013). Branding includes the establishment of an internal identity, as well as the alignment of an organization's culture with its external image, and is not just about external messaging. This holistic approach ensures that all stakeholders, including employees, investors, and consumers will perceive the brand as trusted and credible. As such, branding is more than just promotion but encompasses all touchpoints of an organization's engagement with stakeholders.

Stakeholders are no longer passive observers, but active contributors in shaping strategic decisions and influencing how brand value is communicated (Freeman et al., 2004). Brand identity is a dynamic construct, developed with stakeholders in defining, and developing brand meaning over time (Kapferer, 2017). A shift in focus also occurs when the branding stage becomes stakeholder-centered rather than company-centered. The interaction between the brand and stakeholders is one of them during the formation of identity and its meaning and contributes to the sustainability of the brand in the future. Stakeholder management is not an easy thing for companies or business organizations, because it is necessary to fulfill the wishes and interests of stakeholders. This stakeholder involvement can be another crucial benchmark in innovating and expanding the business (Wulandari, 2018). Collaboration between the organization and all relevant stakeholders is needed to achieve sustainable goals, through collaboration it can ensure that all parties have the same thoughts in achieving common goal (Octavianti et al., 2023). It is necessary to build and maintain strong ties with various stakeholders, which serves to build trust, collaboration, and long-term support, which can then support success (Hafiar et al., 2024). In organizational management and communication, strategic collaboration with stakeholders is also needed to ensure that all operations and problem-solving are effective (Sofyan et al., 2022).

Stakeholder engagement that understands where the branding is and what it wants can help make more informed decisions (Subekti et al., 2023). Stakeholder engagement uses a transparent and collaborative approach in the decision-making stages, building resilience and ensuring brand longevity. Brands can not only prevent reputational damage by maintaining open communication with stakeholders but can also foster goodwill and trust (Coombs & Holladay, 2011). Collaboration with stakeholders is needed to develop a strategy that ensures the branding narrative is truly in line with the expected identity (Septyana & Saragih, 2024). The relationship between brand and stakeholders is symbiotic, where stakeholders help create the meaning of the brand while the brand reflects the values and identity of its stakeholders. Long-term relevance, loyalty and resilience in a rapidly changing environment must be ensured by a branding strategy that integrates stakeholders engagement. Branding efforts through collaboration with various stakeholders are essential to creating a unified and impactful brand identity. This collaboration not only strengthens brand love, but also ensures that the brand reflects the values and expectations of diverse audiences (Rahmawati et al., 2024).

This bibliometric analysis was conducted to identify global research trends on airport branding and stakeholder collaboration, through authors, co-authorship, institutions, countries, citations, and emerging topics, allows researchers to identify key trends, influential academics, and gaps in the literature (Donthu et al., 2021). Assessing the influence of scientific publications in a particular discipline over some time is possible using this analytical approach (Mukherjee et al., 2022). Analysis of bibliographic data including citation counts, journal output, authorship, and keywords can identify significant research and explore topics that require further investigation (Donthu et al., 2021). Through this bibliometric analysis, it will map the development of several influential studies and show the impact of stakeholder engagement in corporate branding, which can demonstrate that stakeholder collaboration is not just a supporting element, but a core component in driving sustainable brand success. Companies that engage in stakeholder collaboration will result in higher customer loyalty, more efficient communication, and long-term reputation management.

The objectives of the research are 1) identify the most prominent authors and institutions contributing to research on stakeholder roles in airport brand perception (Donthu et al., 2021), 2) Map the intellectual structure of the field by analyzing citation networks and co-authorship patterns in research related to stakeholders and airport branding (Mukherjee et al., 2022), 3) Identify the most influential journals and publications focusing on stakeholder engagement and airport branding (Zupic & Čater, 2015), 4) Analyze how research themes and trends in stakeholder engagement and airport branding have evolved (Amaeshi & Crane, 2006). This research will provide significant insights and potential to further explore branding and stakeholder collaborative communication as an evolving discipline, providing opportunities for future research for academics and practitioners, which can make stakeholder collaborative communication a viable decision in branding.

Method

The bibliometric analysis design implemented in this study is depicted in Figure 1, the process involves several stages that are critical to ensuring a comprehensive bibliometric review of branding and stakeholders research. The author outlines the importance of each stage in conducting a thorough bibliometric investigation. The first stage, developing research questions, focused on determining the core questions that drive the analysis. The research questions for this study were: What is the current state of research on branding and stakeholders; Who are the most prolific authors and institutions; What is the geographical distribution of research; What topics are most frequently explored; and What publications are most cited? Answering these questions is expected to provide new insights into the current state of research (RQ1), the most prolific authors and institutions (RQ2), the geographical distribution of research (RQ3), the most frequently explored topics, (RQ4), and the most frequently cited publications. These findings can also be used to direct various researchers and prospective researchers to investigate the topic in more depth on how branding and stakeholders relationships have evolved.

At the data source stage, Scopus was identified as the primary database for analysis. Scopus is known for its credible and comprehensive bibliographic data, especially in academic research. Scopus coverage includes a wide range of high-quality scholarly literature such as co-authored articles, conference proceedings, books, and book chapters, covering a wide range of subjects related to branding and stakeholders engagement. The data collection stage involved collecting bibliographic information from Scopus. Data collection was done through the Scopus database, through searching certain keywords to find relevant articles. The following keywords were used: "airport branding" OR 'corporate branding' OR 'stakeholders airport' OR 'airport marketing'. Furthermore, the collected data was downloaded into CSV format for further analysis. Then cleaning and standardizing the dataset by removing duplicates, correcting errors and ensuring that the bibliographic data was ready for analysis was done (Ruiz-Rosero et al., 2019).

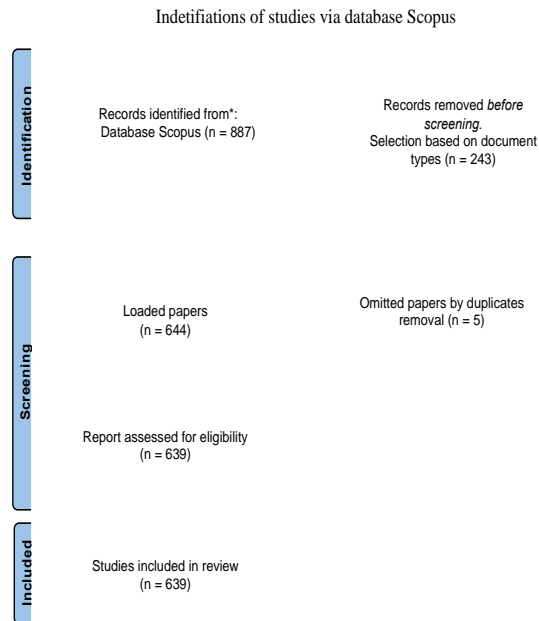


Figure 1. Flow diagram of searches of database and registers
Source: Author's modification, 2024

Sharing a bibliometric approach was applied at the stage of analyzing the collected data. Citation and keyword analysis were used to explore research trends and patterns. In this research, popular tools such as VOSviewer, RStudio Biblioshiny, and ScientoPy were used. Bibliographic data is visualized in the form of network maps using VOSviewer and RStudio, which are also used to identify patterns, trends, and publication groups (Orduña-Malea & Costas, 2021). It can describe the network of co-authorship, co-citation, and co-occurrence of keywords, then identification of influential authors with research themes can be done. The results of bibliometric analysis are analyzed to answer questions that will then help determine the most referenced papers, the most influential authors, and the main research topics in the discipline. Presentation of bibliometric analysis findings using appropriate tables, charts, and network maps in a clear and concise manner (Abdullah & Sofyan, 2023).

Results and Discussion

The basis for presenting the bibliometric analysis in this study is the preliminary analysis and research questions in the previous section. Performance analysis (including year of publication, contributing authors, and document type) and knowledge mapping (authors, country institutions, keywords, and publications) were conducted in this study. These findings provide a comprehensive assessment of the current state of research on stakeholders in the field of branding and guide future research. We do not present all elements of this research, but select those that are directly related to the research questions posed (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, RQ4).

Preliminary data analysis

The initial data analysis for the topic of stakeholders in branding with the Scopus database was carried out, the documents collected from the search through Scopus through the limitation of document types only articles and English presented a dataset of 644 documents, then using the ScientoPy tool, duplicate documents were removed, which were then found as many as 5 duplicate articles (0.8%) which were identified and then removed. In the end, the final number of documents to be analyzed and processed was 639 relevant articles. This systematic approach will make the bibliometric analysis precise and thorough. Through this methodological approach, the findings will provide useful insights into the current state of branding research and stakeholders collaboration.

The current state of branding and stakeholders research

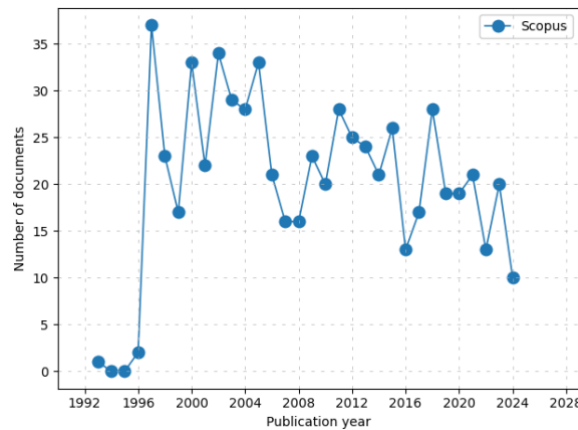


Figure 2. Publication growth in Scopus
 Source: Data processed by ScientoPy, 2024

A bibliometric analysis can provide an overview of the current state of research on stakeholders in branding through an evaluation of the number of publications on the subject, their sources, and publication production patterns over time. Figure 2 describes the number of publications related to stakeholders and branding from 1992 to 2024 in the Scopus database. During the early 2000s the number of articles on this topic increased significantly, reaching a peak around 1999-2000, when more than 35 documents were published. In general, the research results remained strong until 2015 except for a few years with fluctuations. Briefly, an insight into the research results and trends related to Stakeholder engagement in branding over time can be seen from the first figure. While there has been a decline in the number of publications since the early 2000s, the continued academic interest shows the importance of this topic. The variation in the number of publications from year to year that the data shows may indicate something is affecting the field such as a change in research priorities or external factors. Briefly, an insight into the research outcomes and trends related to Stakeholder engagement in branding over time can be seen from the first figure. While there has been a decline in the number of publications since the early 2000s, continued academic interest demonstrates the importance of this topic. The year-to-year variation in the number of publications shown in the data may indicate that something is affecting the field such as a change in research priorities or external factors.

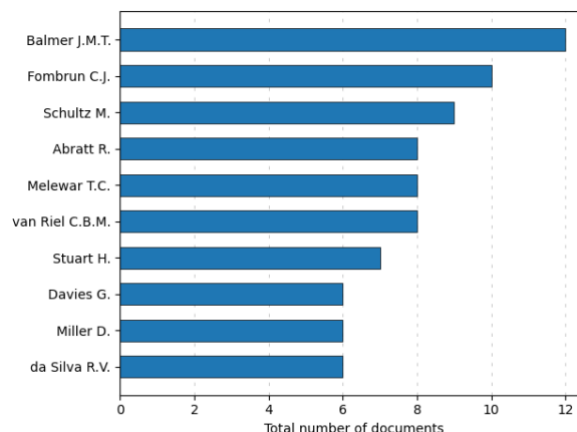


Figure 3. The top the productive authors
 Source: Data processed by ScientoPy, 2024

Figure 3, shows the most productive authors from the stakeholders field in branding, who are the main contributors in this field are Balmer J.M.T with 13 publications, followed by Fombrun CJ with 10 publications, then Shultz M through 9 publications. In addition, there are also other authors who have participated in showing an influential role in advancing research related to this

field, especially in branding and stakeholders in companies, namely Abratt R., Malewar TC., van Riel C.B.M., and Stuart H., these authors have published and helped shape the direction of the research field. The findings will highlight stakeholders-related research in branding through Scopus databases as well as related trends, which then benefits through presenting an overview of the findings. The insights gained from this analysis will contribute to an understanding of how key author and public trends have evolved over time. This bibliometric analysis will also provide a sound basis for future research and can guide scholars in identifying key contributors and emerging trends in the field.

The most frequently studied topics

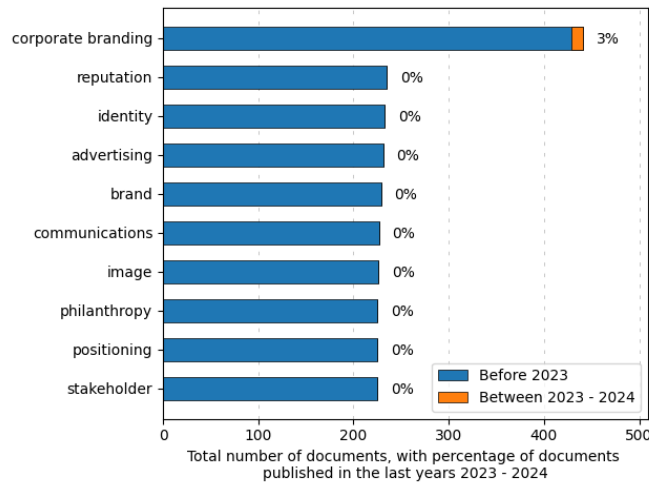


Figure 4. The ten authors' keywords
Source: Data processed by in ScientoPy, 2024

Figure 4 shows the top 10 keywords from the authors related to branding and stakeholders, showing the total number of documents across the themes. The keyword “corporate branding” is the top keyword with nearly 500 total document appearances, with 3% published between 2023-2024, demonstrating the continued relevance of the topic in this area. Other keywords such as “reputation”, and “identity” had notable occurrences, but showed 0% publications in the last two years, suggesting that although these areas have been researched before, they have received less attention in recent years. In particular, the fields of “stakeholders” and “communication” have received considerable attention, but in relation to branding there has been a lack of increase in the percentage of publications recently.

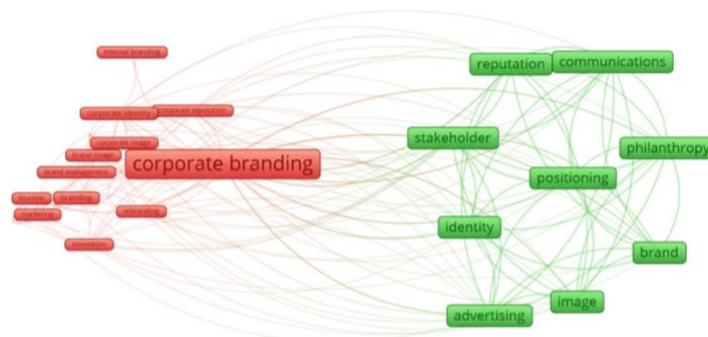


Figure 5. The network visualisation of the authors' keywords
Source: Data processed by VOSviewer, 2024

In Figure 5, through VOSviewer network mapping, the researcher found a network of keywords in the field of branding and stakeholders, in which “Corporate branding” is centrally placed in the red cluster, which has a strong network with “corporate identity”, “corporate reputation”, and “brand image”. This shows the important role of corporate strategy to create brand perception. The green cluster shows the keywords “stakeholders”, “communication” and “reputation” forming close linkages, suggesting that future research could focus on how stakeholders interests can influence brand recognition and the role of communication in maintaining corporate reputation.

The most frequently cited publications

It can be seen from Figure 10 and Table 1, presenting the 10 most cited authors and publications in the field of branding and stakeholders, from citation data with a minimum citation threshold set at 40 obtained through the Scopus database. The top-ranked author and publication is Bachhaus K (2004) in Career Development International with 635 citations making it the most influential work in this field, followed by Kavaratzis M (2005) in Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie as the second with 578 citations, followed by Carrol CE (20033) in Corporate Reputation Review with 505 citations. These publications substantially shape the research domain of corporate branding and stakeholders engagement.

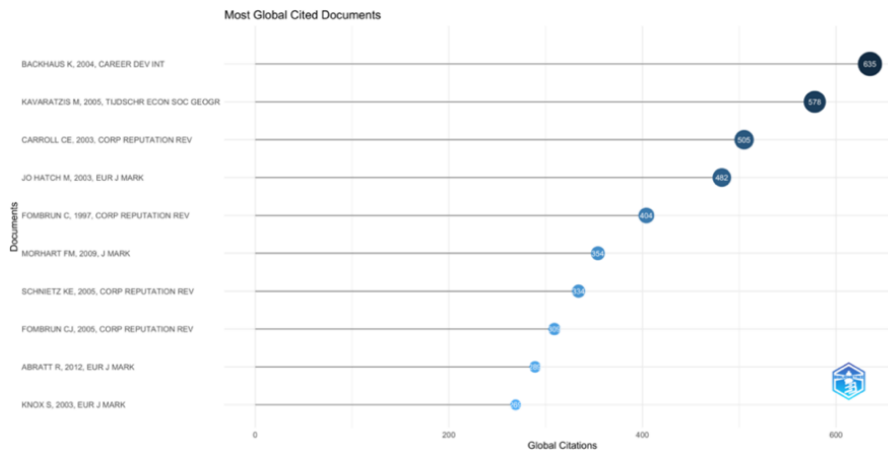


Figure 6. The top 10 most-frequently cited authors’
 Source: Data processed by RStudio Biblioshiny, 2024

Table 1. The top 10 most-frequently cited publications

Rank	Authors	Title	Citation
1	(Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004)	Conceptualizing and researching employer branding	635
2	(Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005)	City branding: An effective assertion of identity or a transitory marketing trick?	578
3	(Carroll & Mccombs, 2003)	Agenda-setting Effects of Business News on the Public’s Images and Opinions about Major Corporations	505
4	(Jo Hatch & Schultz, 2003)	Bringin the corporation into corporate branding	482
5	(C. Fombrun, 1997)	The Reputational Landscape	404
6	(Morhart et al., 2009)	Brand-specific leadership: Turning employees into brand champions	354
7	(Schnietz & Epstein, 2005)	Exploring the Financial Value of a Reputation for Corporate Social Responsibility During a Crisis	334
8	(C. J. Fombrun, 2005)	A World of Reputation Research, Analysis and Thinking – Building Corporate Reputation Through CSR Initiatives: Evolving Standards	309
9	(Abratt & Kleyn, 2012)	Corporate identity, corporate branding and corporate reputations: Reconciliation and integration	289
10	(Knox & Bickerton, 2003)	The six conventions of corporate branding	269

Through the most cited articles and references through various topics such as branding, corporate identity, reputation management to corporate philanthropy and communication with stakeholders. This shows that the global influence of these articles demonstrates how these publications contribute to the advancement of understanding of branding with stakeholders engagement. The high number of citations of the articles shows that the publication has provided a knowledge base that has been widely used by academics to develop further research in branding strategy, corporate reputation and stakeholders relations.

Discussion

In this preliminary data analysis of stakeholders roles in branding using the Scopus database supported by the tools VOSviewer, RStudio, and ScientoPy provided useful insights. This bibliometric analysis offers a strong basis for an in-depth exploration of stakeholders involvement in branding, enabling scholars to detect gaps and potential areas for research expansion. The results show that stakeholders involvement in branding plays an important role in shaping brand identity, this research is in line with stakeholders theory (Freeman et al., 2004), which emphasizes that companies that actively involve stakeholders will gain long-term benefits in terms of trust and reputation. Through analysis findings reveal a steady increase in publications on Stakeholder engagement in branding over the past 20 years, publications saw a sharp increase in the 2000s. With brands facing increasing shareholder and consumer scrutiny, research has increasingly focused on how Stakeholder engagement can influence corporate branding, reputation management and long-term success.

The findings also reveal the dominance of authors and institutions in branding and stakeholders research, the authors who stand out as the most prolific contributors are Balmer J.M.T affiliated with Griffith University and Fombrun C.J with Brunel University with research focusing on corporate branding and reputation management. This suggests that these institutions and researchers play an important role in shaping the discourse related to Stakeholder engagement in branding. The authors who produced the most articles related to branding and stakeholders were affiliated with institutions in Europe, particularly the UK, as well as America, and Australia. This highlights the need for greater contributions from Asian and African researchers, who can then provide new perspectives on the region and its culture. Future collaborations between European and American institutions could help broaden the scope of branding and stakeholders research and provide more diverse insights.

The results of the thematic analysis based on keywords revealed that the topic of “corporate branding” is the most researched topic while the topics of “stakeholders” and “airport” are still not so significant. This reflects the continued interest that is still an opportunity to be researched further. From the findings of this bibliometric analysis, it provides a roadmap for future research related to branding and stakeholders engagement, especially at airports, which are still rarely researched. This is in line with the wider societal shift towards greater corporate accountability and transparency which indicates that stakeholders now expect brands to contribute positively. Further analysis of co-authorship through VOSviewer highlighted several key international collaborations with the US and UK playing a dominant role. However, Australua, Germany and India are beginning to show increasing contributions, suggesting the potential for increased collaboration. Advancing research in this area requires that international partnerships are essential.

While airport-focused research is still evolving, existing research points to a shift towards a more collaborative role for stakeholders in shaping brand identity and image. *stakeholders* social network structure is positively related to indicators of relationship engagement and engagement outcomes (Morehouse & Saffer, 2023). The involvement of these stakeholders can build social capital that is beneficial to the organization (Marschlich & Ingenhoff, 2021). However, based on the results of this bibliometric analysis, research that focuses on stakeholders involvement in branding is still limited when compared to other sectors, such as public companies or organizations. Throughout this bibliometric analysis, there is still a lack of in-depth literature on how airports can effectively strengthen collaboration with stakeholders in branding. In addition, most of the research comes from developed countries such as the United States and Europe, while research in developing

countries is still minimal. This geographical difference opens up great opportunities for future research to better understand the dynamics of stakeholders collaboration in developing countries.

The implications of this research emphasize the importance of stakeholders collaboration in branding strategy. Theoretically, this research extends stakeholders theory showing the active involvement of various stakeholders who play a role in shaping brand identity and reputation. The findings contribute to bibliometric analysis through mapping research trends, identifying influential authors and institutions, and patterns of international collaboration, which opens up further research opportunities, especially in developing countries. In addition, this study also provides insights related to international collaboration between researchers and institutions can expand the scope of airport branding research and implementation, especially in developing countries in the less explored Asia and Africa Region.

Practically, the results of this study offer guidance for airport management in developing a collaborative and integrated branding approach. Collaboration involving stakeholders can strengthen brand image, build trust and long-term loyalty that supports airport sustainability. This research also highlights the importance of a systematic and transparent communication strategy to ensure the fulfillment of stakeholders needs and expectations which can then improve the airport's reputation. This is reinforced by the statement of Prisdiani, a Public Relations expert, saying that a strong airport image must be built through close collaboration with stakeholders, so that the branding narrative remains consistent and relevant, and transparency in communication creates trust between the airport and stakeholders, which is key to building long-term mutually beneficial relationships (Interview Prisdiani, November 27, 2024). This relationship focuses on long-term partnerships that provide mutual benefits, seeing stakeholders as partners in creating sustainable development (Bailey, 2023). Trust established through honest communication is the basis for strengthening stakeholders collaboration and loyalty.

Indonesia, as one of the developing countries in the Asian region, has cultural diversity and socio-economic dynamics that have great influence. This is reinforced by the statement of Junius, a marketing expert, who said that it is important to utilize collaboration with stakeholders by using local cultural narratives as a differentiating element in airport branding, which can increase the attractiveness of domestic and international tourists (Interview Junius, December 5, 2024). This process enables the organization to be more responsive to the expectations of its stakeholders partners, ensuring long-term sustainability through innovation and adaptation (Herremans et al., 2016). For further research, in-depth engagement with key stakeholders, such as investors, consumers, local communities, aero and non-aero business partners and local governments, could enrich the findings. This study also opens up opportunities to explore innovative collaboration models between airports and stakeholders. Therefore, the findings emphasize the need for a holistic approach in airport branding that does not focus on commercial aspects alone, but also integrates sustainability values and Stakeholder engagement as key elements in building a relevant and competitive brand at the global level.

Conclusion

This bibliometric analysis research provides a visualization of the current state of research related to airport branding and stakeholder collaborative communication such as alignment with expectations and engagement with various stakeholder groups such as investors, consumers, local communities, aero and non-aero business partners and local governments that contribute to developing branding strategies. In its findings, this research identifies authors, co-authors, institutions, countries and citations. The findings can then be used as useful insights for this ever-evolving field. The expanding role of stakeholders in branding is due to the increasing awareness of companies to engage various stakeholders in shaping brand equity, enhancing reputation and promoting long-term sustainability. Through this analysis, a growing trend of publications that require an inclusive and sustainable approach to the topic will be seen. Although research relating to airport branding and collaboration with multiple stakeholders is still in the early stages of development, this bibliometric analysis provides useful insights into existing trends and gaps that require further exploration, and is research with significant potential. The findings of this bibliometric analysis can serve as a foundation for academics and practitioners in related fields.

This finding also shows the lack of research related to airport objects, which if the airport successfully integrates branding and stakeholder collaboration in its strategy can place the right position to be able to develop in a competitive global environment. Through the results of this study, it is also revealed that there is still much room for further and in-depth research in the future, especially in exploring branding and stakeholder collaboration in developing countries. Finally, the findings also suggest that strong collaboration between branding and stakeholders will be a key element in building relevant, strong and sustainable brands. This study recommends further and in-depth research in developing countries, including Indonesia, given the great potential in the development of airport branding that can be done through stakeholder collaboration with a holistic approach that includes transparent communication, utilization of local cultural narratives as differentiating elements, and integration of sustainability values to build a relevant and globally competitive brand image.

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