

Review

Territorial Marketing Based on Non-Wood Forest Products (NWFPs) to Enhance Sustainable Tourism in Rural Areas: A Literature Review

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Abstract: It is often seen how a distinctive feature of a territory is used as a brand to create an image that attracts tourists to the region. This is so-called “territorial marketing”, and together with this brand, connected products and services, usually related to recreation, gastronomy and well-being, are offered. Non-wood forest products (NWFPs), such as mushrooms, truffles, aromatic and medicinal plants, nuts and berries, are natural products connected to local traditions that contribute to rural economies, culture and society. This becomes particularly prominent when used as elements of identity to brand specific geographical areas such as the “Chestnut Route”, the “Cranberry Valley” or the “Truffle Way”. This review aims to delve into the understanding of this link between NWFPs and sustainable tourism through territorial marketing and to discuss the different perspectives that address this field, including the methodologies used for the studies, as well as to identify the main research topics tackled in the literature, territorial marketing models and the challenges for its development. The results show the multidisciplinary nature of this field of research, addressed primarily by economists through qualitative surveys and case studies. Most authors emphasize the growing interest in territorial marketing in rural areas as well as the importance of involving the local population in the implementation process. Several studies offer a territorial marketing process model, among which stakeholders’ participation, place identity and image, as well as their interaction, are main aspects to be considered when developing this strategy. A new territorial marketing model is proposed. While it is an emergent research field, studies focused on territorial marketing based on NWFPs to attract tourism remain a research niche.

Keywords: place marketing; place branding; rural development; wild forest products; ecotourism



Citation: Rovira, M.; Garay, L.; Górriz-Mifsud, E.; Bonet, J.-A. Territorial Marketing Based on Non-Wood Forest Products (NWFPs) to Enhance Sustainable Tourism in Rural Areas: A Literature Review. *Forests* **2022**, *13*, 1231. <https://doi.org/10.3390/f13081231>

Academic Editors: Emin Z. Başkent, José G. Borges, Davide M. Pettenella and Yu Wei

Received: 30 June 2022

Accepted: 30 July 2022

Published: 3 August 2022

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1. Introduction

A brand is usually used by a single company that wishes to be recognized in the market by their target public. However, it can also be developed among several organizations, thus becoming a collective brand. In this case, several organizations share costs and benefits under the light of common reputational values and joint marketing strategies. When this is built with the aim of promoting a territory, it takes the name of “territorial marketing” or “territorial branding” [1]. With the aim of creating a positive image among both the internal and external public, territorial marketing can generate social and economic development, boosting innovation and facilitating the conditions for business activation [2]. Currently, territorial marketing and place branding is a common practice as well as a growing academic field. Over the last few decades, the number of scientific articles on topics related to territorial/place marketing and branding has increased exponentially [3],

and the efforts and resources devoted to the development of this type of marketing are broad [4,5].

Territorial marketing is used to achieve different goals which vary depending on the type of place. For example, nation branding aims to promote the country in international diplomacy and trade by shaping a positive national image and increasing national self-confidence [6]. City branding aims to attract immigrants, migrant workers and investors by creating a personalized city image and improving citizen engagement [7]. The tourist destination brand aims to attract tourists through a differentiated destination image and to promote a positive attitude among residents regarding tourism development [8].

Concerning tourism, the development and promotion of territorial brands and territorial marketing strategies significantly increase the tourist, recreational and investment attractiveness of regions, leading to improvements in socioeconomic aspects and local livelihoods [9]. It has been implemented widely, especially in cities, and more recently in rural areas. However, tourist destinations include several elements and stakeholders with different structures and roles that may be complex and diverse, which need to be considered and included in the territorial branding processes [10], for instance, the characteristics of the region; the different products, services and experiences; the various stakeholders such as tourism companies and agencies, public bodies and the local population. In this sense, a brand identity can have a key function in integrating the local elements and connecting the stakeholders [11]. To build a positive image and attract tourists, companies and/or new residents, place managers and local authorities need to adopt joint marketing strategies and implement consistent brands [12].

Moreover, when a region is promoted through territorial marketing with the objective of enhancing tourism, it involves one or various tourist products. The product can be the territory itself such as a small region (e.g., Cinque Terre, Italy [13]); ways, paths, itineraries and/or routes (e.g., Camino de Santiago, Spain [14]); local food products such as wine (e.g., wine tourism in Chianti Classico, Italy [15]); festivals and fairs (e.g., Mussel Festival in Løgstør, Denmark [16]); even specific groups of a local population, such as artists, who can also play an important role in the context of place identity construction and become the tourist product (e.g., old rural Finnish ironworks villages [11]). These products can be related to, for example, the local culture, arts and the environment. Currently, the landscape and natural resources play an important role in attracting tourists to rural areas.

In this sense, non-wood forest products (NWFPs) can be good examples of products to be used in defining a territorial identity [17,18]. Some examples include mushrooms, truffles, aromatic and medicinal plants, nuts, berries and honey. According to the FAO's definition [19], non-wood forest products (NWFPs) consist of "*products of biological origin other than wood derived from forests, other wooded land and trees outside forests*". In terms of economic importance, Lovric et al. (2021) [20] estimated that collected NWFPs represent a total economic value of 23.3 billion EUR/year in Europe, which amounts to 20.5 EUR/hectare of forest and other wooded lands. They are natural products, and their collection and use are connected with rural livelihoods, traditional knowledge, local culture, gastronomy and conservation issues [21–24]. NWFPs usually have the characteristics of territorial goods [18]. Their production is bound to specific areas or places, and they bring symbolic regional associations such as a special regional flavor [23]. In rural areas, a complementary economic role is played when NWFPs are used as "imago" products (identity products) in territorial marketing initiatives for branding a geographic area and networking among its actors [25]. In addition, they can provide food security and contribute to rural income generation while at the same time addressing environmental objectives [21]. The development of sustainable recreational and tourist activities linked to NWFPs can improve the contribution of forest ecosystems to the well-being of local populations and reduce damage to ecosystems [22].

Sustainable tourism is often present as an activity in the development of an NWFP sector, and it can increase not only the economic and environmental benefits but also the social and cultural benefits of the local population. Some specific tourism activities linked to NWFPs, which are usually offered as ecotourism activities, include mycotourism and

truffle tourism [26] (e.g., itineraries, paths or guides to identify mushrooms; guided tours of truffle plantations or wild harvesting). In addition, they can be linked to other products (e.g., itineraries for identifying chestnuts, wild plants and berries; aroma parks or botanical gardens with aromatic plants; workshops for elaborating products based on NWFPs). Moreover, they can also include agrotourism activities (e.g., visits and life experience on NWFPs farms; workshops and product tasting on a farm) and other kinds of activities developed for tourists such as show-cookings, fairs and festivals.

According to Secco (2009) [27], different organizational models are possible in the marketing of a particular NWFP. An enterprise organized in a traditional way can obtain consistent economic results and commercial success; however, its impacts on the territory and its environment are limited. While local network organizations, such as the Borgotaro Consortium in Italy, involving various economic, social and political actors within a defined area, have proved to be highly effective in promoting the area as a whole and its social and environmental components. This organizational model provides income to a greater number of actors as well as strengthen the local identity. This impact is reinforced when supported by communication and dissemination policies. All these aspects are important for rural communities, especially for small-scale landowners and forest managers. In this sense, territorial marketing based on a NWFP and their related services can be a development tool to diversify agricultural activities (i.e., NWFP-based tourism), maintain rural population incomes and support green jobs, especially in remote areas [28]. Some examples of tourism products based on NWFPs within the framework of territorial marketing are the creation of a local mushroom fair, such as Mercasetas in Soria, Spain, to enhance the place brand of “*Setas de Castilla-León*” [29]; the implementation of itineraries and signposts indicating local shops, restaurants and accommodation where tourists can find local mushrooms, thus reinforcing the regional brand such as in Borgotaro and the brand “*Il Fungo di Borgotaro*” [30]. All these products are linked to the place image and may offer cultural, gastronomic and/or natural and green experiences according to the characteristics of the place and the image promoted.

Despite the increase in studies on territorial marketing, it is neither clear to what extent the use of NWFPs for promoting a territory has been analyzed nor to what extent the different disciplines addressing this field are cooperating among each other. The remaining questions relate to what methodologies have been used to conduct those studies, what are the territorial marketing methods and processes followed in rural areas and what are the factors driving their success or failure. In this sense and considering the importance of NWFPs for local communities and the potential contribution of these products to rural development, the present review aimed to analyze the published literature in the field of territorial marketing in rural areas with special attention to NWFPs used to attract tourists. As specific objectives, we aimed to (i) identify the research disciplines interested in territorial marketing and branding; (ii) review the main methodologies used to develop those studies; (iii) analyze their key topics and findings; (iv) analyze the role that NWFPs play as a place image in the framework of territorial marketing; finally, (v) identify and analyze the territorial marketing implementation models.

2. Materials and Methods

To develop the present review the preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA) guidelines were followed [31]. The inclusion criteria for the literature review included mainly scientific articles but also other nonscientific papers such as book chapters, project reports and factsheets, and congress proceedings. The first search was conducted using the SCOPUS database in November 2021 with the following search string: “territorial marketing” OR “territorial branding” OR “place marketing” OR “place branding” AND “rural” AND “NWFP” OR “NTFP” OR “Non-Wood Forest Products” OR “Non-Timber Forest Products”. However, only one study was found. The search was repeated without including “NWFPs”, “NTFPs”, “Non-Wood Forest Products” and “Non-Timber Forest Products”, resulting in a larger number of articles. These first two

searches allowed us to see to what extent territorial marketing based on NWFPs has been studied. “Tourism” was not included in the search, as it was preferred to extend the search to a broader vision, thus allowing us to later identify the relevance of tourism related to both “territorial marketing” and “NWFPs”. Based on the literature found in the SCOPUS database, VOSviewer software was used to automate the identification of the most used terms and visualize the inter-relations and intensity among them, thus supporting the information extracted to achieve this review’s objectives. The terms were automatically extracted from the titles and abstracts (minimum number of occurrences of a term > 8).

An additional search was conducted using Web of Science and Google Scholar focusing on articles related to both territorial marketing and NWFPs, using the same search string. However, in order to broaden the selected literature and find more studies and study cases linked to territorial marketing, tourism and NWFPs, several additional words were used such as “agrotourism”, “food-branding” and “culinary tourism” as well as others more focused on a specific product and tourism activity such as “mycotourism”, “mycological tourism” and “truffle tourism”. Later, the documents not directly related to the topic (i.e., territorial marketing and branding in cities; those focused only on attracting new residents) were excluded, and through snowballing, the literature was enlarged with additional documents referenced by the previously selected papers. In-depth content analysis was performed on the final number of articles, identifying keywords that aligned with the specific objectives of this review, clustering the findings.

3. Results

The first two searches, collected from two different databases (i.e., SCOPUS and WoS) and a search engine (i.e., Google Scholar), as well as the inclusion of other cited articles resulted in a total of 158 articles. Two repetitions were identified. After screening and retrieving, 35 studies were excluded. Finally, 121 studies met the inclusion criteria and were included in the review (Figure 1). These covered a period between 1998 and 2022.

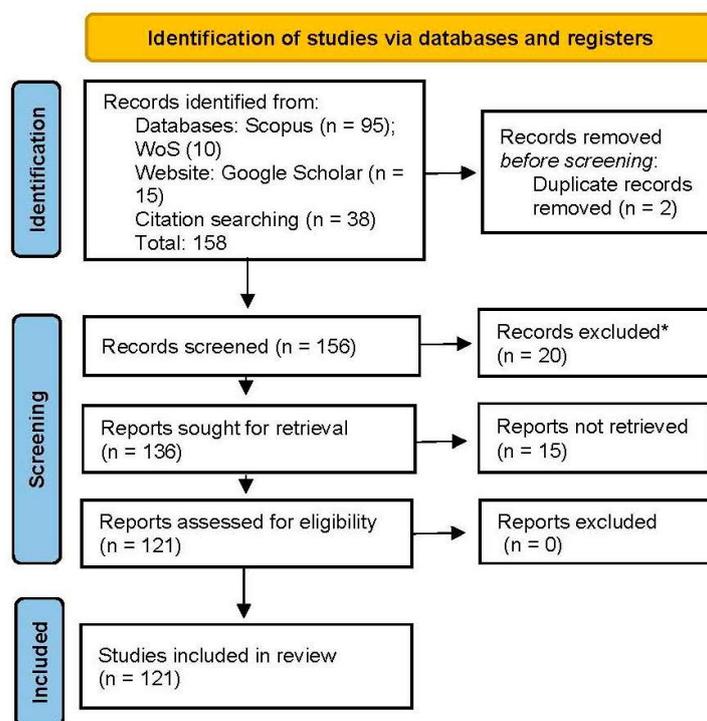


Figure 1. Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA) flow diagram. * The exclusions corresponded to articles that did not refer to territorial marketing in rural areas for the enhancement of tourism (e.g., those that referred to city marketing and branding or to attracting new residents).

3.1. Classification by Disciplines, Perspectives and Approaches

The disciplines, perspectives and approaches addressing territorial marketing and territorial branding strategies in the literature between 1998 and 2022 were broad, and they even included some that seemed, at first, not related to this field such as land-use planning and urban planning [5]. The authors mainly came from Europe and Australia, and among their research fields, economics was the discipline that addressed the topic of territorial marketing and branding the most with 44 articles (36%), followed by forestry with 20 articles (17%), business and management with 15 articles (12%), geography with 12 articles (10%) and tourism with 9 articles (7%). Other relevant disciplines were agriculture and anthropology with 5 articles (4%), environment and culture with 2 articles (2%), and, finally, other disciplines with just one article each (1%) (Table 1).

Table 1. Disciplines addressing territorial marketing strategy.

Discipline	N° of Articles	Percentage
Economics	44	36%
Forestry	20	17%
Business and Management	15	12%
Geography	12	10%
Tourism	9	7%
Agriculture	5	4%
Anthropology	5	4%
Environment	2	2%
Culture	2	2%
Education	1	1%
Spatial Planning	1	1%
Public Administration	1	1%
Rural Development	1	1%
Archaeology	1	1%
Policy Sciences	1	1%
Sciences and Technology	1	1%
Total	121	100%

As a result, the discipline that plays the most central role in territorial marketing is “economics”, since “marketing” is mainly studied within this discipline. Economics is also bound to other perspectives, such as management and business, which were identified separately, also reaching a high number of articles and ranking in the third position. “Forestry” was in the second position. Although this is not a discipline that typically studies “territorial marketing”, the inclusion of many studies in the field of NWFPs in the selected literature increased the number of articles under this discipline. This also shows the interest in territorial marketing among this research community. “Geography” was also a recurring discipline present in the literature, as territory and spatial distribution are key elements of geography and play important roles in territorial marketing. In the following positions we found tourism and agriculture, two disciplines also related to territorial marketing. Concerning “tourism”, the territorial marketing strategy was usually implemented in a region with the aim of attracting tourists. When it came to “agriculture”, the presence of this discipline was due to the articles related to agribusiness and agricultural practices that are common in one place and jointly promoted under the concept of territorial marketing. The presence of “anthropology” was due to the crucial role of various local actors and their relationship in the territorial marketing process. The next discipline was “environment”, mainly due to the importance of the landscape and natural resources of the places, as local characteristics, especially in rural areas, can become the image of a place and attract tourism. In a similar way, “culture” was present, as the cultural features of a place are unique characteristics used in place branding. Finally, to a lesser extent, we found “education”, “spatial planning”, “public administration”, “rural development”, “archaeology”, “policy sciences” and “science and technology”.

“image” and “value”. “Population” and “rural community” also provided an idea of the importance of these collectivities in territorial marketing. Other groups could be found that were also relevant such as “tourist”, “migrant”, “university”, “institution” and “enterprise”. In addition, some topics seen in the figure referred to “rurality” such as “rural development”, “rural region” and “rural community”. Regarding the geographical focus of the reviewed literature, the documents referred to different parts of the world, but two regions were predominant: Australia and Europe. The figure also shows that the “NWFP” term, as well as any specific NWFP term (e.g., “mushroom”, “truffle”, “plants” and “herbs”) were not present, which indicates the low attention the study of territorial marketing based on NWFPs to attract tourism has received.

The topics covered in the selected documents (from SCOPUS and other sources) were diverse, but some of them were common and recurring in the literature. The main topics of the analyzed documents included: (1) the definition of the concept, principles and approaches of territorial marketing and/or branding; (2) the mechanisms, elements and methods for implementing the territorial marketing strategy in rural areas; (3) territorial marketing to attract more visitors and enhance tourism; (4) food branding; (5) study cases and good practices for territorial marketing strategies. In addition, (6) NWFPs as potential local products to promote a rural territory were also tackled in several studies as well as (7) specific products, such as chestnuts, mushrooms, truffles and berries, and their related services such as mycotourism (see Table 2). The selected literature review also identified other themes linked to the main topic, but these were less present. Some examples include the role of migrants [43], the role of the universities in process branding networks [44,45] and local music and the arts. These topics demonstrate the variety of viewpoints, the different approaches and the breadth of place branding research.

Table 2. The main topics in the literature in the field of territorial marketing in rural areas and NWFPs and related articles.

Topic	Articles
(1) Definition of the concept, principles and approaches of territorial marketing and/or branding	Dinnie, 2004 [46]; Donner et al., 2017 [47]; Eidelman et al., 2019 [9]; Hanna & Rowley, 2008 [48]; Jackson, 2015 [49]; Kavartzis, 2005 [6]; Kavartzis & Ashworth, 2008 [50]; Kavartzis & Hatch, 2013 [51]; Kotler & Keller, 2005 [12]; Lasarte, 2013 [1]; Lucarelli, 2018 [52]; Moroz et al., 2020 [53]; Vuorinen, 2013 [54]
(2) Mechanisms, elements and methods for implementing the territorial marketing strategy in rural areas	Anholt, 2007 [55]; Argent, 2018 [56]; Ashworth, 2009 [57]; Atorough, 2012 [58]; Bisani et al., 2022 [45]; Botschen et al., 2017 [59]; Boyne & Hall, 2004 [60]; Cai, 2002 [61]; Campelo et al., 2013 [62]; Cavicchi et al., 2013 [44]; Chen & Šegota, 2015 [63]; Clifton, 2011 [64]; de San Eugenio-Vela & Barniol-Carcasona, 2015 [65]; Domínguez et al., 2013 [66]; Donner et al., 2017 [47]; Eshuis et al., 2017 [10]; Ettenger K, 2015 [67]; Giles et al., 2013 [68]; Govers & Go, 2009 [69]; Govers, 2011 [70]; Gulisova, 2021 [71]; Hanna & Rowley, 2011 [72]; Horlings, 2012 [73]; Hudak, 2019 [74]; Jarratt et al., 2019 [32]; Kalieva, 2015 [2]; Kapferer, 2008 [75]; Kavartzis & Ashworth, 2008 [50]; Kavartzis & Hatch, 2013 [51]; Kladou et al., 2017 [76]; Kotler & Keller, 2005 [12]; Lasarte, 2013 [1]; [53]; Lichrou et al., 2010 [77]; Line & Wang, 2017 [8]; Messely et al., 2015 [78]; Mettepenningen et al., 2012 [79]; Morgan et al., 2011 [80]; Moroz et al., 2020 [53]; Rausch, 2008 [81]; Secco et al., 2009 [27]; Senyao, 2021 [82]
(3) Territorial marketing to attract more visitors and enhance tourism	Botschen et al., 2017 [59]; Donner et al., 2017 [47]; Eidelman et al., 2019 [9]; Giles et al., 2013 [68]; González-Álvarez, 2019 [83]; Ilies et al., 2015 [84]; Kavoura et al., 2013 [85]; Precedo Ledo et al., 2007 [14]; Lew, 2017 [86]; Lopes et al., 2022 [34]; Marcihac & Moriniaux, 2018 [87]; Mettepenningen et al., 2012 [79]; Mittilä & Lepistö, 2013 [11]; Ou & Bevilacqua, 2017 [88]; Răcășan & Egresi, 2020 [35]; Rinaldi, 2017 [89]; Ryan & Mizerski, 2010 [90]; Vikhoreva et al., 2019 [91]; Senyao, 2021 [82]; Senyao & Ha, 2022 [92]; Sottini et al., 2019 [15]; Vegnuti, 2020 [13]; Walmsley, 2003 [93]; Yuceer & Vehbi, 2014 [94]

Table 2. Cont.

Topic	Articles
(4) Food branding	Bellia et al., 2021 [39]; Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2014 [16]; Bowen et al. 2020 [95]; Boyne & Hall, 2004 [60]; Clark & Rice, 2020 [96]; Donner et al., 2017 [47]; Gyimóthy, 2017 [97]; Lee et al., 2015 [36]; Lopes et al., 2022 [34]; Marcilhac & Moriniaux, 2018 [87]; Muñiz-Martínez, 2016 [98]; Muñiz-Martínez & Florek, 2021 [99]; Pencarelli et al., 2015 [100]; Rinaldi, 2017 [89]; Star et al., 2020 [37]; Tregear et al., 1998 [101]
(5) Case studies and good practices in territorial marketing strategies	Bellia et al., 2021 [39]; Bisani et al., 2021 [45]; Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2014 [16]; Botschen et al., 2017 [59]; Bowen & Bennett, 2020 [95]; Cai, 2002 [61]; Cavicchi et al., 2013 [44]; Clark & Rice, 2020 [96]; de San Eugenio-Vela & Barniol-Carcasona, 2015 [65]; Domínguez et al., 2013 [66]; Donner et al., 2017 [47]; Eidelman et al., 2019 [9]; Filimon et al., 2016 [102]; Gibson & Davidson, 2004 [103]; Gulisova, 2021 [71]; Gulisova et al., 2021 [104]; Horlings, 2012 [73]; Iliş & Iliş, 2015 [84]; Kianicka et al., 2006 [105]; Precedo Ledo et al., 2007 [14]; Lee et al., 2015 [36]; Lopes et al., 2022 [34]; Messely et al., 2015 [78]; Mettepenningen et al., 2012 [79]; Mittilä & Lepistö, 2013 [11]; Morgan et al., 2011 [80]; Mueller & Schade, 2012 [106]; Muñiz-Martínez, 2016 [98]; Muñiz-Martínez & Florek, 2021 [99]; Ryan & Mizerski, 2010 [90]; Senyao, 2021 [82]; Stoica et al., 2021 [107]; Vegnuti, 2020 [13]; Yang & Liu, 2018 [108]
(6) NWFPs as potential local products to promote a rural territory and boost tourism	Amici et al., 2020 [25]; Pettenella et al., 2007 [109]; Marcilhac & Moriniaux, 2018 [87]; Martínez de Arano et al., 2021 [28]; Maso et al., 2011 [110]; Mutke et al., 2019 [22]; Slee, 2011 [18]; Sotirov et al., 2016 [111]; Taghouti, et al., 2021 [24]; Taghouti et al., 2022 [41]; Weiss et al., 2020 [23]; Wolfslehner et al., 2019 [112]; Živojinović et al., 2020 [113]
(7) Specific NWFPs and services (e.g., mushrooms and truffles, berries, chestnuts, mycotourism and truffle tourism)	Bonet et al., 2020 [114]; Büntgen et al., 2017 [115]; Cai et al., 2011 [116]; de Frutos et al., 2012 [117]; Pencarelli et al., 2015 [100]; Pettenella, 2001 [118]; Latorre et al., 2021 [38]; Latorre et al., 2021 [26]; Marcilhac & Moriniaux, 2018 [87]; Oliach et al., 2021 [40]; Riedl et al., 2020 [42]; Secco et al., 2009 [27]

Several authors highlighted the growing interest in territorial marketing, not only at the national or city level, where this strategy has mainly been developed, but also at the regional level [47,71,102]. Especially over the last decade and a half, this field has received academic attention [71,119]. While few studies on rural territorial marketing in the selected literature were present at the beginning of the 21st century (11% of them from 1998 to 2010), such as Cai (2002) [61] and Boyne (2004) [60], a clear increase in the number of studies was observed in recent years (Vuin, 2016 [43]; Gyimóthy, 2017 [97]; Donner, 2017 [47]; Botschen, 2017 [59]; Argent, 2018 [56]; Răcăşan & Egresi, 2020 [35]; Basile, 2020 [120]; Bowen, 2020 [95]; Clark, 2020 [96]; Moroz, 2020 [53]; Vegnuti, 2020 [13]; Senyao, 2021 [82]; Bellia, 2021 [39]; Gulisova, 2021 [71]) (89% from 2011 to 2022). However, research on rural places branding is still low [54], and its application is scarce due to the lack of knowledge regarding the process and the possibilities of adapting its modeling to rural areas [53].

Regarding (1) the definition of the concept, principles and approaches of territorial marketing and/or branding: The concept of territorial marketing/branding in the context of the socioeconomic development of rural areas started at the end of the 20th century with Kotler and Keller [12], who indicated the potential and principles of marketing of territories. Later, Anholt [55] sustained the methodical basis of territorial branding and also created the term “place branding”. Territorial marketing was also defined as a factor of social and economic development, increasing the investment activity and development of a favorable image of a territory [49]. In contemporary science, the concept of place branding evolved to a participative process, bringing stakeholders together with the aim of strengthening the identity of the place [54]. Nevertheless, and despite the increasing number of place branding practices, there is no widely accepted scientific definition due to the fact of its multidisciplinary characteristics [47].

Related to (2) the mechanisms, elements and methods for implementing the territorial marketing strategy in rural areas: The role of relevant actors was present in most of the studies. Sustainable territorial development falls largely under the responsibility of policy makers [71], and territorial marketing is often practiced at the level of political-administrative units, because the respective authorities drive the place branding processes [51]. Although other stakeholders played relevant roles in the implementation of territorial marketing, public bodies were the key players to boost the involvement of other actors and to establish public–private partnerships to create a new brand and identity [35,47,121]. Other stakeholders' involvement included the private sector, local communities, universities and research centers, not-for-profit organizations and volunteers [36,45], especially in smaller places, such as in rural communities, as occurred in South Australia's Mid North region [43]. Place branding in rural areas was seen by many authors as a participative process with the aim of co-creating a strong regional identity that brings economic and social benefits [55,122]. Territorial marketing included institutional and organizational innovation and new forms of communication [36,65,98]. This involved the creation of vital coalitions, new networks and interaction processes as well as intensive and transparent communication among local people and communities [66,89]. In the case of NWFPs, an original form of a local network organization, the Borgotaro Consortium in Italy, involved various economic, social and political actors, and it proved to be highly effective in promoting the area as well as its social and environmental elements [27]. The local population was increasingly relevant in these processes, as the place image addressed to external consumers was influenced not only by the place image designed by destination management organizations but also by the authentic place culture inherited by residents [63,96,120], especially during Web 2.0 in which residents acted as online ambassadors of places and, thus, had a more direct influence on the image construction of the place [33].

As for (3) territorial marketing to attract more visitors and enhance tourism, many of the articles contained a tourism-focus analysis and discussed how it could be promoted through the image of the destination. One regional strategy was the reorientation of territorial capital via the development of culturally embedded food products that reflected the “story of the region” and offered experiences to citizens that could support tourism [47]. This could be the case of NWFPs. Moreover, it can be related to the following topic, (4) food-branding, a strategy that can be useful for promoting local food products [95], as they are one of the most important differentiating assets of rural territories [34]. Studies showed the link between tourist motivations and local enogastronomy, culture, art and nature [38–40]. Many studies developed their analyses through case studies and good practices for territorial marketing strategies. For this reason, these were identified and included in a separate topic (5). Some examples include the Mussel Festival in Rural North Jutland, Denmark [16]; food branding in Rhondda Cynon Taf, Wales [95]; the case of place branding in the River Minho Estuary in Portugal and Spain [66].

3.4. The Role of NWFPs in Territorial Marketing

Some authors (12% of the selected studies) considered territorial marketing as a promising strategy to attract tourists to the region and promote the consumption of NWFPs [18,22,87,109]. NWFPs were connected to territorial identity, recreation, gastronomy and other local values; thus, they were considered good candidates for becoming “imago” products [17], and they facilitated stakeholder networking (e.g., the “blueberry valley”, the “chestnut trail” and the “Boletus roads”) [123]. Moreover, NWFPs sustain an increased demand for natural resources [28,116], which stems from a higher standard of living and a willingness to pay for natural, safe and healthy products, especially among European consumers [25]. This tendency has increased the demand for many NWFPs, especially for non-commodity and personalized products [112] as well as the growing interest in experiential services in tourism, recreation and gastronomy [23]. The link between products and services was often materialized in the “road concept”: roads, paths or trails became tools for connecting different actors in the territory. Complementary activities,

such as itineraries and guided routes, visits to farms, tastings of local products, botanical parks and product transformation workshops, were addressed toward visitors through which their expenses could contribute to the socioeconomic development of the region. In this sense, the tourism sector can greatly benefit from channeling such increased demand for wild and traditional products as well as for experiential activities in rural areas [28]. Articulating this demand opens up opportunities to generate synergies among a territory's services and products, making a tourist destination more attractive, and increasing the consumption of NWFP-based products, experiences and other services, frequently supported by a well-recognized brand such as "*Il Fungo di Borgotaro*" in Italy [27] or "*Setas de Castilla y León*" in Spain [25].

The territorial marketing strategy was also bound to NWFP-based services including, ecotourism, agrotourism or more specific tourism products such as mycotourism and truffle tourism. Mycotourism is an innovative specialized tourism product [26] that is connected to the local society of a place [115] and, thus it is an activity that can contribute to developing the "sense of place", i.e., an emotional link or feeling to the place [67,124]. As for truffles, the organization of tourist-oriented activities, such as farm visits and food tastings, can become development tools to diversify agricultural activities and increase the income of truffles farmers, strengthen the reputation of traditional, local products and attract tourists by proposing themed experiences [100]. A combined touristic offer with other high value products (e.g., wine or olive oil) can attract luxury tourism in rural regions and boost the territorial marketing concept [40]. In addition, truffle festivals have great potential as an identity and heritage feature for a territory [87]. Local food and gastronomy can play important roles as identity markers, expressing a specific culture and way of life [34,37]. These can even be considered as one of the few important options for keeping rural regions socially connected and alive [47].

Several studies supported this potential synergy between territorial marketing and NWFPs. However, only one tackled this field more in depth by analyzing a case study, "*Fungo di Borgotaro*" [27]. Beyond analyzing the processes needed to develop a territorial marketing strategy, it focused on the key elements for a successful joint marketing strategy involving several companies in the same region. Among the key factors for achieving it, there was product differentiation (i.e., through certification), strong links among local actors and a promotion strategy through territorial marketing (i.e., development of the "Road of Borgotaro Boletus"). Thus, some questions remain unanswered: What would be the appropriate model and processes to develop the territorial marketing in a rural region based on a NWFP? What are the key elements to achieve a successful implementation? Several cases related to NWFPs were mentioned, but none of them were analyzed as a territorial marketing model.

3.5. Territorial Marketing Implementation Models

Various models for implementing a territorial marketing strategy and place brand architecture were present in the literature; however, they were not focused on NWFPs but in general in nature. There was no unique model for place branding [7], as every place contained different features representing the local culture, regional politics and social relationships [82]. According to the objectives established, the characteristics of the place, and the principles and mechanisms concerning the prospects of rural development, different processes were adopted. We can differentiate five territorial marketing/place branding models identified in the literature.

3.5.1. Strategic Place Brand Management (SPBM) Model

Hanna and Rowley (2011) [72] developed a holistic place-branding management model integrating the relevant perspectives found in previous models with the aim of supporting both research in the place marketing field and its managers in the implementation process. The SPBM model includes the process of place branding, and its key components are (1) brand evaluation, a process to gather feedback on current brand image and situation;

(2) stakeholder engagement, which includes the processes by which stakeholders and their interests are identified and interactions are managed; (3) infrastructure, referring to the various characteristics of the place, (4) brand identity, by which the essence of the brand is created, (5) brand architecture, as the process of designing and managing brand portfolios, (6) brand articulation, the expression of the brand through the place name, logotype and photographs; (7) marketing communications, as the activities associated with the communication of the brand identity; (8) word of mouth, as a powerful form of communication; (9) brand experience, by which consumers engage with the brand and formulate perceptions. These key components help to understand the process for the territorial marketing implementation. However, some aspects are not clear. For instance, while the role of stakeholders was contemplated, the role of residents as place authenticity and identity ambassadors was not overly tackled.

3.5.2. Identity-Driven Place Branding Model

Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013) [51] constructed an identity-driven place branding model, which points out that effective place branding should promote residents' place identity to fully express the place culture, enabling external consumers to construct a place image. Residents' place identity should play an important role in place branding, because such and identity helps residents form consistent values and beliefs, increases the efficiency of collective decision making and ultimately affects citizen's behavior for the promotion of place branding [58]. This was considered a dynamic process in constant evolution conducted by interactions among internal and external actors. However, as place branding is a combination of top-down and bottom-up place making [86], Kavaratzis and Hatch's model lacks the important element of a planners' designed place image.

3.5.3. Brand-Driven Identity Development of Places (BIDPs)

Botschen's (2017) [59] systematic approach focuses on sociocultural meanings, which are considered as the main source for the construction of brand identities and seek to create meaningful experiences that resonate positively for all stakeholders. It is structured in three phases: the first phase is the definition of the intended place brand identity, which in the second phase is translated into concrete touchpoint experiences along the main constituents of the place, and the third phase for materializing them into the new place format. The BIDP approach is an integrated social experience for all participants, with continuous interactions among key actors. Crucial practices include the creation of a core team; an additional team with different stakeholders (microcosm); the application of collaborative and creative research techniques. Although the model is for both urban and rural places, it does not mention the particularities of each type of place. For instance, the role of the actors in the core team may not be the same in a city as in a small town. Meanwhile, in cities, public bodies may play a main role, while in towns residents and local groups may be more participative. Moreover, the stakeholders were not defined, and the level to which they were involved in the process was not addressed.

3.5.4. The Place Branding Model from the Perspective of Peircean Semiotics

Senyao (2021) [82] reconstructed Kavaratzis and Hatch's place branding model from the perspective of Peircean semiotics (the philosophical study of signs) and analyzed it in the context of destination branding in rural tourism. With this model, place branding is regarded as a dynamic symbolic process represented by the trichotomy of immediate/dynamical/final interpretants (place planners/residents/tourists) and exploring the different roles they play and their relationships. All of them are "interpretants". Place planners create the planned place image they want consumers to experience (immediate interpretant); residents represent the place identity (dynamic interpretant); tourists are external consumers that interpret place culture through the constructed place image (final interpretant). In addition, the dynamic relationship of this trichotomy includes their interactions with the place culture (inherited by residents), which plays the role of "object" and

place elements (place name/logo/song), which plays the role of “representamen”. This model highlights the importance in place branding of villagers’ roles as place ambassadors and authentic narrators of place culture. This also allows for understanding how the place elements affect the place image and even the change in place culture as well as how to use the place elements to actively adapt to social changes and carry out a reimagining of the place. This is a comprehensive model integrating all stakeholders (internal and external) as well as place elements, place identity, planned image, the interaction among them and the changing dynamics. However, this model did not tackle the different steps and procedures for a successful territorial marketing implementation process.

3.5.5. Rural Place Branding Processes (PBPs)

Gulisova (2021) [71] analyzed several case studies of rural place branding to identify different types of processes considering the contextual factors underlying their application. The author proposed five types of rural place branding processes (PBPs) based on the actors involved in the process and their responsibility and participation. While the first type is led by one focal actor (mainly an administrative body), the last type is conducted by many different actors (with strong participation by the community). Among the five PBP types, the more participatory ones were more often present in rural areas, which means a bottom-up PBP model with greater community involvement. Six actor groups were identified: residents; local businesses; local authorities; university/researchers; regional or local organizations including NGOs or protected areas; external actors. In addition, six contextual factors were presented: (1) type of place, referring to administrative power; (2) initiative promoter, distinguishing between political/administrative, community and mixed initiators; (3) support base for the branding, i.e., political/organizational, community, strong identity or external forces; (4) brand purpose, i.e., competitiveness, identity and conservation; (5) target group, e.g., residents, businesses, tourists, and the general public; (6) type of place brand, referring to the differences between sectoral and integrated place brands. This paper offered a classification of rural place branding types based on the involved actors; however, it did not tackle several organizational aspects such as the need for a core leading team or the process for identifying the sociocultural values and implementing the brand as well as the main steps for a successful implementation.

4. Discussion

This literature review shows the growing interest generated by the concept of territorial marketing among researchers and other stakeholders, not only at the national or city level but also at the regional level. This opens opportunities for rural areas to develop this marketing strategy. However, research attention in the field of territorial marketing and the branding of rural regions is still limited. Only one study [27] analyzed specific aspects of territorial marketing based on NWFPs in rural areas, but a full territorial marketing model was not developed in the context of NWFPs. The literature also underscored the multidisciplinary nature of territorial marketing research with its variety of approaches, with economics as the discipline that has led this field of research, followed by forestry, business and management, and geography and, to a lesser extent, other approaches that, at first, appeared to be unrelated to territorial marketing such as archeology, spatial planning and public administration. On the other hand, forestry was not a discipline that was used to address territorial marketing and branding. However, the inclusion of several studies in the field of NWFPs has increased its presence, showing the interest of this concept within the forestry academic community. Few studies mixed various disciplines, resulting in a small proportion of unified knowledge and views. Most studies were approached from an economic and a few from social perspectives, leading to a lack of holistic and comprehensive studies. Conceptual methodologies (i.e., qualitative research and literature reviews) were mainly used in the selected studies. Thus, more quantitative investigation relying on numerical or measurable data are needed.

Regarding the main topics present in the studies, there is the need for widespread acceptance of a scientific definition of the concept of territorial marketing. In addition, different aspects and elements to be considered in the territorial marketing processes were analyzed, among which the participation of different stakeholders, with special attention to residents' involvement, was one of the most relevant. Moreover, food branding appeared as a field of interest within territorial marketing, especially in rural areas where rural goods and services are especially considered in the construction of identities. This is a relevant field, as it can be connected to NWFPs and related services aimed at attracting tourists such as festivals and fairs.

In regard to territorial marketing models, there was no unique methodology, as each place had their own characteristics. For this reason, different models were developed in different regions and countries. The crucial elements included in these models were the brand construction process [72], the residents' place identity [51], cultural meanings [59], the interactions among stakeholders, as well as with place culture and its image [82], and the roles of the actors [71]. While Senyao (2021) [82] offered a comprehensive model integrating various stakeholders as well as local culture, local elements and planned image; Gulisova's analysis (2021) [71] provided an understanding of the roles and representativeness of the actors. First, the author presented the key actors and components as well as analyzed their interactions from a more visual and symbolic perspective and, second, the author deepened the understanding of the actors and their roles as well as the contextual factors. Both models form a good basis for understanding the situation of the place and key elements. However, the steps to be followed in the process were not clearly presented. Hanna and Rowley's brand construction process [72] proposed some steps for the implementation of a strategy, which can be useful for understanding the process of territorial marketing design and implementation. In addition, other authors [51,59,71,82] focused on the residents' role and cultural meanings as crucial elements to be considered in the territorial marketing process.

On the basis of Hanna and Rowley's brand construction process [72], and the relevant aspects and elements to be considered in territorial marketing described by other authors, a proposal with five consecutive steps for the implementation of territorial marketing based on NWFPs in rural areas is presented:

1. **Phase 1:** A state-of-the-art analysis of the situation: In this step, the particular characteristics, identity and culture of the area to be promoted are analyzed, and the actors are mapped as well as the tourist sector and economic activity in the area including tourism. The identification and interpretation of differential place elements complemented with cultural values is a starting point in a territorial brand, and residents play a crucial role in expressing genuine elements of their culture within the local brand. At this stage, it is important to understand the relevance of NWFPs to be used as an image and to know to what extent residents identify with the product(s). If they feel connected to a local NWFP, it will be easier to build the brand image of the place based on it;
2. **Phase 2:** Stakeholder engagement: Coordination, cooperation and a collaborative relationship among stakeholders are key aspects throughout the process. To this end, a core team could act as a steering committee and an additional group of relevant stakeholders could be established. The community plays a relevant role in the territorial marketing process, especially when it takes place in a rural area [73]. This phase is foreseen to last through the whole process, as territorial marketing is a dynamic process in which stakeholders, identity and ideas will be constantly changing;
3. **Phase 3:** Action plan preparation: Joint definition (with the core group and additional stakeholders) of an operational roadmap considering the authentic place culture constructed by residents and local interests identified in the previous phases. The action plan includes the objectives, activities and indicators to develop the territorial marketing strategy as well as the elaboration of a promotional plan;

4. **Phase 4:** Action plan implementation: In this phase, the activities are developed. This includes the design of the brand and place elements such the logo and brand name based on the NWFP to be promoted;
5. **Phase 5:** Monitoring and evaluation: As this is a dynamic process, it needs to be monitored and evaluated periodically. Indicators could be used to follow progress. For instance, the effect on tourists needs to be followed with indicators, such as variations in visiting numbers and/or duration, type of activities performed or budget spent in the area, complemented by their perceptions regarding the place brand. In addition, residents' feedback on the process of the action plan's implementation is to be closely followed and integrated to ensure their engagement;

In addition, policy makers need to be engaged and adopt policies that contribute to developing innovative territorial value chains, harnessing the potential of NWFPs for territorial development [25,112] as well as strengthening this link to enhance sustainable tourism.

5. Conclusions

The analyzed literature on territorial marketing in rural areas showed the multidisciplinary nature of this field of research and the variety of methodologies used with a clear tendency towards qualitative methods. The main topics tackled in the literature were the territorial marketing concept; the role of stakeholders with a special focus on residents' perceptions, as they are the key actors that express the local identity; NWFPs as products connected to local traditions, culture and economy with high potential for becoming territorial "imago" products; finally, different models for implementing the territorial marketing in a rural area.

As limitations of this review, the number of selected articles related to territorial marketing and territorial branding could be increased, for instance, by expanding the search with other terms, such as "site marketing", "site branding", "destination marketing" and "destination branding", that would increase the number articles related to this concept. In addition, the review could consider other articles related to territorial marketing published before 1998, which were not included.

Although territorial marketing has been studied for a long time, the current state of research in this field highlights the need to face several challenges for its maturation. The first challenge is to discourage the "silo mentality" [5] in the field, as it prevents authors working with different approaches from being considered and achieving interdisciplinary studies. Second, more quantitative studies are needed to enrich the research results in this field. Third, there is a need to eliminate the lack of conceptual clarity in territorial marketing and branding. Fourth, literature focused on territorial marketing based on NWFPs is virtually nonexistent. Further studies are needed to understand the potential of NWFPs and their services (e.g., mycotourism and truffle tourism) as "imago" products to attract tourism through territorial marketing. Finally, a proposal of the main phases to implement a territorial marketing strategy based on NWFPs in rural areas was presented (Phase 1: State of the art, analysis of the situation; Phase 2: Stakeholder engagement; Phase 3: Action plan preparation, Phase 4: Action plan implementation and Phase 5: Monitoring and evaluation). Territorial marketing is a promising and inclusive concept that can serve as a tool for rural development, and it deserves further attention.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization: M.R., L.G. and J.-A.B.; methodology, M.R.; writing—review and editing, M.R., L.G, E.G.-M. and J.-A.B. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research was developed within the framework of the WILDFOOD Project "Eating the Wild: Improving the Value-Chain of Mediterranean Wild Food Products" funded by the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) and the National Funding Agencies (PRIMA Call 2019, Section 2; reference number: PCI2020-112020).

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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