

CITY BRANDING: INTRODUCING METHODS OF MEASURING BRANDING STRENGTH*

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ABSTRACT

Cities increasingly compete in contested international markets for a wide range of beneficial assets, opportunities, and investments that help the city to develop and generate opportunities and resources for their citizens. Increasingly, cities are using thoughtful promotional brand strategies to better project their advantages, and to foster a clear identity and reputation that will help them win the competition for mobile opportunities over time. These identities and reputations are much more than logos or strap lines, they communicate a 'whole story' about the value added that the city can offer to mobile activities that have a choice where they locate. The purpose of the brand is to provide an authentic and aspirational message about the city, brand models and rankings are then used to assess the cities standing among others in respect to image and to reveal their comparative shortcomings. This paper introduces the different models that assess city branding strength, in order to conclude the main factors that help cities to increase their branding strength.

KEYWORDS: city branding, city marketing, city ranking, brand, branding.

INTRODUCTION

Branding is a tool that can be used by cities to define them and attract positive attention in the midst of an international information glut. Unfortunately, there is the common misconception that branding is simply a communications strategy, a tagline, visual identity or logo. It is much, much more. It is a strategic process for developing a long-term vision for a place that is relevant and compelling to key audiences. Ultimately it influences and shapes positive perceptions of a place.

A branding process is anchored in a community's societal, political or economic objectives by focusing on its relevant differences, identifying the core promise that it makes to key audiences, and developing and consistently communicating the core, positive attributes of the place.

There are many reasons why it is critical for a place to be branded, but the most common is to stimulate economic growth. That because a strong brand can: shift the perception of a place that may

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be suffering from a poor image among external and internal constituents, create a common vision for the future of the community and its potential, provide a consistent representation of the place, and enhance its local, regional and/or global awareness and position.

The adage, "What is not measured is not managed," is true for all branding, whether product, service or place; so the question often raised is what makes good city branding and how can its success be evaluated. The aim of this paper is to introduce different methods that used in measuring city branding strength.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Today city branding is on the radar of most developed nations, as well as increasingly among developing countries seeking an enhanced image in order to attract direct investment, tourism, trade, and improve international relations. However in recent years, branding discussions have moved towards city brands, reflecting the growing importance of cities in national and global economies and as attractors of investment and people in their own right.

City branding as a field of study is considered a newly emerged term in the urban management and marketing industry^{1,4}. It integrates concepts from product and corporate branding, tourism destination marketing, place-and event branding as well as city planning⁵.

Since the 1990s, eager to strengthen city attractiveness in local economic development, the notion of a strategic approach to place marketing (in particular, city branding) has been embraced by a widening number of cities and countries around the world. Some urban analysts have argued that city branding is a cultural strategy of an entrepreneurial city⁷.

A positive reputation or strong competitive identity is critical for any city. Cities that are well known and that are perceived positively are cities that attract investment, tourism and trade and appeal to skilled and talented people. A strong competitive identity can also assist to improve international relations.

City branding is understood as the means both for achieving competitive advantage in order to increase inward investments and tourism; and also for achieving community development, reinforcing local identity and identification of the citizens with their city and activating all social forces to avoid social exclusion and unrest⁴.

In this context, for the efficiency of the actions of promoting the cities, the correct knowledge of the city brands is opportune, which is realized through the measuring models. Through the models of measuring the city branding, the political leaders and business men can easily understand the perception of the visitors, investors, costumers and future residents upon the image of the city, for taking pro-active measures, of improvement and stimulating the existing opportunities. This paper will study the most used such methods; which are: Anholt-GfK City Brands Index, and European Barometer of City Brands.

Anholt-GfK City Brands Index

The study evaluates the power and appeal of each city's brand image, giving a holistic and detailed perspective based on six key dimensions³; shown in fig. (1):

Presence (the city's international status and standing).

Place (its physical outdoors aspect and transport)

Pre-requisites (basic requirements, such as affordable accomodation and the standard of public amenities).

People (friendliness, cultural diversity, how safe one feels).

Pulse (interesting things to do)

Potential (the economic and educational opportunities available).



Fig. 1- Anholt city brand hexagon - Source: Anholt, S., (2005)

The Anholt-GfK CBISM Index measures the image of 50 cities with respect to Presence, Place, Pre-requisite, People, Pulse and Potential. For the 2015 study, 5166 interviews were conducted in total, consisting of at least 500 interviews in each of Australia, Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Russia, South Korea, UK and USA. Adults aged 18 or over are interviewed online in each country. Using the most up-to-date online population parameters, the achieved sample in each country has been weighted to reflect key demographic characteristics including age, gender, and education of the online population in that country. Fieldwork was conducted from September 10th to 23rd, 2015. The 50 cities ranked in the survey are as follows³:

Western Europe: Amsterdam, Barcelona, Basel, Berlin, Brussels, Dublin, Edinburgh, Geneva, London, Madrid, Milan, Paris, Rome, Stockholm, Munich* .

Central/Eastern Europe: Istanbul, Moscow, Prague, Vienna, Warsaw.

Asia Pacific: Auckland, Bangkok, Beijing, Hong Kong, Melbourne, Mumbai, Seoul, Shanghai, Singapore, Sydney, Tokyo.

North America: Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, Seattle, Toronto, Washington D.C., Dallas Fort Worth*, Houston*.

Latin America: Buenos Aires, Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro.

Middle East/Africa: Cairo, Cape Town, Doha, Dubai, Durban, Johannesburg.

Fig. (2) Shows the six dimensions that make up the overall index, London, Paris and New York are seen as the top three cities for having strong international Presence. When it comes to Place, Paris leads the ranking, followed by Sydney and

Rome. For Prerequisites, Sydney is ranked top, with Berlin second and Amsterdam third. Sydney is also ranked first for People, with Toronto and Amsterdam making up the top three – while Paris, New York and London are ranked highest for their Pulse. Finally, for Potential, we see New York in the lead, with London second and Sydney third.



Fig. 2- Top 5 cities in each category, Source:<http://www.gfk.com/en-us/insights/press-release/toronto-drops-out-of-top-10-in-latest-city-brands-index-report/>, accessed (20-3-2016).

Fig. (3) Shows the top ten cities in Anholt-GfK City Brands Index.

Anholt-GfK City Brands Index SM		
-	2015	2013
Paris	1	3
London	2	1
New York City	3	4
Sydney	4	2
Los Angeles	5	7
Rome	6	5
Berlin	7	12
Amsterdam	8	11
Melbourne	9	10
Washington, D.C.	10	6

Fig. 3- Top 10 cities of Anholt-GfK City Brands Index
 Source: <http://www.gfk.com/en-us/insights/press-release/toronto-drops-out-of-top-10-in-latest-city-brands-index-report/>, accessed (20-3-2016).

ASSET AND BRAND STRENGTH

The Barometer thus measures the strength of cities’ brands and assesses how well cities use branding to exploit their assets. Saffron concludes that there are ten qualitative factors (the Saffron City brand criteria) a city should work on if it wants to improve its standing in the world. They looked at European cities with populations of 450,000 or more, plus Manchester, Bristol, Cardiff,

Leeds, and Newcastle, (important UK cities with populations less than that). Altogether there are 72 cities in this analysis².

This ranking uses two comprehensive aspects: City asset strength (which asks: looking only at the observable and measurable features of the city how strong could the city’s brand be?) and City brand strength (which asks: right now, how strong is the city’s brand really?).

**A- THE CITY ASSET STRENGTH ASPECT:
CULTURAL FACTORS**

These factors include four main aspects: sight-seeing and historical attraction (max. 20 points), cuisine and restaurants (max. 15 points), shopping (max. 10 points), and Economic significance of prosperity (max. 20 points).

AMENITY FACTORS

These factors include three main aspects: how easy it is to get around on foot and public transport (max. 15 points), costs very little to enjoy (max. 10 points), and has good weather (max. 10 points)

B- CITY BRAND STRENGTH ASPECT²

Pictorially recognized (25%)

Quantity/strength of positive/attractive qualities (25%)

Conversational value (25%)

Media recognition (25%)

The City Brand Barometer: graphical illustration of how the cities match up against one another (by plotting city brand strength versus city asset strength on an X-Y grid), as shown in fig. (4).

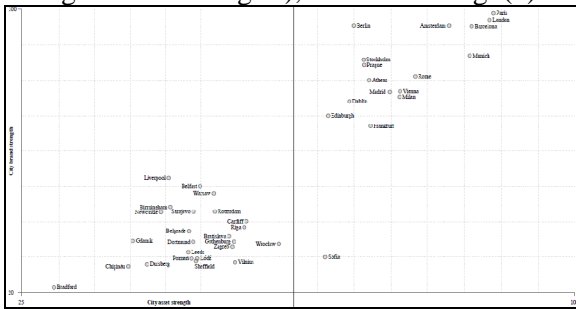


Fig. 4- The European City brand barometer - Source: Hildreth, J., (2008)

CONCLUSIONS

City branding is more connected with the international presence and pulse of a city than with city liveability. A city can therefore have a strong, positive brand that is built on one strong feature of the city region, despite having some weaknesses as a place to live.

City brands are generally built on real strengths (or weaknesses) of city regions. Therefore to build

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an effective brand, they need to be based on reality and reflect a city's major strength.

Long term global perceptions of major cities are resilient and do not appear to be significantly affected by a short term crisis. For example riots in Paris and London and the 9/11 attacks in New York did little to affect long term positive perceptions of the cities.

It is also clear that global perceptions of cities can be strongly influenced by major positive events in the city – such as hosting the Olympic Games. Sydney is a case in point. Sydney's brand, and brand Australia, soared following the successful 2000 Olympics and the city is still reaping the rewards, with a competitive identity which it could be argued 'punches above its weight'.

Similarly cities with cultural strengths are more likely to appear in the top ten and popular culture (the television, movies and increasingly animation industries) also have a very significant impact on both global recognition of cities and on the way that they are perceived.

From the top ten lists, it is evident that the cities in the world with the most recognizable, positive brands tend to be cities with a strong international presence. They are mainly medium sized to large cities that are significant players on the international stage, economically, politically or culturally.