

Chapter 52

The Role of Culture in City Branding

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ABSTRACT

City branding means all types of image development studies for a city in order to attract more visitors, raise the quality of life and awareness of the city and provide development etc. Today, the increasing competition among the cities has made city branding a necessity. There are different strategies implemented for city branding. The mostly used strategy among those is the culture-focused branding studies. Culture has a critical importance for city branding and it is used as an international strategy for the economic, social and environmental renovation of cities. Marketing the cultural city sources and activities in an efficient way and branding the city accordingly have become increasingly important. In this chapter, the role and importance of culture which is one of the most important strategies used in city branding has been discussed in detail. Also, the cases of cultural cities which become successfully different from their rivals with their cultural heritage and the strategies implemented in these cases have been analyzed.

INTRODUCTION

Cities are becoming more popular destinations for visitors with their lively and different atmosphere comparing to rural or coastal destinations. People can travel to a city for purpose of business trip, family/relatives visiting or just for a holiday. Also, during their travel they perform many activities like shopping, visiting cultural heritage sites, nightlife, dining, sports, festivals, art, cultural events etc.

Inter-city competition and public-private urban partnerships increased as an impact of globalization and cities became vital objects of marketing in this environment (Barkham & Murray, 2012). In that context, city managers use marketing tools -branding is one of them- to improve cities (Pecot & Barnier, 2015). Cities need to be unique and more attractive in such an environment of increased competition of investment, trade and visitors (Lindblom, Lorentz & Pettersson, 2012). Since 1980s, improvement and branding of cities have become the main policies of many countries, especially those in Europe and America. Since that period, activities with high budgets were organized by considering the impacts of

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the elements which trigger the city development, and city development and branding were supported with worldwide organizations such as Olympics, conventions and forums (Ciftci & Ozsoy, 2008). Within this context, one of the mostly used elements is culture and the related investments. Culture is a rich and multi-dimensional concept that contains social norms and traditions, language, fashion, architecture, handcrafts, art, music, gastronomy etc. (Iliachenko, 2005). Cities with unique cultural attractions can easily be branded since they offer different experiences to visitors. Local historical places, stories and legends create an unforgettable and romantic experience for tourists visiting the cities and they stick in the mind.

The aim of this chapter is to understand the concept and the development of city branding and to present the role of culture in city branding. In this chapter, the role and importance of culture which is one of the most important strategies used in city branding will be discussed in detail. The main research questions of this chapter are; “what are the cultural presentations, values and resources and how they could be used in city branding?” The chapter will discuss these questions and at the same time different cities will be taken into consideration as case studies to focus on the cities which become successful brands with their cultural values. And, some recommendations will be proposed for the implementation.

BACKGROUND

Concept of City Branding and Its Development

Branding activities is an application used for many years to distinguish product and services of an establishment from the products and services of other establishments. Brand is “a distinguishing name and/or a symbol (such as logo, trademark, or package design) intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or service from competitors who would attempt to provide products that appear to be identical” (Aaker, 1991, p. 7). Brand protects and indicates a company’s ownership to a named, particularly identifiable product (Stigel and Frimann, 2006, p. 244).

Considering the income levels obtained from the flow of local and foreign visitors and its economic effects, it is possible to say that cities are marketable “products” today. Within national and international contexts, depending on equipping the cities with new attractions for new visits, the competition among cities to attract more visitors is gradually increasing. Cities are in a constant competition to attract more investments, tourists or residents. City administrators use different marketing tools in order to improve and manage their cities in this competitive environment and “branding” is one of these methods (Pecot & Barnier, 2015). In other words, factors such as globalization, the increasing competition among the cities, developments about the public and private sector collaboration for city improvement etc. have turned the cities first into a marketing object, and then into a branding object (Murray, 2012). Therefore, city branding is an important activity for cities around the world and there is a recognizable increase in the number of city branding projects, especially in Europe (Lucarelli & Berg, 2011).

As an emerging construct, city marketing can be defined as all types of promotional and branding activities in order to attract more visitors to cities. Branding, as a part of marketing strategies, is being used more often for also city marketing and promotion (Riza, Doratli & Fasli, 2012). Kotler, Asplund, Rein and Heider (1999) classified places as products whose identities and values can be designed and marketed. City branding is regarded as *a strategic instrument to publicize a city’s competitive advantages, becomes a common practice to market the city’s history, quality of place, lifestyle, and culture for*

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