

CITY BRANDING AND CULTURAL ROUTES

DOI: 10.26341/issn.2241-4002-2019-sv-12

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Abstract

The main aim of City Branding is to highlight and exploit the particular features of a local cultural heritage of a city multiple benefits can arise from it, as cultural tourism and, consequently, sustainable development can be strengthened. At the same time, cultural routes are now emerging as a basic management tool for the empowerment of cultural tourism. These are structured tours around a central thematic axis, aimed at highlighting the relevant historical and natural, intangible and material monuments of a city or a larger area.

This paper proposes the application of cultural routes once it has been established that the site fulfils certain conditions in order to categorize the cultural heritage elements. After identifying their common unifying elements, they are placed in context and the cultural route is suggested. The aim is that the proposed cities and their wider areas, through the City Branding tool, develop their own identity and brand name so that visitors and general public opinion associate the city with its cultural heritage, and also to develop ~~its~~ their recognizable brand name with an emphasis on culture.

Keywords: *City Branding, Sustainable Development, Cultural Routes*

Introduction

In recent years there is a growing association between local development and culture. The value of the monuments and cultural assets of each place is highlighted and modern tools are used to exploit them. City branding is one of these tools as it attempts to portray for each city its competitive advantage, that is, the element that differentiates it from all other cities. Undoubtedly, the cultural heritage of the cities is their strengths (Mitoula & Kaldis, 2018)

Place Branding is a complex process that covers many aspects of the image and life of a place. The purpose of such a process is to search for those elements that make each destination unique. It is a powerful development tool that can last for many years. It is an important foundation of modern marketing and a necessary tool for strategies that can be followed by each city. The identity that city branding can offer to the place can contribute into enhancing its attractiveness to visitors and investors and thereby to create the basis for its economic growth. This development is mainly based on the development of cultural tourism that exploits the available cultural elements either of the material artifacts of civilization such as traditional buildings etc. or of the intangible aspects of culture such as the cultural activities taking place there (Chalioris et al., 2018).

Therefore, the term "city branding", means the coordinated effort by the relevant authorities of a city to create a brand which is a combination of names, symbolic elements, images, and individual processes so that the city is visually recognized and stands out emotionally among other cities. The interpretation of the term city branding attributed each time, depends on the extent to which traditional marketing or other commercial practices (advertising, public relations) are used and adapted to the reality of the cities. Therefore, the definition of the concept of city branding cannot be made in strictly defined contexts, as it involves many interrelated practices (Van Gelder, 2005).

The concept of city promotion is part of a broader urban policy, known as place marketing, which can be understood if its approach is based on the "urban entrepreneurship" phenomenon. The marketing of a place is defined by Kotler (1999) as the process of planning a place to meet the needs of the target markets to which it targets. It can be successful when two parameters are satisfied: a) businesses and residents are satisfied with the consumption of the goods and services that are provided and b) the expectations of the target markets are met (investments, visitors, etc.), insofar as the goods and services provided by the place are the ones they wish to receive".

The logo used, is a symbol or a word, or even a combination of more elements and is a very important aspect of the brand, because it represents it visually. Its brand is the one that allows an organization, business or city to create a positive predisposition for a product. The stronger the brand's positive influence on customer perception, the better the prospects for sales, hence the greater the economic benefits to the business or organization. The identity of a place, however, is not limited to an aesthetically acceptable symbol, or an intelligent slogan. The main problem that usually occurs is the confusion between the integrated branding strategy with one of its components which is the design of a logo and a slogan or, at best, the setting up of an advertising campaign (Kaldis, 2016).

Therefore, place marketing and city branding are the tools a city can use to highlight the "new" urban environment that is created, to attract investment and to exploit urban regeneration intervention in order to create a new "strong" brand and launch its competitive identity. The images, the flavors, the sounds, the information, the experience that a person receives, whether he has visited it or not, can at the same time or even individually be the name of the place. The identity of a city is what makes it look unique.

Place marketing and city branding

The image of the city, the values and the experiences that visitors and residents of this city will derive are the factors that can create an attractive identity and uniqueness that will make it a city known and distinct at national and international level (Maccannel, 2012). The image of London, for example, is indissolubly entwined in the minds of most people with the image of Big Ben, which is one of the most impressive monuments of the city. The image, however, is not entirely identical to literal images, although it may contain elements associated with literal images. The image of a place varies considerably from how the inhabitants perceive it in relation to its visitors. Usually residents of a place have a more detailed and diverse picture of their place than those who do not experience it every day. Visitors see the place through a simplified look, which is usually influenced by indirect knowledge, such as the one disseminated through the Mass Media. In addition, the image is not necessarily unalterable in time, or common to all but may be to a lesser or greater degree

deliberately constructed. The image corresponds more to a partially untrue narrative about the city, a narrative that can have a direct relationship with what we call history or tradition, but also with invented traditions.

Exploring the potential offered by the development of internal marketing tools highlights the possibilities that respond to contemporary trends for participatory planning. By combining approaches from a wide range of management disciplines, a dynamic framework of mating the need for adapting to the dynamically changing environment is developed in conjunction with the innate dynamics of a place. It is now commonplace to see regions and cities trying to use specific communication tools to emphasize specific features or values. Smart houses, life in nature, "thematic" neighborhoods, famous residents, cultural routes, etc. are elements that can attract targeted population groups.

Also, in recent years, there are many cities that are trying to create an ecological "green" identity using targeted campaigns and symbols. Another trend is innovation and smart cities (Siountri & Vergados, 2018; Mavromati & Malindretos, 2017). Tourism promotion and sustainable tourism development appear to be the primary objectives of many regions and cities with alternative forms and the link between agricultural production and tourism being the main demand (Christofakis, 2010). In this sense, the authenticity and the experience of an original experience are connected, with the modern tourist looking for original facts, tastes, etc. during his visit to a place (Waitt, 2000; Maccannel, 2015).

The process of developing a branding strategy of a place is directly related to the search for a new identity and developmental vision of a city, a wider area or a region or even a whole country. It does not imply high developmental performance and targets, but the implementation of relevant procedures may concern areas with developmental difficulties and geographical specificities, such as remote, mountainous, island and sparsely populated areas. By focusing on learning, developing and spreading knowledge and new behaviors, an internal marketing implementation in a place can use those mechanisms and processes that focus on interaction and participation, effectively triggering the potential of participants.

There are other positive effects that can come from using and implementing city branding. Local partnerships for employment can raise social capital and add value to civil society by encouraging networking, stimulating democratic participation and strengthening social consensus. This social capital can in itself be a source of competitive advantage by changing the way in which local society values itself and its potential, the way in which it responds to changes and to competitive pressures, the ways in which it faces inequalities and social exclusion and thus shapes the "identity" of an area. The existence of common development opportunities linked to other sectors such as sustainable development, the knowledge economy, new technologies, networking, etc. besides the traditional sectors of agriculture, fisheries, transport, etc., which enrich the local production chain and are linked to all sectors of the economy, create the conditions for an integrated and sustainable development of an area (Christofakis, 2010). City branding can therefore be seen as a patchwork of the aforementioned processes, having preceded the process of adapting them, based on existing product and business techniques, to policies that will bring about the promotion of the city in cultural, social, tourist and economic levels.

Branding is the process of creating a business, people, cities, countries, places to be loved. This process "passes" through the creation of honest relationships, morality, trust, transparency. These relationships need to be sincere, out of duty and not for commercial

purposes. In order to achieve branding, people need to be happy in business, cities, countries (Kaldis, 2016).

However, we must bear in mind that a city's attempt to diversify and project something special is the difficulty, as most of today's cities have similar characteristics, mainly at the level of infrastructure and service they offer to their visitors. In order to gain this comparative advantage, in relation to their competitors, they must develop and then promote the functionality of their products and the added value of their use, which must be combined with a specific identity, with specific principles and values, copying, in a way, the processes of creating a corporate branding. At the same time, in many cases, local authorities are proceeding with urban regeneration, to create a positive and attractive city profile with the aim of attracting visitors (Lucarelli & Berg, 2011).

In order to achieve the right brand, the following elements are necessary: brand reliability, differentiation from the others and promoting the appropriate message. This message must be easily perceived by the potential visitor as well as inspiring local agents and the inhabitants of the city. More specifically, the message is important, as it causes the inhabitants themselves a psychological bond, a sense of pride for their own place. As a result, they are actively involved in the process of proclaiming their city and its special characteristics, which lead to self-evident positive results, as the cities are primarily the people who live in them, and their approach to visitors (Maziotis & Kapopoulos, 2008).

Traditional incentives to attract investment and people, such as advertising in order to improve the image of a place through daily press releases, television spots, creating logos, slogans, etc. offer great potential for development. However, Information Technologies (ITC) offer more opportunities and city advertising can now be accessed on the Internet.

As regards the promotion of city branding by the European Union and the NSRF, it is clear that the EU is reinforcing this phenomenon with its direct and indirect policies and actions, and the use of the tool of city branding to develop its cities. At the same time, all the related policies on the promotion of tourism also promote such brand-name branding tools (European Commission, 2010).

Undoubtedly, the EU, through its past and recent policies and actions, is using every kind of action and tool that aims to advertise cities, considering them as a lever for the development of its entire territory. Cities have social, administrative, financial, etc. infrastructures and, above all, concentrate the majority of the Union's population (Couch et al., 1990).

At the same time, city branding exploits elements from various scientific areas such as marketing, spatial planning, social, economic and physical geography, cultural planning, communication, social media management, tourist destination management, etc. and so on.

City branding examples

In recent years, many cities have been implementing marketing and branding plans. Most of them focus on their positive characteristics and highlight their strengths, with the aim of attracting visitors, investors etc. Cities such as Amsterdam, Paris or Barcelona implement successful strategies so far, given that are popular touristic destinations. Some examples of cities follow below.

Amsterdam adopted the "I am Amsterdam" logo, which was considered a success, since it is easily understood, memorable and includes the name of the city (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2008).



Figure 1 Amsterdam logo
(found: <https://bit.ly/2YdctXi>)

Similarly, Groningen was associated with the marketing strategy, which was designed around the slogan "Nothing over Groningen", using as the logo the first letter of the city ("G"). The overall strategy succeeded in reversing the negative image of the city and the wider region (www.visitgroningen.nl).



Figure 2 Groningen logo
(found: <https://bit.ly/2Y3Rouc>)

Barcelona is characterized as one of the most successful examples of city branding. The effort of the city peaked with the hosting of the Olympic Games and has already adopted several successful slogans and logos.



Figure 3 Barcelona Inspira
(found: <https://bit.ly/30MoZut>)

Paris is internationally recognized as one of the largest tourist destinations and its logo is quite efficient as well as chic giving the “air” of the city.



Figure 4 Paris logo
(found: <https://bit.ly/2Z2CsOr>)

The "Genoa Urban Lab" logo is the main element of the name of the city of Genoa. The slogan is easy for everyone to understand and reflects a changing city experimenting with new dynamics within a lab that designs solutions for people with new urban propositions.



Figure 5 Genoa logo
(found: <https://bit.ly/2Ygm4wz>)

Since 1989, the Karlstad logo of Sweden has a smiling sun, presenting its sunny position and the joyous mood of the city.

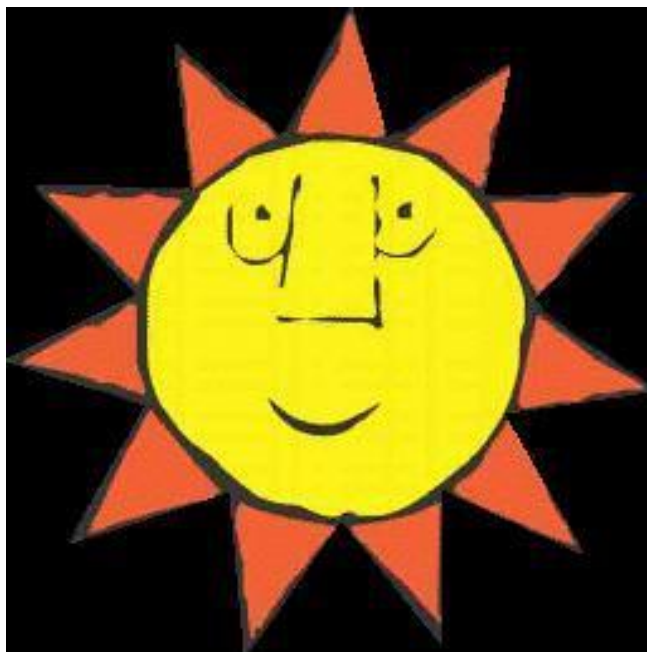


Figure 6 Karlastad logo
(found: <https://bit.ly/2O3fdT5>)

Brighton, a city in the southern coast of England, creates the city's name through a palette of colors that reflect the city's characteristics:

- Blue: sea, sky, calm
- Magenta: culture, health, femininity
- Purple: royal, spiritual clarity
- Black: elegant, timeless.



www.visitbrighton.com

Figure 7 Brighton logo
(found: <https://bit.ly/30KfVGw>)

The selected logo of Thessaloniki is a heart made of tattoos with the message "many stories one heart" and features the history, life and spirit of the city (www.citybranding.gr).



Figure 8 Thessaloniki logo
(found: <https://bit.ly/2Y1DZ5W>)

The city of Trikala has adopted "Smart Trikala" as the city's logo, aiming to highlight the city's forefront of electronic organization issues (e-services aiming at improving the day-to-day life of citizens, simplifying daily transactions, etc.) (www.citybranding.gr).



Figure 9 Trikala logo
(found: <https://bit.ly/32L0z6j>)

Culture and city branding

Today, city branding is based on culture-led regeneration and culture. From literature and practice, culture is the main element of every city's identity. It acts as a comparative advantage because of its contribution to economic development, social cohesion and environmental protection.

Today, with increasing internationalization, cities are increasingly developing competition among themselves. In the age of globalization, competition between sites (cities or regions) takes on intense dimensions and requires solutions to attract investment. Cities are looking to find policies and tools to rebuild and upgrade their features to become attractive and provide a competitive edge. Two of the widely implemented urban policies that contribute to the transformation and increase of the attractiveness of the city profile are urban regeneration and place marketing.

In the frame of place marketing, city branding is implemented, which is a basic "advertising" tool used by the responsible bodies of a city to develop it. These bodies will have to answer questions such as: What should the city brand name be? How can it develop? What are the means of communication that should be selected to be implemented? How should brand management be done?

At the same time, culture has gained a prominent position in international organizations such as the OECD, the World Bank, the United Nations and UNESCO in recent years. Even though the European Union is historically oriented towards the economy and trade, recognizing that culture is a driving force for the development process, it undertakes actions and initiatives contributing to the preservation, dissemination and development of European culture. Indeed, in the Treaty establishing the European Union (EU), the Treaty of Maastricht (1992) states in Article 128 that "*the Community shall contribute to the development of the cultures of the Member States and respect their national and regional diversity while at the same time the common cultural heritage*".

Culture is at the heart of EU policies for sustainable development - economic, environmental, social - as it offers European societies affected by economic, immigration, and environmental, demographic problems, a holistic developmental and, at the same time, humanitarian perspective (European Commission, 2007).

The local agents do the same. The creation of a distinct and attractive cultural identity that promotes the diversity of the destination is one of the primary actions of local authorities and residents. Local culture through an organized design can extract a specific identity of the place, creating a driving force for development.

According to our initial hypothesis, both the value of use by visitors and their ability to be exploited by the inhabitants themselves, highlight the cultural assets as the necessary weapons on the path to successful local development. The result is the protection of cultural units and the effort to improve them.

Dealing with cultural activities lead to the full development of personality, regardless of age and gender, and lead to skills and creativity. At the same time, local units are empowered and, through their personal involvement with the public, they are formed with sensitized citizens. Besides, the relationship between a person and his past is alive and uninterrupted, as today "it is fed" by past and present from today (Mitoula, 2006).

The cultural features of a site that are handed down from generation to generation and are composed of material or intangible remnants and monuments are undoubtedly the most important, perhaps, reference and self-identification of the site. Knowing and coming into contact with these particular cultural features of an area, ~~we~~ one can only benefit, as their knowledge will also indicate the specific characteristics that local development should have for sustainability.

Cultural tourism - cultural routes

Cultural tourism is a special and alternative form of tourism, which takes place both in the countryside and in the urban area (Coccossis & Tsartas, 2001; Karagiannis, 2013). The people who choose it are mainly interested in the arts, traditional products, culture, customs, architecture and cultural heritage, history, various places of culture, sports, gastronomy, religion and others (Richards, 1996). Cultural routes are one of the means for developing a country's cultural tourism (Kantzoura & Mitoula, 2016; Kolovos, 2018). These routes are based on the identification of a defined route / course, where the aim is to visit monuments of natural and cultural heritage. In particular, cultural routes can make a significant contribution to the extroversion of a place, which in turn can act as a catalyst for further cultural development (through actions to promote its material and intangible cultural heritage) for the benefit of the local economy and society (Spiliopoulou & Kouri, 2014). The purpose of a cultural route is to be a driving force for the development of a region. The development has to be sustainable in economic, social and environmental level. The aim is to attract tourists to the area, to create opportunities for businesses and producers of products and services active in the region, in order to increase their incomes. A parallel aim is to attract new investments, extend the tourist season, and provide resources for maintenance of archaeological sites and monuments.

The content of a cultural route may vary according to the characteristics of the area and the variety of cultural and natural heritage that exists. In particular, cultural routes can be described as:

- thematic cultural routes: meaning routes that include a specific subject, such as museums of a region, archaeological sites, wineries, disused industrial buildings, etc.,

- historical cultural routes: meaning routes that focus on monuments and cultural elements of a particular period,
- mixed cultural routes: routes including cultural elements of a certain type or age, or even elements of natural heritage as part of the most comprehensive cultural identity of a place (Balermipas, 2015; Economou & Zikidis, 2014).

In addition to the above classification, the cultural routes, depending on their scale, can be divided into:

- urban cultural routes, limited to the monuments and cultural elements of a city - urban area,
- local cultural routes, focusing on a limited geographical unit (e.g. within a municipality, county),
- Extended cultural routes, which can extend over a much wider geographical area, especially when it comes to specific themes (e.g. the medieval castles throughout the Ionian Sea).

Finally, it is worth noting that the choice of the most appropriate cultural route suitable for a region depends on its particular identity. The inclusion of a cultural element / monument in a cultural route does not negate the possibility of the same element being included in other cultural routes of another nature. In the same sense, a cultural monument / element can at the same time be part of cultural routes of a different scale.

Therefore, one of the main tools for the promotion and interpretation of cultural heritage is Cultural Routes. These tours are structured around a central theme core, including archaeological and historical monuments and sites, architectural monuments, traditional settlements, nature monuments, with a specific connecting element that categorizes them. The unification between these elements may be the type of monuments (temples, castles, buildings, etc.), the time period to which they belong (ancient times, the Middle Ages, etc.) and their geographical distribution (Konsola, 2006).

The cultural routes give new "readings" to the monuments, preserve and promote the intangible heritage. The visibility of the cultural resources that emerge through a route, contributes to the conservation and restoration of cultural heritage institutions, making it an attractive destination not only for visitors but also for undertaking investment initiatives by innovative businesses in the wider cultural field.

The concept of cultural routes was introduced in 1987 by the Council of Europe as an attempt to promote cultural tourism in the European community. The "European Cultural Routes" served as a springboard for the emergence of common elements of heritage and contemporary European cultural expression, triggered on a case-by-case basis at local, national and international levels (Avgerinou-Kolonia, 1995). Cultural routes are proposed as the main means of attracting cultural tourists. Further goals of a route include:

- Attracting investment.
- Lengthening the tourist season.
- Securing resources for the preservation of archaeological sites and monuments, if possible.

The cultural routes to be proposed should largely cover the conditions for the success of their implementation as they exist:

- Sightseeing and related infrastructure such as monuments, museums, tours and support infrastructures.
- Point-to-route connectivity infrastructures such as road network, hiking trails, cycle paths, transportation, pedestrian walkways, and routes within the settlements, accessible and conserved.
- Businesses offering quality services that can be enriched with innovative services and participate in a route management network.

On the proposed routes, the site should meet some of the above-mentioned conditions, and categorize the cultural heritage elements. Once their common consolidation elements have been identified, they should put their common feature into a guiding framework and create a cultural path.

For the successful creation of cultural routes, the preservation and promotion of monuments and sites is a prerequisite. The creation of joint tickets in the case of museums, as well as their promotion on the Internet, are targeted actions to attract cultural tourists. A further reduction of the ticket price in the winter months as well as a sightseeing tour through the common ticket can attract tourists even for "daily cultural getaways".

The existence of a common ticket and guided tours by trained staff will make cultural routes more attractive. More generally, a discount tourism program, with the cooperation of municipalities, tour operators, hotel units as well as their cultural sites and managers, through an integrated offer with reduced prices for accommodation, food and visits, would be an important asset for the development of cultural tourism.

The emergence of cultural heritage and modern cultural activity, also with the help of new technologies, is a crucial element for every place to gain a comparative advantage and to shape a modern tourist policy. After all, competition and new trends in the international and domestic markets require modernization in media and tourism management. The digitization of historical monuments, cultural sites, local traditions and cultural routes proposed above is an important part of a visibility plan for sites that will promote the attractiveness of destinations. Linking innovation and culture through the creation of multi-site digital imagery, as already done in some places, such as digital museums, enhances cultural tourism. With such innovative methods, the visitor can now experience historical events and move interactively within them, take a tour in historical places with the help of audio-visuals, or obtain information about the area he visits with the help of modern media.

Applications for destinations installed in smart phones act as digital travel guides. They are a modern method that will enable the visitor to get information directly from his mobile phone device for a range of tourist issues. Through this action, the latest technologies are exploited and the optimal information for visitors is sought. At the same time, the environmental, cultural and historical features of the sites are highlighted. The main objective is to increase tourist traffic in cultural and historical areas, as well as to other places of high tourist interest, the improvement of the tourist product offered as well fully informing visitors. In order to upgrade existing applications (e.g. digital museums already in place) it would be advisable to include in their actions proposed cultural routes and to inform the public and their users about the actions of cultural operators and cultural associations.

Conclusions

Tourism planning and the creation of a cultural policy to strengthen cultural tourism is a structural element of the proposal on which the formation of cultural routes is based. As far as branding is concerned, it refers to the performance of a particular spatial identity in an area to form a central idea of its particular characteristics. As explained above, the goal is to link the area with a particular identity. Specific competitive policies and strategic projects with a vision of attracting new investment and increasing tourism demand should be adopted and implemented through the identification and assessment of the specific features of each site.

The proposed sites, through their marketing models, will shape their own identity and brand name so that existing and potential visitors, as well as public opinion, connect the places with their cultural heritage and develop their recognizable brand name with an emphasis on culture.

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[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383\(99\)00115-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(99)00115-2)

Reference to the above article should be made as follows:

Mitoula, R. & Kaldis, P. (2019). City branding and cultural routes. *Sustainable Development, Culture, Traditions Journal, Special Volume in Honor of Professor George I. Theodoropoulos*, 118-130. <https://doi.org/10.26341/issn.2241-4002-2019-sv-12>