CITY BRAND PERSONALITY OF KUALA TERENGGANU FOR IMAGE AND REPUTATION ENHANCEMENT

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to develop a measure on the city branding of Kuala Terengganu as Coastal Heritage City using an Aaker's brand personality scale. Specifically, the study proposes the antecedents of a city brand personality in promoting Kuala Terengganu City through it's a strategic communication campaign. In order to administer this study, the qualitative and quantitative research methods were employed. In the first phase, semi-structured interviews and pre-test study were conducted to identify and verify the antecedents of city branding. In the second phase, survey questionnaires were applied using the Aaker's brand personality scale. Finally, in the third phase, structured interviews were conducted to complement the results of the main studies. Five dimensions proposes with a total of nineteen (19) items from the City Personality Scale (CPS) that can be applied to the communication perspective in Malaysia. The five dimensions were refined using a confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation model. The factors were named as factor 1 (Peacefulness), factor 2 (Competence), factor 3 (Sophistication), factor 4 (Uniqueness) and factor 5 (Traditionalism). It seems the scale of 24 items brand personality to work better in the city branding among internal stakeholders (opinion leaders, communication managers, executives and non-executive officers). The results show that the revised brand personality is dire needed tailoring with Asian values. In fact, we found a cultural component is a strong predictor of City Brand Personality. The substantial contribution of this study is the City Brand Personality has successfully been developed in a Malaysian east coast context. Thus, this study may enrich current literatures on branding generally and city branding specifically in an Asian context.

Keywords: *Branding, Brand Personality, City Brand Personality, Kuala Terengganu City*

Article Classification: Research paper

INTRODUCTION

Kuala Terengganu is a city with a range of nature assets such as beautiful islands, plantations, rainforest, mountains and a rich sealife. The biodiversity, along with increased numbers in terms of tourism and the history (Brookfield, Byron & Potter 1995), makes Kuala Terengganu Coastal Heritage City (Kuala Terengganu City) is the capital of the state of Terengganu in Malaysia. Kuala Terengganu City is an example of a Malaysian city with a strong personal brand. Kuala Terengganu has an abundance appeals and attractions. There is Pasar Payang Central Market, a bustling centre of activities, the historic Kampung China, the state museum, handicraft centre, the famous 'keropok lekor' in Kampung Losong and the picturesque fishing village in Seberang Takir. Other attractions are the dotted cottage industries of songket weaving, batik 'chanting' (hand drawn) and block imprints, the traditional boat making, the traditional foods and recreational beaches of Pantai Batu Buruk, Pantai Teluk Ketapang, Pantai Chendering and the famous Monsoon Cup venue of Pulau Duyung. It carries a strong branding by itself because it is not just well known among Malaysians and local visitors but also to people around the world. Kuala Terengganu an interesting city in a place branding perspective with focus on tourism.

Branding is today often considered as a key priority for many companies in order to stay competitive on the market. Branding can be defined as the way in which the organization managing their brand and requires a long-term participation of both skills and resources (Markides & Williamson 1996; Keller, McDonald, de Chernatony & Harris, 2000; Parameswaran & Jacob, 2011). The expression "city brand" refers to a city and to its competition in the area of developing a reputation among investors, residents, tourists and other resources (Kavaratzis, 2005 & 2017). The process of considering a brand is a conceptual unit that creates unique, positive and recognizable relations (Braun, Kavaratzis & Zenker, 2013). The place brand involves creating and maintaining these relations. An organization can use branding in order to identify and differentiate it selves from competitors', it is a way to ensure quality and honesty, identify the ownership and to hold the producer responsible for their actions. Branding is also an essential component in the process of building a strong brand image and to create brand awareness, moreover it may increase marketing communication effectiveness, improve perceptions of product performance and create customer loyalty (Keller, 2009 and Aaker, 2012).

The purpose of this study is to empirically look at the perceived brand personality of Kuala Terengganu City. The study focus on multiple components of brand personality stressed out in the literature such as affective, cognitive, overall image, identity and personality as well as key constructs found in the brand literature, namely city brand personality (Ahmad, *et al*., 2013). In terms of branding a city that the brand should communicate a consistent identity, and the difference between identity and perceived identity conveyed by the people of the city that can build a strong and positive image of the city (Skinner, H., 2008).

Currently, the most important concept of branding is greater than ever before. City branding, although challenging, was regarded as the most powerful tool that should be utilized, but the actual challenge here is how the city brand may become worldwide and to avoid the future of nation branding with the uncertain condition for effective differentiation strategies (Young & Sung. 2013; Kim *et al*., 2013). Most of the literature on the city branding concentrated on how to build a brand (Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013). As a matter of fact, it is about each country in the world is trying to cultivate and develop their activity of city branding. This study hesitates to use the word 'strategy' because lack of the general vision, city branding is necessary in order to

emphasizes city competitiveness and attract businesses, investment, a skillful workforce, inhabitants and visitors to the city in place of another city (Ahmad, *et al*., 2013). Dinnie (2008 & 2015); Young & Sung. (2013) noted that the purpose of city branding could be deduced as follows; to create a unique identity, to connect to the consumer's emotional state, and to create a brand promise that can be identified with the city to improve their nation brands. This research was developed to meet the following important objective: to see antecedents brand personality dimensions association to city brand that applied specifically in the context of Kuala Terengganu City.

Overall, the purpose of city branding can be summed up as the creation of competitive identity that will make the city a preferred choice over others, and a unique image that will stick in the mind of the target audience (Hankinson 2001; Hankinson 2004; Kavaratzis 2004; Kavaratzis, and Mary Jo Hatch 2013). Although the research considers the significance of the central concepts branding for the city brand (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005) and these reasons should be the ultimate goal of city managers; to organize all branding activities towards achieving those ends.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Branding

Branding city has not gained much scientific interest like the conventional product branding (Lambin, 1993). Perhaps, because city branding is relatively recent compared to the conventional product branding that has been with semantic confusion between personality and image (Plummer, 1985). Some literatures argue that the shallow interest in the city branding domain was as a result of the complexity of the field; owing to a pool of reasons, for example, continual changing of visitor's behaviour and the existence of interdependent stakeholders (Kapferer, 2008). In most cases, it is almost impossible to manage and coordinated the autonomous stakeholders under a single framework of management (Blackston, 1992; Goodyear, 1996). Also, there is always difficulty to assign single meaning to the tourism city products by the different markets and market segment involved (Kapferer, 2008). These make city branding a challenging field, yet, to stress the importance, experts has viewed tourism city branding as the most powerful tool that should be utilized by city markets for effective differentiation strategies (Gutman, 1982). Therefore understanding the meaning and usage of city branding is indispensable.

Brand Personality

As developed by Aaker (1997), she managed to measure the theoretical framework for the construction of the brand personality and its dimensions. She introduced a reliable, valid and generalisable scale of brand personality. In her study, 37 out of 631 subjects brands of 114 personality traits was discovered. Consequently, the study has 42-point scale Brand Personality (BPS) developed and funded with five distinct personality dimensions. They are sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness (See Table 1). As Aaker (1997) defined the brand personality as "a set of human associated to a brand". Adaptation from Aaker (1997), the research organized by Kaplan *et al*., (2010), they apply the concept of brand personality cities as multidimensional concept is defined as the set of human characteristics with certain places

branding are associated. Kaplan. *et.al.*, (2010) captured the brand personality with Aaker (1997), five scale dimensions of brand personality with twenty-seven (27) of the received controlled by forty two (42) items verified items retained in their study. They found the destination image and destination personality are interrelated concepts. They also found that Aaker (1997), the brand personality is the brand standard for applicable to branding places.

Table 1: Aaker's (1997) Brand Personality Dimensions and Traits

Sincerity	Excitement	Competence	Sophistication	Ruggedness
Down-to-earth	Daring	Reliable	Upper-class	Outdoorsy
Family-oriented	Trendy	Hardworking	Good-looking	Masculine
Small-town	Exciting	Secure	Glamorous	Western
Honest	Spirited	Intelligent	Charming	Tough
Sincere	Cool	Technical	Feminine	Rugged
Real	Young	Corporate	Smooth	
Wholesome	Imaginative	Successful		
Original	Unique	Leader		
Cheerful	Up-to-date	Confident		
Sentimental	Independent			
Friendly	Contemporary			

City Brand Personality

A number of recent studies have been supported to the place personality concept (e.g., Ekinci and Hosany, 2006; d'Astous and Boujbel, 2007; Murphy, Moscardo and Benckendorff, 2007; Murphy, Benckendorff and Moscardo, 2007; Pike, 2009; Brand 2016). However, the discovery of the city brand personality can be a time consuming process, where decisions are not always holding across a sample of consumers. In general, place or city brand personality researchers have carried out a difficult task to develop their own standard scale (d'Astous and Boujbel, 2007) or else Aaker's (1997) mentioned, it applies the existing scale, then, the brand personality scale (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006). Irrespective of the basic source, from the most common brand personality scale consists of personality traits with a long list of a Likert scale with descriptive anchor between the not very significant at all measured. The factor analysed was run to these items to improve and develop a set of personality traits. Nevertheless, the scholars discovered that changes in the factor structure between the samples and thus does not seem to be generalized (Austin, Siguaw and Mattila, 2003; Azoulay and Kapferer 2003). The absences of consistent

empirical data drawn drastically restrict the use of research brand personality rather than the association analysis of the main characteristics of the sample.

METHOD AND DATA COLLECTION

Data collection method is constructed on the basis of research strategy with suggestion by experts' opinion and based on literature reviews with remaining forty two (42) items of Aaker's BPS, measured to discover appropriate to designate a city's personality trait in the first phase. One hundred and twenty (120) items were used in phase one and seventy (70) items were used in phase two subsequently sorting with the factor analysis process. The study incorporated with quantitative research internationally, expert opinions and opinion leaders, more than 1000 respondents selected samples using a systematic sampling and cluster management staff. A sample of managers, executive officers and non-executive officers randomly selected from the Majlis Bandaraya Kuala Terengganu (MBKT) and Tourism Kuala Terengganu. The population of study is approximately 4,600 people. This statistic is based on data collecting provided by MBKT and Tourism Kuala Terengganu. A multiple regression analysis also uses to find out the appeals of brand personality for Malaysian city branding, while a Structural Equation Modelling using AMOS 21 was applied to improve a model fix on contributing factor of city brand dimensions and strengthen the brand personality.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Measurement Model Testing

As revealed in Table 2, the top 10 personality items are solely from Peacefulness, Competence, and Sophistication which confirms the Peacefulness, Competence, and Sophistication character of Kuala Terengganu City (Ahmad, *et al*., 2013). The component extracted for city brand personality accounted for 83% for 13 items related to Factor 1, 79% for 6 items related to Factor 2, 68% for 5 items related to Factor 3, 65% for 5 items related to Factor 4 and 55% for 2 items related to Factor 5 of the total variance explained.

Table 2: Factor Structure of Measure for City Brand Personality

Personality Items	Factor Loadings				
	FAC 1	FAC 2	FAC 3	FAC 4	FAC 5
Factor 1: Peacefulness					
Tough	.768				
Good-natured	.729				
Genuine	.703				
Sincere	.706				
Loyal	.687				
Successful	.645				
Imaginative	.623				
Reputable	.623				
Family-oriented	.609				
Hardworking	.608				

Clever	.605				
Sentimental	.591				
Peaceful	.538				
Factor 2: Competence					
Reliable		.776			
Hardworking		.740			
Secure		.710			
Intelligent		.680			
Technical		.628			
Corporate		.603			
Factor 3: Sophistication					
Beautiful			.648		
Leader			.585		
Extraordinary			.565		
Charming			.548		
Tender			.506		
Factor 4: Uniqueness					
Unique				.707	
Exciting				.706	
Well-known				.705	
Attractive				.578	
Spirited				.529	
Factor 5: Traditionalism					
Conventional					.654
Devout					.627
Eigenvalues	31.514	5.296	2.184	2.018	1.674
% Variance	83%	79%	68%	65%	55%
Alpha Cronbach	0.932	0.834	0.853	0.851	0.748

Note: City Brand Personality items were evaluated by 1: perfectly descriptive to 5: not descriptive at all. Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization was used.

Therefore, the main components with varimax rotation (SPSS Version 21 for Windows) conducted in this study on 70 personality items to classify underlying dimensions. Items were deleted if factor loadings were lower than 0.50 or communalities were lower than .50. If there was any item that was loaded onto multiple dimensions with more than .35, it was also deleted (Tabachnik and Fidell, 2007). A final analysis showed that there were five dimensions remaining with 70 items in the scale. Using varimax rotation in this study for the reason that it spreads the variance factors consistently and produces less complex factors (Tinsley and Kass, 1979). In addition, to determine whether the method was applicable factoring, Kaiser Myer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test of sphericity were made (See Table 3). KMO measure of sampling adequacy is .963 and Barlett's test was significant at the 0.000 level, suitable for factor analysis (George and Mallery, 2000). Only items with factor loadings greater than 0.40 and with commonality greater than 0.50 were retained for each factor grouping. Factors were extracted with eigenvalues equal

to or greater than 1.0 in the final factor structure. To rotate factors varimax rotation was used, because it allows for co-vary the factors. With a number of variables heavily impacted by several factors, produced the varimax factor simpler structure and interpretable. Weak items as "rugged", which cannot load more than 0.4 on one factor were eliminated. The item "Poor" was also eliminated in that respondent interpreted the attribute differently from the context intended by Aaker (1997). The term "Poor" seemed to be understood as undeveloped rather than rugged or tough as originally used by Aaker (1997) in BPS.

When labeling the factor names, Aaker's (1997) study was used as a basis. The items that had higher stress levels loadings were to name the most important factors (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006). For example, factor 3 was named 'Sophistication' as all items were from the 'Sophistication' dimension of Aaker's BPS. In the same way, factors were known as; factor 1 (*Peacefulness*), factor 2 (*Competence*), factor 3 (*Sophistication*), factor 4 (*Uniqueness*) and factor 5 (*Traditionalism*). Paralleled to Aaker's scale, the "*Sophistication*" and "*Competence*"dimensions were retained into some items. "*Ruggedness*" was changed to "*Traditionalism*" in the east coast Malaysia perspective. The "*Sincerity*" dimension was narrowed down to "*Peacefulness*" and "*Excitement*" to "*Uniqueness*".

Table 3: Kaiser-Meyer-Measure of Sampling Adequacy

Kaiser-Meyer-Measure of Simpling Adequacy		.963
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	214.10
	Df.	278
	Sig.	0.000

Structural Model Testing

The structural equation modelling (SEM) by using AMOS 21 was applied to concurrently study the model proposed in the subject field. (See Figure 2). The initial structural model SEM was not adequately fit of the NCI (/df) (4.60) being above 3, RMSEA (.126) not being within recommendations, and both GFI (.731) and CFI (.731) being under .90 (Hu and Bentler, 1999; Reisinger and Mavondo, 2006). A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to test the validity of convergent and discriminant of the measurement model. The overall fit of the CFA as well as structural model, models was tested using common parameters, that is, chi-square statistics, goodness-of-fit index (GFI), comparative fit index (CFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) (Bollen, 1990; Hair *et al*., 2010). Among other indices, the goodness of mean fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), the comparative fit index (CFI), the incremental fit index (IFI) and the square error of approximation (RMSEA) and SRMR were examined (Hu and Bentler, 1999; Byrne, 2010). However, in order to improve goodness of fit, one of the indices i.e. GFI suggested that the model should further adjust. The SEM was carried out again when the indicator has been dropped; the result demonstrates that the model fit is

significantly improved. The model has a χ²-value significant (χ^2 = 112.371, df = 132, PC 0.001) with an insufficient fit of data to the proposed model. Although the chi-square value is significant (p <0.001), the use of the chi-square test as the sole measure of adaptation in an SEM model is not recommended due to its sensitivity to sample size (Hair *et al*., 2010). Consequently, the model was fit to be revised by another fit indices; the fit indices (GF1 = .96, CFI = .95, IFI = .95, RMR = 0.93, RMSEA = .062) from CFA, the measurement model providing an indication of satisfactory fit. Therefore, the fit measure of the model proposed a reasonable fit. (Hu and Bentler, 1999; Reisinger and Mavondo, 2006; Byrne, 2010) (See Table 4). The result of the modified model establishes a satisfactory model with acceptable goodness of fit.

Table 4: The Empirical Result of City Brand Personality Model with Parameter Estimates

Model	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	RMSEA	GFI	IFI	CFI
Measurement Model	335.776	148	2.255	.176	.723	.711	.721
Initial Structural Model	295.250	147	2.180	.126	.731	.721	.731
Final Structural Model	112.371	132	0.851	.062	.961	.952	.952

The results clearly show that the model should be recognized, however, need some sort of purification, in order to fit the model of the research. A four-point scale for each of the four dimensions of brand personality is chosen, the revised scale has 17 items.
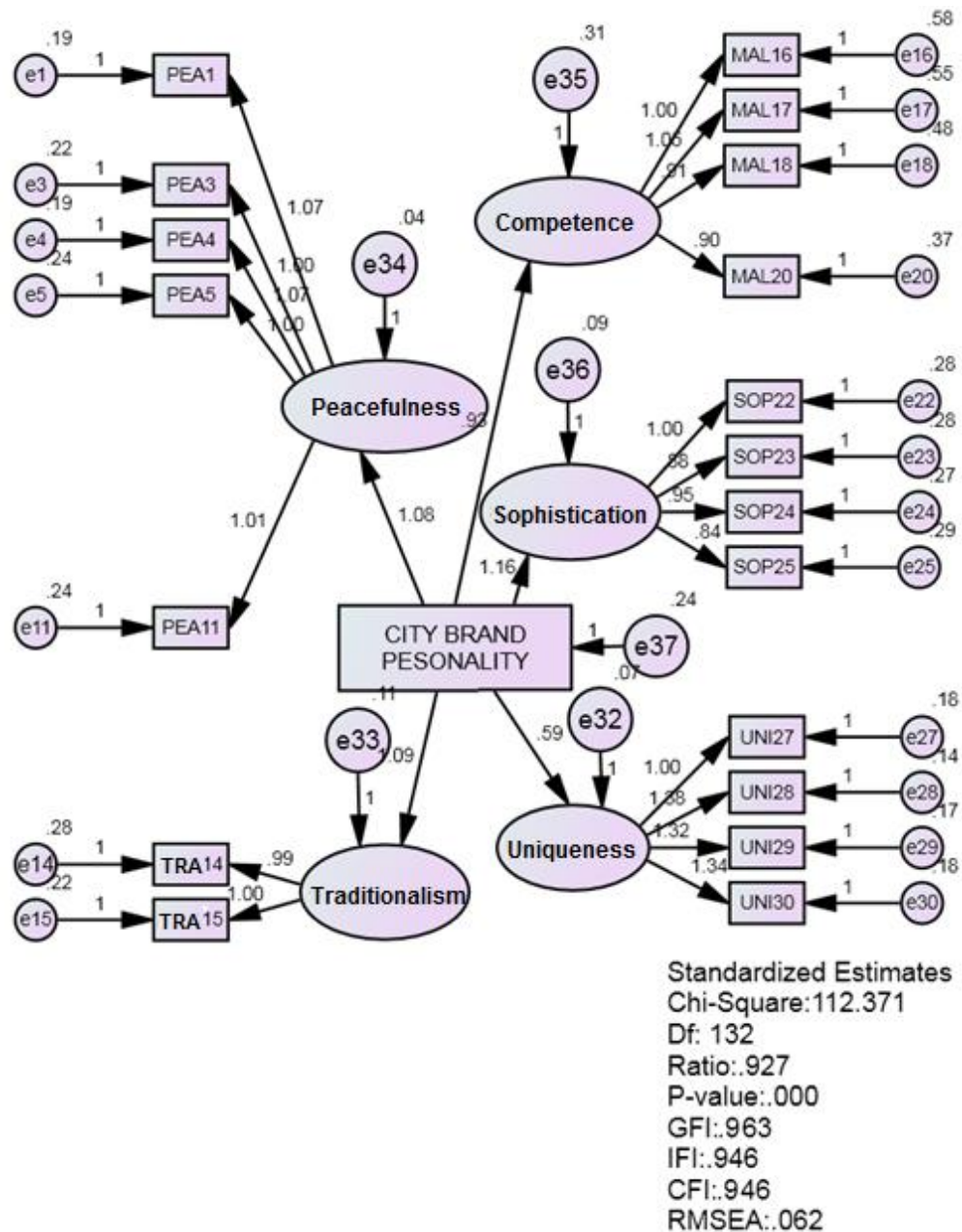
Figure 2: City Brand Personality (CBP) Revised Model

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to provide a city brand personality dimension that can be useful in Kuala Terengganu City, Malaysia. Some findings of this study are in line with previous studies that have applied by Aaker's BPS in different national and field of study contexts. Given that, there have been suggestions that the Aaker's BPS requires customization when applying it to different areas of study and place setting (Aaker, Martinez and Garolera, 2001; Austin, Siguaw

and Mattila, 2003; Sung and Tinkham, 2005), this study provided a Brand Personality Scale (BPS) by modifying the Aaker's scale and identified dimensions of city personality traits. The results showed that the ruggedness dimension initially developed by Aaker (1997), was not consistent with this study and the other four dimensions have been rectified by a confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation models. The factors were known as Peacefulness, Competence, Sophistication, Uniqueness and Traditionalism. The "Sophistication and Competence" dimensions were retained as compared to Aaker's 1997 scale. While in this study "Ruggedness" was not retained. The "Sincerity" dimension was narrowed down to "Peacefulness" and "Excitement" to "Uniqueness". The findings suggest that personality traits define and differentiate the conventional product brands are the same way with the brands of human personality. For example, further analysis shows, on the basis of these results that respondents of Kuala Terengganu City perceive 'Attractive', 'Exciting' and 'Unique'. A more comprehensive analysis of the brand personality for the Kuala Terengganu City is obviously conceivable, but it is excluded from this study, because it is outside the scope of this study. The results also showed respondents consider Kuala Terengganu City is 'Peacefulness', 'Competence', 'Sophisticated' and also 'Uniqueness' and a small percentage had no idea about the 'Traditionalism' dimension. This study validated five brand personality dimensions in the context of Kuala Terengganu City (Ahmad, *et al*., 2013). Hence the city brand also needs adjectives with negative meanings not work to test human personality and usually not included in the questionnaires. However, brand personality and human personality is not entirely analogous. For example, the human personality traits can not only an implicit (perceived) component, but also a real (objective) component that is independent of the perceiving subject qualification of persons to possess them. For that reason, the study recommends that the city can also be recognized with their positive and negative personality traits, alike with humans.

The result indicates that the Sophistication dimensions are in-line with Aaker, 1997 brand personality dimensions in U.S. It showed in view of the following research in, Chilian, China, Japan, Russia and Spain (Aaker *et al*., 2001), congruencies become resilient in relation to other factors in this study. Although Peacefulness, Malignancy and Uniqueness were absent from previous studies, but these three dimensions are not culture-specific (Kaplan *et al*., 2010). The reason for this statement is that the previous research on the personality of the brand on the classification of the brand personality in a manner similar concentration as the assessment of the human personality. In other words, the dimensions identification of brand personality traits is generally used for testing in human personality. However, referring to Bowen *et al*., (2002) mentioned that the tests of human personality in general challenge to the personality traits of the focuses themselves by self-questionnaires judge, and many are clearly the subject of these studies are very doubtful to be a negative characteristic, such as malice to identify irresponsibility and selfishness. Because of the tendency of people, socially desirable reactions, self-reporting leads to results that may be biased to a number of researchers to describe this as a major defect in the study of personality (Bowen *et al*., 2002; Kaplan *et al*., 2010; Ahmad, *et al*., 2013).

During the last ten years, a new area in branding has emerged - the branding of cities. Cities have always had a personal brand, but it has not been made cognizant until recently when the concept was 'developed'. Many marketers have made an effort to take pictures of a city's attractions, as strong brands build a city, and communicate the positive personality of the city by often

borrowing methods and techniques from the business environment and the brand image of companies (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009). The question is why cities and the respective authorities want to have a strong brand. Does a strong brand support the economic development of a city? In most cases, a strong city branding brings more people and businesses to the city.

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