

Chapter 35

The Role of Local Governments in City Branding

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ABSTRACT

Local governments provide a range of local services, preserve the life and liberty of residents, creating space for democratic participation and civic dialogue, supporting market-led and environmentally sustainable local development. City branding supplies the principles for the city developing policy to sustain the local development. In other words, city branding means being powerful to face the increasing wild competition for resources, investment and tourism facilities, both for addressing crucial social issues and cultural variation. The main objective of this study is to highlight the role of local governments and to emphasize the various destinations “bodies” used in the branding process in different administration systems. Although there are many different destination branding strategies over the world, the city branding success cannot be performed without the strong participation of the local governments.

INTRODUCTION

Local governments play an inevitable role in destination regional development. They provide land use planning, infrastructure, economic regulations, and other facilities in order to support the local economy and make the destination an attractive place to live, to work and to do business with (Barnett, 2013, p. 1).

Tourism is an important opportunity to strengthen city branding and local development. Tourism sector can promote poor and unknown areas with few other advantageous and differentiation choices. The global facilities, the remote and micro destinations, particularly attract tourists because of their outstanding cultural and social wildlife and geographical characteristics (Yunis, 2004, p. 3). Tourism can bring about non-material benefits such as identity, pride from local culture and adds value to the natural environment in the eyes of local communities (Ijeomah, 2007, p. 60).

Almost one billion people travel all over the world for many different reasons: to explore, escape, understand, taste, and participate in the local cultures they visit. Nevertheless, the most important thing is the experience they have in the destination.

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Tourism is a product and service oriented industry. Tourism generates extensive benefits and impacts to the local economy and society. It helps the achievement of “Millennium Development Goals”, particularly those concerning poverty reducing, environmental conservation, and generation of employment opportunities for women, local communities, and the youth. Tourism is also a very big source of revenue (foreign exchange earnings, tax income) to the government. Because of its multiplier effect, tourism could provide facilities for local economic development sustainability. The direct, upstream, and downstream industries involved in tourism activities have the potential for creating different sectorial interconnection and economic development in the localities (Kavaratzis, 2004, p. 58).

Local governments play the key role in this success. Local governments can provide the authority, infrastructure, policy, and planning procedures to maximize the benefit of its communities. They undertake the greater role in a community’s development, provide the links between the people and government, address the community’s problems and concerns, enforce policies, and influence its communities. The local governments are also intermediaries in directing the framework of government into each individual community in order to create a beneficial outcome.

This chapter consists of two main parts; defining the local governments, concepts and dimensions (social, economic, environmental, administrative, and political) theoretically and city branding strategies with several examples from the world and Turkey. Finally, the chapter draws some conclusion and challenges regarding the implementation of the city branding process.

THE DEFINITION AND THE CONCEPTS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The economic liberalism, globalization and more recently the economic crises are generally the phenomena leading to changes of territorial administrative practices.

The local government process has started because of the United Nations’ negotiations about the local environment and development in 1970s. This platform had explained the importance and the performance of the local administration on the infrastructural and local administrative structures of the UN countries. Stockholm Conference in 1972 was the starting point for these efforts and made a strong effect on The Rio Environment and Development Conference and Rio Charter in 1992.

The concept of Global Agenda 21 that was a global plan for the 21st century was realized. Each country had to prepare its own Global Agenda and Local Agenda 21 plan at a local administration level. Turkey, for example, completed its National Agenda 21, finished its report in 2000 under the control of The Environment Ministry, and put Local Agenda 21 directions to practice in various local governments with the Project financed by the UN (Danis & Albayraktaroglu, 2009, p. 91).

Local government is generally defined, as “a sub-national level of central government, which has jurisdiction over a limited range of state function, within a defined geographical area which is part of a larger territory” (Miller, 2002, p. 3).

Local government can also be defined as decentralization of administration, democratically controlled by the local community. *Decentralization* means the transfer of state responsibilities or authority from higher levels of government to regional bodies or to its subordinate units (United Nations, 2006, p. 5).

Decentralization can be explained with three forms and characteristics, which are *Deconcentration*, *Delegation* and *Devolution*.

Deconcentration seems to be the weakest form of decentralization, which is called administrative or bureaucratic decentralization. It is used in unitary states-redistributes decision-making authority and

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