Chapter 25
Cultural Heritage and Digitalization in City Branding

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ABSTRACT

In today's competitive global environment, cities are striving to stand out and be attractive to investors, visitors, and residents. City branding is an important tool to differentiate the city from its competitors and to be preferred by visitors. Every city has its own characteristics resulting from its historical development, the influence of its geography, and its social, cultural, and economic past. Therefore, the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of cities is vital for their promotion and branding. This study aims to show the importance of their cultural heritage, which is the most fundamental feature to differentiate themselves from their competitors in city branding. It is emphasized that the cultural events organized in cities or the assets specific to cities, most of which are on the UNESCO World Heritage List, have a significant impact on city branding. In addition, the chapter explains the impact of digitalization, which is one of the most important developments of our time, on city branding and cultural heritage.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a significant industry in the development of a city due to its economic, social and cultural contributions. In tourism, destination marketing has gained the upper hand over national marketing, both theoretically and practically. Destination marketing can also include marketing of regions, cities and towns. In city marketing, the concept of city branding, which can be expressed as the promotion of the city and the presentation of an image developed in accordance with its resources, has an important place. One of the most crucial steps in city branding is the need to create an identity for the city. Each city has unique characteristics, and these unique qualities determine the identity of the city. In other words, while creating the city brand, the positive, distinctive, original and local cultural heritage of the

city is leveraged. Accordingly, cultural heritage emerges as an attractive element of city branding, the importance of which is constantly growing (Apostolakis, 2003; Hall & Piggin, 2002; Iliachenko, 2005; Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2007).

Cultural heritage is one of the most key attractions in cultural tourism. People are paying more and more attention to different cultures and cultural heritage. The tendency to adapt to nature and highlight unique visual values is also increasing (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2021). This trend has also significantly increased cultural tourism (Zhang & Yang, 2011). On the other hand, negative aspects such as the complexity of social life, stress, destruction of nature, environmental pollution, noise and traffic problems increase people's search for peace. This situation directs people to historical cities that meet these needs and at the same time have rich opportunities in terms of cultural heritage. Historical cities are going to digitalise to meet today's demands, protect their valuable cultural heritage, and facilitate access to these values.

Digitalization and/or technology can have a positive impact on the competitiveness of cities. Awareness and the ability to compete are crucial requisites for cities to have a say in the global arena. For this reason, cities that have competed within the borders of their country have ceded their place to brand cities that can compete globally and strive to create a strong image for themselves with their cultural heritage, originality, and difference to have an advantage in this race. Brand cities make these differences even more visible with the advantages of technology. By digitising various archival materials and museum collections, they protect both their cultural heritage and lay the groundwork for the unhindered accessibility and use of cultural heritage.

This study aims to explain the importance of cultural heritage, which is the main feature that makes cities different from their competitors, in city branding and the impact of digitalization in this context, based on the literature. In the study, it is aimed to contribute to local managers and destination management organizations that want to make their cities a successful brand. Adding the Covid-19 pandemic that the entire world has faced in recent years to developments in technology, understanding and leveraging the benefits of digitalization will go a long way in helping city managers and tourism marketers. To this end, the chapter, which is designed as a literature review, first explains the basic concepts involved in the process of city branding. Then it highlights the role of tangible and intangible cultural heritage in city branding and finally discusses the relationship between cultural heritage and city branding in the digital age.

CONCEPTS IN THE PROCESS OF CITY BRAND FORMATION

A tourism destination is a geographical area or a region where the tourists are located in the local community (Tinsley & Lynch, 2001). Such destinations are mostly cities. The effort to make any city distinguishable from its competitors in the eyes of potential visitors is defined as city marketing. This can be achieved by developing a city brand. The city brand formation process involves the application of basic stages of product branding (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005) and concepts such as brand and branding, brand identity, brand image and brand positioning should be understood in this process (Ma et al., 2021, p.3). Cities that have successful branding can attract tourists.

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