

City Branding of Casablanca in Morocco



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Abstract The phenomenon of city branding has become global. City branding is the creation of a brand for places to improve its attractiveness. The goal of this research is to study the city branding theory based on Casablanca branding experience. The idea is to start with a review of literature of city branding and its role in place and to analyze the new city brand of Casablanca in Morocco. The objective is to determine the conditions of success of a city brand and to make recommendations to the managers of Casablanca to improve the image of the city of Casablanca.

Keywords City branding · Value of the brand · Brand success · Satisfaction of the residents · Image

1 Introduction

The use of city branding is very recent; it dates back to 1980 even if Ward [1] claims that it goes back to the nineteenth century. It has shaken up the field of management and territorial competitiveness. Kotler and Levy [2] were among the precursors how claim that marketing could be extended to places. As individuals, capital and knowledge have become mobile, the development of places as a brand helps them attract capital, and tourists and Creative class [3, 4].

A large majority of cities have invested in the experience of a city branding. The phenomenon is no longer limited to large cities and developed plays. Today, small towns and even cities in developing countries have begun to have a city brand. The aim is to improve their attractiveness, to attract tourists and investors. Place Branding or territorial brand has developed because cities, regions and even countries have become very concerned about their image and are seriously working

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on their brands. The issue has become topical and is now of interest to developing countries as well as developed countries.

The aim of this article is to study the city branding theory based on Casablanca branding experience. The idea is to start with a review of literature of city branding and its role in place and to analyze the new city brand of Casablanca in Morocco. The objective is to determine the conditions of success of a city brand and to make recommendations to the managers of Casablanca to improve the image of the city of Casablanca.

2 Review of Literature

The City Branding theory is a recent theoretical field which began to develop with territorial marketing in the 1980s. Being a relatively young discipline, it still suffers from a lack of consensus at the level of definitions and theoretical foundations. It is a theory at the crossroads of several disciplines such as territorial marketing, public management, and public diplomacy.

Place branding has enjoyed great success in recent years, as evidenced by the number of logos and brands developed for cities and regions. In this field, the concept has been very successful and has created a gold mine for consulting firms. Academically, things are more complicated. City branding is studied from several different disciplinary angles which lead to a certain dispersion in the results. The development process and the Analytical work of city branding still have a theoretical blurring attributed to the youth of this theory. Renaud Vuignier [5] explains the existence of a conceptual blurring, a divergence of definitions and a weak theoretical base; which contribute to a very wide spectrum of objects of study. By the way, several questions need to be asked about the relevance of the city branding process. Is City branding sufficient to improve the attractiveness of a city? What conditions or prerequisites must this brand have to play its full role in the city development? Originally, the brand played a role of a guarantee. It allowed companies to stand out from the competition. In the beginning, the first role of the brand was therefore legal and consisted in the authentication of the origin of the product. It fulfilled a certain promise of quality or value to customers. This promise made it possible for companies to differentiate themselves and create a competitive advantage. But the role of the brand today is the creation of value. When a strong brand is associated with a performing product, it translates into a value resulting in a price premium paid by the consumer.

In the Anglo-Saxon literature, we distinguish between destination branding and city branding. Destination branding concerns territorial brand for tourist destinations. The latter is only a special case of a place brand with the attraction and satisfaction of tourists as a target. In our review of literature, we found a large number of definitions of city branding. Table 1 summarizes the main definitions.

The development of a territorial brand is more difficult than a trademark because of the complex and contradictory qualities of the territories. Places are unique and

Table 1 Definitions of city branding

Author	Definition
The American Marketing Association	A customer experience represented by a collection of images and ideas; often it refers to a symbol such as a name, logo, slogan, and design scheme.
Aaker [6]	Multi-dimensional constructs, consisting of functional, emotional, relational and strategic elements that collectively generate a unique set of associations in the public mind.
Batey [7]	A cluster of associations concerning attributes, benefits and values.
Braun et al. [8]	A network of associations formed in the consumer's mind, and those that matter to the future of the place are developed from the visual, verbal and behavioral expression of a place.
Zenker and Braun [9]	A network of associations in the consumers' mind based on the visual, verbal, and behavioural expression of a place, which is embodied through the aims, communication, values, and the general culture of the place's stakeholders and the overall place design.
Kavaratzis and Ashworth [10]	Places are complex entities made up of numerous characteristics: environment, urban design, history, culture, politics, etc. A place brand can synthesize these components into an organized, unified image that signals content and differentiability.
Kapferer [11]	The brand is a name (with its associated signs) that brings fame.
Pasquinelli [12]	Place branding consists in an adaptation of business theories and practices to places with an emphasis on corporate branding in order to establish a fair reputation and build a brand equity supporting the pursued development path.
Braun et al. [8]	An intangible idea based on the perceptions of internal and external audiences.
Van Ham [13]	The totality of the thoughts, feelings, associations and expectations that come to mind when a prospect or consumer is exposed to an entity's name, logo, products, services, events or any design or symbol representing them.
Eshuis et al. [14]	Symbolic constructions aimed at strengthening the meaning or interest of cities. Signs that make it possible to identify places and to evoke associations that permeate places of cultural significance.

their commercializing is not a simple process of translating conventional marketing theory and practice derived from the marketing of goods and services. They see the role of events in the transformation of cities as a paradigmatic example of the peculiarities of territorial marketing. The goal for a city is to improve the attractiveness of the city. It is about improving the image of the city to attract the tourists, the investors, the creative class . . . etc.

The development of the city brand must begin with the determination of the promise of value of the city to its different stakeholders. The question is: what promise can be made and for which target audience? This implies a real internal and external diagnostic work on the assets and handicaps of the territory. Without a promise, a brand does not make sense. In the past, place marketing strategies centered primarily on functional attributes such as the beauty of particular environments, advanced infrastructures, etc. Recently, the focus of place marketing has shifted to promoting emotional and experiential attractions [15].

In the literature, we speak of the resident's adoption of the place brand which is the result of the integration of the residents in the elaboration project. Rehmert and Dinnie explain that internal stakeholders are in direct or indirect contact with the visitor and therefore form an important group which has the potential to be the determining factor as to whether the place brand promise and brand reality are consistent [16]. The adoption of the brand by residents improves the reputation of the city. This adoption depends on the acceptance of the new brand by residents and its ability to reflect the reality of the city as lived by the inhabitants. One of the consequences of this adoption is reflected in the role of the residents as ambassadors of their city. The literature names the formal ambassadors residents who are formally chosen to become ambassadors for their cities: athletes, artists . . . etc. Residents are always ambassadors of their cities and their quality of life, satisfaction, adoption of the city brand are all conditions for the good image of the city. Braun, Kavaratzis and Zenker highlight that residents play three key roles in place branding: through their characteristics and behavior, as an ambassadors for the place, giving credibility to communications about it, and as citizen and voters who are vital for the political legitimization of place branding [13].

The city brand must create value by making the city a privileged destination and a place with a good standard of living. Several researches have focused on the analysis of the branding experiences of cities. Rehmelt and Dinnie studied the Berlin branding experience and revealed new insight in the key factors of decision-making process determining whether citizens engage or not engage with ambassador programs [16]. Filareti Kotsi studied aligning multiple stakeholder perception of visual and auditory communication elements based on the case study of United Arab Emirates [17]. The study highlights the importance of resolving multiple stakeholder perspectives and the importance of the stories that can link various narratives that are important for nation branding and building, since common visuals have layered interpretations. But a question arises: is it enough to create a city brand to become a preferred destination? Are all city brand experiences successful? We will try to answer this question through the study of branding experience of the city of Casablanca.

3 Case Study: Casablanca Branding

The city of Casablanca has experienced the influence of several civilizations: Roman, Phoenician, Arab and Berber and then French. Geographically, the city is a gateway to Europe and Africa. Located on the Atlantic coast, the Greater Casablanca Region covers a total area of 105,000 hectares and is composed of two prefectures and two provinces. The city was built on the ruins of the ancient medieval city of Anfa and became the port of Dar-Al-Baida with the Sultan Alaouites Mohamed III of Morocco in about 1788 that the name of Casablanca saw the day. Under the French protectorate, it became one of the great ports of Africa with a large European community. In terms of number, the population of the city amounts to 4,270,750 inhabitants including 28,161 foreigners, which represents 12.6% of the total population of Morocco [18]. The city hosts 1,892,975 international visitors every year. Being the economic capital, the city is at the center of the economic concerns of the country. An envelope of 3.3 billion Euros is devoted to improving the infrastructure of the city and the living environment of Casablanca. The country wants to make the region a real international financial hub and improve the living environment of its inhabitants.

The city of Casablanca, the economic capital of Morocco, has acquired a territorial brand and a logo since the end of October 2016. The objective, according to the city officials, is to raise and affirm the identity of the city and reinforce the pride of being Casablanca and attract investors and tourists. The city of Casablanca, the economic capital of Morocco, has acquired a territorial brand and a logo since the end of October 2016. The objective, according to the city officials, is to raise and affirm the identity of the city and reinforce the pride of being a resident of Casablanca and attract investors and tourists [19].

3.1 Analysis of the Brand Logo of Casablanca

Part of a wide range of stimuli consists of the symbolic place brand elements, such as the name, logo, tagline and all other symbolic expressions of the place brand that represent the place in the mind of the person encountering it [20]. For Casablanca, WeCasablanca is the new territorial brand created to accompany the development project of the great Casablanca (PDGC). The brand was unveiled in October 2016. The visual identity of the city of Casablanca is made up of a wecasablanca logo. This brand was created by Ernest & Young. According to this consultancy firm, the blue color refers to the dominant color of the city (ocean, sky . . .) and the black color in counterpoint balances and stabilizes the whole. The arch above Casa symbolizes the mixing of Arab and Western culture and embodies the value of openness with an arch bridge between the two cultures and referring to the emblematic arcades of the metropolis. The starting point confirms the unifying character of the visual identity.

Fig. 1 The logo of the Casablanca Brand



Fig. 2 The Arabic logo of the Casablanca brand in Arabic



Casa is drawn as a symbol at the heart of the name with a nested concept. The visual identity was not accompanied by any audio signature (Fig. 1).

This visual identity was not well received by residents. It was very much criticized by the residents. It can be noted that the logo does not include any identity symbol of the city and that the languages used are English for (we) and French for Casablanca. Even though the firm has planned logos for the Arabic and Berber versions which are the native languages of the country, Casablanca residents seem to sully this visual identity (Fig. 2).

3.2 *Brand Promise of Value*

The brand must rely on a promise that the place will offer to its different audiences. The development of the brand must be preceded by a diagnosis to identify the assets of the place. It's also about determining the image desired by the powers of the city. To make Casablanca an international financial hub, is the will of Morocco for its economic capital. The value promise must normally be linked to the competitiveness or performance of Casablanca as a financial hub. But given the multitude of place marketing targets, the promise of value can relate to other aspects of life in this city in general. The value promise must normally be linked to the competitiveness or performance of Casablanca as a financial hub. But given the multitude of territorial marketing targets, the promise of value can relate to other aspects of life in this city in general. The study of Casablanca branding and the advertisements that followed, show that apart from the value of tacit sharing in the "we", no other promise of value is advanced. Even this value of sharing was not deduced by residents until the officials interpreted the graphic charter. In this context of value sharing, Casablanca has always been a cosmopolitan city, Several Europeans have chosen to live in this city. Besides, thanks to Morocco's open foreign policy, Morocco has welcomed a large sub-Saharan community.

3.3 Functional and Symbolic Attributes of the Brand

One of the unique facets of place branding is the dynamic between the brand and the place infrastructure [21]. Place infrastructure constitutes the brand's existent, accessible and sufficient functional (tangible) and experiential (intangible) attributes [22]. For Casablanca, an ambitious project for the development and rehabilitation of the city was launched. But it is necessary to know what are the strengths by which stand out Casablanca today to become an international financial hub and what are the handicaps that weigh heavily on the competitiveness of this city?

In relation to the major metropolises that have invested in place marketing, Casablanca suffers from a set of problems that violate its policy. But the city still suffers from several handicaps on the human and social level. 12% of the inhabitants of the city live in housing representing 0.6% of the total area. Indeed, 72,000 households live in slums and 23% of the houses are still not supplied with drinking water and the rate of wastewater treatment reaches barely 45%. These findings lead to the question of the legitimacy of the practice of territorial marketing in the cities of developing countries. Can we practice city branding for cities still suffering from certain handicaps? Our answer is yes because Casablanca, for example, is a city with two speeds.

The city also has many assets. It is very attractive in terms of investment. Thus, with 4.2 million residents and 19.12%, it is the largest city in Morocco. It gathers a large part of the companies of the country with 31% of the industrial units and 38% of the jobs in the industry. Casablanca is also the first African destination for the offshoring trades. Besides, with regard to its offshoring strategy, Morocco is competing with countries such as India and Eastern Europe which are recognized for their competitiveness in offshoring. The city is recognized for its call centers that manages customer relations and technical assistance on behalf of European companies. It has a fleet dedicated to companies specializing in offshoring.

In terms of infrastructure, the city has upgraded public transport by building several Tramway lines to improve mobility within this city. Moreover, a global logistics strategy has been launched for the development of logistics platforms and the implementation of a new port operating plan with, in particular, the realization of a road and rail connection for the regulation of transport in this city. In terms of tourism, the city has a wide coast on the Atlantic. The city also has a very rich architectural heritage as some buildings date from the French protectorate and the ancient medina which is being rehabilitated.

3.4 Adherence of Residents and Local Stakeholders

Successful countries have developed efficient and systematic methods to develop and project themselves as brands. Their long term success depends on the aligned participation of key stakeholder groups [23]. Internal stakeholders, particularly

citizens, have been recognized as an important asset of places for the delivery of a brand-consistent message [16]. As Braun, Kavaratzis, and Zenker [24] note, residents play a fourfold role in place branding, since they are an internal target market, an integrated part of a place brand, possible brand ambassadors for the place and, last but not least, citizens wield influential political power in determining the political legitimization of place branding initiatives. Concerning the participation of local actors for Casablanca branding, several initiatives can be cited. For the city's development project, city leaders organized several think tank with professors and representatives of economic circles. Several thematic workshops have also been organized such as transport and mobility, employment, training, education and health etc. Concerning the Casablanca branding project, several focus groups were organized around six key themes: Entrepreneurship, Infrastructure and Major Projects, Tourism, International Outreach, Teaching and Research and Sport. The persons invited in each focus group constitute specialists in each of the themes. The objective was to know what they expected of the city of Casablanca and to know the DNA of this city for these different actors.

Following the communication of the Casablanca brand, a Wecasablanca site was created. On this site, a form has been made available to the residents of Casablanca who want to become ambassadors of their city. The objective according to this site is to give the possibility to all those who wish to testify, to share, to diffuse by example, spirit of initiative and creativity the promotion of Casablanca. Despite all these efforts, the new brand was not welcomed by the residents. One element of response may be the elitism that characterized the residents of Casablanca who participated in the think tank or focus groups and the lack of communication of research work on the identity of Casablanca. The residents, who are the key players in the identity of this city have not been much integrated into the consultation process.

City branding is the result of the transposition of corporate marketing to places. The study of the literature has shown that this transposition requires integrating the specificity of the places in relation to the consumer products. The interest of the application of the place marketing necessarily passes by the adaptation of the marketing principles to the specificity of the places. Places are defined through names, identity and image. All of these elements are the starting point of any city branding approach.

4 Conclusion

For Casablanca city, there is unfortunately, a problem of integration between the project of development of the city and the city branding. The brand, thus, is not associated with any promise of value as a financial hub. However, the Branding experience in Casablanca is relatively young. Certainly the brand should not remain a slogan and a logo. The young brand nevertheless marks the beginning of a major development project for the city. The brand has certainly not been unanimous, but it is a first step towards improving the competitiveness of the city of Casablanca. All

the projects and development projects of the city marks a real territorial dynamic. Much remains to be done for the rehabilitation of certain neighborhoods and infrastructures of the city, to anchor the brand in the true Casablanca identity and especially to put the brand at the service of the desired image of the city. This is a good start: Casablanca is one of the few cities in Africa to have a brand. The involvement of residents in the brand of their city is essential. This involvement certainly translates into their participation in the brand building process in particular and the management process of their city in general. But one thing is certain: the city must start by satisfying residents who are considered an internal target. Satisfaction necessarily involves improving the quality of life in the city. This requires the city's efforts on education, security, infrastructure, public transport, green spaces and entertainment. This satisfaction will guarantee a positive internal image prior to any city branding process. According to Vasudevan [25], a place's image reflects the affinity and relationship visitors had/have with the place but he does not refer to the internal image of the residents of their cities. Once the residents are satisfied, the city can do an internal and external diagnostic to find the right positioning. It's about defining how the city is unique or better than other cities. The result will be the promise of the city in the context of city branding. After, the city must choose a logo for the city brand.

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