Historic Preservation as a Tool for City Branding Case Study: Khedivial Cairo

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Abstract

Historic urban spaces are considered one of the important components of the visual image that have significant effect on the urban environment. Those spaces are identified as planned open spaces which are usually located in the city center, and it can be a gathering place for community members and tourists, a suitable place for open markets, festivals, or political events. Today, many cities aim to strengthen the valuable urban character of the historical urban spaces to achieve a sustainable urban image by integrating several elements like economic, cultural, social aspects and activities via some new strategies including urban branding strategy. City branding is a novel aspect of urban communication that improves marketing of the city image in several ways by transforming the visual image of the city into a brand image. Historic preservation can help cities keep their unique character and diversity of urban parts in downtown areas and consequently lay a foundation upon which they can form their unique urban space brands that attract talent. Simultaneously, historic properties can be used to marketplace branding. This study aims to define the connection between historic and valuable images of the urban spaces and city branding, in order to achieve a proposed framework for evaluating the level of success of historic urban spaces (Opera Square) from the urban aspects to improve the identity of the square.

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1 Introduction

The globalization created a competition between cities for a share in the world's tourism, businesses, investment, and attention. Due to the fact that some cities form the economic and cultural backbone of nations, they are increasingly becoming the focus of this international competition for funds and fame through the transformation of their urban environment into a branded visual image.

A main character for urbanization for any city is its visual image, with successful urban branded spaces as one of its main elements, thus drawing tourists and residents. Urban spaces are commonly located in the center of the city, which can be a place for tourists and residents to meet and celebrate, for open markets or political events.

The identity of a place is probably synonymous with its uniqueness, character, historic context, and roots. It is crucial for city branding. Downtown living has become an important marketing tool in the city's branding. It is of utmost importance for a downtown that it retains is character. Historic buildings and neighborhoods can contribute strongly to the character of a downtown.

In this context, historic preservation can help cities retain their unique character and diversity in downtown areas, thus laying a foundation to develop their unique place brands. Simultaneously, historic areas can be used as a marketing resource for place branding.

2 Research Problem

Successful urban branded spaces are rare to find in many Egyptian cities, despite their profound importance in the formation of the urban visual image and attraction. Thus, a set of research questions were developed to help to explore the relation between the historic and valuable images and identity of the urban spaces and city branding in order to achieve the proposed framework.

Fig. 1 Basic aspects for designing urban branded spaces
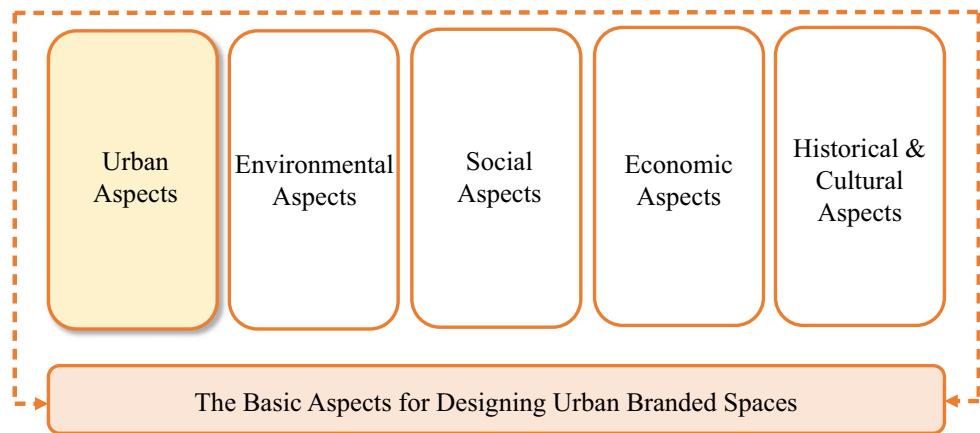
These questions can be summarized as follows:

- What are the main basic aspects for designing urban branded spaces?
- What are the main criteria to construct urban branded spaces, especially historical urban spaces?
- What are the attributes and concepts that show significant positive impact to improve the identity of the square and to transform the Opera Square to a branded urban space.
- Can the strength points in the studied area (Opera Square) convert the square into an urban branded space?

3   Objectives and Hypotheses

The paper aimed to achieve a proposed framework for evaluating the level of success of Opera Square from the urban aspects to improve the identity of the square and thus enhance the branding strength of the square; as these urban spaces will be considered as a nucleus for the development of the surrounded urban area, and so improve the city branding.

4   Methodology

The research methodology is qualitative and is based on two main parts:

The first part:

Reviewing literature of the identity and unique image of urban spaces and city branding in books, scientific journals, and research projects. A theoretical framework was adopted; various qualities of branded urban spaces as suggested by the most leading urban theorists and planners are categorized into 5 main aspects that should be taken into consideration while planning to convert an urban space into an urban

branded space; see Fig. 1 (Abdelaal & Hussein, 2012). The research study will focus only on the urban aspect, which includes a set of dimensions, which have a group of indicators, and each indicator will be defined through several key design concepts. These concepts were used to conduct the proposed framework.

The second part:

This part is based on the empirical study and includes the following steps:

- Data collection and site documentation.
- Data analysis of the strength and weakness points occurred in the study area.
- Evaluation of the indicators of the urban aspects with the different urban elements in the study area.
- Formulation of the proposed framework and the objective of the research study; see Fig. 2.

5   City Branding: Overview and Definitions

City branding arose as a field of study in the 2000s, and today, destination branding is on the radar of most developed nations, as well as increasingly among developing countries seeking an enhanced image to attract direct investment, tourism, and trade and improve international relations. However, in recent years, branding discussions have moved toward city brands, reflecting the growing importance of cities in national and global economies and as attractors of investment and people.

Branding of a place is critical due to several reasons, most commonly to promote economic growth. This is due to the fact that a strong brand can achieve a shift in the perception of a place that has a poor image among external and internal constituents, form a vision for potential and future of the

Fig. 2 Second part of the
research methodology
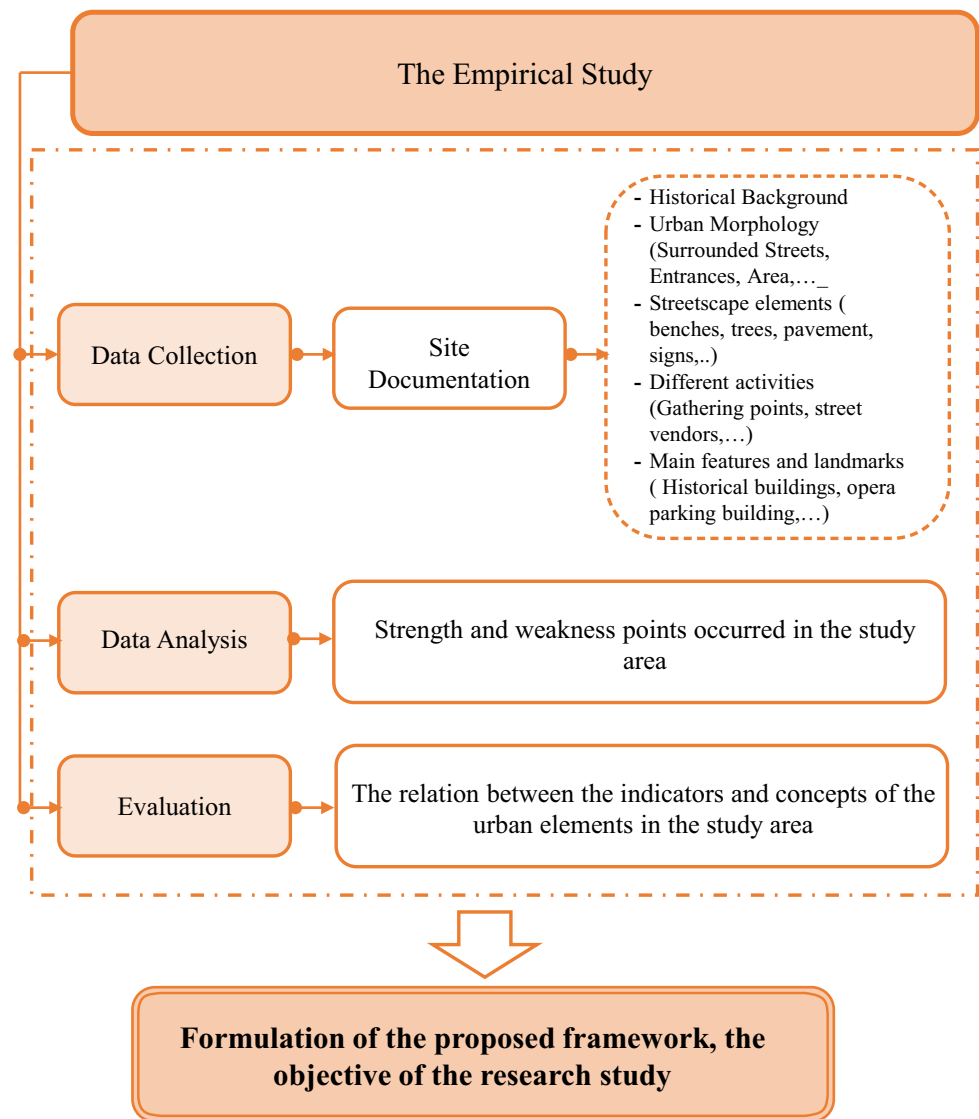
community, and enhance its local, regional, and/or international awareness and position. It can even transform unfavorable stereotypes related to a place more appealing.

Brand image is the way customers currently view a brand and signify what it currently stands for. This overall impression is a product from many sources (Vanolo, 2008).

Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2005) stated that places are brandable entities if they can be differentiatable from each other by their characteristics. Due to the intensely growing competition for investors, skilled workers, and tourists, substantial efforts to differentiate places have frequently been noticed in recent years. Hence, place branding today refers to the application of proper marketing strategies to differentiate cities and countries from the competition, regarding economic, social, political, and cultural aspects.
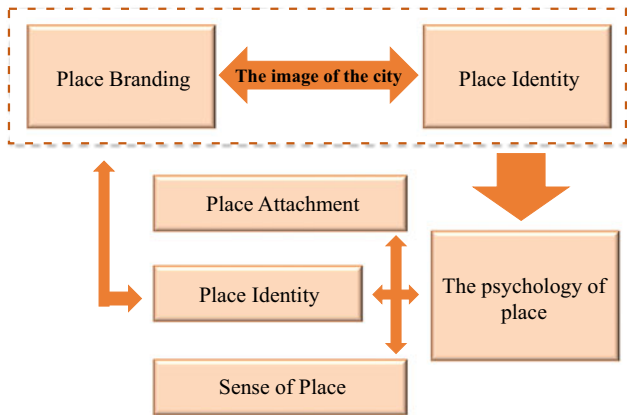
So from this point of view, city branding concept can be defined as "the practice of developing a strategy that

underlines the value the place offers to its target publics, namely residents, workers, employers, investors, tourists, and so on" (Biçakçi, 2012).

5.1 Place Branding: Overview and Link to Identity

"Identity" is defined as the properties of an individual or group which differentiate them from others. Conversely, Urban identity is defined with natural and artificial urban elements and sociocultural characteristics of urban environments. The urban identity has 2 major components: "social" (socioeconomic, sociocultural, and psychological) and "environmental" (natural and artificial) (Örer, 1993).

Thus, place branding depends upon its identity, experience, and image. The common conception is that if the brand
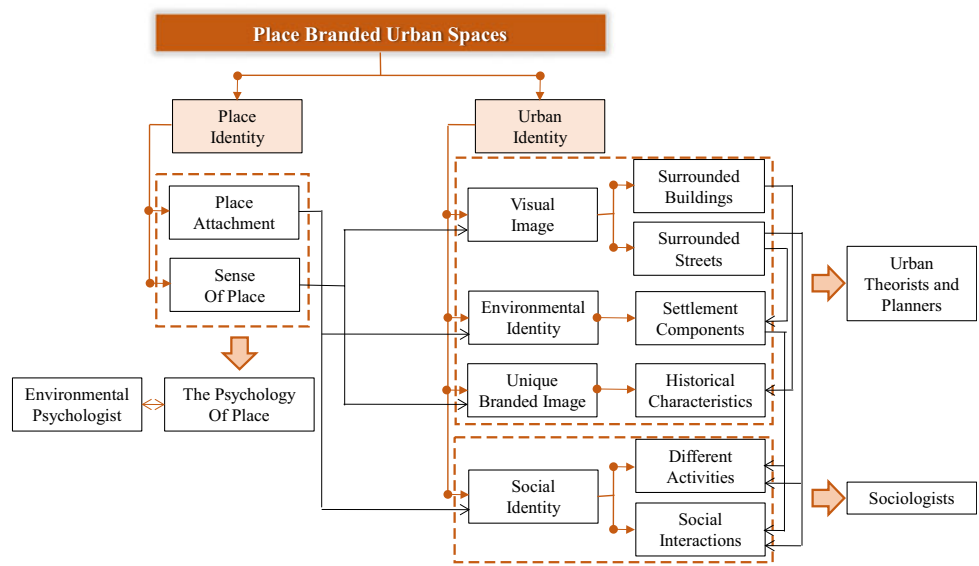
Fig. 3 Relation between place branding and place identity

6 Historic Preservation, Place Identity, and Place Branding

The focus of this part is on the identity of urban structure in the city since it aims to show the contribution of historic areas to place brand. A city should positively discriminate itself from its competitors to identify its own characteristics to be able to ensure that it becomes a competitive and effective place brand in the global marketplace. This is where a city can benefit from the preservation of its cultural heritage which in return would promote an authentic sense of place that would be a great aid to attracting the people to visit and utilize this place.

The downtown area contains the historic buildings and old long-standing inner-city neighborhoods. These provide a unique streetscape in addition to defining and shaping the new development. A healthy downtown retains its historic fabric, while simultaneously allowing new development and the retrofitting historic buildings with modern facilities. A distinctive downtown exhibits a harmonic mix between historic elements, modern facilities, and sensible rehabilitations joining preservation and modern life.

There is always a competition between preservationists and developers over downtown areas. Comprehensive historic preservation can be only guaranteed if a city government considers the integration of historic preservation plans into community master plans.

Paradoxically, historic preservation is a very modern activity, as well-preserved historic buildings can reflect a city's modern culture in addition to its ancient past. Therefore, a lot of cities nowadays try to market their cultural facilities—such as art museums and concert halls—as proof of cultural

is not based on identity then the branding efforts can only lead to a brand "estranged" to the place, especially to its residents.

Place identity was defined as a subdivision of self-identity by environmental psychologists, consisting of cognitions about the physical world. Three main constructs that can be used to account for the psychology of place were identified by environmental psychologists: "place attachment," "place identity," and "sense of place" (Fig. 3).

They also formulated a three-part definition of place: location—the geographical space providing the setting for social interactions; locale—the setting for informal and institutional social relations; and sense of place—the local set of feeling that subjectively and emotionally attaching people to places. See Fig. 4 (Knez, 2005).

Fig. 4 A holistic approach between place branding and place identity

richness to lure both tourists and new inhabitants. In summary, historic city centers play a pivotal role in differentiating a city from its competitors and to highlight livability and attractiveness, thus drawing talent to the city (Brien, 2012).

7 The Basic Urban Aspects, Dimensions, and Indicators to Design a Historical Branded Urban Space

Branding of places links the urban image to the elements of the urban form, and historical and cultural identity. It aims to develop new and creative way of communicating the image of the city to the rest of the region or the world. From this point of view, the aim of this part is to find the relation between various qualities and aspects of branded urban spaces. The research will subdivide the urban aspect into several dimensions, and each dimension has a set of indicators. These indicators will be defined through a group of concepts to reach the proposed framework, as shown in Table 1 (Abdelaal & Hussein, 2012 & Hefnawy, 2018).

8 Case Study: Opera Square

8.1 Reasons for Selecting "Opera Square"

There are many reasons for selecting Opera Square, and the most important of them are:

Table 23.1 Relation between various qualities and aspects of branded urban spaces

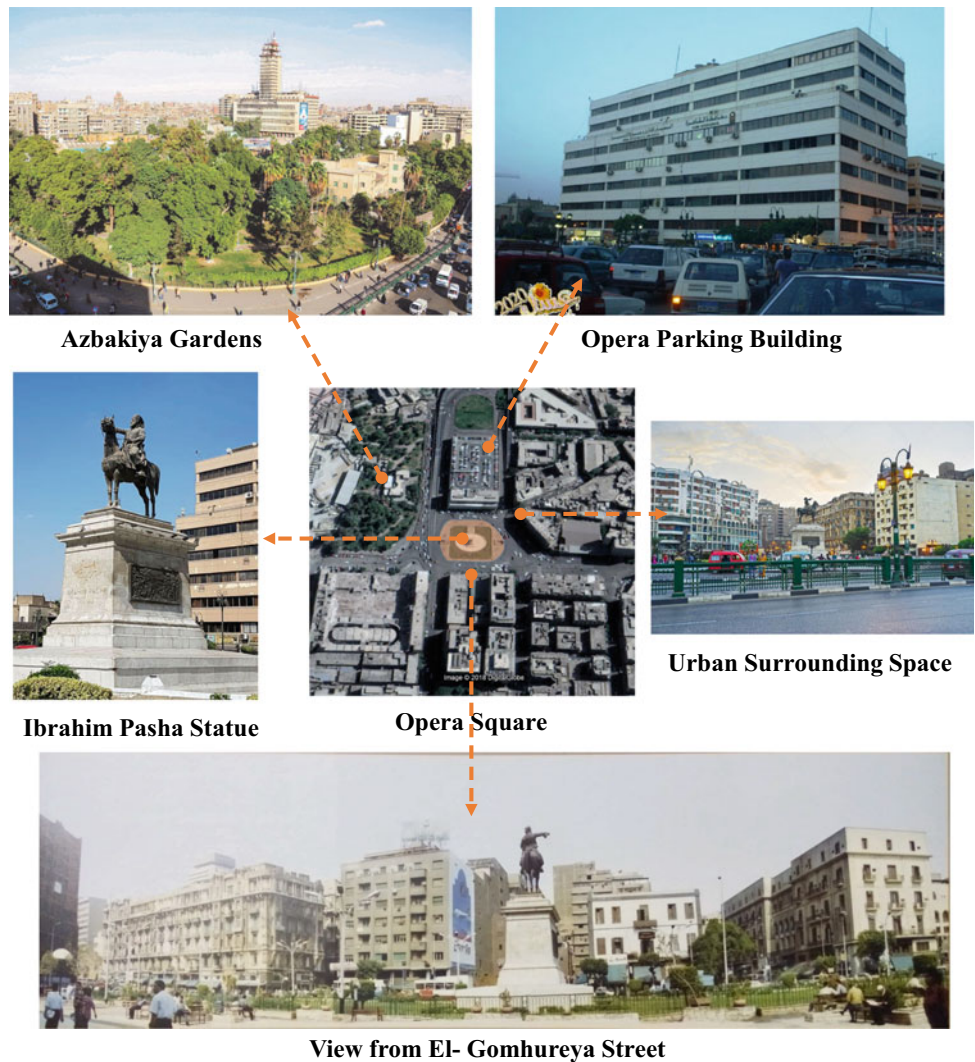| Aspects	Dimensions	Indicators	Concepts
Urban aspect	Visual image	Surrounded buildings	Continuities and homogeneities of facade materials, texture, details
			Homogeneities between buildings and streetscape elements
			Skyline
			Urban spaces surrounded by physical form
		Surrounded streets	Has a clear start point and end point
			Has a strong entrances and leaves
			They lead to unique and dominant landmarks
			Locate the urban space on main routes in order to make the movement economy more efficient
			They oriented toward interesting views
	Environmental identity	Streetscape elements	Linking streetscape elements with the identity and character of the urban space
			Singularity and continuity of streetscape elements
			Supporting social activities
			The condition of streetscape elements
	Social identity	Different activities	Concentration and variation of activities to enrich the space with life and movement
			Enough and comfortable gathering spaces
			The urban space users feel comfort and safe
			Designed spaces for street vendors
			Design plazas that allow for diverse functions and consider the needs of users
	Unique brand image	Unique building	Presence of historical buildings
			The condition of buildings
			Homogeneities of the character and style of the historical buildings
		Significant arch	Create urban spaces surrounded by landmarks (especially the historical one)
			Create landmarks that are distinguished by their dominance and singularity
			Remarkable for their prominent position as seen from far and near distance
		Events	Hold events and cultural activities
			A designed space for the cultural events

- The location of the square in historic districts in Cairo's center. It is one of the very important historic central squares in Cairo because of its historical value:
- It directly overlooked the oldest opera house in Egypt, which had a historic, architectural, and functional value (until it was burned to the ground).
- The square also includes the statue of Ibrahim Pasha and the Azbakiya Gardens.

The square suffers from the traffic bottlenecks, which have degraded the visual image and increased environmental pollution. Figure 5 shows the main elements and the buildings surrounded Opera Square.

8.2 Historical Background and Urban Morphology

Opera Square and Ibrahim Pasha Square are all names of the square that witnessed one of the most important cultural and artistic renaissance features of Egypt. Built during Khedive Ismail Era, its name was changed repeatedly as it was first known as "Teatro Square" followed by "Opera Square" and later on "Ibrahim Pasha Square" after moving Ibrahim Pasha Statue from EL-Attaba Square, and finally after 23 July revolution in 1952, it returned to be "Opera Square." Figure 6 shows the basic information, accessibility, and location of the square.

Fig. 5 Main elements of the Opera Square

Azbakiya Gardens

Opera Parking Building

Ibrahim Pasha Statue

Opera Square

Urban Surrounding Space

View from El- Gomhureya Street

Fig. 6 Basic information and map showing location and accessibility of the Opera Square

Opera Square	
Access Points	Adly Pasha Street/ Abd El-Khaliq Tharwat Street/ EL-Gomhureya Street/ and Azhar Bridge
Area	About 3500 m2
Activities & Uses	Mixed Uses (Residential/ Commercial/ Entertainment/…)
Main Features	Azbakiya Gardens/ Ibrahim Pasha Statue/ Opera Parking Building/ and historical buildings

8.3 Site Documentation

The documentation of Opera Square was categorized into five main categories: surrounded buildings (style, color and texture, and skyline), main streets, streetscape elements, different activities, and main features of the square, as shown in Fig. 7.

8.4 Analysis and Evaluation

The response of Opera Square visitors was assessed through a field survey, observations (Fig. 8), and questionnaires.

A questionnaire was distributed among 30 persons of the street visitors, to evaluate the Opera Square from the urban aspect. It consisted of two main parts, where:

The first part includes:

- Questions about the main indicators and dimensions of the urban aspects.
- A three-point rating scale was used to answer the questions. The scale ranged from 1 to 3 (1—poor, 2—average, and 3—good). The mean values of the ratings of the questions were calculated for each indicator of the urban aspects.
- The scale was divided into three-part score, where the first part is from 0 to 4 (poor), the second part from 5 to 7 (average), and the third part from 8 to 10.

The second part includes:

- Three direct questions about the problems that faces the people in the square and their recommendations to improve the advantages of the square from the urban aspects.

Table 2 expresses the main points of strength and weakness in Opera Square based on the observation, while Fig. 9 evaluates the relation between the urban aspects and the different dimensions, indicators, and concepts of an historical branded urban space based on the questionnaires.

9 Conclusion

The research study reached the following conclusions:

Historic preservation aims to retain a city's real cultural assets, and with a good plan to preserve and use them appropriately, the cultural resources can significantly contribute to the city's livability, thus helping a city to develop an effective place brand. Therefore, historic preservation can be an effective mean for branding.

The paper concluded a proposed framework which is useful in developing and enhancing a historical branded urban space. It revealed the key design aspects, dimensions, indicators, and concepts of successful historical urban branded spaces, as shown in Fig. 10.

The visual image elements of any urban space could have one or more of these characteristics: singularity (though it is unique in shape, color, proportion, surface and in contrast to its surroundings recognizable), dominance (through its size, height, and other physical characteristics improves image quality), clarity and simplicity (simple forms are easily recognizable), exposure, and unity or equivalence (elements should be in relation to each other).

Linking the visual image to the cultural, economic, social activities is of profound importance, and these activities should originate from the place and encourage its translation by different advertising elements.

Emphasize the squares identity, through using a group of buildings and landmarks, giving them a unique identity, and making the appropriate treatment for building facades overlooking these squares to fit their architectural style.
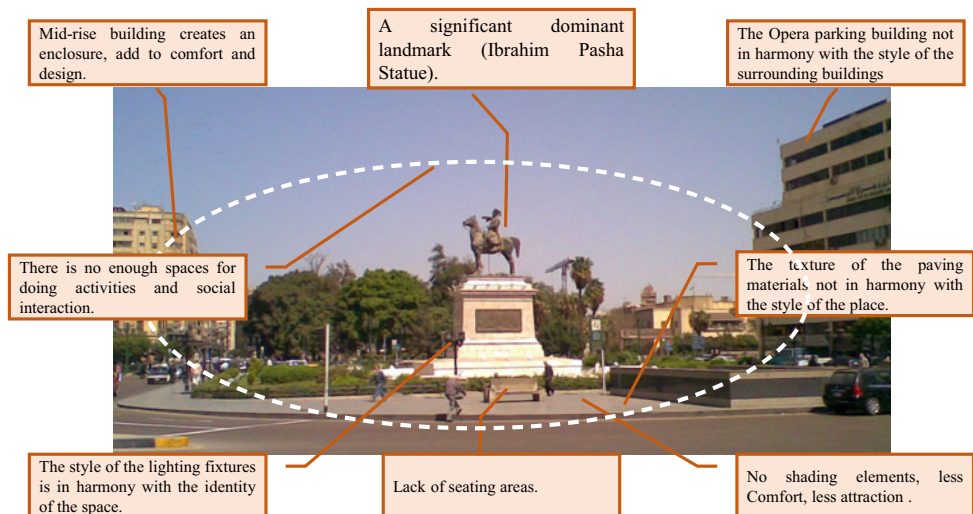
Fig. 7 Site documentation of the Opera Square

Indicators	Site Documentation
Surrounded Buildings — Pictures	(A) (B) (C)
Surrounded Buildings — Comments	- Style: Building A: constructed in 1899 with classic style. Building B: built in the beginning of 20th century. Building C: constructed in the middle of 20th century, style of Neo-Baroque. - Color and Texture: All the buildings around the square are homogeneous in texture and color. - Skyline: The average height of the buildings is ground + 6 floors.
Main Streets — Pictures	
Main Streets — Comments	- The Opera Square is a focal point surrounded by main streets, - The surrounded streets are oriented to the square. - The square doesn't have a strong start and end points (there is no identified entrances and leaves.
Streetscape Elements — Pictures	(Benches) (Bollards) (Lighting Fix.)) (Signs) (Pavement) (Bushes)
Streetscape Elements — Comments	- Streetscape elements are in a bad condition. - They are not in harmony with the unique character and identity of the square, except some of the lighting fixtures.

Fig. 7 (continued)

Indicators		Site Documentation
Different Activities	**Pictures**	
	Comments	- There are not a designed place for street vendors. - There are a variation of mixed used activities such as shops and restaurants. - Lack of designed gathering spaces. - The seating areas are not comfortable: not shaded, design of the benches (back to back: not suitable for social interaction)
Main Features	**Pictures**	
	Comments	- Ibrahim Pasha Statue is distinguished by its dominance and singularity. - Azbakeya Garden - Three main historic buildings, they have an unique and significant character. - The Opera Parking building, but The building is not in harmony with the surrounding historical buildings.

Fig. 8 Main observations at Opera Square

Mid-rise building creates an enclosure, add to comfort and design.

A significant dominant landmark (Ibrahim Pasha Statue).

The Opera parking building not in harmony with the style of the surrounding buildings

There is no enough spaces for doing activities and social interaction.

The texture of the paving materials not in harmony with the style of the place.

The style of the lighting fixtures is in harmony with the identity of the space.

Lack of seating areas.

No shading elements, less Comfort, less attraction .

Table 23.2 Analysis of the Opera Square

	Items	Picture	Description
Points of strength	Ibrahim Pasha Statue		Landmark that is distinguished by its dominance and singularity of shape, size, height, location, and visibility
	Azbakiya Gardens		Constructed in 1872, and comprises an artificial knoll planted with rare trees
	Historical buildings		Building A: constructed in 1899 with classic style Building B: built in the beginning of twentieth century Building C: constructed in the middle of twentieth century, style of Neo-Baroque
	Opera Square		Strong node supported by strong landmark (Ibrahim Pasha Statue) and surrounded with historical buildings The presence of metro stations makes the place more accessible

(continued)

Table 23.2 (continued)

	Items	Picture	Description
Points of weakness	Opera Parking Building		The building is not in harmony with the surrounding historical buildings
	Square flooring		Floorings are not in good condition, as some tiles are broken
	Seating places		Seating areas are not enough for doing different activities and social interaction
	Lighting fixtures		Lighting fixtures are not in good condition
	Shading areas		There are not any shading areas, which makes people less comfort
	Green areas		Green areas are in bad condition
	Street vendors		There is no place designed for street vendors

Aspects	Dimensions	Indicators	Points — Strength	Points — Weakness	Concepts	Eval. Good	Eval. Average	Eval. Poor	Pictures
Urban Aspect	Visual Image	Surrounded Buildings	●		Continuities and homogeneities of facades materials, texture, details	●			
					Homogeneities between buildings and streetscape elements		●		
					Skyline	●			
					Urban spaces surrounded by physical form	●			
		Surrounded Streets	●		Has a clear start point and end point.	●			
					Has a strong entrances and leaves			●	
					They lead to unique and dominant landmarks	●			
					Locate the urban space on main routes in order to make the movement economy more efficient	●			
					They oriented towards interesting views	●			
	Environmental Identity	Streetscape Elements		●	Linking streetscape elements with the identity and character of the urban space		●		
					Singularity and continuity of streetscape elements.			●	
					Supporting social activities			●	
					The condition of streetscape elements		●		
	Social Identity	Different Activities		●	Concentration and variation of activities to enrich the space with life and movement	●			
					Enough and comfortable gathering spaces			●	
					The urban space users feel comfort and safe			●	
					Designed spaces for street vendors			●	
					Design plazas that allow for diverse functions and consider the needs of users			●	
	Unique Brand Image	Unique Building	●		Presence of historical buildings	●			
					The condition of buildings		●		
					Homogeneities of the character and style of the historical buildings	●			
		Significant Arch.	●		Create urban spaces surrounded by landmarks (especially the historical one)	●			
					Create Landmarks that are distinguished by their dominance and singularity	●			
					Remarkable for their prominent position as seen from far and near distance	●			
		Events		●	Hold events and cultural activities			●	
					A designed space for the cultural events		●		

Fig. 9 Evaluation of the relation between the urban aspects and the different dimensions, indicators, and concepts of an historical branded urban space
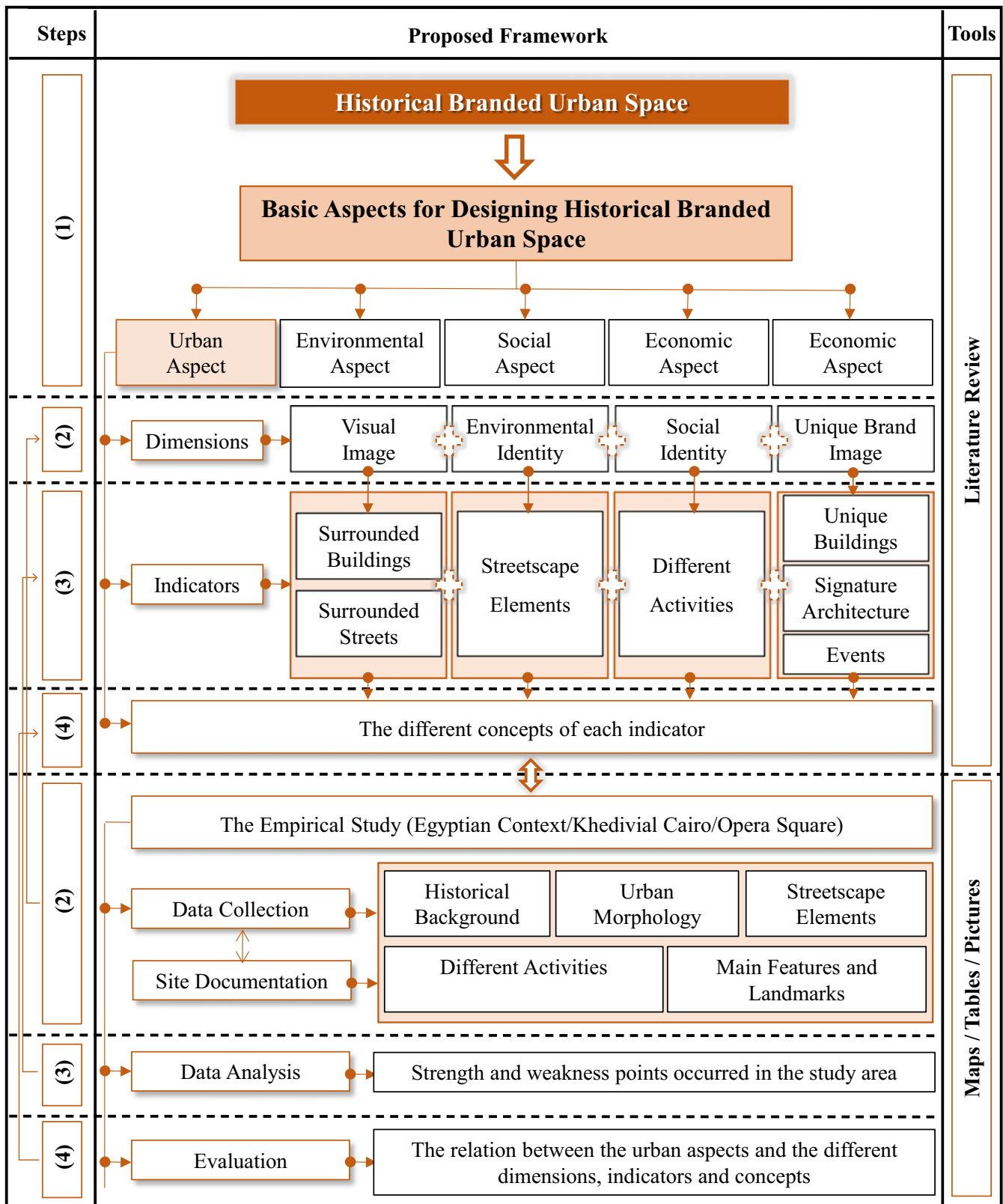
Steps	Proposed Framework	Tools

Historical Branded Urban Space

⇩

(1)

Basic Aspects for Designing Historical Branded Urban Space

Urban Aspect	Environmental Aspect	Social Aspect	Economic Aspect	Economic Aspect

(2) — Dimensions

Visual Image	Environmental Identity	Social Identity	Unique Brand Image

(3) — Indicators

Surrounded Buildings / Surrounded Streets	Streetscape Elements	Different Activities	Unique Buildings / Signature Architecture / Events

(4) — The different concepts of each indicator

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The Empirical Study (Egyptian Context/Khedivial Cairo/Opera Square)

(2) — Data Collection / Site Documentation

Historical Background	Urban Morphology	Streetscape Elements
Different Activities		Main Features and Landmarks

(3) — Data Analysis — Strength and weakness points occurred in the study area

(4) — Evaluation — The relation between the urban aspects and the different dimensions, indicators and concepts

Tools: Literature Review / Maps / Tables / Pictures

Fig. 10 Proposed framework of historical branded urban space

The need to link squares visually to the surrounded urban environment, by enforcing the paths and entrances leading to it.

The importance of conducting activities that are related to the history and the visual image of a place (as celebrations) and promoting its translation through various advertising methods to suit the desired branded image.

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