

# City Branding and the Way It Is Perceived in People's Mind, a Case Study of Milad Tower in Iran

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**Abstract** In today's world city branding is one of the important instrument in order to receive the city to high economic situation. Historically, city branding has started with establishing the first city by human, where people wanted to use some structure to show their power to their enemies. Cities today are in challenge together to attract tourism and creative class in order to promote economic finance and their World-renowned and global credit; so that the concepts of brand strategy for cities are increasingly considered from the commercial world and used as a process in pursuit of urban development, regeneration and quality of life. Place branding is the management of place image through strategic innovation and coordinated economic, commercial, social, cultural, and government policy. In this paper the term City Branding is been explained and it is investigated that whether the Milad tower in Tehran metropolis is a brand in observer's mind or not.

**Keywords** City branding · City identity · Observer mind · Milad tower

## 1 Introduction

Globalization has increased competition among cities in both national and international level. Such competition is for attention, influence, markets, investment, business visitors, talents, and significant event. For being a winner in this competitive environment, cities need to use a wide variety of tools which one of them is the city branding. City branding regarded as a strategic tool to publicize the city's competitive advantage. For being succeed in city branding, identifying and defining the characteristics of the city is a critical task [1].

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But considering it as a strategic program is much younger. At the late 1960s, a new concept, city boosterism has been introduced. Actually it was the marketing of a product which was as an identification of the city. Place branding which invented after city boosterism in 1980s, is the marketing of a place that make the city specified [2].

The reasons for the creation of city branding can be found in city boosterism. Boosterism is the act of “boosting,” or promoting, one’s town, city, or organization, with the goal of improving public perception of it [3]. Therefore, cities, for elevating their images in peoples mind was used their products advertising and marketing; in this way they were declared themselves to the observers.

The concept of place branding was proposed in theories in later 1980, including: nation branding, region branding, city branding [4]. Employing branding strategy for small scales within cities is new urban designers/planners issue that has been neglected. In this regard, the paper is seeking to investigate how to use branding strategy in small scales such as urban space places. The question emerges here is that how one unknown place could be a brand of its city and what could be done by means of city designers and planners in order to improve the one place’s image on visitors mind in order to change one unknown place to known one in the national and international level.

## 2 Definition of Brand

A brand is an impression perceived in a client’s mind of a product or a service. It is the sum of all tangible and intangible elements, which makes the selection unique [5]. A brand is enduring in the most people’s mind and attracts more people’s attention. A Brand, defined by the American Marketing Association, is a “name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition”. A brand is an impression perceived in a client’s mind of a product or a service and it is the sum of all tangible and intangible elements, psychological and sociological features related to the product, which makes the selection unique [6]. Brands are created, stimulated and applied by people working in organizations seeking to create worthwhile experiences for their customers that will induce behavior beneficial to the organization [7]. Shaping brand occurs in the viewer’s mind; one brand has three essential concepts that are related to it: identity; image; and communication. The identity of the brand is defined by the creator of it and include the features that the owner of brand wants to be perceived, the features like: functional, emotional and self-expressive benefits. On the other hand, brand image is the real image remains in the observer’s mind. In order to make connection between chosen factors of the identity and observer’s mind is needed to communication like advertising. It is the way that introduces the brand identity to the customers. What we name Brand, is totally positive and negative part of an element

perception. At first step, there is owner of brand, that try to creates it with positive aspects, but second step depends on a observer's perception and background about this product and even the way that product be promoted. Each product, company, region, nation, country or city could be introduced by specially brand to the customer and observer.

### 3 City Branding

Cities today are in challenge together to attract tourism and creative class [4], in order to promote economic finance and their World-renowned and global credit; so that the concepts of brand strategy for cities are increasingly considered from the commercial world and used as a process in pursuit of urban development, regeneration and quality of life. "Place branding is the management of place image through strategic innovation and coordinated economic, commercial, social, cultural, and government policy. Competitive identity (CI) is the term to describe the synthesis of brand management with public diplomacy and with trade, investments, tourism and export promotion". In fact the goal of city branding is to make a connection between city identity and perceived images through memorable city experiences and projected images.

City branding can be looked upon as a refreshing of urban identity or as the creation of new forms of identity [8]. According to Khirfan and Momani proposed model, the city's refreshed identity is shaped by physical interventions, events and activities, and place representations that are based as much on the city as on its consumers. Cities should have depth, originality, and a distinct character though the materialization of choice, diversity, and distinguishing features [9]. Thus, branding contributes to the construction of local identity [10].

It is the city spaces that can be classified as distinct brand through linking the visual image of these areas to the brand image by holding several cultural, social and economic activities with the importance of declaration about it by several ways aiming at strengthening the urban character of the place, in a way that enable it to compete globally through presence of valuable urban and historical elements.

City places have become relatively Substitutable [6]. place substitutability made locational branding *inevitable* in consequence of the ever-growing globalization of business investment and the ferocious nature of the competition among places to attract employing companies, to host major sporting or cultural events, or to become centers for tourism [11].

In order an element to be enduring brand in people's mind (both residents and tourists). It should include two Characteristics: functional and added value. Again in this part, functional features refers to the creator of brand, for example the functional goals of building Eiffel tower are: aerodynamic measurements, studies of the resistance of substances, physiology of the climber, radio electric research, problems of telecommunication, meteorological observations, etc. [5]. Indeed the

tower is an original monument that looks at Paris, The tower is identical with the urban landscape and remains in observer's mind in first sight and this is added value of Eiffel tower that will be described later.

## 4 Observer's Mind

It is generally accepted in the literature that, in the people's minds, the perceived place image is formed by two 'distinctly different but hierarchically interrelated components: cognitive, affective and [according to some] conative' [12]. 'Cognitive evaluations refer to the beliefs or knowledge about place attributes whereas affective evaluation refers to feelings toward, or attachment to it' [13]. 'The affective component of image is related to the motives one has for destination selection' [14]. The conative component, on the other hand, 'is the action component which builds on the cognitive and affective stages' [15]. Beerli and Martín provide evidence for this, as they have established empirically that: (i) motivations (as affective psychological characteristics) influence the affective component of image; (ii) the experience of travel (as in learning as a psychological characteristic) has a significant relationship with cognitive and affective images; and (iii) the socio-demographic and personal characteristics (gender, age, level of education, occupation, country of origin and social class) influence the cognitive as well as the affective assessment of image [6, 15].

According to the information stored- in the previous times in part cognitive-about for example one city, we could introduce subcategories of added values characteristic, including: perception, people's experience of the city, belief in the city, appearance of the city. Residents' thinking and dependency to their hometown or where they work can influence the perceptions of tourists and visitors. To retain residents of the city and attract tourists, city policy makers and urban designs should Strengthened residents' everyday experiences to encourage their long-term commitment.

## 5 Various Types of City Brands Classification

In the literature, three main categories of urban image carriers have been identified: the built environment, hallmark events and famous personalities [9]. In this essay we try to fragment these three general categories and some others.

City brands components includes: city Natural landscape like Niagara falls as a brand of Ontario city in Canada, city Artificial landscape like Gardens and palace of Versailles in Paris, architectures like Petronas tower in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Prominent Urban designs as design of Squares and streets like The Piazza d'Italia, Designed in 1978 by renowned architect Charles Moore, Climate like Cloudy London, historical events like 11th September, important international events like

Olympics races in Beijing, special product of a city like Isfahan crafts in Iran, Urban Industry as known factories, like Ferrari company in Maranello, Italy.

## 6 Processes of Making Brand

City planners must begin with basic requirements of living, working and playing in urban communities such as affordable and accessible housing, transport, healthcare, education and training, retail outlets, other public amenities, and opportunities for social interaction. If these functional needs are provided well down in one city, the opportunity is created for the people to perceive a unique index of the city. We should pay attention to the most popular objects that are different from what people usually encounter at home or work—they are different in terms of scale, meaning or experience. Like Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao or remains of the Berlin Wall [16].

Kavaratzis proposes that city branding ensues from the interaction between an internal and an external city. Whereas the former is based on physical structure (landmarks), the latter is embedded in the intangible characteristics (subjective perceptions) that unite complex mental messages about the city [3].

To retain residents of the city and attract tourists, city policy makers and urban designs should strengthen residents' everyday experiences to encourage their long-term commitment. In fact the goal of city branding is to make a connection between city identity and perceived images through memorable city experiences and projected images [15]. If these events influence majority's mind, then it brings about a situation which is the trigger in shaping a city branding [17].

Regarding to urban designing, these events could contribute to either city identity or city image. The reason which explains why the research has been underscored city image and identity in order to reach a successful city branding is behind the fact that place branding links place identity with projected and perceived images through communication and experience. The brand strategy for a city must appeal to 'outsiders' as well as residents. A strong place brand cannot be built on projected images alone, it needs to incorporate a high involvement experience concept—supported through infrastructure, projects, events and place development initiatives—in order to build a primary place image [7].

The process of creating city brand should start with a strategic analysis of the city like SWOT, to find the strength and weakness, and concentrate on the strengths of the city, on its existing basic substance [13].

To categorize elements of place identity as structural elements (location and history); semi-static elements (size, physical appearance and inner mentality); and coloring elements (symbolism, behavior and communication). Structural elements that are pretty well unchanging—the DNA of place if you like—are location (geography and climate) and history (roots). Semi-static elements that can be changed, but that take time to transform, include size and physical appearance, such as superstructures, infrastructure, land-use planning and landscape. Also included

as a semi-static element of place identity is the inner mentality of the population, as in the cultural and religious values, often embodied in language [17]. Coloring elements include symbols (names, logos or emblems such as flags, costumes, folk dances or maps), behavior and communication [14].

## 7 Conclusion

When we talk about a city, what is the first thing that passes to our mind?

This is the simplest question that we can use about city branding. According to the research small percentage of the residents of Tehran and people in other cities that visited capital know Milad tower as a brand of Tehran! Most of them in reply to the mentioned question, discusses pollution and car traffic. Therefore in some cases, the negative features of one city can influence the index that has capability to be a brand.

Characteristics of brand is mentioned in this essay, now we are trying to introduce different parts of these characteristics and deliberate them about

Milad tower:

Functional features of a city brand includes: promotion of economic, employment, recreation, and attractions. In other word in order one city landscape to be a brand, it should be functional at first step. Our case study, Milad tower is part of The Tehran International Trade and Convention Center. The project includes the Milad telecommunication tower offering restaurants at the top with panoramic views of Tehran, a five-star hotel, a convention center, a world trade center, and an IT park (Congress Venue). Every year different international and internal conferences are held in this tower and its conference hall and five-star hotel is receptive foreign guests. These international conferences are the most cause of visit of this tower; thereupon one way to declare Milad to the people is held up varied congresses.

The second Characteristics of city brand is added value defined by four concepts: people experiences of the city, perception, belief in the city, and appearance. As this tower is the tallest one in Iran, it could have approximately persistent affection on people mind especially from the point of direction; so that citizen or tourist at any point of Tehran could identify the west and determine its path.

In other hand, being in one place and sensing the place directly, has a great impact in making the image of it, but unfortunately because of the high entrance and restaurants prices few are willing to go and visit the place.

By the way due to this fact that Milad tower is not residential and commercial tower, ordinary people and public have low chance to visit the tower without paying cash.

What are the solutions in order to change Milad tower to the brand of Tehran?

Today's marketing and advertising have important rule in introducing a product to people. This could be from different ways such media like: TV, radio, and specially internet. Milad's five-star hotel could advertise in the internet agencies for attract tourist.

The effort should be provide more access to this tower. For example, its restaurants with serving low price foods could be advertised for ordinary people.

More information from the features of this tower should be available to the public. Including the architecture of tower, structure of it, the reasons for building Milad tower and its position in today's world.it can be by publishing the books, or SMS.

Milad tower Built in between the Shahrak-e Gharb and Gisha districts of Tehran, in fact our case study is a strong sign in the city according to the lynch, therefor we can make it stronger with urban designs solution; like reinforce this sign with the ways in which get along to it.

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