A REVIEW OF THE ESSENCE OF CITY BRANDING IN ENHANCING IMAGE AND IDENTITY OF A CITY

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Abstract

The future of cities is at the juncture of a new reality. This poses a domestic opportunity to relook and rediscover the image and identity of the city. Cities are often viewed in the international arena, hence the authentic local essence of city image and identity is often flattened, hidden, or ignored. Therefore, this paper aims to review existing literature on city branding in order to identify characteristics that will enhance city strategies. This research is conducted using content and thematic analysis based on the Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) databases. Findings have identified criteria such as integrated- design, landmarks, signature architecture, city vision statement, culture and symbolic assets to be among the contributing factors. Based on the review, the domain of city branding consists of intangible and tangible city assets that must be further researched in the field. These findings shall contribute to the research in the context of cities in Malaysia.

Keywords: Place Branding, City Characteristics, Imageability, Integrated Design, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

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INTRODUCTION
This study is a review of articles by leading researchers in the multidisciplinary field of city branding. It reviews city branding literature from established research databases to analyze the essence of city branding components that contribute to the enhancement of a city's image and identity. The city branding research domain is cross-disciplinary, encompassing robust academic discussions from multiple viewpoints since the 1980s (Muratovski, 2012; Oguztimur & Akturan, 2015; Ma, Schraven, Bruijne, Jong, & Lu, 2019). The body of knowledge of city branding is both conceptual and empirical, and also at the practice level (Oguztimur & Akturan, 2015).

Why is city branding important for cities? City branding is emerging as an internationally recognized research domain and design strategy characterized by a high degree of multidisciplinary, with rapid proliferation in and between disciplines (Lucarelli & Berg, 2011). The city branding phenomenon is similar to corporate branding, in the sense of addressing numerous stakeholder groups, having multidisciplinary roots, being complex and intangible, dealing with multiple identities, and its need for social responsibility (Oguztimur & Akturan, 2015; Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013). City branding has been defined as the 'purposeful symbolic embodiment of all information connected to a city to create associations around it' (Lucarelli & Berg, 2011). The city as a brand is defined by a sustained public presence and characterized by an enduring existence (Muratovski, 2012). This image of the past is intertwined with modern and technological advancements within the city fabric. What differentiates the visual characteristics of one city from another is its local content in the form of a city identity. In this review, the essence of city branding is investigated to identify key characteristics that influence a city brand from the perspective of the image and identity of a city.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND
The aim of this study is to review key themes on the essence of city branding components that enhances a city's image and identity. The image of the city, described as 'imageability' by Lynch (1960), is a concept introduced to city planners and urban designers to help create cities that are memorable, attractive, and navigable. The term 'imageability' is a way to describe the quality of a city to be re-created in the mind. Lynch (1960) emphasizes the need for cities to be efficient as well as interesting, aesthetically pleasing, and able to offer delight. The cross-reference and purpose for cities to have a strong image and identity has been on the table for many city managers and city dwellers alike. City branding is a developing research domain that covers major viewpoints from marketing and business, tourism development, and urban governance, as well as viewpoints from the built environment of architecture design and urban planning. As there is a lack of cohesive discussion between the various disciplines in existing

literature, this study aims to perform a preliminary identification of components that bridge city brand essence to the elements of city image and identity.

Scholars are reviewing the literature on city branding in order to find common ground. Content analysis is commonly used by scholars to extract place brand terms and geographical entities within various articles published in various disciplines (Oguztimur & Akturan, 2015). As concluded by Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013), there is a need for further theoretical development and practical clarification. Muratovski (2012) observes that a brand's identity cannot be observed in a vacuum and that the outcomes of branding activities need to be observed in relation to one another. Cities cannot be treated in the same way as short-lived products or corporations without taking into consideration essential policy changes that will determine how people participate in the ongoing restructuring of economic and cultural practices (Muratovski, 2012). Some approach the field on the basis of place branding research, which is a more comprehensive concept.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The iterative search and article retrieval technique employed in this study begins with an awareness of the concepts and language used in city branding, which connects to diverse ways of thinking about a city. Lucarelli and Berg (2011) conducted a systematic review of city branding literature and analyzed articles published between 1988 and 2009 via content analysis. Oguztimur & Akturan (2015) continued the review of city branding literature as a research domain on articles published between 1988 and 2014. The three common perspectives are Place, City and City Region as described by Lucarelli and Berg (2011). These terms are used interchangeably within various contexts in city branding literature. Concepts and terminologies commonly used by researchers include town, destination, region, place, metropolis, municipality, urban, city, etc. Urban branding has a different context from city branding (Oguztimur & Akturan, 2015). Urban branding is seen from a larger perspective of city branding, that is the city region. The city region includes approaches from urban branding, regional branding, urban regeneration branding, and branding the metropolis. This article emphasizes city branding perspectives and definition from the context of a city perspective and approaches city branding in building a visual identity, city image, and distinct profile for the built environment.

The scope of this research investigates articles across relevant academic journals explicitly from the Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus databases. Thomson Reuters' Web of Science and Elsevier's Scopus are leading research databases that have wide journal coverage of bibliometric evaluations (Mongeon & Paul Hus, 2015). A comparative analysis was also conducted between active scholarly articles in WoS and Scopus (Mongeon & Paul Hus, 2015) with results showing that the two databases have substantially different coverage of specific

fields. WoS provides a common search language, navigation environment, and data structure, allowing researchers to search broadly across disparate resources and use the citation connections inherent to the index to navigate relevant research results and impact. WoS has a research indexing that is preferred by premier government and non-government agencies with regards to research database. WoS is searchable with complete bibliographic data, cited reference data, navigation, and links to the full text articles. In this study, only open access journal articles, predominantly published in the past ten (10) years, were reviewed. The objective is to seek contemporary discussions, identify gaps in the research, and discuss the matter in the field of city branding.

The methodological procedures for search, selection, and exclusion include:
(1) Defining the Field of Study
i. Open access journal articles only.
ii. Directly integrating the keywords *city branding*, *city rebranding*, and *cities* in relation to discussions on characteristics of *city image* and *identity* from the viewpoint of built environment.
(2) Search Method and Scope
i. Iterative search of articles across relevant academic journals.
ii. Using the open access database and search engine of Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus journals only.
iii. Journal articles predominantly relevant components of key discussions among researchers in the field.
iv. Qualitative research method of interpretive analysis.
(3) Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis
i. The articles are analyzed to identify key themes and context in the meaning of city branding phenomena.
ii. The article themes are analyzed into two (2) thematic domains:
(1) Essence of city branding component.
(2) Related elements of city image and identity.
(4) Exclusion Criteria
Studies focused on geographic entities other than cities and the urban context (such as destination, town, country, and nation).

DISCUSSION
In understanding the city brand image, a brand is a 'consistent group of characters, images, or emotions that consumers recall or experience when they think of a specific symbol, product, service, organization or location. The attachment of the definition of the city branding phenomenon to a product is due to its similarities to corporate branding, in the sense that it addresses numerous stakeholder groups, has multidisciplinary roots, is complex and intangible, deals

with multiple identities, and has a need for social responsibility (Oguztimur & Akturan, 2015; Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013).

City Branding
Some of the early concepts of branding are rooted in the philosophy of the brand personality scale that identifies five (5) dimensions of a product brand. Aaker Brand Dimensions is a framework that describes the profile and traits of a brand in five core dimensions, each divided into a set of facets. It is a model that describes the profile of a brand using the analogy of a human's personality: excitement, sincerity, ruggedness, competence, and sophistication. In adopting the concept of brand personality to cities, originality, and value, are added to the dimensions of the city brand personality research domain. City branding is more complex than a product as it identifies with complexities beyond those of products and services. City branding arises from the diversity of stakeholders, the number of organizations steering the brand, and the limited control brand developers have over their product with the diverse target groups within a city context (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013).

According to Muratovski (2012) every city already has a form of 'corporate identity' that includes a name, a visual identity in the form of a coat of arms or a similar sign, logo or symbols in the form of landmarks and monuments, as well as a brand perception in people's minds about a particular place or city. This is also supported by the description of Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013) that every city already possesses the basic elements of a brand, and that people would already have a basic perception of it, albeit unconsciously. The city brand is a valuable asset that improves the competitive advantage of the city, although residents and their priorities have an insufficient concentration in many city branding practices (Dastgerdi & De Luca, 2019). Therefore, city branding should not be focused on 'selling' the city and the lives of its inhabitants, which means considering social, cultural, political, and economic environments and practices (Muratovski, 2012).

The built environment possesses components of city branding in the form of infrastructure, cityscape, and gateways (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013). These city branding components are the tangible city assets that enhance the image and identity of the city and, importantly, becomes the habitat and catalyst for intangible city assets to flourish. According to Kirby and Kent (2010), the 'sense of permanence' contributes to the communicative power of architecture to a great extent. Buildings have become brands in their own right, while at the same time being landmarks that can communicate the vision of their cities (Muratovski, 2012). The role of architecture and integrated design in city branding is one that is design-led and based on social innovation policy combined with architectural theory and practice. Cities with distinct cultures and recognizable architectural features are more popular than those without them (Muratovski, 2011).

In reviewing and identifying the essence of city branding from prominent researchers in the field, it is agreed that this essence consists of common themes of tangible and intangible city assets in the form of (1) vision and strategy, (2) internal culture, (3) local communities, (4) synergies, (5) infrastructure, (6) cityscape and gateways, (7) opportunities and potential of place, and (8) communication (Kavaratzis M., 2009). These eight (8) components are a suggested framework of an integrated approach to managing city brands that further describes the essence behind each city branding component. This informs the structure of this review, whereby journal articles are analyzed against the descriptions of the framework. Relevant concepts of image and identity of the city has an important role in city branding strategies.

City Image and Identity
Influential discussions on urbanism by sociologists and scholars defines and debates urbanism from a sociological and critical urbanism perspective. Critical urbanism theory opens new modes of multi-scalar and multidisciplinary research geared to urban design and planning practices, therefore unleashing the potential for urban transformation (Dovey, 2011). We understand the city image as defined by prominent urbanist and theorist in the field, Kevin Lynch (1960), who identified paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks as five (5) interrelated characteristics to create navigable and interesting cities. Lynch describes these characteristics as the qualities of 'imageability' of the city. This projected image varies, as cities are built over generations where social identity, structure, and relation to time and historical context give different experiences to the city. Cities are known to be a constantly growing entity that is organic, never static, and seeks to improve both its externalization and internalization (Kapferer, 1994; Florek & Janiszewska, 2013).

In understanding the unique layers and perspectives of city image and identity, the authors identified the gap of discussion between the disciplines describing the city as an entity. Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013) states that city branding serves as a conduit for city residents to identify with their city. Signals of identity within pluralistic societies take on critical importance. Muratovski (2012) agrees that city branding should involve changes to the 'physical fabric of place'. With residents in search of place attachment and an aspiration to belong, the city's image and identity plays a role as a symbol of territorial identity. Hence, from the literature, the discussion about the essence of city branding does impact the understanding of the components of city image and identity.

In this crucial time, it is also important to acknowledge that this global crisis is not only a time of recovery for cities and their inhabitants. Perhaps we are at a juncture and rite of passage for cities to rethink strategies in city branding as a way forward to rebrand themselves, equipped with the knowledge and frameworks from researchers and practitioners. An understanding of the essence

of city branding is important to enhance the respective components for a sustainable and resilient city to move forward in the 21st century. Enhancing the image and identity of a city is important in a post-recovery period, where cities formed a densely populated epicenter, a conversation often brushed aside in city developments. The opportunity presents itself for cities to rebrand, reconstruct, revitalize, and reclaim their image and identity to mediate not only an increasingly complex consumer space (Muratovski, 2012) but the future of city dwellers who continue to drive and uplift the city and nation.

The image of the city is often viewed in the international arena, hence the authentic local essence of city identity is often flattened, ignored, or hidden in the quest for cities to project an image that is metropolitan and modern. Authenticity of place, historic landscape, cultural tradition, and built heritage are contributing criterion (Abdul Aziz, 2021). It is the right time to include and engage local communities, especially local citizens, in the city branding narrative and strategy. It is the role of researchers in the field to review broader perspectives, make suggestions, and be part of the process to rebuild and rebrand the city image in co-creation with city administrators and managers. A cohesive brand identity through communication and co-creation are revealed to be prerequisites for efficient collaboration.

Essence of City Branding Component
The articles reviewed arrived at common themes and the essence of city branding components from the findings discussed by Kavaratzis (2009) and Oguztimur and Akturan (2015). The data collected from the selected key journal articles are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Essence of City Branding Components related to City Image and Identity

WoS & SCOPUS Journal	Year, Author	Article Theme	Essence of City Branding Components	Related City Image and Identity Elements
Place Branding and Public Diplomacy	2009, Kavaratzis	City Brand Management	Eight components of an integrated city brand. Vision and clear strategy are the top components for realization of the	Built environment components include infrastructure, cityscape, and gateways

		city's future. The built environment's representation.	
2012, Muratovski	Cityscape and Gateways, Built Environment	Ability of built environment to represent itself and reinforce the city brand. Role of architecture, social innovation policy, and integrated design-led strategy.	Integrated design. Building as a marketing object and brand. Iconic architecture and expressive landmarks to communicate vision of their cities.
2019, Mankowska, Grochowski.	Local Communities, Opportunities	Prioritizing local needs and residents. Empowerment of local entrepreneurs and creative industries. City's attractive feature used in branding.	Visual image of local creative community. Creation of city image from local characters, heritage, and culture-based activities.
2021, Lemmetyi	Internal Culture, Synergies.	Culture and image of an individual	Distinction and authenticity of

	ne n, Nieminen , Aalto.		site contribute to a cohesive brand identity. Cultural heritage and sites develop a recognizable brand name. Co-creation among stakeholders; the process of joint values and goal.	site. Architecture and prolific individual architect's portfolio enhance city visibility. Culture as a symbol of territorial identity.
Journal of Place Management and Development	2011, Berg & Lucarelli.	City Brand Management , Communication	City planning, city regeneration, city as a destination, city promotion and marketing, city image management.	Visual identity of cities, image and profile building of cities. New semiotic spaces that re-organize the urban experience.
Journal of Brand Management	2009, Freire.	Local Communities	*Local people* factor is important in the geo-brand building process. A manageable variable; well-managed and motivated.	A form of stereotypical image of local people. Favorable images of local people create a positive city image; success in the marketplace.
	2016,	City Brand	Co-creation in city	Uniqueness in city

			branding.	brand.
	Green, Grace &	Management, Communication	Collaboration	Organic origin of
	Perkins.		between researchers and practitioners.	cities, such as history. Multiple elements of
			Co-ownership and co-management of	place identity include physical landscape,
			cities. Representation of city's natural distinctiveness.	people, media, and the arts.
Journal of Marketing Theory	2013, Kavaratzis & Hatch	Internal Culture, Cityscape and Gateways, Infrastructure, Communication.	Spreading brand orientation through city management. Dynamics of place branding relating to place culture, place identity, and place image between stakeholders.	Implanting new meanings and symbols into culture. Brands are built out of the 'raw material' of identity.

Source: Author (2022)

CONCLUSION

Researchers in the field agree on the importance of city branding as a multidisciplinary and complex research domain with high relevance and significance in mapping the future of cities. Analytical and bibliometric studies reviewing city branding and, in the broader scope, place branding literature that also includes cities have been conducted by several scholars (Lucarelli & Berg, 2011; Oguztimur & Akturan, 2015; Green, Grace & Perkins, 2016; Ma, Schraven, Bruijne, Jong, & Lu, 2019), although the existing literature on the city branding component is predominantly discussed from the academic viewpoint of city brand management and communication aspects. In recent developments, the research area of city branding has attracted field researchers and perspectives from the built environment field that includes architecture, urban planning, and design.

Integrated design is the key theme and component in the theory and perspectives put forth by Lynch (1960) and, more specifically, in the research domain of city branding by Muratovski (2012). It is important to co-relate these perspectives as they highlight the inter-related components in city building (T.F. Poon, 2018). These city qualities are interrelated characteristics as they are spatially distinct to the pattern of the city. Muratovski (2012) highlights that integrated design strategy combined with architectural theory and practice in the built environment can contribute to the city branding of emerging cities (Figure 1).

This study has several limitations. The main limitation is that it explores only open access scholarly articles published in WoS and SCOPUS journals in relation to the keywords 'city branding' and 'city rebranding'. It excludes articles focused on geographical entities other than cities, such as destination branding, country branding, nation branding, and town. The study focuses on reviewing the essence of city branding from existing literature that includes the elements of and discussions on the image and identity of a city. For further research, including other geographically distinct entities can contribute to the broader discussion.
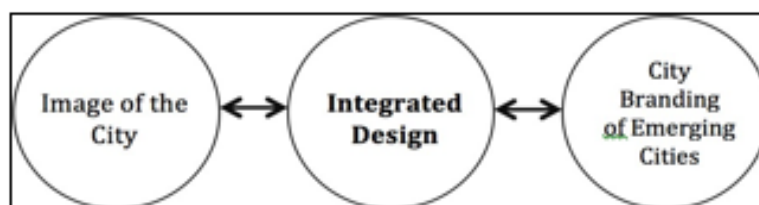

Figure 1: Diagram derived from Lynch (1960) & Muratovski (2012)

The other limitation is that the study analyzed only journal articles in the English language. Analyzing national articles in native languages can help extend the contextual city branding perspectives reviewed.

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