

II. RÉSZ: VÁLOGATÁS TURIZMUS ÉS VENDÉGLÁTÁS TÁRGYÚ KUTATÁSI EREDMÉNYEKBŐL

CITY MARKETING IN TOP CITIES

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, with new tourism trends city branding as a tourism product has become one of the most important destination marketing problems. In this context, the adaptation of new strategies and tools for cities varies across the world, while some cities have come to the forefront, some cities have remained one step behind in the competition. The aim of this study is to reveal the importance of branding cities as tourism products and to examine the best examples in the field of city branding in the world. Considering all the projections emerging from existing cities, various suggestions and strategies have been developed for managers who want to bring city branding to the forefront.

Keywords: city branding, tourism, destination marketing, future of tourism

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism stands out as one of the fastest-growing industries on a global scale, playing a pivotal role in the development of regions, localities, and cities¹. It is a critical contributor to the global GDP and serves as a substantial source of employment, encompassing both skilled and low-skilled job opportunities. In the evolving landscape of globalization, an increasing number of destinations are entering the tourism market, fostering intense competition between cities. Notably, city branding has taken precedence over the branding of entire countries, with marketing assuming a heightened role in recent decades. Consequently, the success of cities in this competitive

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environment hinges on the cultivation of a favourable city image. The perceived image not only has the potential to attract tourists but can also be strategically shaped through various marketing tools².

The tourism sector faced severe shocks due to the health and economic crises triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in the loss of over one billion tourists and more than 100 million jobs³. The pandemic presented both a new opportunity and a key challenge for the industry—the need to redefine city branding⁴. This crisis spotlighted the importance of domestic tourism promotion as a recovery strategy following the decline of international tourism. Historical instances, such as Kenya's response to post-election violence in 2008 and Malaysia's reaction to the financial crisis in 1997-1998, suggest a recurring industry tendency to turn towards domestic tourism during times of crisis⁵. The evolving patterns in tourist demand underscore the significance of regional and city marketing, making the branding of cities as tourist products a topic requiring comprehensive exploration.

Against this backdrop, this research aims to delve into the significance of city branding in destination marketing in 2023. To gain a comprehensive understanding of successful branding techniques, the article meticulously examines the branding strategies of the top 3 cities and Budapest listed in the city branding index.

1. METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

To comprehensively analyse the contemporary use and effectiveness of city branding, we have adopted a secondary research approach. This involves an in-depth review of pertinent literature on city branding, with a specific emphasis on its application as a tourist product. Primary sources for this research will encompass academic journals, books, and esteemed conference proceedings.

The analysis will focus on the top 3 cities globally, considering crucial factors such as tourism infrastructure, the construction of the city's image, diverse cultural attractions and landscapes, leisure offerings, and promotional strategies. Special attention will be paid to addressing the novel challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic to the tourism sector. In addition to the top 3 cities, our study will include an examination of the city branding of Budapest, the Hungarian capital. This inclusion facilitates a comparative study, blending a broad perspective with an in-depth investigation of a specific city.

The analytical framework will be anchored in the theoretical foundations of city branding, scrutinizing how each city positions itself as a tourist product. A comparative framework will be developed to discern common trends, differences, and successful strategies employed by the top 3 cities. This approach is designed to contribute to a thorough understanding of the role of city branding in shaping tourism experiences and cultivating a positive city image.

Our research will also incorporate a temporal dimension, assessing the impact of city branding on the perceived touristic value of the cities under investigation. This methodological approach is poised to offer valuable insights into the dynamics of city branding and its implications for the tourism industry.

1.1 Tourism industry – an overview

The economic significance of the tourism industry resonates both nationally and internationally, contributing substantially to global economies. As of 2022, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) reported that the sector accounted for 7.6% of the global GDP. It stands as a formidable force in global employment, with the year 2022 witnessing the creation of 22 million new jobs. In the pre-pandemic era, one in every five new jobs created globally was attributed to tourism, constituting over 10% of all jobs and involving more than 334 million employees worldwide⁶. In 2021, the sector experienced a remarkable growth of 24.7%, followed by a 22% rise in 2022⁷. Undoubtedly, the tourism industry stands as one of the most dynamic and fastest-growing sectors globally, serving as a primary driver of employment.

However, the 2019 coronavirus crisis delivered a severe blow to the tourism sector. Despite initial underestimations of its impact (Škare et al., 2021⁸) the industry emerged as one of the most affected. The crisis triggered a decline in demand due to public panic and stringent travel restrictions imposed by governments worldwide⁹. Particularly, economies heavily reliant on tourism suffered the most, given the sector's integral role in regional, local, and city development. The pandemic led to an unprecedented loss of over 90 million jobs, causing an approximate 80% contraction in the sector¹⁰¹¹.

The crisis underscored the vulnerability of the tourism industry, primarily due to its reliance on contact-intensive services. The lessons drawn from this experience have prompted the industry to face new challenges as well as opportunities. Key priorities post-pandemic include restoring travellers' confidence, promoting domestic tourism, fostering cooperation within and

between countries, and, crucially, building sustainable and resilient tourism. Flexibility has emerged as a paramount necessity in response to the dynamic landscape. (OECD,2020)

Domestic tourism has played a pivotal role in revitalizing the sector, driven by shifts in tourist behaviour. People now exhibit a preference for domestic destinations over overseas travel in the post-pandemic era, placing an increased emphasis on city branding. The spotlight on branding destinations as safe holiday options aligns with the changing preferences of post-pandemic travellers¹²¹³.

In addition to the impact of the pandemic, external factors such as climate change, inflation, high oil prices, and geopolitical conflicts are shaping the future of the tourism industry, introducing new challenges for businesses and travellers alike.

1.2 Branding Cities as Destinations and Their Importance

The expanding array of destinations entering the tourism market has intensified competition among them. This shift is indicative of the evolving nature of the tourism market, which has matured over recent decades due to globalization, the proliferation of information and communication technologies, and the escalating global competition¹⁴¹⁵. The tourism industry, characterized by hyper-competition (D'Aveni, R.A,1994¹⁶), has experienced an amplification of this competition owing to globalization (Kavaratzis, 2005¹⁷) and the uncertain changes in the economic, social, technological, and political environment of tourism¹⁸. To secure a competitive advantage and navigate successfully through market uncertainty, destinations increasingly invest in marketing strategies.

Consequently, icons, logos, and slogans have emerged as tools aimed at attracting both existing and potential visitors¹⁹. The perceived image of destinations plays a pivotal role, where a positive image can boost tourists' willingness to visit, while a negative image may have the opposite effect. A robust image provides a distinct identity to a city, setting it apart in the minds of people from other destinations²⁰. Branding serves as a critical tool for destinations to articulate and build their primary attractions for visitors, contributing to the overall competitiveness of cities in the tourism market (Kozak & Kozak, 2015). Moreover, destination branding and image assist tourism destinations in positioning themselves within the market (Sotiriadis, 2020).

Destination marketing and city branding, though distinct, are interconnected elements. While city branding serves as a significant component in destination marketing, it remains a unique instrument for cities to increase their competitiveness in the tourism market²¹. Just as in destination image, destination branding and brand creation have also drawn the attention of researchers in the field of tourism, leading to numerous studies in tourism literature (Kozak & Kozak, 2015). Cities in order to compete with each other not only on the regional market but globally (Jelinčić et al., 2017) use different city marketing tools to influence tourists' decision-making on their visits, moreover by using marketing tools and techniques cities can distinguish themselves from other destinations²². According to literature (Hankinson, 2006; Kavaratzis, 2005) three main approaches have emerged in promoting cities in the competitive tourism market, and these are 1. cultural mega-events, 2. the restoration and promoting heritage, and 3. the construction of iconic buildings. However, the main goal for giving an identity for the city is to make the city unique and distinguish it from others in the globalized market²³. City branding gives a unique image of the city, however, city image is a key element of city branding.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic introduced a perceived risk for tourists, altering consumer and traveller behaviour. First of all, the pandemic has created a perceived risk for tourists. Kusumawati, et al, (2023)²⁴ that perceived risk changes the behaviour of consumers and travellers. Addressing the crisis responsibly can positively influence tourist behaviour. Additionally, changes in work and free time, technology usage, and virtual spaces have been notable impacts of the pandemic²⁵. As the tourism sector adapts to these global transformations, city branding techniques have gained strength in online platforms and social media, with online brand reputation becoming increasingly crucial²⁶ (Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2019). The crisis, while challenging, has also presented an opportunity for sector transformation, emphasizing the need for sustainable destination image and tourism development (Koens et al²⁷., 2019; (Pasquinelli et al, 2021).

1.3 The Use of Digital Tools in City Branding

Kotler et al. (2010)²⁸ assert that marketing functions as a concept in equilibrium with the macroeconomy. Consequently, as the macroeconomic landscape undergoes shifts, marketing inevitably adapts. Alabay (2010, p. 216) has consolidated the factors driving changes in marketing under the following categories:

- Technological Developments and the Pervasiveness of the Internet
- Globalization

- Changes (Increases) in Consumer Education Levels and Communication Skills.

This framework suggests that marketing evolution is closely intertwined with the dynamic forces of technological advancements, the global landscape, and shifts in consumer education and communication capabilities.

In the contemporary landscape, the dynamics of marketing, particularly in the context of city branding, are significantly influenced by the principles of Marketing 4.0. This approach is defined as the seamless integration of the digital realm with marketing activities, enabling two-way communication facilitated by evolving technologies (Kotler et al., 2017, p. 77²⁹). Cities, seeking to distinguish themselves and accentuate their unique strengths compared to competitors, leverage Marketing 4.0 strategies to enhance their competitive edge and allure to tourists. The objective is not merely survival but rather the cultivation of a distinctive identity.

Given the intricate and multi-dimensional nature of cities, city branding emerges as a pivotal concept applicable to both developed and developing urban centres. The expectation is that cities must establish a brand to compete on a global scale. Key to this endeavour is the strategic utilization of opportunities to showcase the city's potential in branding³⁰. By effectively amalgamating cultural history, natural attractions, and distinctive features, cities can craft a brand that not only gains international recognition but also translates into tangible economic benefits, attracting increased investments. City branding, as a holistic approach, not only encapsulates the essence of a city but also differentiates it from its competitors, contributing to its overall image and appeal.

The evolution of technology has not only eradicated intermediary links between producers and consumers but has also bolstered direct communication channels. Beyond eliminating intermediaries, this ongoing transformation has unveiled alternative channels facilitating direct interaction between producers and consumers, constituting a revolutionary shift across all marketing distribution channels. Review platforms like TripAdvisor, for instance, have revolutionized consumer communication by providing first-hand information through word of mouth, profoundly influencing reputation, branding, and business performance.

The pervasive use of smartphones and other mobile devices in today's landscape extends beyond physical products to impact tourism products and experiences. This digitalization effect allows technologies to interconnect and function cohesively, ushering in the era of smart tourism where values are

collaboratively revealed. Digitalisation, designed to maximize stakeholder value, plays a crucial role in managing the creation of innovative services, products, and processes in the current paradigm³¹.

The tourism sector, characterized by its dynamic nature, is undergoing a process of differentiation propelled by advancing technology. The use of smart technologies, a pervasive force influencing various industries, has emerged as a pivotal factor in reshaping the landscape of tourism. As smart technologies seamlessly integrate into daily life, they inevitably alter people's expectations. Destinations and cities, prominent actors in a tourism sector where expectations evolve rapidly and are promptly reflected, must not only adapt to these changes but also be categorized as smart entities, aligning with the essence of their branding. Therefore, discussing the necessary steps or potential developments in the branding of destinations and cities in the context of tourism becomes essential to complement this shift.

2. EXEMPLARY CITIES FOR CITY MARKETING - TOP 10 CITIES

The custodians of a city's brand, and its stakeholders, play a crucial role in shaping how the city is perceived, ultimately defining its identity. At its core, city identity is the face a city aims to present and project. This identity encompasses more than just geographical and climatic characteristics; it extends to include the city's squares and streets, and monumental structures, as well as its folkloric and sociocultural features (Avcılar and Kara, 2015: 85-86).

1. Table:

Top 10 Cities (Source: Brandirectory,2023)

Table.1 Best city brands worldwide in 2023	
1	London
2	New York
3	Paris
4	Los Angeles
5	Sydney
6	Singapore
7	Tokyo
8	San Francisco
9	Dubai
10	Amsterdam

As illustrated in Table 1, the premier global brand city is London, securing the top spot, with New York closely following in second place, and Paris claiming the third position (Brandirectory, 2023)³².

In the following part, the top 3 cities and Budapest, capital of Hungary will be analysed from the view of the brand.

2.1 London: A City of Enduring Heritage and Modern Innovations

London, characterized as a capital city, cultural hub, and rejuvenated coastal area (Peters and Pikkemaat, 2005: 150³³), stands proudly along the River Thames, boasting a rich history spanning 2,000 years. Governed by the Mayor of London and the City Council, the metropolis holds a preeminent global position across diverse domains including arts, commerce, education, entertainment, fashion, finance, health, media, professional services, research and development, tourism, and transportation. It stands as one of the world's largest financial centres.

London's allure is further heightened by its high brand value, safeguarded through the preservation of its cultural and natural heritage, implementation of smart city initiatives enhancing residents' quality of life, and its global financial prowess. Noteworthy among its smart city practices is the expansion of low-emission zones, a deliberate effort to curtail air pollution and elevate the well-being of Londoners. With an eye on the future, London aims to prohibit the sale of diesel and gasoline-powered vehicles by 2030, complemented by the introduction of a smart parking system to alleviate traffic congestion, enabling drivers to swiftly locate parking spaces without delays.

2.2 New York: A Beacon of Diversity and Innovation

City branding encompasses various criteria, and New York effortlessly meets the standards of a brand city. It stands out for its robust technology infrastructure, efficient logistics, comprehensive transportation network, diverse accommodation facilities, natural landscapes, rich historical heritage, year-round cultural and artistic activities, and its embodiment of the metropolis and smart city concepts—all upheld through strategic preservation efforts.

As home to one of the world's largest natural harbours, New York holds a preeminent position in commerce, fashion, media, arts, technology, education, and entertainment. Additionally, it serves as a significant bureaucratic centre and hosts the United Nations Headquarters. New York's

iconic 24-hour subway, emblematic of the city, has earned it the moniker "The City That Never Sleeps" (Britannica³⁴, 2023; New York Subway Guide, 2023³⁵).

2.3 Paris: The Epitome of Love, Romance, and Timeless Elegance

Paris, a standout in the realm of city marketing, boasts the most robust brand image in Europe, positioning itself as the epicentre of love, sensuality, and romance to its target audience. Presently, Paris is widely recognized as the city where love and romance take centre stage, aligning itself with these captivating attributes in the eyes of its audience.

The iconic Eiffel Tower plays a significant role in Paris's prominence, having transitioned from a centre of protests and demolition campaigns during its construction to a symbol that attracts over 20 million tourists today (Statista, 2023³⁶). Referred to as the "City of Light," Paris shines brightly in the global landscape, celebrated for its rich history, cultural depth, intellectualism, enchanting venues, architectural marvels, formidable economy, and thriving tourism. As a brand city, Paris possesses distinctive features that set it apart; in the evenings, 155 notable buildings, complementing its 11,000 street lights, illuminate the city, living up to its renowned moniker. Paris stands as the cultural, commercial, and communication nucleus of Europe.

2.4 Budapest: The City of Unity and Diverse Delights

Budapest, securing the 51st position in the City Brand Index 2023, embarked on a rebranding journey in 2016, introducing a fresh slogan: Budapest, "the city that unites." This initiative, led by the municipality of the capital, endeavours to imbue a modern spirit into the city, employing contemporary design to craft a new visual identity.

Under the Budapest Brand³⁷, the municipality has been dedicated to transforming Budapest into a fair, green, liveable, and compassionate city for both residents and tourists. In communication efforts, the Budapest municipality fosters a sense of community by involving residents in decision-making processes. The city's new identity, encapsulated in the slogan "Budapest for Everyone," underscores its openness to all.

In the realm of tourism, Budapest is hailed as an international hub of sub-cultures, featuring one of the most robust public transportation systems among European capitals. Beyond leisure activities, the city's allure lies in its natural beauty, encompassing verdant spaces and historical landmarks that

captivate visitors. Renowned for its thermal baths and distinctive spa culture, Budapest, perched over hot springs, stands out as a vibrant and diverse city, offering a spectrum of activities tailored to various target groups³⁸.

3. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the ever-expanding tourism sector, a critical driver of global economic growth, has undergone significant transformations and challenges, particularly intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic. As the industry adapts to this new landscape, the role of city branding emerges as a central and dynamic force, shaping how cities are perceived in the competitive tourism market.

City branding explored through the lens of the top 3 cities and Budapest, highlights the multifaceted strategies employed by metropolises to differentiate themselves in an increasingly globalized world. The unprecedented shocks of the pandemic served as a catalyst for redefining city branding, with a growing emphasis on domestic tourism as a recovery strategy. This shift, evident in past crises, emphasizes the adaptability and resilience of the tourism sector.

The digital era, marked by Marketing 4.0 principles, underscores the integration of technology in city branding, creating a two-way communication channel and enhancing cities' competitive advantages. The impact of technology extends beyond marketing to influence tourism experiences, with digitalisation fostering integrated and connected systems in smart tourism.

Examining specific cities like London, New York, Paris, and Budapest illustrates the diverse approaches to city branding. London, a city blending heritage and innovation, strategically utilizes smart city initiatives, while New York shines as a beacon of diversity and innovation. Paris, the epitome of love and elegance, leverages iconic structures for global recognition. Budapest, a city of unity and diverse delights, embraces rebranding for inclusivity and sustainability.

As cities face challenges and opportunities post-pandemic, understanding the significance of city branding in shaping tourism experiences becomes paramount. The success of cities in this competitive environment hinges on their ability to strategically showcase their unique characteristics, embrace technology, and cultivate a positive city image. In this ever-evolving landscape, city branding stands as a vital tool for cities to not only survive but thrive in the global tourism market.

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