



## Original Article

# Cities and their brands: Lessons from corporate branding

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**ABSTRACT** First, this article attempts to clarify certain issues involved in treating cities as brands, which have significantly limited the application of city branding. Secondly, it draws from corporate-level marketing theories important lessons for cities, and, thirdly, it contributes towards a clear city branding framework that is evidently missing and required. The article directly addresses whether city brands should be treated as corporate brands. It then concentrates on the similarities between these two forms of branding and extracts major lessons from corporate-level marketing concepts. Essential similarities are identified, especially in their complex and multi-stakeholder character and their dependence on a wide cooperation that runs across a city or organisation. Corporate-level marketing is suggested as the closest that marketing theories have ever come to addressing the distinct demands of cities, not disregarding the need to fine-tune relevant tools. The article then compares several city branding frameworks found in the literature exploring their common ground, which leads to the identification of eight components of an integrated city brand-management framework. The paper substantially contributes to the academic discussion on city branding and fills a significant gap in the literature by bringing together the fragmented suggestions on how city branding should be implemented.

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## INTRODUCTION

Place marketing has attracted the interest of many academic commentators from various disciplines resulting in a substantial body of publications on the wider marketing process (for example Ashworth and Voogd, 1990; Kotler *et al*, 1999) as well as specific issues (for example Gold and Ward, 1994; Berg and Braun, 1999; Ashworth, 2001). Within the context of

place marketing, places throughout the world are shifting the focus towards branding and are increasingly importing concepts and techniques of product and corporate branding into their own operational field. This shift towards branding is characterised as the current episode in the development of place marketing (Kavaratzis, 2007). So far, obviously the most common application of

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place branding focuses on the visual elements of branding such as the creation of a new logo, the incorporation of a new slogan and, at best, the design of advertising campaigns around those visual elements. Branding, however, encompasses other fields of activity and intervention that decidedly influence and form a place brand. In fact, Virgo and Chernatony (2006, p. 379) identify that ‘... many believe brand steerers are only able to use one part of the marketing mix, namely promotion because they have limited control over the product – the city, or customers’ experience of it’. But that is not necessarily true and it shouldn’t be the case, simply because branding does not equal promotion and brand management cannot be limited to promotional activities. Branding needs to be thought of as a complete and continuous process interlinked with all marketing efforts. Furthermore, as the last part of this article will demonstrate, many elements of the city other than promotional activities lend themselves to control, and it is possible to integrate them into coherent and effective city branding strategies.

Place branding is certainly a complex issue and what seems to be missing is a ‘common language’ that would facilitate interaction and further theoretical clarification of the issues involved. This article concentrates on the single aspect of branding cities, particularly contributing towards the clarification of city brand management. In order to better inform the practice, the literature on corporate branding and corporate-level marketing is reviewed and major lessons are extracted. A recent stream of publications has specifically dealt with the concept of corporate branding, attempting to adjust its basic elements and specific methodologies in place branding (Rainisto, 2003; Trueman and Cornelius, 2006; Ashworth and Kavaratzis, 2007; Hankinson, 2007; Trueman *et al.*, 2007). There are indeed evident similarities between these two forms of branding, which this paper outlines.

## **CORPORATE-LEVEL MARKETING**

Recent years have seen the emergence and rapid development of corporate branding and

other corporate-level marketing concepts, which shift focus from the integrity of the product brand to the organisation and the people behind the brand (Knox and Bickerton, 2003). It is not the purpose of this paper to review the extensive literature on corporate branding or the latest developments in the field.<sup>1</sup> It is, however, necessary here to scan this literature in order to identify links and similarities to city marketing and city branding.

What exactly is a corporate brand and why has it become so relevant? A corporate brand is the visual, verbal and behavioural expression of an organisation’s unique business model (Knox and Bickerton, 2003), which takes place through the company’s mission, core values, beliefs, communication, culture and overall design (Simoes and Dibb, 2001). Today an organisation has to coordinate all aspects of its communication and behaviour, as it is not possible any more to send differing messages to each one of the organisation’s audiences (Olins, 2000). In an era of unpredictable markets and changing ground rules of competition, differentiation requires positioning the whole corporation, and the values and emotions symbolised by the organisation become key elements of differentiation strategies (Hatch and Schultz, 2003). Hulberg (2006) summarises the reasons for increased interest in corporate branding, which can be broadly explained by three main factors: differentiation (separating one’s self from the crowd in an environment where consumers fail to see differences between products offered), transparency (today organisations’ external audiences command access to those who are behind the brand, what they stand for and their policy) and cost reduction (rather than promoting several brands separately, corporate branding creates synergies between brands). Schultz and Chernatony (2002) argue that a well-conceived corporate branding strategy provides a holistic framework for conceptualising and aligning the many different activities by which companies express who they are and what they stand for. Thus, it provides a solid foundation for developing a

coherent and engaging promise to all stakeholders, and it acts as a mechanism to align organisational subcultures across functional and geographic boundaries (Schultz and Chernatony, 2002).

According to Hatch and Schultz (2001), the foundation of the corporate branding process is the interplay between strategic vision (the central idea behind the organisation and its aspirations), organisational culture (the internal values and basic assumptions that embody the meaning of the organisation) and corporate images (the views of the organisation developed by its internal and external audiences). Hulberg (2006) reviews the essential constructs of corporate branding theories, which include identity, organisational culture, behaviour, values, image and reputation. An obviously central element in corporate branding theories is the organization's multiple stakeholders (for example Hatch and Schultz, 2003). Perceptions of an organisation are formed by the interaction and communication with the organisation and one must be aware of the fact that everything an organisation says and does communicates messages; therefore, every single source of communication must be governed by similar messages to assure uniform delivery to all stakeholders (Hulberg, 2006).

Another fundamental notion within corporate branding that deserves a more thorough examination, especially because of its relevance to place branding, is corporate identity. Although the definition of the concept is rather problematic (Melewar and Jenkins, 2002), it is believed that a strong identity is very important for transmitting a consistent internal and external image among stakeholders, creating a valuable asset (Simoes and Dibb, 2001). Or as Melewar *et al* (2006, p. 139) put it 'by effectively managing its corporate identity an organisation can build understanding and commitment among its diverse stakeholders'. Balmer (2002) proposes a 'corporate identity mix', which consists of the following components: *strategy* (management vision, corporate strategy, product/services as well as corporate performance, corporate brand

covenant, corporate ownership); *structure* (relationships between parent company and subsidiaries, relations with alliance or franchise partners); *communication* (total corporate communication, which encompasses primary, secondary and tertiary communication); and *culture* (the soft and subjective elements consisting of the mix of subcultures present within, but not always emanating from, the organisation). Melewar and Jenkins (2002) provide a different but not dissimilar model, which breaks down corporate identity into the areas of communication and visual identity, behaviour, corporate culture and market conditions.

As Hatch and Schultz (2003) summarise, product brands and corporate brands differ in several respects: their focus (product vs company), the responsibility for managing and delivering the brand (middle managers – marketing department vs CEO – whole company), their time horizon (short vs long) and the groups they need to attract attention to and gain support of (customers vs multiple stakeholders). Simoes and Dibb (2001) argue that the entity in corporate branding has a higher level of intangibility, complexity and social responsibility, which makes it much more difficult to build a coherent brand. Or as Balmer and Gray (2003, p. 976) state: '... corporate brands are fundamentally different from product brands in terms of disciplinary scope and management, they have a multi-stakeholder rather than customer orientation and the traditional marketing framework is inadequate and requires a radical reappraisal'.

This, together with other corporate level concepts, has led to the concept of corporate marketing and the introduction and refinement of the corporate marketing mix. As Balmer and Greyser (2006) emphasise, corporate marketing is more of a philosophy rather than a function; therefore, the elements of the corporate marketing mix should not be seen as elements for a department of the company to orchestrate but rather as informing an organisation-wide philosophy. The six Cs of corporate marketing

and the key questions that underpin each of them are (Balmer and Greyser, 2006):

- *Character* (tangible and intangible assets of organisations as well as activities, markets served, philosophy: What we indubitably are)
- *Culture* (internal collective feeling derived by the values, beliefs and assumptions about the organisation: What we feel we are)
- *Communication* (channels of communication with customers and other constituencies, ideally taking into account the effects of word-of-mouth and media/competitor commentary: What we say we are)
- *Conceptualisations* (perceptions of the corporate brand held by customers and other stakeholder groups: What we are seen to be)
- *Constituencies* (meeting the wants and demands of stakeholder groups taking into account that many customers belong to other groups also: Whom we seek to serve)
- *Covenant* (the promise made by the corporate brand that leads to the expectations associated with it by stakeholders: What is promised and expected).

The rest of this paper will examine the link between corporate and city branding and marketing by outlining their similarities and attempting to extract lessons from corporate branding theories that can inform city branding.

## ARE CITY BRANDS CORPORATE BRANDS?

As seen above, corporate branding is radically different from product branding. City brands, like corporate brands, are also fundamentally different from product brands, and the traditional marketing framework is also clearly inadequate. As Virgo and Chernatony (2006) identify, city branding involves complexities beyond those of product and services branding, which arise from the diversity of stakeholders, the number of organisations steering the brand, the limited control brand steerers have over their product and the diverse target groups. These are, of course, issues that have been raised since the very first attempts to adjust marketing

concepts to the needs of places (see Ashworth and Voogd, 1990) and have not hindered the application or popularity of place marketing. Hankinson (2007) discusses the distinctive factors between product and destination branding, which include the co-production and co-consumption of place products, their variability, the legal definition of place boundaries, the administrative overlap and political accountability. So, city branding and corporate branding are similar in that they are dissimilar to product branding, but does this mean that city brands should be treated and managed as corporate brands?

In fact, there are many substantial common characteristics of marketing and branding corporations and cities, a fact recognised by several commentators who point to the relevance of the ‘metaphor of place as corporate brand’ (Anholt, 2002). They both have *multi-disciplinary roots*, both address *multiple groups of stakeholders*, both have a *high level of intangibility and complexity*, both need to take into account *social responsibility*, both deal with *multiple identities*, both need a *long-term development*. In this sense, corporate branding does seem to offer a multitude of lessons for implementing branding within cities. The corporate marketing mix (Balmer and Greyser, 2006) and its elements are fundamentally relevant to cities and their marketing conditions (obviously more so than the four Ps of the traditional marketing mix) and it could serve as a basis for the refinement of city marketing theory. The above stated similarities have encouraged researchers to test corporate branding tools on cities (see for example Caldwell and Freire, 2004; Trueman *et al.*, 2004).

Nevertheless, it is not clear in what ways cities could be thought of as corporations and, therefore, whether city brands can be treated as corporate brands. It could be argued that the complexities involved in city branding are even greater than corporate branding and the difficulties are more acute. For example, the adoption and projection of a single clear identity, ethos and image by cities is deemed more difficult (Ashworth, 2006), if desirable at all. ‘Cities have many similarities with large

commercial corporations but unless these similarities are more important than the dissimilarities of political responsibility and public interest, places cannot be branded in the same sense' (Ashworth, 2006). Applying corporate branding to places demands a treatment of the place brand as the whole entity of the place products, in order to achieve consistency of the messages sent (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005), which might be trickier than in the case of corporations. At the same time it demands associating the city with 'stories' about it that need to be built in the city by planning and design interventions or infrastructure development (Kavaratzis, 2004), both of which demand meeting conditions that do not seem to be evident in the corporate marketing environment.

Trueman *et al* (2007, p. 21) identify parallels of city branding to corporate marketing 'where the tools incorporate people as well as communications, character and covenants'. To that they contrast the differences in that 'city brands are multi-layered and more complex, since marketing exchange in the public sector does not demand any 'reciprocation' and there is often no clear legal or constitutional agreement about brand ownership' (Trueman *et al*, 2007, p. 21). Hankinson (2007) provides five guiding principles for destination brands based on corporate branding theories. He argues that 'there are sufficient similarities between these two types of brand to allow useful lessons to be drawn' and suggests that efficient destination branding depends upon (a) a strong, visionary leadership, (b) a brand-oriented organisational culture, (c) departmental coordination and process alignment, (d) consistent communications across a wide range of stakeholders and (e) strong, compatible partnerships.

The above discussion on the usefulness of corporate branding models and tools for city branding demonstrates two things: first, that cities do have a lot to learn from corporate-level marketing theory and practice, and secondly, that there is a need to adapt such models for the specific conditions and characteristics of cities and places in general.

Applying city branding can rely to a great extent on corporate branding but it can still only be a distinct form of branding. Therefore, what is needed is to develop a branding framework that applies specifically to cities. As Kerr (2006, p. 281) suggests, '... given the widespread acceptance of the similarities between the corporate brand and the location brand, researchers and practitioners in place branding have the opportunity to draw from the existing models of the corporate brand and to develop a model to reflect the key components of, and relationships within, the location brand architecture and portfolio'.

## CITY BRANDING FRAMEWORKS

As stated earlier there is an evident confusion between city branding and promotion, caused by the perceived little control over other elements of the marketing mix (Virgo and Chernatony, 2006). This misunderstanding has misled most contemporary city branding practice to the exclusive use of promotional tools like slogans and logos or, at best, advertising campaigns. A strategic and responsible view on city branding, however, includes many more areas of activities. Although it is true that considering the popularity of place branding, 'very little has been written about how place marketing and in particular the branding of places should be managed' (Hankinson, 2007, p. 241), there have been suggestions of place brand management frameworks. This article will now review these frameworks and attempt a synthesis; a process that might eventually lead to a more generally accepted framework of how to develop and manage city brands. Ashworth and Kavaratzis (2007) undertook a similar review that led to the identification of basic similarities of some of the frameworks. This article, however, reviews more frameworks and provides, for the first time, a clear and justified suggestion as to the route for their integration.

*Rainisto (2003)* proposes a general framework of place branding concentrating on the marketing of places as business locations and in particular the activities of inward investment

agencies. The framework consists of nine success factors of place marketing and branding practices. According to this framework, the core building stones of place marketing (and most important success factors) are the following: Planning Group (the organ responsible to plan and execute marketing practices), Vision and Strategic Analysis (the insight of the place about its future position), Place Identity and Image (a unique set of place brand associations, which the management wants to create or maintain), Public–Private Partnerships and Leadership (the capability to conduct complex processes and obtain the organising power). These are the factors that a place can actively influence and that represent the organising capacity of the place. Another four success factors assist the above to meet the challenges in the environment where place marketing practices are performed; these are Political Unity (agreement about public affairs), Global Marketplace, Local Development and Process Coincidences (remarkable occurrences of events during the marketing process).

*Anholt (2006)* describes a framework for evaluating city brands, called the city brand hexagon, which is used to create the Anholt–GMI City Brands Index. The six components of the hexagon are Presence, Place, Potential, Pulse, People and Prerequisites. The *Presence* refers to the city’s international status and standing – how familiar people are with the city. The *Place* component refers to the physical aspects of the city – how beautiful and pleasant or otherwise the city is. The *Potential* considers the opportunities the city has to offer in terms of economic or educational activities. The *Pulse* examines the existence of a vibrant urban lifestyle or lack thereof – how exciting people think the city is. The *People* component examines the local population in terms of openness and warmth and also looks at safety issues in the city. Finally, the *Prerequisites* deal with the basic qualities of the city – the standards and price of accommodation and public amenities. This framework has been developed as a means of evaluating the effectiveness of branding, but it is a particularly

helpful tool for guiding the branding effort, in that it distinguishes between the broad areas of local policy making that will ultimately influence the judgment of the city’s brand.

*Kavaratzis (2004)* suggests a framework of city-brand communication through different variables, which have both functional as well as symbolic meaning. The framework distinguishes between intentional and unintentional communication:

1. *Unintentional Communication* relates to the communicative effects of a city’s actions and marketing measures when communication is not the main goal. It is divided into four broad areas of intervention: *Landscape Strategies* (including urban design, architecture, public spaces in the city, public art and heritage management); *Infrastructure Projects* (projects developed to create, improve or give a distinctive character to the transport, communication, cultural, tourism and other types of necessary infrastructure); *Organisational Structure* (the effectiveness of the city’s governing structure including organising for marketing, Public–Private Partnerships, community development networks and citizens’ participation in decision making); the *City’s Behaviour* (the city leaders’ vision for the city, the strategy adopted, the financial incentives provided, the quality of services and the number and type of events organised).
2. *Intentional Communication* is the formal communication that most commonly takes place through well-known marketing practices like advertising, PR, graphic design, logos etc.

A different view is offered by *Hankinson (2004)* who distinguishes between four branding perspectives, namely (a) brands as perceptual entities, (b) brands as communicators, (c) brands as relationships and (d) brands as value enhancers. He provides a model of place brands based on the conceptualisation of brands as relationships, in which the brand is construed as having a personality, which enables it to form a relationship with the consumer. The starting point is the core brand (the place’s identity and a

blueprint for developing and communicating the place brand), which can be defined by the brand personality, the brand positioning and the brand reality. The effectiveness of place branding relies on the extension of the core brand through effective relationships with the various stakeholders. These relationships are grouped into four categories: (a) Primary Service Relationships (services at the core of the brand experience, such as retailers, events and leisure or hotels); (b) Brand Infrastructure Relationships (access to services, brandscape/built environment, various facilities); (c) Media Relationships (organic and marketing communications); and (d) Consumer Relationships (residents and employees, internal customers, managed relationships from the top). ‘The extension of the brand from the core to include primary services, the brand infrastructure, media and communications and consumers is best described as a ripple effect in which brand relationships are gradually extended through a process of progressive interaction between the network of stakeholders’ (Hankinson, 2004, p. 115).

More recently the same author (Hankinson, 2007) suggested another framework, which underlines the leading role played by the Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO). The development and management of the destination brand is described as a process dependent on the effectiveness of brand leadership by the DMO. The process begins with the DMO deciding on a vision for the brand and a strategy for brand building. First, the brand needs to be built internally from the top by embedding its values to the internal culture of the organisation (Internal Brand Identity). The brand ‘rolls out’ to partner organisations, attempting to build strong alliances and partnerships based on compatibility (External Brand Identity). Afterwards, the brand is communicated and the brand experience delivered (Consistent Brand Communications), with the DMO ensuring effective communication with all stakeholders (Multiple Stakeholders).

Trueman and Cornelius (2006) suggest a ‘place branding toolkit’, which includes five fields of measures that can be taken, termed the ‘five Ps’ of place branding: *Presence* (on the one hand,

the appearance of architecture, icons and the built environment, on the other hand, the emotional landscape connected to the local social fabric); *Purpose* (in the levels of various boundaries that exist in the city, for instance neighbourhood vs city or other social boundaries); *Pace* (the speed at which the place responds to internal and external market conditions); *Personality* (which is made up by presence, purpose and pace as well as the visual impact of the built environment); *Power* (or empowerment of change, without which local communities are unlikely to support regeneration or adopt ownership of city brands). The authors include for each ‘P’ relevant tools that a city can use to successfully cope with the demands of managing each of those areas of intervention and demonstrate this with an application of their toolkit on the city of Bradford. The relevant tools that they suggest are:

- *Presence*: iconic symbols (which offer a clear visual image and differentiate), ordered and multi-layered identity (which caters for the different needs and aspirations of main stakeholders) and visibility (the visual presence in the street environment).
- *Purpose*: distinct boundaries (which facilitate the link between the brand and specific locations), brand ownership (a measure of civic pride), multi-cultural society (which facilitates regeneration and new ideas) and clear communication channels (which reinforce messages and cohesion).
- *Pace*: public–private partnerships (which balance the perspective and mitigate tensions).
- *Personality*: the emotional landscape (which provides a reality check and clarifies evaluations of the city’s aspects).
- *Power*: social purpose and empowerment (that reinforces brand presence and trust).

## TOWARDS INTEGRATION?

The frameworks described above differ in several respects. Whereas Hankinson focuses on cities as tourism destinations, the rest attempt a



**Table 1:** Similarities of city branding frameworks and lessons from corporate branding

<i>City branding component</i>	<i>Essence behind city branding component</i>	<i>Elements from the frameworks</i>	<i>Relevant corporate marketing concept</i>
Vision and strategy	Vision for the city's future and development of a clear strategy to realise it	Kavaratzis: City's behaviour (partly) Trueman and Cornelius: Pace (partly) Rainisto: Vision and strategic analysis Hankinson (2007): Vision, Strategy	Strategic vision (Hatch and Schultz, 2001), Strategy of corporate identity mix, Behaviour (Melewar and Jenkins, 2002) Strong visionary leadership (Hankinson, 2007)
Internal culture	Spreading a brand orientation through the city management and marketing itself	Kavaratzis: Organisational structure Trueman and Cornelius: Pace Hankinson (2004): Consumer relationships (partly) Rainisto: Planning group (partly) Hankinson (2007): Internal brand identity	Organisational Culture (Hatch and Schultz, 2001) Culture of corporate marketing mix Brand-oriented organisational culture (Hankinson, 2007) Departmental coordination and process alignment (Hankinson, 2007)
Local communities	Prioritising local needs, involving local residents, entrepreneurs and businesses in developing and delivering the brand	Kavaratzis: Behaviour (partly), Organisational structure (partly) Trueman and Cornelius: Power Hankinson (2004): Consumer relationships (partly) Anholt: People (partly), Pulse (partly) Hankinson, 2007: External brand identity (partly)	Distinctive to city branding
Synergies	Gaining agreement and support of all relevant stakeholders and providing for balanced participation	Kavaratzis: Organisational structure Trueman and Cornelius: Pace, Purpose (partly) Hankinson (2004): Consumer relationships, Primary service Anholt: People (partly) Rainisto: Public-Private partnerships, Political unity Hankinson (2007): Multiple stakeholders	Multiple stakeholder groups, Organisational culture (Hatch and Schultz, 2001), Structure of corporate identity mix, Constituencies of corporate marketing mix Strong compatible partnerships (Hankinson, 2007)
Infrastructure	Providing for basic needs without which the city cannot attempt delivering the expectations created by its brand	Kavaratzis: Infrastructure projects Trueman and Cornelius: Presence Hankinson (2004): Brand infrastructure Anholt: Prerequisites Rainisto: Place identity	Strategy of corporate identity mix Partly similar to the corporation's product/service-line, which remains essential in corporate marketing identity/image interface
Cityscape and gateways	The ability of the built environment to represent itself and reinforce or damage the city's brand	Kavaratzis: Landscape strategies Trueman and Cornelius: Presence, personality Hankinson (2004): Brand Infrastructure, Primary Service Anholt: Place Rainisto: Place identity	Key questions on the corporation's distinctive attributes Character of corporate marketing mix Identity/image interface
Opportunities	Targeted opportunities available for individuals (urban lifestyle, good services etc) and companies (financial, labour etc.) which signify the potential of the place	Kavaratzis: Behaviour Trueman and Cornelius: Pace, Purpose (partly) Anholt: Potential Rainisto: Local development Hankinson (2007): Multiple stakeholders (partly)	Distinctive to city branding
Communications	Fine-tuning all intentionally communicated messages	Kavaratzis: Intentional communication Trueman and Cornelius: Presence (partly), Purpose (partly) Hankinson (2004): Media relationships, Consumer relationships Anholt: Presence (partly) Rainisto: Place image (partly) Hankinson (2007): Consistent brand communications	Communication of corporate marketing mix, Communication and visual identity (Melewar and Jenkins, 2002), Communication of corporate identity mix Consistent communications across a wide range of stakeholders (Hankinson, 2007)
	High relevance and significance of emotional and symbolic aspects	All frameworks Especially Trueman and Cornelius: Personality	Emotions as key elements of differentiation strategies (Hatch and Schultz, 2003)
	City branding as multidisciplinary and complex	All frameworks	Basic notion of corporate marketing and branding
	Branding as a general philosophy and not simply a set of activities	All frameworks	Corporate marketing as an organisation-wide philosophy (Balmer and Greyser, 2006)



wider focus. Anholt's Hexagon is more a blueprint for research on the effectiveness of a city's branding effort and its evaluation, whereas the rest provide the basis for attempting the branding effort. The frameworks also differ in their conceptualisation of the place brand. For example, Kavaratzis treats the place brand as a communicator, whereas Hankinson adopts the brand as a relationship approach, and Trueman and Cornelius attempt a more integrated conceptualisation. In all frameworks, however, the multi-dimensional nature of the place brand is evident, which leads all of them to integrate into their main approach elements of the different functions of the brand. It becomes obvious from all frameworks that everything a city consists of, everything that takes place in the city and is done by the city, communicates messages about the city's brand, in the same way that this is true for corporations (Hulberg, 2006). Strong similarities are actually demonstrated in the frameworks, which could serve as a base for their integration.

For instance, the element of Organisational Structure in Kavaratzis, in essence, addresses relevant relationships, in much the same way as Hankinson's 2004 Consumer Relationships and Trueman and Cornelius's Power element. It also includes both internal and external brand identity as described in Hankinson (2007). The Prerequisites of Anholt's model are very similar to the Infrastructure components of both Kavaratzis and Hankinson. Trueman and Cornelius's Personality emphasises the fact that the communicated purpose and identity of a brand is likely to be credible if it is reinforced by the actual appearance of architecture, landscaping and the heritage of the city, which is the main idea behind the Landscape Strategies of Kavaratzis and the Place feature of Anholt's model. Potential and opportunities are major elements in the models of both Anholt and Trueman and Cornelius. The selected vision for the city and the strategy adopted to achieve it are basic components of three of the frameworks, namely Hankinson (2007), Kavaratzis and Rainisto. Hankinson (2007) and Rainisto also stress the importance of a strong

leadership. The increasingly popular establishment of Public-Private Partnerships to plan and implement place marketing activities is highlighted by Rainisto, Trueman and Cornelius and Kavaratzis. Trueman and Cornelius and Kavaratzis add the natural environment to the elements that need to be managed and, finally, Trueman and Cornelius add the importance of gateways into the city or corridors that connect city parts, indeed bringing attention to a neglected subject.

These evident similarities of the suggested frameworks open the way towards their integration, which would constitute a major contribution to the refinement of city branding theory and, consequently, its practice and would provide the basis for the development of a 'common language' of place branding. Table 1 outlines the evident similarities between the six frameworks and includes the main lessons from corporate branding and marketing theories.

The similarities of the frameworks are grouped into eight categories suggested as components of an integrated approach to managing city brands. The categories are:

- *Vision and Strategy* (chosen vision for the city's future and development of a clear strategy to realise it)
- *Internal Culture* (spreading a brand orientation through the city management and marketing itself)
- *Local Communities* (prioritising local needs; involving local residents, entrepreneurs and businesses in developing and delivering the brand)
- *Synergies* (gaining agreement and support of all relevant stakeholders and providing for balanced participation)
- *Infrastructure* (providing for basic needs without which the city cannot attempt delivering the expectations created by its brand)
- *Cityscape and Gateways* (the ability of the built environment to represent itself and reinforce or damage the city's brand)
- *Opportunities* (opportunities available for targeted individuals (urban lifestyle, good

services, education etc) and companies (financial, labour etc), which signify the potential of the place)

- *Communications* (fine-tuning all intentionally communicated messages).

The above components are proposed here in a manner resembling a city branding process. The process starts with the relevant authority of the city debating and deciding on a certain vision for the city's future (and its brand) and the brand strategies that will best achieve this vision. The brand-oriented culture must then be spread through the organisation itself. Local communities must then be involved and mobilised to support the establishment and refinement of the brand vision and strategy. After that, synergies must be found with all relevant stakeholders that will play a role in delivering the brand promise. This promise must be based on the city's infrastructure, its physical landscape and the opportunities it offers to targeted audiences. Finally, all the above need to be communicated and promoted. Two essential elements that need to be evident throughout the whole process need to be highlighted: (a) external and internal research and analysis is necessary at all stages in order to create and maintain a necessary connection with all relevant audiences and (b) strong leadership needs to be exercised in order to guarantee consistency and effectiveness.

Several issues involved in place branding need further theoretical and practical clarification. First, there is a need to address the differences between branding a nation and branding smaller geographical entities, like regions and cities (for example Caldwell and Freire, 2004). Anholt (2007) makes a strong case for the development of a nation brand as a framework to improve a country's reputation (what he terms competitive identity). He suggests that national policies are by definition branding exercises and he underlines the need to treat brand management as a component of national policy and not a separate activity. As he correctly asserts, 'if brand management is ... put into a separate silo of 'communications', 'public affairs' or 'promotion',

then there is very little it can do' (Anholt, 2007, p. 33). But he is not clear about the relation of the nation's competitive identity to the partial city or regional brands. Questions that require answering in this vein are the following: is one place brand enough to cover a country and all its regions? Should there be a system of brand architecture with subbrands under a general 'umbrella' nation brand? Should the regional and city brands be treated separately to the nation brand? The second issue is that both the practice and, to an extent, the theory of place branding tend to focus on its benefits for tourism development and management, which, however, is only one of the multiple functions of any place. Is one place brand able to address the distinct needs and expectations of visitors, investors and residents alike? Given that consistency is vital, would a set of brands each addressed to one of those audiences even make sense? How can a place deal with their radical different and often conflicting expectations? A third issue is the further integration of all relevant disciplines that have (or should have) an interest in place branding theory and application. As Therkelsen *et al* (2007, p. 2) state, '... in order for one to fully understand the phenomenon of place branding the three academic disciplines of marketing, urban studies and policy-making must be addressed. Furthermore ... much contemporary branding analysis fails to combine these three fundamental dimensions and tend to focus only on one or two dimensions'. The disciplines of cultural and economic geography should be added to the three above. Morgan (2006) also agrees that it is a sign of maturity of the place branding field that a more critical approach is materialising these years that scrutinises the socio-cultural and political aspects of place branding and hence works as a counterbalance to the very marketing-oriented approach that has prevailed for a long time. Another prevailing issue is the everlasting confusion of a branding strategy with promotional activities, an issue that despite strong academic emphasis, seems very difficult to put across to practitioners. How can it be more emphasised that marketing is

more strategic and not merely about communications? 'It helps even less that there are so many communications agencies which, perhaps frustrated by the difficulty of selling pure strategy to governments, have fallen into the habit of pandering to this misconception and simply selling logos and slogans to any government prepared to pay for them' (Anholt, 2003, p. 28). How can local politicians be persuaded to engage in a complex and demanding process that will bring results only long after their four-year term has expired?

This article has attempted a presentation and an initial integration of existing suggestions on what city brand management should include but further theoretical exploration is necessary before a definite, integrated model of city branding can be suggested. Such a model should obviously also be tested for its applicability and practical value. This process can, to a very large extent, be based on the rising concept of corporate marketing, which casts new light to the topic by bringing marketing theories closer than ever before to the needs of cities. This certainly unfolds opportunities for refining city marketing and city branding theory and generates great optimism for the future of these practices.

## NOTE

- 1 For such reviews, see the recent special issues of the *European Journal of Marketing* 40 (7/8) 2006 and the *Journal of Brand Management* 14 (1/2) 2006.

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