

Mohammadifar, Yousef; Rousta, Ahmad; Gharehche, Manizhe et al.

## Article

# The necessities and consequences of city branding and emphasizing the economy of urban tourism

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## Kontakt/Contact

ZBW – Leibniz-Informationszentrum Wirtschaft/Leibniz Information Centre for Economics  
Düsternbrooker Weg 120  
24105 Kiel (Germany)  
E-Mail: [rights\[at\]zbw.eu](mailto:rights[at]zbw.eu)  
<https://www.zbw.eu/>

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## The Necessities and Consequences of City Branding and Emphasizing the Economy of Urban Tourism

**Yousef Mohammadifar\***

Department of Entrepreneurship, Faculty of Social Sciences, Razi University, Kermanshah, Iran

**Ahmad Roust**

Department of Business Management, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran

**Manizhe Gharehche**

Department of Business Management, Faculty of Management and Accounting, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran

**Mohammadreza Hamidizadeh**

Professor, Department of Business Management, Faculty of Management and Accounting, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran

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**Abstract:** Today, city branding is important in urban spatial, cultural, social and economic structures for sustainable development, but this has been less used for several reasons. This paper discusses the identification of the causal circumstances of city branding and the analysis of its consequences and impacts in two qualitative and quantitative phases. The extracted model is based on the qualitative research method of data theory, using theoretical sampling method, and in the quantitative phase, city branding outcomes were investigated based on correlation method. The results of this study showed that, on the one hand, city branding is influential as a predictor variable for creating an ideal image and also on the level of satisfaction of residents living as criterion variables, and on the other hand, it has a direct and significant impact on audience satisfaction level including tourists.

**Keywords:** city branding, urban tourism, city image, citizens' satisfaction

**JEL Classification:** L83, O18, L32, R10

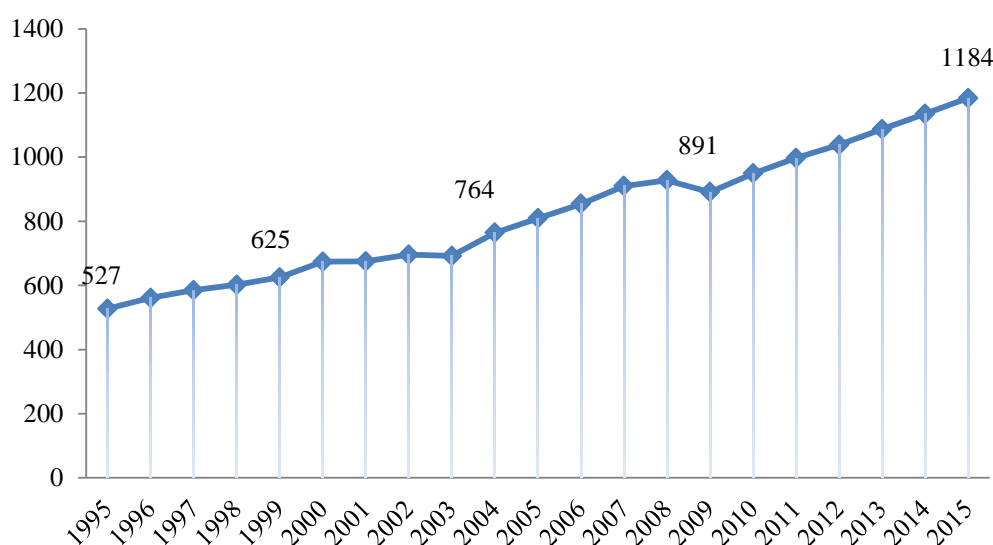
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\* Corresponding author: yosefmohamadifar@gmail.com

### 1- Introduction

According to the reports of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in 2015 the number of international tourists reached one billion and one hundred and eighty four million with an increase of about 50 million compared to previous year, it experienced a roughly 4.4 percent growth (World Tourism Organization, 2015). Income from tourism for the global economy in that year was about \$ 7.86 trillion that is around 10 percent of the

world's gross domestic product. It has created about 277 million jobs directly or indirectly in different countries (about 9.5 percent of the world's businesses were directly and indirectly related to tourism in that year) and it is predicted that by 2025, this income will have reached to \$ 11.4 trillion and the number of practitioners in the area will be 357 million (World Tourism Organization, 2015). Graph 1 shows the growth of the number of international tourists.



**Fig.1. The growing number of international tourists (numbers in millions)**

**Source: World Travel & Tourism Council, 2015**

Despite the fact that Iran has numerous historical and natural tourist attractions, it earns a bit out of them. In 2014, the share of travel and tourism from the gross domestic product was about 2.3 percent, which guided the country to achieve the rank 135 among the countries of the world. The Islamic Consultative Assembly Research Center report showed that Iran's tourism balance in 2013 was minus 6 billion and 403 million dollars<sup>1</sup>

(Islamic Consultative Assembly Research Center, 2015); this is while based on the country's twenty-year program in the field of tourism, in the final year Iran has to achieve the minimum income of \$ 25 billion and attract at least 20 million foreign tourists as well (the future perspective document of the Iran Tourism sector, 2004).

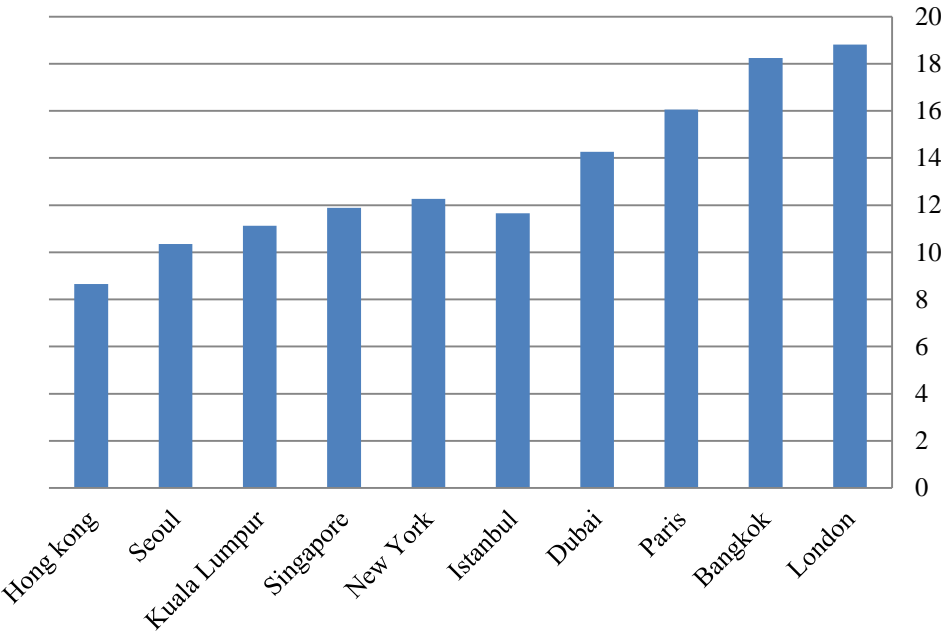
The destination of the majority of tourists is cities. According to the reports of MasterCard in 2015, top ten popular cities for tourists in the world were London,

1- The report of the Office of Cultural Studies of the Islamic Consultative Assembly Research Center has been extracted from the world tourism organization data, the World Travel and Tourism Council in 2014

and 2015 and also the domestic reports involving the report by the Statistical Center of Iran.

Bangkok, Paris, Dubai, Istanbul, New York, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Seoul and Hong Kong that attracted 133 million tourists in general (MasterCard, 2015). A

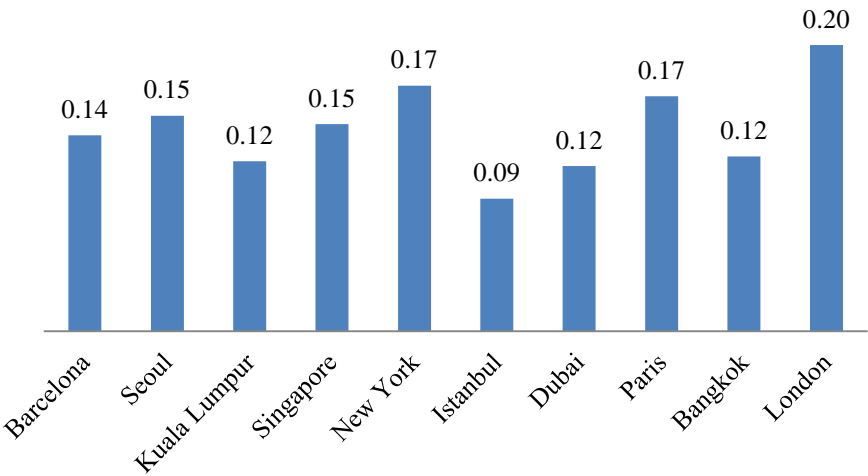
significant point in the report is the presence of seven Asian cities in the list of top ten visited-by-tourists cities in the world.



**Fig.2. The top touristic cities in the world in 2015 (in millions)**  
**Source: (MasterCard, 2015)**

These cities account for 11.4 percent of all international tourists. In 2015, the city of London was able to attract about

19 million tourists through which it earned more than \$ 20 billion in revenue (Figure 3).



**Fig.3. Estimated revenue from tourism in 2015 (figures in billions)**  
**Source: (MasterCard, 2015)**

The tourism industry is one of the most important economic industries and has a special place in the economic, cultural, social and urban arenas. Urban areas are often considered important tourist destinations due to their large attractions, and urban tourism is an important issue for urban management. The development of urban tourism has different economic, physical and environmental impacts on the lives of citizens, and this plays a greater role in the quality of their participation in tourism affairs (Aminian et.al., 2017).

Although different variables as development of infrastructures, urban furniture, public culture and etc. can be influential in attracting tourists, one of the key variables can be the consideration of marketing and city branding factors. At the moment, many of the pioneer cities in the world are dealing with branding or repositioning their own brand. These cities are keen to introduce themselves as attractive venues for investment, tourism, continuing education, life, and so on. In recent years, the development of tourism has also been noted in Iran, because it is one way to create sustainable revenues<sup>1</sup> for cities, and the traditional revenue generation methods do not meet the growing costs of urban management, and they must seek other sources of income. Hence, the mayor of Tehran in 2015 stated that about 23 percent of the municipal revenue was sustained and approximately 77 percent was obtained through the sale of congestion, construction license and change of ownership and other unsustainable earnings (Daneshjou News Agency, Jan. 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016).

In the field of city branding, some steps were taken to form a city brand

committee in some provinces of Iran such as Tehran, Isfahan, Mashhad and Kermanshah, and some cross-sectional efforts were made for city branding (Tehran as the Umm al-Qura of the Islamic World; Shiraz as the Gate of All Nations, Ramsar as the Bride of Cities in Iran, and Isfahan as Half the World); however, for different reasons, these efforts are scanty or have been subject to forgetfulness and inattention.

This paper, besides studying literature related to the topic, intends to deal with different aspects of the phenomenon of city branding. In this way, having designed a model using the view points of experts, the consequences of city branding and determination of the relationships among the variables were studied.

## 2- Literature Review

Several studies have been carried out on city branding; each of them has looked at the subject from a different viewpoint. Urban planners focus on social and economic outcomes and see their task as to develop a brand that can help achieve the goals. On the other hand, some studies have taken the country of origin into account, and products have generally been reviewed in them; but the current research of location tracking emphasizes the multi-brand identity (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009).

Briefly, what is implicit in the study of theoretical literature produced in this field is that despite the studies that have been conducted in the area of determining the power of city branding, there is no comprehensive study on the variables affecting branding and how it is implemented; therefore, this study has been done to fill this gap. Table 1 summarizes the results of some studies in the area of city branding.

1- Sustained earnings are those revenues that have characteristics such as continuity, desirability and flexibility, and can be used to define the intended execution plans.

**Table1. Summary of the results obtained from some research on city branding**

Researcher	Year	Summary of the results
Ashworth	2009	The results showed that the impact of the internal aspect of city branding on its external aspect is positive and significant, and the satisfaction of citizens affects the outer brand of the city as well.
Kavaratzis	2008	The image of place in the mind is formed through planned interventions (such as urban design, city interaction experience) and various forms of communication (such as films, news, reports).
Anholt	2007	The location of the city, place, capacity, pulse and jumble, people and prerequisites are among the variables that can affect the city branding.
Hankinson	2007	A strong brand has a number of important roles: attracting tourists and investors, attracting talents, respecting individuals, selling products and crafts. Social macro-effects such as creating a distinct identity, creating order and increasing social solidarity are also significant effects of a powerful city branding.
Leoko Martinez	2007	Urban problems, urban attractiveness, urban environments, infrastructures, architectural appeals and perception of citizens are influential on their mental image of the city in question. Also, the mental image influences citizens' pride.
Riza et al.	2012	The image of the city affects the citizens' satisfaction and their quality of life
García et al.	2012	The main stakeholders in branding a place are entrepreneurs, investors, locals and visitors.
Zenker & Beckmann	2013	Zenker has provided methods for evaluating the success of marketing and location branding programs
Rütter	2014	City branding and satisfaction are influential on the citizenship behavior
Merrilees et al.	2013	The factors affecting urban brands include: clean, safe and natural environment, business opportunities, shopping malls, transportation, cultural activities, government services and social ties.
Haji Karimi	2009	Determining the most important factors affecting urban brand in Tehran with emphasis on brand orientation.
Monavaryan et al.	2013	Findings of their research showed that the definition of the status of urban management in Iran's planning system, land allocation planning in order to determine the division of urban duties, changing the viewpoints towards branding, reducing rents and increasing the competitive space, and scientific, research and executive capacities of cities are the main areas of branding.

### 3- Theoretical Background

Branding in the general definition includes all steps involved in creating a unique name (brand) and maintaining it that distinguishes a vendor's product from another by using tokens such as: name, logo, symbol, etc., Not only does the brand differentiate products<sup>1</sup>, but it also brings out ideas, calls for emotions, and brings about certain activities (Kotler & Keller, 2007).

Although there is no common definition in the literature related to

city branding (Gertne, 2011), (Braun, 2012), in a relatively comprehensive definition, the city management can be recognized as an attempt to create the reputation that is powerful and attractive and is useful for economic, political and social purposes and can reflect the essence and originality of the people (Anholt, 2007). Some experts go further and see the most important goal of modern cities to be increasing their competitiveness through branding (Braun, 2012; Fernandez & Meethan, 2013). Hospers believes that cities have the potentials through identifying which they can distinguish themselves

1- The product contains goods, services and ideas, and, in today's definition, places and destinations.

and they can hope to gain victory over their rivals; however the requirement of that is adopting a marketing view and finding a landmark specified to the city; the landmark that can provide the opportunity of being distinguished from others and creating a unique image for the city (Rehan, 2014).

In this field, an idea is pursued that as the companies handle brand management of their organizations and their manufacturing products, cities should pay attention to their reputation too. This attitude seeks to design, shape, or change the mental images of the audience, because the credit and reputation of the city provides a great action guide for tourists and investors and a shortcut to information, which is a prime reason to the recent interest of many cities in brands and landmarks (Vanolo, 2008). Since the 1990s, with the introduction of views such as Porter's vision and dramatic changes in the distribution of economic power of countries the importance of urban brand grew and attracted the attention of many economists and policymakers to local and regional development. New investment, innovation and development of companies and tourism are among the factors contributing to local development; so today, there is an intense competition between regions and cities in order to strengthen these factors and consequently, increase the competitive advantage of the regions (Anholt, 2010).

But apart from the economic and commercial uses of the topic of brand, some argue that branding is tied with two other important concepts: first, the matter is the distinct identity we are looking for in branding and the second is the theory

of Linking Value<sup>1</sup> of products, services and brands, the theory developed under the influence of the post-modern thoughts. Some scholars believe that today the individuals are deeply engaged in engendering a linking value with the products and services much more than paying attention to their practical values (Kavaratzis, 2008; Ashworth, 2009).

Unlike the typical products or services, the places are the wrapped packages of goods, services, emotions and perceptions of the customers and the entire combinations of them (Rainisto, 2003). Therefore city branding is also a complex combination of the inferences and subjective perceptions of the audience about a city and its residents, the living space and business space and attractions of it (Eshuis et al., 2013). In other words, city branding is a comprehensive and long term strategy beside the strategies of city development and economic development of the city which contains a chain of tied and integrated strategies, processes and actions that would finally lead to the enhanced credibility and reputation of the city among other cities and the increased competitive capabilities and improved residential life (Mozafari, 2012).

#### 4- Research Method

The research methodology for the following study can be discussed in two quantitative and qualitative phases. For the qualitative phase, the grounded theory was used. Selection of that method was due to two reasons. On the one hand, there is no model in the area of city branding in Iran that takes into account the indigenous conditions of the country

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1- Linking Value conveys that a person who uses a specified brand will be linked to the groups, and meanwhile the acceptance of special life styles as the common denominator of a group is tied to the reflection of power among those styles and brands.

comprehensively; and on the other hand, the grounded theory is efficient for modeling and theorizing in the area of emerging concepts and events. This method is an inductive approach according to which the theory is formed from the data-derived concepts. This strategy is based on moving from part to whole and three elements of concepts, categories and theorems. There are three plans for conducting such research: systematic approach that is known as Strauss and Corbin (1998); emergent approach which was presented by Glaser (1992), and constructivist approach developed by Charmaz (2000). Systematic approach has been used in this research.

The data derived from the interview were first studied by utilizing the in vivo coding and the sociological constructs based coding. In this stage, a list of codes was extracted, combined and ordered to make the primary concepts. Then similar codes were located in groups called category; this stage is called open coding. Then in the stage of axial coding, the relationship was established among the obtained categories based on the general pattern known as paradigm. Accordingly, the axial category was determined and then the other categories as subcategories under different titles of paradigm model were related to it. In the final stage, selective coding was dealt with. This stage can be known as the integration process and the category improvement. In this stage, the theory was developed and the model was presented, that is, the axial category was systematically related to other categories and the relationships were introduced in the form of a clear narrative.

In the quantitative phase the correlation research method was applied with the

researcher-made questionnaire. The statistical sample of this section involved experts and specialists in the field of tourism, marketing and economics, 68 of whom were selected as the available samples. In this section, for describing the data, the frequency distribution tables with dispersion indices including mean, median, variance and standard deviation were used and in the section to the inferential statistics (hypothesis testing and assessment of the statistical relationships between variables) the statistical tests such as t-student, Chi-square, Pearson correlation coefficient and ANOVA were applied based on the nature of the variables and the scale of each variable.

#### *Sampling in the Qualitative Phase*

The sampling method used in the qualitative section of this research is theoretical<sup>1</sup>. To select the sample, a combination of judgment sampling method and snowball method was used. In the snowball sampling technique, after interviewing the professors and experts, they were asked to introduce the experts in the field of city branding. Therefore, except for the first few people who were directly selected based on the criteria regarded in the research, others were introduced and affirmed by the professors and experts interviewed. In Table 2, the sample specification in qualitative phase is presented.

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1- Theoretical sampling is a kind of purposive sampling in which the researcher tries to deal with investigating and analyzing the phenomenon considered using the ideas and knowledge of the most conspicuous people about the research topic.



**Table2. The sample specifications in the qualitative phase**

Type of relationship with the city branding topic	Number	Education
University faculty member in marketing /economics/management/sociology	5	PhD with the rank of Assistant Professor / Associate Professor or professor
Director/ Deputy in various areas of tourism	3	Master/ PhD
Counselor in city branding	3	Master/ PhD
Researchers in the field of location branding, city branding and advertisement	2	Master/ PhD
City / municipality managers of the department of social assistance	3	Master
City Council members and advisers	2	PhD/ Master

Adequacy of sampling was achieved theoretically. According to this method, sampling was continued until the model reached the saturation and construction level; so, in the present study, we reached the saturation after the fifteenth interview, but in total, eighteen interviews were conducted.

## 5- Results

In this section, the findings of the qualitative phase extracted from the interviews were investigated at first, and then the implications of successful implementation of the city branding plans in the quantitative phase were examined.

### *Requirements of the City Branding*

**a. Modern approaches in urban development:** one of the most important concepts raised in interviews as well as in the branding experiences in the world as a causative and effective variable is the kind of modern look which now has dominated urban development and management. Nowadays cities have been headed for branding due to a variety of reasons such as the need for sustainable revenues. One of the cases that can be pointed out here is the entrepreneurial city. For example, in 1983 the municipal self-efficacy scheme was approved and, based on that the share of state aid in the municipal administration should have been gradually reduced each year.

Another subject raised in this context is the development of marketing knowledge and the arrival of this science to the field of marketing services and marketing in non-profit institutes that underlies the concepts relating to the destination marketing. However, in practice, taking advantage of the destination marketing knowledge is constrained to some promotion tools. Other concepts derived from the interviews include issues such as: the need to create a sense of belonging among residents, programs to improve quality of life, ruling well, upstream documents and development programs.

**b. Opportunity to compete more:** the fact that cities are in a difficult competition to attract tourists and other resources and facilities and, day after day, the scope of this competition is increased has been seriously considered in interviews and reviewing the documents and articles, and it can be claimed that marketing and city branding subjects are the natural outcomes of the competitive atmosphere among cities that utilize city branding as an impressive tool in order to create differentiation and improvement in the position and increasing the influence and prestige of the cities.

**c. The desire to retrieve the city image:** determination, definition and clarification of the identity of the city and proper positioning of the city in the perception of non-resident target groups as well as citizens living in the city is an important issue which has been

taken into account in the interviews and the experiences of branding. For some of the old and historic cities, it should be borne in mind that the image of these cities comes from the characteristics that have been formed over the course of centuries and have a historical identity; therefore, in some parts of history, a city might have had an influential role in the region or country, where the desire to retrieve and revalidate the historical past of the city is of great significance by the stakeholders. Other concepts gathered in this discussion include recognition of the city image and correcting the misconceptions of cities.

**d. New international environment:** today, cities are facing a competitive environment not only at the national level, but also globally. A dynamic environment that has mobilized global resources both in terms of investment and in terms of the benefits of tourism, the recruitment of forces, and etc., has placed the cities in a wider global environment. In this environment, city branding is a prerequisite for the development and exploitation of modern economic, social, and cultural ties. In this way, some cities in the world have provided an opportunity to interact with other cities in parallel with the national policies and take an advantage of the international opportunities.

#### *Consequences of City Branding in the Area of Tourism*

Consequences are the results of applying the tangible and intangible strategies and outputs that are created as a result of implementation of the branding process for cities and residents and target non-residents as well as the community. True understanding of the actions/reactions enables the researcher to analyze the data by asking questions about the consequences. In the coding stage, some concepts were recognized that were grouped

in categories that had also been evaluated in the quantitative phase.

**1- Reinforcement and improvement of the city position:** one of the effects of branding is the reinforcement and improvement of the city position, which has been considered in the form of several concepts in the interviews; among these concepts, one can mention the increasing influence of the city, the strengthening of dependency, respect for individuals, and highlighting the city's name.

**2- Stakeholders' satisfaction:** satisfaction of stakeholders is among the most important consequences of the successful city branding. This subject can be debated from a few general areas. The first is the satisfaction of the residents. A city, in order to continue its life in a powerful and progressive way, requires citizens to be happy and active. These citizens create a constant identity for the city and also guarantee sustainable revenues for the city management and development. The second group can be known as the domestic and foreign tourists. In this area, city branding can be considered as one of the most important issues affecting tourism attraction; because a city must get itself known to the world over a period of time with a specific attribute, so that tourists are allowed to choose their destination based on that feature. The third group involves the investors who need a defensible image and a clear future of the destination to attract them to a place. The city branding is also influential on the favorable opinions of other groups such as immigrants and university students and government (Haji Karimi, 2009).

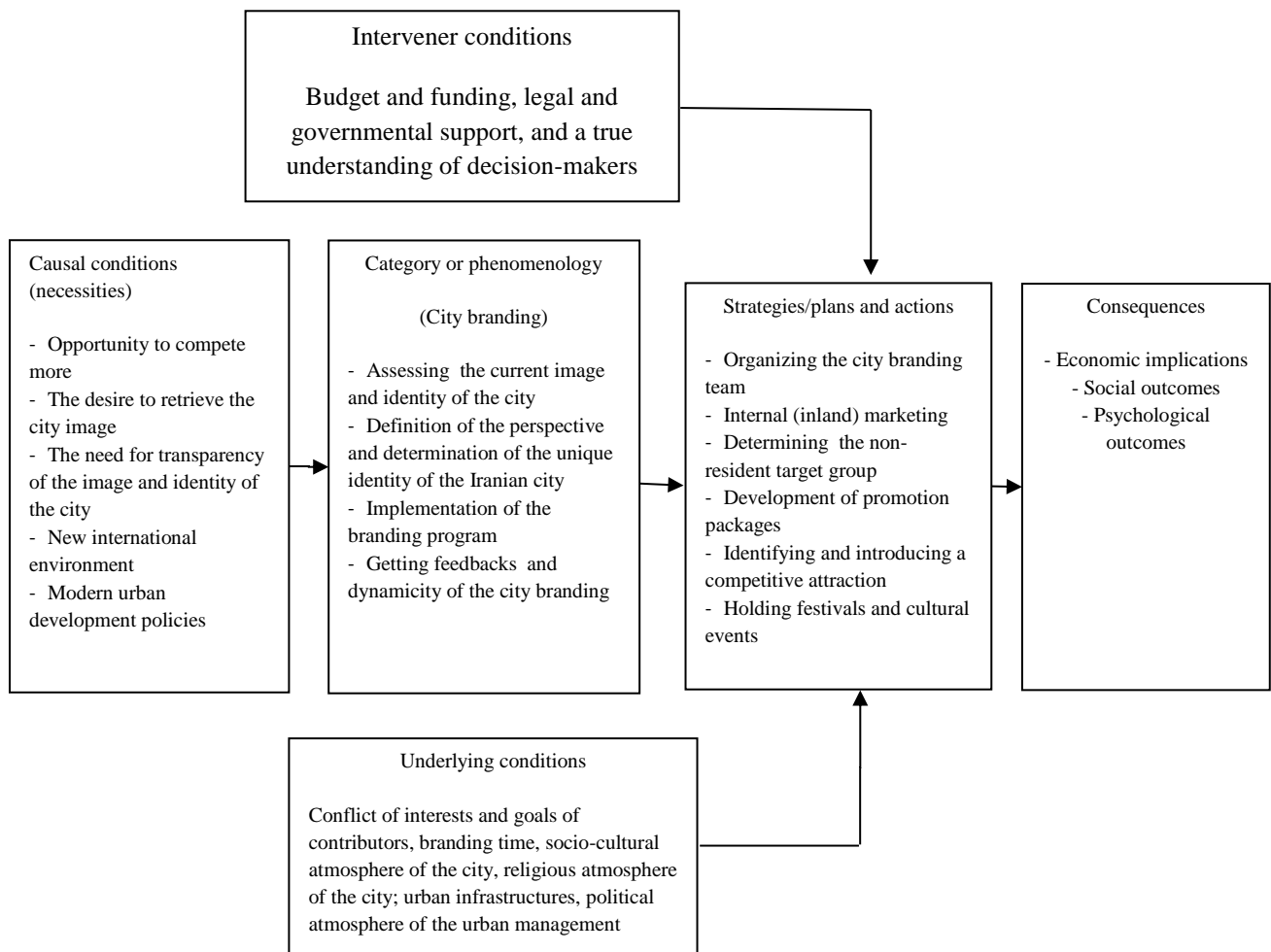
**3- Creating a favorable image:** one of the most significant results of a successful city branding is creating an ideal image. Influencing the unconscious minds of the audience, improving the city's position in the minds of the audience and creating a pleasant image of the city are the concepts

outlined in this category. Changing the unpleasant images of a city can be the result of this issue. In addition, in some cases, controversial and distorted images are transmitted from cities that can be reviewed in branding.

**4- Economic development of the city:** one of the most important results of successful branding at the exploitation stage for cities is increasing the attraction of domestic and foreign tourists which could help turn the city into a potential destination of tourism. Such that the results of using this

process in many cities of the world confirm this fact. Also, with the increase in endogenous and exogenous investment, we will face the improvement of the city's position for the audience, which will create a dynamic cycle for the development of the city.

**5- Social development of the city:** of the key consequences of city branding that were mentioned in interviews and can be raised in the social area are improving the quality of life, improving the influence of the city, increasing the tendency to interaction and increasing the desire to immigration.



**Fig.4. Suggested model of city branding**

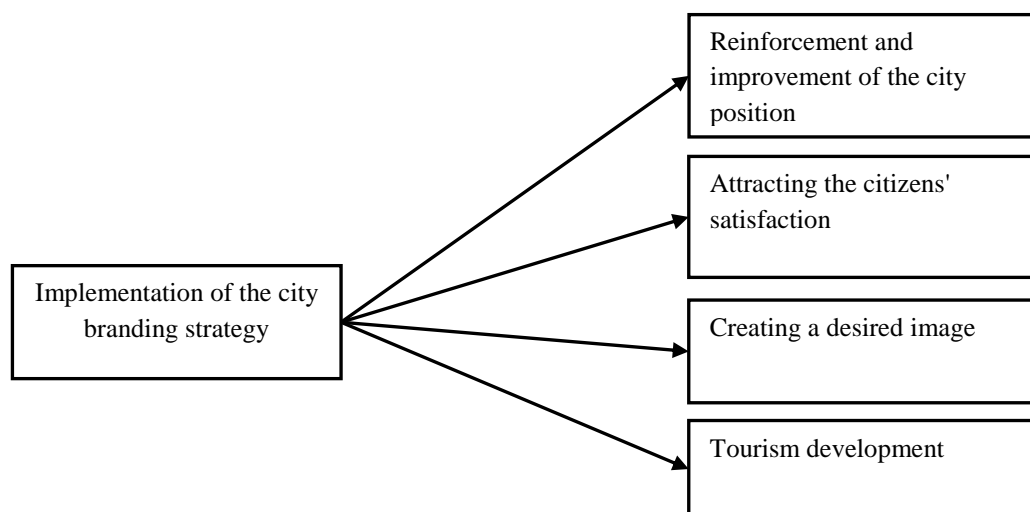
#### *Relationships between the Variables Studied*

Having designed the model, it was examined by experts. Following is the summary of evaluating results of the section of “consequences”.

28 per cent of the sample is composed of women and 72 per cent of it is formed by men. The average age of respondents is 43 years old. In terms of work experience, the assessment of responses reported

15.6. The statistical sample studied has academic education and the group of masters devoted 46 percent of the sample size (36 people) to itself. In this (quantitative)

section, the self-reporting method with the close-ended questionnaire was used. In Fig. 5, a part of the research model is shown in the quantitative phase.



**Fig5. A part of the research model in the quantitative phase**

With regard to the professors' comments and accomplishing the modifications and getting the final confirmation, the questionnaire enjoyed content validity, and regarding the reliability the Cronbach's alpha coefficient calculated for the whole

questionnaire was 82 percent which is desirable and acceptable in comparison with the threshold limit value. Table 3 shows the correlation coefficients of the research variables.

**Table 3. Correlation coefficients of the research variables**

Variable	City branding	Reinforcement and improvement of the city position	Resident satisfaction	Creating a desired image	Tourism development
City branding	-	0.478	0.527	0.720	0.683
Reinforcement and improvement of the city position		-	0.632	0.753	0.650
Resident satisfaction			-	0.705	0.780
Creating a desired image				-	0.591
Tourism development					-

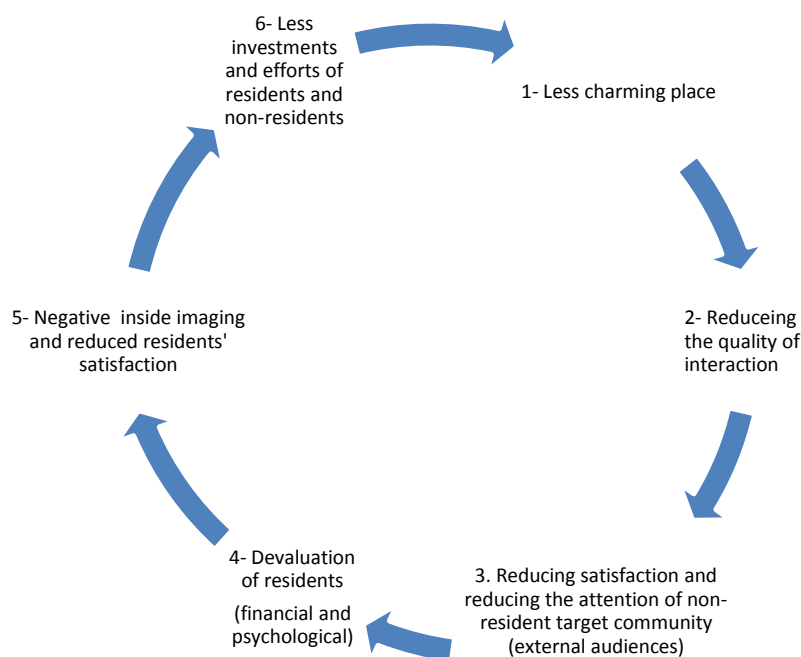
\*\* Correlation is significant at 0/01 level (2 tailed)

### *Relationships between the Variables of the Model*

According to Table 3, the greatest correlation coefficient between city branding and the creation of an optimal image is about 72 percent, and the smallest of these with the variable of strengthening and improving the city's position is about 48 percent; but with 99 percent confidence, it can be said that there is a significant correlation between the city branding and the four variables studied. Among other notable findings, the correlation coefficient of over 78 percent can be found between satisfying citizens and attracting tourists.

### **6- Conclusion and Discussion**

Often, a good or bad image may come to mind when hearing the name of a city. This image which can be derived from our interaction with city residents or from promotional advertisements, etc. includes dimensions such as: social image (like the image of people and their features and symbols and events of those people), economic image (such as level of development, business environment, economic capacities, etc.), physical image (urban furniture, geographic location, architecture and tourism, etc.), and a historical and ethnographic image.



**Fig.6. Self-reproduction cycle and other imaging**

This issue has been widespread in many cities around the world, and many executive programs have been developed and implemented in the form of urban branding, with satisfactory results, so that the number of cities interested in implementing and spending large costs are added.

This article studies the necessities and dimensions of city branding as well as its

consequences, with emphasis on its effects on urban tourism. City branding is influenced by the mental image in both internal and external dimensions. The inner image is the look of the people (inhabitants) of a city itself, that citizens are thinking about people, attractions, culture, developmental level, and ... how their city is, and the external image is the attitude of the inhabitants of other cities

to natural attractions, tourism, people, culture and intended city. The inadequate internal or external image of a city, prepares the grounds for reducing the willingness of citizens to invest (inward investment), self-financing by non-resident investors (outsourcing), a low share of tourism, etc., and this leads to lack of development the aggravation of the negative self-esteem of the city's residents. This issue is transmitted to other people through various tools and creates a cycle that will lead to a more inferior reproduction of its own and a more inappropriate image. However, the vice versa is true and an effective and developing cycle of "attraction-value-satisfaction" can be created (Fig3).

The findings of this study showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between city branding as a predictor variable and the four variables studied involving strengthening and improving the city's position, satisfaction of citizens, creating a favorable image and developing tourism as criterion variables. These results are consistent with the findings of Hankinson (2007), Ashworth (2001), Rizza et al. (2012) and Meireles et al. (2013). The highest correlation coefficient is calculated for the variable of optimal image creation and the improvement of the city's position in the minds of the audience and the creation of a pleasant image of the city can be the result of a major issue in this area.

On the other hand, the results confirm the fact that successful city branding can change the unpleasant images of a city. However, this can be rooted in the perceptions or experiences of previous engagements and influenced by some unconscious deposits in the collective minds formed and are being transmitted, yet the results of this study showed that it

was possible to solve this problem with a comprehensive program in the field of urban remodeling.

Although a significant relationship was observed between all variables studied in this research, the level of satisfaction of citizens residing and attracting tourists can be considered. The correlation coefficient obtained is 78 percent which is the highest coefficient among the variables studied and it can be argued with high confidence that increasing citizens' satisfaction will lead to increased tourist attraction. These results confirm the findings of Ashworth (2001) and Zenker and Rütter (2014).

With regard to the research findings, it is suggested that while investigating the current status of the brand and the existing mental image of their cities, the city managers develop urban strategies and, if necessary, by revising, modifying and re-positioning, amend the internal and external image of the survivor (its undesirable part) left from the natural and human geography of cities, and create the proper position and stand in the mind of the audience by brand reproduction. In this way, the existence of satisfied citizens who can create a stable identity for the city and defend the city brand with power can guarantee the success of any branding program; because the residents, on the one hand, are in a humanistic interaction with the audience and the level of their satisfaction can influence the level of satisfaction in the audience including tourists, and, on the other hand, this group can play a role as the brand ambassadors and at a macro level, a city, in order to survive in a dynamic and powerful manner, requires citizens to be happy and active and this is what should be considered in the city branding programs

and other urban management plans. Therefore, what can have an endogenous and sustainable impact on city branding and so on the tourism development is the domestic marketing and the cultural works for reinforcement of the desired internal image based on the value oriented and historical capitals for residents in the context of recognizing the honorable signs of social identity of cities.

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