Visual Representation for City Branding and Identity

Sean Calvin Shin Ching Yong[1], Dany Chi Wai Ng[2], Wen Sern Poh[3]

[1] Centre for Research and Graduate Studies, University of Cyberjaya, Persiaran Bestari, 63000 Cyberjaya, Selangor, Malaysia

[2] Douglas Business School, 999077 Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong PRC

[1,3] Intown Design and Marketing Solutions Sdn. Bhd., 59200 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Abstract:

City branding must be holistic and specific in order to meet the objectives of the country and its key sectors. In numerous instances, it is recommended that people gain insight and remember information presented visually, so it stands to reason that visual communication would be more effective than verbal communication. The construction of an iconic structure in a city or the preservation of its cultural history can successfully contribute to the development of an urban brand identity that is tied to the identity of the community. The purpose of this study is to identify the city iconic structures that most properly express the identity and image of the places in Kuala Lumpur, the capital city of Malaysia. This qualitative study consisted of 180 participants from different places of birth. The survey questionnaire were divided into two sections: segment and visual representation. The results of this study revealed an iconic structure that can be used as a visual representation to promote Kuala Lumpur. This can increase the significance and memorability of the city for its local community and visitors.

Keywords: *Visual Representation, Branding, City Branding*

1. INTRODUCTION:

The possibility that visual communication is more remarkable than verbal communication, which in many examples recommends that people learn and remember the visually presented data, is superior to verbal communication. This is because the fabric in each image contains data (Hamzah, 2021). Accordingly to Ethington and Schewartz (2006), urban icons are components of the urban landscape, such as buildings, monuments, or cultural heritages, that function as single or repeated visual representation that are able to translate the complexities of the urban experience into knowledge and meaning through the use of representational practises. It is an important component of the overall urban development plan. According to Aaker (1997), it is generally accepted that embedded images are especially preferred over words. This is confirmed by analyzing visual considerations in branding decisions. Their research shows that consumers generally rely on visual data before verbal data when forced by time, which is the case when buying low-union products.

The visual components in the bundle can be seen as "touchpoint" data for product image, brand image, brand identity, and country of origin. Therefore, the researchers had to use a national identity that reflects the nation to update the personality of local products. Direct communication through the pool

helped consumers make a decision (Saad and Idris, 2017). Branding has been used up till today to call attention to the differences between products that are otherwise comparable and to strengthen the identity of a product by drawing attention to what it is about that product that sets it apart from similar products (Manuela, 2021). As a result, it is associating it to its place of origin or production. In addition to promoting the product in the near and global economic sectors, the packaging configuration can also help promote the home country universally and determine the consumer's choices (Anholt, 2005). Therefore, the visual representation of the city should be established in a unified principle so that it can become significant and unforgettable. Communication is very critical in establishing a brand identity as it has to be communicated and shared with the people who understand the ideals of their culture in their country and its people who forms the community. With regard to that, this study targets to identify the level of visual representation of the urban brand identity as a means of communication in developing the city brand.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:
2.1. City Brand Identity

A city's brand identity is represented in a multidimensional construction. According to Bloomfield (2006), a city does not just exist as a physical space, but also as a symbolic space that is formed by the visual and cultural impressions of individuals who visit or live in the city. A city can be seen as both a physical and a symbolic environment. In this regards, the idea of a city's icon become a component of the city's landscape that is able to impact its visual representation and the experience of people presented. City personality also refers to a prominent area or place, normal and registered fantasies reminiscent of a typical mass culture, customary legitimate rights and duties for everyone, individuals, and average economy with regional diversity for the individual (McCrone and Bechhofer, 2015). On closer examination, it encompasses the "disposition of significances" possessed by the given culture through social homogeneity, faith-building, national heritage, and ethnocentrism (Hassan and Mahrous, 2019).

Many analytics significantly impact the use of city personality to promote their identity in the market. Most countries are commonly applying the techniques of national identity similar to those of commercial sectors as they seek to promote their good name and the government. For that matter, Malaysia has been using Public Relations companies, spin doctors, speechwriters and advertising men while handling mass persuasion task. Their identity is ideal in the global space, even though sometimes they are being rated as the most corrupt. The reputation of most destination and places have been based on the influence and management of deliberate leaders with the borrowed skills and expertise from others (Dinnie, 2015). Advertisement agencies have been some of the leading institutions that helps in persuading mass population to have favourable perception towards a country, an approach that has been exploited in the United States of America. These are critical approaches in identifying the image and reputation of the country while also reflecting on their domestic behaviour and control of the activities that would attract more positive attention in the global space.

It has been shown that using the city's brand identity to achieve a competitive edge in terms of tourism and investment is an effective strategy of a country. This advantage gives a city the ability to strengthen its potential to attract investments and tourists, as well as to develop a local identity and the resident's identification with their city (Kavaratzis, 2004). The use of a city's iconic image serves as the crossing point for the city brand and the icons that make up the city brand. This is because the image

serves as the representation of the city. However, there are issues that have arisen as a consequence of the separation of urban icons from the context of the communities that surround them, which has resulted in these icons losing their significance. Within this context, the local community plays a significant role in the relationship between city brand and city icons.

2.2. Identity Development for City Branding

A strong and easily recognisable image would contribute favourably to the level of satisfaction experienced by the visitors. Iconic buildings make a significant contribution to the recognisable image of a city or location (Jencks, 2005). As a result, it is possible to conclude that these structures can indirectly have an effect on the sense of well-being and pleasure experienced by local communities and visitors.

The point of view of symbolism differs from country to country because the images have a pronounced similarity, and different products are aimed at different people. Each image has clear implications that depend on the viewer's lifestyle. Images can create a visual glow, meaningful encounters, and eye-catching "touchpoints" (Dzulkepli, and Lazim, 2022). Thus, it is possible for advertisers, marketers, and tourist policy makers to promote the perceived unique elements of a country, or a city, or a region that are infused with special significance and symbolism. This can create a positive image building, which may lead to successful city branding. This is where the function of communications networks comes into play, which need to operate and interact not just at the global and local level, but also between the corporate and government entities.

For this reason, "point of contact" is used in packaging configuration as an advertising term that refers to the primary visual component that consciously connects the brand to the buyer and becomes what visually identifies the consumer with the product. The correct use of visual representation is the way to communicate a product effectively. The attached word increases the pictures' meaning and the general plan's understanding. According to Dawson (2011), data communication is one of the core elements of the grouping and helps buyers interact dynamically. It can be assumed that non-verbal characters, such as images, shapes, colors, surfaces, etc., can be just as important as their verbal communication elements. They can be "read" just like any other piece of content. When addressing the image of the city from the perspective of city branding, it is important to first note that in today's world, a lot of cities try to advertise themselves with the assistance of iconic artefacts. This is something that should be taken into consideration when discussing the visual representation of the city. There is a widespread misconception regarding the city branding strategy, which holds that its scope is restricted to marketing and advertising endeavours and fails to acknowledge the significance of an integrated city branding process. From a broader perspective, the image, uniqueness, and authenticity are the three most important aspect that go into its branding.

Today, the brand of the city has become an essential issue (Fernando, 2016) as all the countries have called to draw the world's attention in the fields of entrepreneurship, the travel industry, respect, and media and distinguish themselves from different countries. As such, the concept of developing an identity for a city needs to assure the existence of multiple dimensions. Balmer and Grey (2003) claimed that these aspects include (i) multidisciplinary roots, (ii) multiple groups of stakeholders, (iii) high level of intangibility and complexity, (iv) obligation to take into account on social responsibility, (v) dealing with multiple identities, and (vi) require long term development.
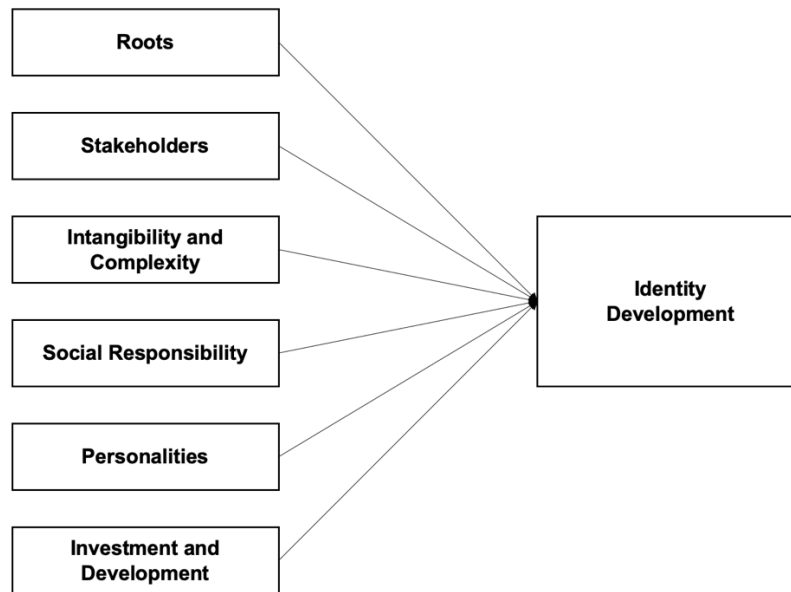
Figure 1: *The dimensions of identity development*

Within the scope of this study, researchers concentrated on the iconic buildings in addition to cultural heritage. Examining a city's cultural inheritance as well as its historical legacy is one way to determine the significance of the city's cultural and historical legacies. City brand identity is extremely important due to the fact that it intentionally recognises and categories features of brands in the form of a benefit that can be generalised for local communities and tourists.

In the context of tourist marketing, the city with the largest budget and the most sophisticated markets is likely to have the loudest branding voice. This is because tourism boards tend to focus on areas with the greatest potential for economic growth. It is imperative that every city implement the complex dimensions as described above, as doing so will both prevent failures in city branding and meet the expectations of stakeholders and communities in the process of developing an appropriate urban brand identity. As a consequences of this, it is necessary to appreciate the relevance of adopting an integrated strategy when developing the urban brand identity in order to ensure that it is powerful, successful and sustainable.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

There are a total of six iconic buildings and two cultural heritages that have been selected because of their great identities and widespread recognition. The examples selected for iconic buildings are the Istana Negara (Royal Palace), Petronas Twin Towers (Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre), Dataran Merdeka (Independence Square), Merdeka 118, Menara Kuala Lumpur (Kuala Lumpur Tower) and Berjaya Times Square, while the examples selected for cultural heritages include Thean Hou Temple and Jamek Mosque.

A questionnaire was developed and grouped into two sections: segment and visual representations. Figure 2 shows the visual representation of iconic buildings and Figure 3 shows the visual representation of cultural heritages that were used in this study. These visual representation were evaluated using the 5-point Likert scale, namely 1 = not applicable at all, 2 = moderately disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = moderately agree, and 5 = strongly agree on their familiarity and acceptability of its becoming the urban brand identity.

IBM Statistical Software for Social Science (SPSS) was used to evaluate the data. Descriptive statistical analyses, for example, frequencies and velocities, were used to determine the urban brand identity (Hagtvedt, 2011).

Figure 2: *Iconic Buildings in Kuala Lumpur*

Figure 3: *Cultural Landscapes in Kuala Lumpur*

4. RESULTS OF FINDINGS:

A survey was conducted among 180 respondents according to gender, age, and place of birth. Table 1 shows the gender, age, and place of birth. In this study, 32.7% (n = 59) between 18 and 20 years, 48.9% (n = 88) between 21 and 23 years, 15.6% (n = 28) between 24 and 26 years, 2.8 % (n = 5) were older than 27 years. The respondents born and living in the state of Selangor and Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur were omitted from taking part in this survey due to geographical capacity.

Table 1: Profile of Respondents

Demographic Characteristic								
Gender	Frequency	Percentage	Age	Frequency	Percentage	Place of Birth	Frequency	Percentage
Male	90	50	18 - 20 years	59	32.7	Perlis	6	3.3
Female	90	50	21 - 23 years	88	48.9	Pahang	11	6.1
			24 - 26 years	28	15.6	Perak	12	6.7
			above 27 years	5	2.8	Negeri Sembilan	11	6.1
						Sabah	9	5
						Johor	23	12.8
						Melacca	27	15
						Terengganu	16	8.9
						Sarawak	23	12.8
						Penang	26	14.4
						Kedah	16	8.9

In the next phase of the study, contrasts in visual representation were tested. Table 2 provides a summary of the respondents' mean and ratings regarding visual recognitions according to the results. The result showed that the three highest values were Petronas Twin Tower with (M = 4.83), Istana Negara (M = 4.71) and Merdeka 118 (M = 4.70). Taking into consideration that Merdeka 118 is one of the newest iconic buildings built in the country, this demonstrates that the development of new designs and constructions, the registered constructions can undoubtedly be remarkable. This, from now on, arouses excellent interest in reliable and careful savings protection and adherence to the registered qualities of the city to ensure that the personality of the place is not tarnished.

This study has identified the importance of visitors' imagination and place personality when updating new or future developments in a verifiable city. This can make the city more meaningful and remarkable for the visitors. The iconic buildings as the visual representation of the city is not just an image but a method by which a city presents itself to the rest of the world.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistic for "Strongly Agree" Scale

Category	Mean	Std. Dev.	Category	Mean	Std. Dev.
Iconic Buildings			**Cultural Landscape**		
Istana Negara	4.71	0.63	Thean Hou Temple	4.55	0.69
Petronas Twin Tower	4.83	0.41	Jamek Mosque	4.53	0.76
Dataran Merdeka	4.66	0.61			
Merdeka 118	4.70	0.58			
Menara Kuala Lumpur	4.61	0.72			
Berjaya Times Square	4.51	0.77			

5. CONCLUSION:

This study was made to select the highest score of the visual representation for the Kuala Lumpur's brand identity. When the dimensions of identity development are applied to the development of iconic buildings, there is a chance that the buildings will be known and remembered successfully. In the event that these efforts are rewarding, they will have a favourable effect on the image of the city, which will in turn, have a positive effect on the sense of well-being that tourists experience in the city.

According to the findings of this study, the visual representation and stakeholders should include the preservation of the community's unique identity as well as the promotion of amicable interactions among all communities of the region. The vision of the city brand identity should serve as an element that is capable of uniting the brand of the city, with the values and ideas of the people who live there, as this is what makes the city unique and remarkable. In addition, the engagement of local communities should

be part of the participatory design process for the development of iconic buildings in a city. It will result in providing a powerful and significant presence for the city's brand.

Future research may yield current results by examining visitors' insights into visual representations such as flora and fauna, festival and international events, musical instruments and famous figures. Ultimately, it seems branding has remained a critical endeavour for every country in the world. If a brand image is the catchy reduction of something rich and complex into a basic, naive, one-dimensional formula, then many countries that already have one would be wise to get rid of it. City branding is unquestionably a problem, not a solution: branding is something that the media and public opinion do to a city, not something that governments should attempt to do to their own states and citizens. What is required for people all around the world to have a better, deeper, more complicated, nuanced, democratic, chaotic, and human understanding of their land, population, and civilisation rather a produced stereotype to replace an inherited stereotype.

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