

## **Place branding as an engine of induce local development**

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### **Abstract**

In a context of the role of cities in society and rediscovering the importance of urban environment quality, a new factor has been considered critical for the success of management strategies and territorial development: its brand.

Place branding based local development stands on the transposition of a marketing concept and process to the socio-territorial aim, approaching the identity of a place and its associated image.

In fact, cities need economic and human capital to survive. In today's globalized world, the only way to be recognized is to maintain a strong positive image. Many cities fail to attract new residents, tourists and businesses, by maintaining a negative image of themselves, which imposes the need of elaborating a good strategy to change public perception.

Its application on territorial planning and management can bring economic, social and cultural benefits, as it introduces new forms of communication between planners, stakeholders and communities. In a context of a growing globalization and mobility, there is an increasing competitiveness between cities, as they have to state their position as a valid choice (whether for trade, business location, tourism destination, or housing), integrating branding into their urban policies and using it as a comparative advantage in a globalized economy.

The success key is bottom-up methodology, as it involves communities since the strategy, through transparent processes of decision-making, in order to ensure that urban projects contribute to broad community outcomes. Moreover, place branding based local development works as an inducer of civic pride, which is the basis for the inclusive local development.

In order to ensure the success of a place branding based local development, it is needed: a) an effective communication platform between stakeholders and the community; b) to build a strategic vision that reflects the real needs and aspirations of the population, and at the same time catches the attention of the target population; c) action based plans and transparent processes that actively involve all stakeholders and the community; d) effective monitoring and control systems of the implementation process; e) to involve all agents on the reinforce and divulgation of the local "brand".

This methodology enriches the planning process, which has been excessively standardized, introducing specific characteristics of each place, different ways of understanding the problem, and more adequate decisions, made by the stakeholders and the community.

This paper will present several case studies of place branding based local development, with different realities and objectives. The aim is to develop a methodology to apply in small cities, in the Portuguese context.

The final goal is to improve competitiveness in small cities, through urban development processes with a strong community involvement, strengthening civic pride, citizenship, and promoting a more open and happier society.

**Keywords:** place branding; urban development; participatory process; city competitiveness; globalization.