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EVALUATION OF INFLUENCING FACTORS ON DETERMINING BRAND FOR SMALL CITIES, CASE STUDY: ARAN & BIDGOL CITY

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ABSTRACT

In the present study, the effective factors on determining brand for small cities have been evaluated and the city of Aran&Bidgol was selected as case study. According to the paper's literature, brand is not limited to metropolitans and small cities can as well use metropolitans' methods of branding. Therefore variables of landscape strategy, infrastructure projects, managerial and organizational structure, city behavior, city image and city brand was considered and with a reference to the literature of the research, the proposed model and research's hypotheses were developed. The data of the research was gathered using 197 questionnaires and structural equation modeling and Amos software were used for testing the hypotheses of the research and studying the relationship of variables of research's model. Significant regression coefficients with the benefit of P-value were used for studying the relation between the variables. Results show that landscape strategy, infrastructure projects, organizational and administrative structure and city behavior has an impact on city brand.

Keywords: *City Marketing, City Brand, Small City*

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays cities seek a supply and demand ground for their capitals in social, economic and cultural areas, a ground in which the need for marketing is inevitable. The role of marketing in reaching organizational plans and strategies is emphasized in several books and papers by researchers and scholars in management domain. Different studies show that marketing principles along with some necessary moderations and modifications could be used for cities as well (AkhavanSaless, 2010).

It should be noted that the process of determining city brand is part of a bigger whole which seeks city marketing and selling city metaphorically and obtaining citizens' satisfaction and gaining loyal citizens, financing city and important city projects and finally attracting tourists operationally. Therefore it is clear that the target of the activities and efforts of this important arena are three important groups: inhabitants, financers and investors and tourists. Researchers consider city brand from three different entries, however they are overlapping. The first entry is aiming at marketing view and promoting place destination in the literature of marketing and tourism. The second entry is from the applicable view of names –brand- over places in the current literature of marketing and the third entry is from city management and planning view (Haji Karimi Sari, 2010).

The fundamental and initial point in city marketing and city strategic planning is assessing the city image. Awareness of the city image is an important diagnostic element and should be considered as one of the principles of city planning. City image is multidimensional and is not limited to an urban area then again includes other aspects as well. This study suggests the aspects which has the biggest impacts on the formation of city image (Martines et al, 2007). One of the most important issues in each city is having a significant city-identity. This is of high importance in terms of creating a constructive relationship between citizens and management, labor productivity and achieving sustainable development. Aran and Bidgol were two big boroughs until the end of Qajar dynasty and each had defensive wall around them and were located near one another. After Qajar, according to the rules of country division each had a separate municipally. After passing of time and because of urban development these two got connected

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and stood on the same road and route from one another. Therefore in early 1970th they were merged and became one city (isfahancht).

However the merging of these two urban areas resulted in some problems. The rapid growth of residential areas and as a result a rapid merging of these two villages caused identity mismatches. The fast pace of changes made the residents unable to accept their new city identity and they still considered themselves from two different areas (Imani, 21:2010). Since city brand covers a variety of areas and aligns them to be presentable to the city targets therefore it can play an important role in creating a united strong city identity. On one hand the industry of Aran and Bidgol is single-product and relies on machine carpet factories. Single-product industry increases the risk of investment and creates a barrier for attracting investors. In city branding, different aspects of the city is studied and the weak and strong points of it is determined, therefore, new areas for investing and economic prosperity of the city can be created (Shireh Paz, 2011). Considering that Aran and Bidgol is located in less than six kilometers from the city of Kashan –which is a rich tourism attraction city- with the use of appropriate branding the attractions of the city can be introduced correctly and the tourism of this city can be improved (The Institute of Civil and development of Aran and Bidgol City, 2010).

Hence considering the importance of city branding in creating competitive advantage as well as aligning different economic, social and cultural areas, we will focus and study this in the present paper.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

There are two main questions in the process of reaching the purpose of the study which we tend to answer by following the research stages:

1. What are the influencing factors on city image and city brand of Aran and Bidgol?
2. What is the arrangement of priorities of these factors?

Base on the purposes, research questions, theoretical principles and the previous researches in this area, these hypotheses were decided for this research:

First Hypothesis: landscape strategy has an impact on the city image of Aran and Bidgol.

Second Hypothesis: Infrastructure projects have an impact on the city image of Aran and Bidgol.

Thirds Hypothesis: Organizational and administrative structure has an impact on the city image of Aran and Bidgol.

Fourth Hypothesis: City behavior has an impact on the city image of Aran and Bidgol.

Fifth Hypothesis: City image of Aran and Bidgol has an impact on the city brand of Aran and Bidgol.

This research is a practical study in terms of purpose and in terms of nature and materials and methods it is a descriptive research of correlation type. The theoretical principles of this research were gathered from library and by survey data collection in which the data was gathered using questionnaire and distance survey. Relevant books, journals, internet, theses, organizations' archives and etc. were used to obtain the needed information. Combined sampling technique was used in this research. Initially using cluster sample technique, the Municipal areas of Aran and Bidgon were divided to two clusters. Then in each area a main street was selected using simple random sampling technique. Afterward people were selected voluntarily for answering to the questionnaire using simple and accessible sampling. In order to determine the number of people who have to fill in the questionnaire in each cluster, at first for an initial 30 set sampling, 30 questionnaires were distributed. Considering the population (60626 heads), the type of statistical population was unlimited and the population distribution of the two clusters were 53.8% and 41.7%. Therefore 17 and 13 questionnaires were distributed respectively. The obtained variance was 0.12. Therefore at 0.05 detection level and 6% error the sample size was calculated as follows.

Formula 1; calculating sample size

$$n = \frac{z_{\frac{\alpha}{2}}^2 \delta^2}{d^2} = \frac{(1.96)^2 * 0.12}{(0.06)^2} \geq 128$$

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It shall be mentioned that the obtained sample size and the model type of research, 200 heads were considered as sample size for this research.

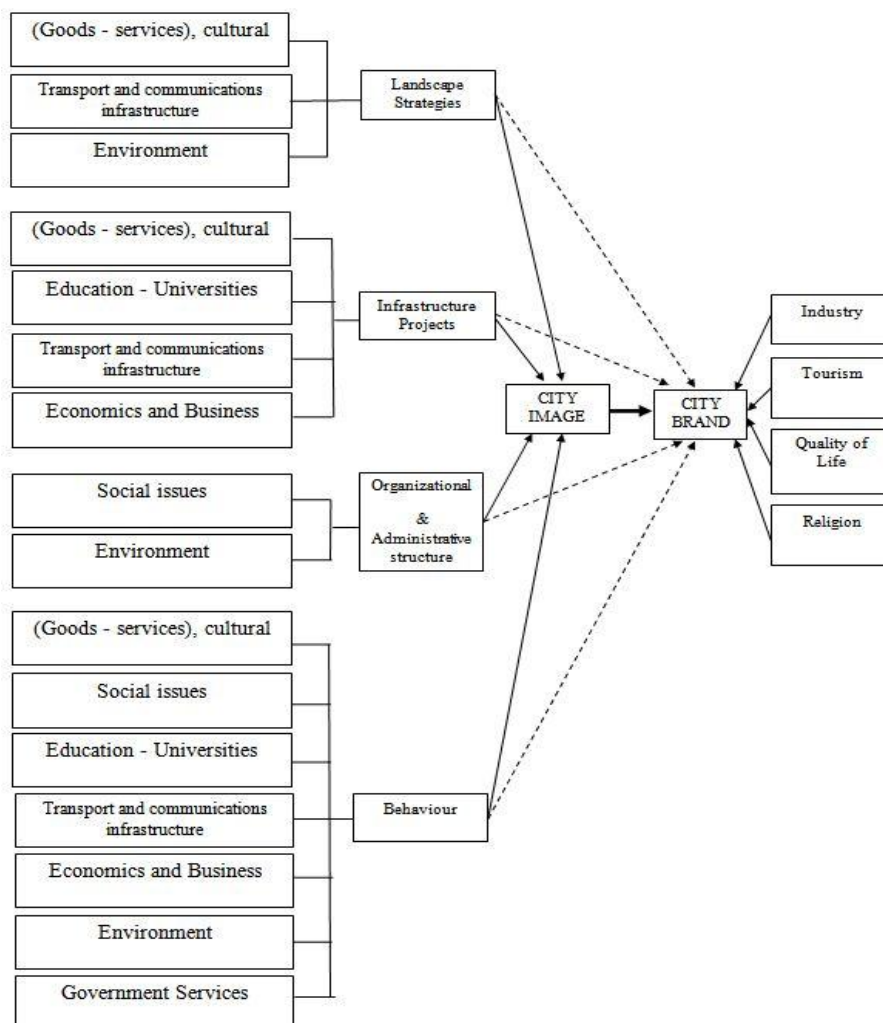


Figure 1- research model (Martines et al., 2007, Kavaratzis, 2004, Kavaratzis& Ashworth, 2007)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table1- regression coefficient and significance of relation between landscape strategy and city image of Aran and Bidgol

Hypothesis	Directroute	Regression coefficient	p-value	Result
1	Landscape strategy →city image	0.48	0.005	confirmed

Table 2- Regression coefficient and significance of relation between infrastructure projects and city image

Hypothesis	Directroute	Regression coefficient	p-value	Result
2	Infrastructure projects →city image	0.68	0/006	confirmed

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Table 3- Regression coefficient and significance of relation between managerial and organizational structure and city image

Hypothesis	Directroute	Regression coefficient	p-value	Result
3	Organizational and administrative structure →city image	0.63	0.022	confirmed

Table 4- Regression coefficient and significance of relation between city behavior and city image

Hypothesis	Directroute	Regression coefficient	p-value	Result
4	City behavior→city image	0.34	0.041	confirmed

Table 5- Regression coefficient and significance of relation between city image and city brand

Hypothesis	Directroute	Regression coefficient	p-value	Result
5	City image →city brand	0.78	0.000	confirmed

RESULTS

As you can see, the results confirm the hypothesis that direct all recognize the 05/0. On the other hand, according to the regression coefficients Project area by a factor of 68/0 had a greater effect than other areas of the city and the areas of organizational and administrative structure by a factor of 63/0, the strategy aspect ratio of 48/0 and Behavior urban ratio of 34/0, respectively, are the next priorities. The fifth hypothesis of regression coefficient 78/0 represents the impact on the brand image of the city.

According to model (figure 1), at the detection level of 0.05 all the aspects that were considered for the city brand of Aran and Bidgol is effective on the city brand. Among them, industrial brand and living quality brand with a regression coefficient of 0.73 have the most impact and has the same impact on city brand while religious brand and tourism brand are placed after with a coefficient of 0.45 and 0.44 respectively.

DISCUSSION

About the first hypothesis which examines the influence of landscape strategy on the city image of Aran and Bidgol, the results of this research confirms this hypothesis. Landscape strategy refers to a part of backgrounds and urban decisions which is related to city design, architecture, green space, and in general the public spaces in the city. The result of the study shows a relation and positive impact in this domain over the city image of Aran and Bidgol. It ranks third in comparison to other domains in terms of influence. Kavaratzis (2004) also names landscape strategy as one of the domains in the initial communication of the city image in his paper and acknowledges the influence of this domain and its aspects over the city image. Zenker (2011) also acknowledges kavaratzis view and names landscape strategy as “physic of place”. Martines&et. al. (2007) in the paper “modeling a city image: the case of Granada” acknowledge the relation and influence of culture, environment, traffic and communicative infrastructures and transportation on city image. These points were used as the aspects of landscape strategy domain in the present research. About the second hypothesis which examines the influence of infrastructure projects domain on the city image of Aran and Bidgol, the results of this research confirms this hypothesis and the positive impact of this domain on city image of Aran and Bidgol. Infrastructure projects refer to projects that create or improve an extensive identity of the city; the most important point about this domain is the availability and adequacy of existing facilities and amenities in the city. The research result shows this domain has the first rate in terms of influence on city image of Aran and Bidgol which indicates the importance of this domain and its aspects. Kavaratzis (2004) also names infrastructure projects as one of the domains in the initial communication of the city image in his paper and acknowledges the influence of this domain and its aspects over the city image. Zenker (2011) also

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CONCLUSION

Results show that landscape strategy, infrastructure projects, organizational and administrative structure and city behavior has an impact on city brand, But the influence of these dimensions are equal.

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