

THE ANTECEDENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE CITY BRANDING: A COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

Reimond Kowaas¹, Jeane Cicilia Syamsia², Deske W. Mandagi³

Magister Management, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Klabat, Indonesia^{1,2,3}

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

brand, city brand, city branding, place brand, destination branding

The aim of this study is to identify the key factors contributing to successful city branding. The methodology employed was a systematic literature review, which involved the searching and analysis of fifty scientific articles from Scopus and Web of Science databases. The selection and screening process were carried out by implementing certain criteria, such as empirical research and a publication date no earlier than 2015. Through thematic analysis, key antecedents for effective city branding are identified. These factors encompass cultural identity, community engagement, environmental and natural elements, governance, safety, infrastructure, and services. The city's unique identity is enriched by the addition of cultural heritage, and a sense of ownership among residents is fostered by community engagement, injecting vitality into the brand narrative. Coherence in the branding message is ensured by effective governance, and the physical and functional attributes of the city are shaped by infrastructure, serving as a foundational element. The city's attractions are capitalized on by tourism initiatives, and perceptions are shaped by strategic marketing. The intricate interplay and collective influence of these diverse factors on the overall efficacy of city branding campaigns are probed into by the study. Ultimately, decision-makers are provided with informed insights, facilitating the cultivation of proficient city branding practices within the fiercely competitive urban landscape. By transcending superficial attributes and adeptly navigating complex interrelations, resonant branding strategies can be crafted by cities, positioning themselves for success in the global arena.

E-mail:

deskemandagi@unklab.ac.id

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1. INTRODUCTION

City branding has become a strategic imperative for local governments and municipal authorities worldwide, as cities increasingly compete on a global stage for talent, investment, tourism, and recognition. Understanding the antecedents of effective city branding is crucial for devising successful strategies that can enhance a city's image and reputation (Shirvani & De Luca, 2019). One of the foremost justifications for the expeditious pursuit of research in this domain resides in the heightened competitive landscape prevailing among cities (Mandagi et al., 2021). As the process of urbanization undergoes an accelerated trajectory, cities are confronted with multifarious predicaments encompassing issues such as urban congestion, environmental degradation, and resource scarcity (Singh & Singh, 2017). City branding's effectiveness is crucial, attracting businesses, tourists, and residents, fostering economic growth, and promoting sustainability. In a competitive era where cities vie to be top destinations, understanding the key elements of successful city branding is essential.

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the significance of city branding. Many cities have had to adapt rapidly to the new normal, and effective branding has been instrumental in conveying crucial information, building trust, and promoting resilience (Bereitschaft & Scheller, 2020; Lai et al., 2020; Sharifi & Khavarian-Garmsir, 2020). This crisis has shown that a well-branded city can respond more effectively to emergencies and maintain the confidence of its residents and investors and prospective investors (Lai et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the scholarly rationale for this research endeavor is underscored by its potential to proffer empirically substantiated counsel to urban planners, marketing practitioners, and policymakers. A systematic review of extant literature in this domain affords the prospect of delineating salient antecedents, encompassing elements such as cultural attributes, infrastructural development, governance

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frameworks, and community engagement strategies that constitute pivotal determinants of efficacious city branding (Ambalao et al., 2022; Mandagi et al., 2022). Armed with the insights gleaned from such a scholarly pursuit, cities are poised to optimize the allocation of resources, facilitating the judicious tailoring of their branding initiatives to harmonize with their unique strengths and challenges (Sharifi & Khavarian-Garmsir, 2020).

The concept of city branding extends beyond conventional marketing. It encapsulates the process of crafting and disseminating a narrative about a city, encompassing its culture, history, infrastructure, governance, and overall quality of life. An effectively branded city can influence perceptions, engender pride among its residents, attract investors, tourists, and residents, and ultimately foster economic growth and sustainability (Ambalao et al., 2022; Mandagi et al., 2022; Walean et al., 2023)

This research endeavors to explore the multifaceted antecedents that underpin effective city branding. It aims to identify the key determinants that contribute to the successful construction of a city's brand image, encompassing elements such as cultural identity, physical infrastructure, governance structures, and community engagement. By conducting a systematic review of existing literature, this study seeks to provide evidence-based insights that can guide city planners, marketers, and policymakers in enhancing their cities' brand image, thereby fostering sustainable development and global competitiveness.

The study of the antecedents of effective city branding represents a critical area of research due to the existence of several significant theoretical gaps in the current literature. Firstly, existing research often lacks a comprehensive and systematic examination of the various factors that influence city branding. While some studies have focused on specific dimensions such as infrastructure or cultural identity, there is a dearth of research that synthesizes these factors into a holistic framework (Oguztimur & Akturan, 2016; Górska-Warsewicz, 2020). Understanding how these different antecedents interact and collectively contribute to effective city branding remains an underexplored territory (Oguztimur & Akturan, 2016). Secondly, there is a lack of consensus and clarity in how effective city branding is conceptualized and measured, leading to difficulties in comparing findings across studies. Developing a unified theoretical framework for assessing city branding effectiveness is crucial for advancing the field. Moreover, the impact of external shocks like the COVID-19 pandemic on city branding strategies and their effectiveness remains underexplored, highlighting a critical theoretical gap (Bereitschaft & Scheller, 2020; Lai et al., 2020; Sharifi & Khavarian-Garmsir, 2020).

This systematic investigation into the antecedents of effective city branding offers both practical and theoretical implications. On a practical note, it provides valuable insights for city planners and marketers to tailor branding strategies according to identified factors, enhancing a city's image and competitiveness. Understanding the influence of digital technologies and social media enables more effective online engagement. Theoretical implications involve the development of a comprehensive framework that unifies diverse perspectives, fostering a coherent body of knowledge. This framework can guide further empirical research and enrich our understanding of city branding, crisis management, and cross-cultural factors, ultimately contributing to the sustainable development and global recognition of cities in an interconnected world.

2. METHOD

This study utilized the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method, which refers to a rigorous research approach employed to collect and evaluate studies related to a specific topic within a particular field or discipline (Xiao & Watson, 2019). This method is utilized to systematically identify and analyze pertinent literature with the ultimate goal of advancing a more profound understanding of the selected subject matter. The SLR process involves conducting a comprehensive investigation that encompasses various objectives, such as identifying, examining, evaluating, and interpreting all existing research within a captivating domain of interest, with a specific focus on relevant research inquiries (Okoli & Schabram, 2015). Figure 1 summarizes the stages in the SLR employed in this study.

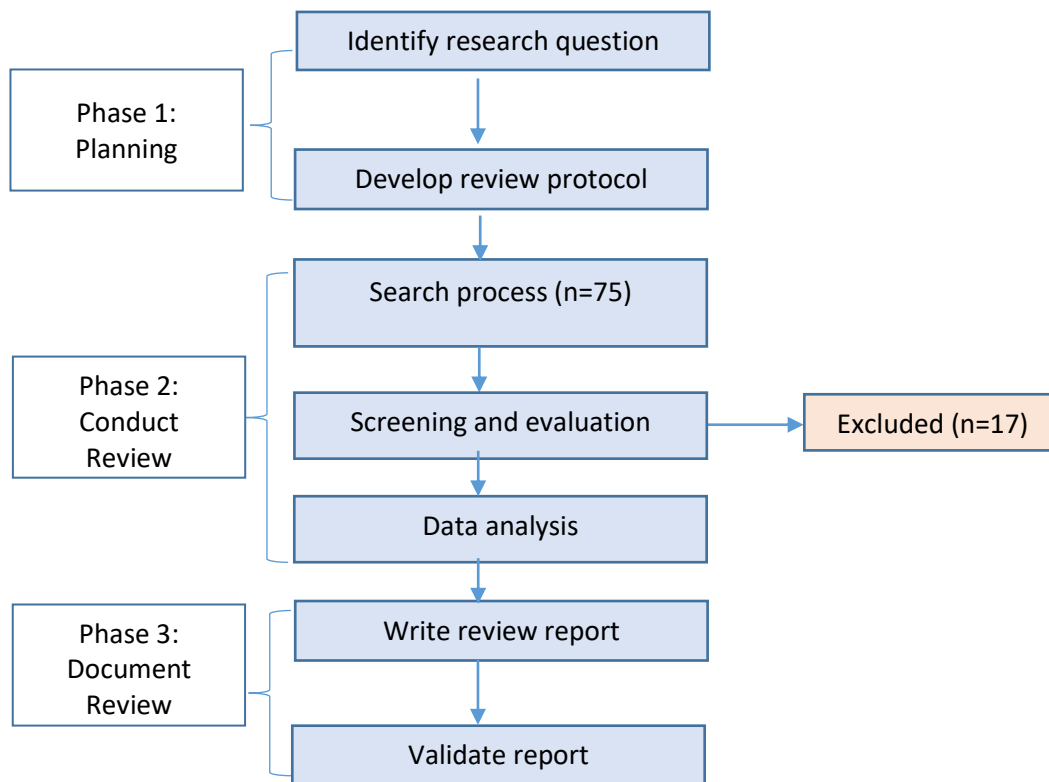


Figure 1. Steps in the SLR Process
(Xiao & Watson, 2019)

The first step involves identifying the research question (RQ) that will guide the investigation. In this study, careful consideration has been given to crafting research questions that align with the specific requirements of the chosen topic. The research question formulated for this study is: "What factors contribute to successful city branding?" This well-constructed RQ aims to delve into the extensive effects and results of transformational leadership practices in today's rapidly changing digital landscape. By focusing the study on this precise research question, the systematic literature review aims to shed light on and offer a thorough understanding of this critical aspect of contemporary leadership within the digital age. The second step involves the development and refinement of a review protocol. This protocol serves as a structured plan that outlines the methods and procedures that will be followed throughout the review process. Creating a well-defined protocol is crucial for maintaining transparency, rigor, and replicability in the review.

During the third stage, an extensive search was conducted to gather relevant sources addressing the research question and related references on the chosen topic. The primary objective was to obtain high-quality and pertinent materials, ensuring the credibility and strength of the research. This phase involved a thorough exploration of respected databases, such as Scopus, to identify valuable literature from renowned journals. Scopus proved advantageous due to its wide-ranging coverage of scholarly publications in diverse fields, enabling a comprehensive retrieval of crucial literature. The search process required meticulous attention to detail, aiming to pinpoint the most appropriate and informative resources. This effort significantly bolstered the scholarly rigor of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and enriched the depth of understanding regarding the selected subject matter. Currently, 75 relevant articles have been extracted from the database at this stage.

The fourth stage consists of reviewing and selecting articles to confirm their alignment with the defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. This step is essential for assessing the suitability of the gathered data for the systematic literature review. The selection of articles is guided by distinct criteria that help decide if a study should be included. The criteria for article inclusion are outlined in Table 1. By applying these criteria, the researchers intend to gather a thorough and appropriate collection of studies that match the goals of the systematic literature review.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of a comprehensive and systematic analysis of related literature underscore the multifaceted and intricate determinants that contribute to effective city branding. These encompass factors such as cultural identity and community engagement, environmental and natural elements, governance and safety, as well as infrastructure and services. The following sections delve into an in-depth exploration of each of these facets that shape the foundations of city branding.

Cultural Identity and Community Engagement

Cultural identity is a complex and multifaceted concept that plays a pivotal role in shaping the branding and image of cities around the world. A city's cultural identity is the sum of its history, traditions, art, cuisine, language, and the unique characteristics that set it apart from other urban centers (Ziyaee, 2018). This identity is not only a source of pride for residents but also a powerful tool for city branding. It provides a unique narrative that distinguishes one city from another (Mandagi & Sondakh, 2022). For example, Jakarta is often celebrated for its rich cultural diversity. It's a melting pot of different ethnicities, languages, and traditions. This diversity is reflected in its people, food, and cultural events. The city often promotes itself as a place where various cultures coexist and thrive, making it an exciting and vibrant destination for tourists. As a home to numerous museums, galleries, and cultural institutions, the city actively promotes its art scene, hosting exhibitions, performances, and cultural events. It brands itself as a cultural hub where traditional and contemporary art forms thrive. Bandung, on the other hand, is celebrated for its vibrant and youthful atmosphere, romantic ambiance, creative scene, and culinary excellence. These distinctive cultural identities form the foundation of each city's brand, attracting tourists, investors, and residents. Bandung's fashion designers and creative entrepreneurs are gaining international recognition, and the city hosts various fashion events and art exhibitions, adding to its reputation as a creative and artistic hub. Surrounded by picturesque landscapes, makes it an attractive destination for eco-tourism and outdoor enthusiasts.

Community engagement is a vital component in shaping the branding of a city. It goes beyond slogans, logos, and advertising campaigns, as it involves active participation, collaboration, and interaction with the local residents, businesses, and stakeholders (Mandagi & Aseng, 2021). When effectively executed, community engagement can significantly influence a city's identity and reputation. Firstly, community engagement fosters a sense of belonging and pride among residents (Ambalao et al., 2022). When residents feel heard and valued in decision-making processes, they are more likely to have a positive perception of their city (Wulyatiningsih & Mandagi, 2023). Engaged communities contribute to a vibrant local culture, which can become a defining characteristic of the city's brand (Shirvani & De Luca, 2019). For example, Bali as a global tourism destination that actively involve their citizens in cultural events, public art installations, and local initiatives often develop a reputation as culturally rich and diverse places to live and visit.

Secondly, community engagement helps identify and address local issues. Through open dialogue and feedback mechanisms, cities can better understand the concerns and aspirations of their residents (Ambalao et al., 2022). By proactively addressing these issues, such as traffic congestion, environmental sustainability, or affordable housing, cities can enhance their image as responsive and forward-thinking. Consequently, they become known for their commitment to quality of life, further shaping their brand.

Environmental and Natural Factors

Environmental and natural factors are integral antecedents of effective city branding. A city's natural surroundings, environmental initiatives, cultural activities, and community engagement all contribute to its unique identity and appeal (Katsikeas, 2016). As cities increasingly compete for attention and investment in a globalized world, those that harness their natural assets and prioritize sustainability are better positioned to build strong and lasting brands (Parkinson et al., 2017). In the age of conscious consumerism and responsible tourism, cities must recognize the vital role that their environmental and natural factors play in shaping their brand and driving their success.

Firstly, a city's natural environment, including its landscape, climate, and biodiversity, greatly influences its brand (Mandagi et al., 2022). A city blessed with natural beauty, such as stunning landscapes, pristine beaches, or lush greenery, has a distinct advantage in attracting tourists and residents. For instance, cities like Bandung, Manado, and Ubud have leveraged their breathtaking natural surroundings to build strong brands associated with outdoor activities, adventure, and a high quality of life. Bandung, the capital of West Java is nestled amid lush green mountains and beautiful landscapes have earned it a reputation as the "Paris of Java." Located on the island of Flores, Labuan Bajo has embraced its role as the starting point for adventure seekers looking to

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explore the park's unique wildlife and pristine waters. Manado, in North Sulawesi has developed a brand associated with underwater exploration, marine conservation, and a high quality of life for divers and marine enthusiasts (Walean et al., 2023).

Moreover, a favorable environmental record and sustainability efforts can enhance a city's brand. In today's environmentally conscious world, cities that prioritize clean energy, efficient transportation, green spaces, and waste reduction projects are seen as forward-thinking and progressive (Singh & Singh, 2017). For example, Yogyakarta, often referred to as Jogja, has made efforts to become a more sustainable and environmentally friendly city, attracting eco-conscious travelers and businesses. The city has been working on waste management programs and aims to reduce its carbon footprint through public transportation improvements and green urban planning. Sustainability initiatives not only improve a city's image but also contribute to its long-term appeal and competitiveness.

Furthermore, natural factors can inspire cultural and recreational activities that define a city's brand. A city's natural assets often serve as the backdrop for various cultural events and recreational opportunities. Festivals and cultural celebrations held in beautiful natural settings create memorable experiences for residents and visitors alike. For instance, Tomohon International Flower Festival (TIFF), set against the backdrop of its lush green mountains and stunning landscapes, has become synonymous with the city's distinctive features and characteristics (Mandagi, 2023; Mandagi & Aseng, 2021).

Additionally, environmental conservation efforts can foster a sense of pride and belonging among residents. When a city prioritizes the preservation of its natural heritage, it fosters a strong sense of identity and community (Ambalao et al., 2021). Residents are more likely to participate in branding initiatives and promote their city as a desirable place to live, work, and visit (Mandagi et al., 2021). Bali, often referred to as the "Island of the Gods," is famous for its stunning beaches, lush rice terraces, and vibrant marine life. Bali's commitment to preserving its natural beauty has not only shaped its brand as a green and environmentally conscious city but has also instilled civic pride among its residents. Central to Bali's brand and its commitment to preserving this natural beauty is the Subak system, a traditional water management system that has played a crucial role in shaping the island's landscapes and sustaining its agricultural practices for over a thousand years. As Bali continues to grapple with tourism-related challenges and environmental conservation, the Subak system serves as a model for sustainable land use and community-based natural resource management. It not only sustains Bali's brand as a haven of natural beauty but also exemplifies the harmonious coexistence of culture and nature, making it a significant contributor to Bali's global appeal as a unique and culturally rich destination.

Governance and Safety

Good governance plays a pivotal role in city branding. When a city is well-governed, it tends to have efficient public services, transparent decision-making processes, and policies that promote sustainable development (Shirvani & De Luca, 2019). These attributes are highly appealing to potential investors and residents, as they create an environment conducive to business growth and a high quality of life. For instance, a city with well-maintained infrastructure, reliable public transportation, and a commitment to environmental sustainability will undoubtedly attract positive attention.

Political stability plays a pivotal role in shaping city branding, influencing perceptions, attracting investments, and fostering sustainable development (Górska-Warsewicz, 2020). A stable political environment within a city provides the foundation for effective governance, economic growth, and overall societal well-being (Oguztimur & Akturan, 2016). Firstly, political stability instills confidence and trust among residents, businesses, and investors. A stable government ensures consistent policies, regulations, and long-term planning, giving businesses the confidence to invest and operate within the city (Górska-Warsewicz, 2020). This stability is a fundamental aspect of a city's brand, reflecting reliability and predictability in its functioning. Secondly, a politically stable city is more likely to project a positive image globally. It becomes an attractive destination for international investments, tourism, and talent. A city known for its stability is perceived as a safe and secure place for people to live, work, and visit. This positive perception directly contributes to the city's brand, attracting a diverse range of stakeholders and promoting growth (Sijabat et al., 2022).

Furthermore, political stability facilitates effective governance by enabling the implementation of sustainable development strategies (Mandagi et al., 2023). Policies focused on infrastructure development, environmental sustainability, and social welfare can be pursued with consistency and dedication, enhancing the city's overall image. A city with a strong brand identity based on stability and good governance can leverage this image to negotiate partnerships, collaborations, and funding for various initiatives.

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However, it's important to note that branding is not merely about projecting a positive image but also about aligning the city's brand with its unique identity, values, and aspirations (Waworuntu et al., 2022). While political stability forms a critical aspect of city branding, it must be complemented by inclusivity, transparency, and the involvement of various stakeholders to create a holistic and genuine brand that resonates with both the local population and the international community (Wulyatiningsih & Mandagi, 2023). Overall, political stability is a cornerstone in shaping a city's brand, influencing its trajectory towards prosperity and sustainability.

City branding strategies are designed to highlight a city's unique characteristics, and cost of living is a fundamental aspect. Governments and city planners play a vital role in shaping policies that influence the cost of living, directly impacting the city's image and branding (Lebo & Mandagi, 2023). Striking a balance to ensure a reasonable cost of living while maintaining or enhancing the city's attractiveness is a critical governance challenge in urban development and branding (Rondonuwu & Mandagi, 2023). Cities with a reasonable cost of living are often branded as attractive places for residents, professionals, and businesses. A lower cost of living implies affordability in housing, daily expenses, and overall lifestyle, making a city appealing for those seeking a good quality of life without excessive financial strain. Conversely, cities with a high cost of living may position themselves as centers of luxury, sophistication, or exclusivity. These cities often target high-income individuals and businesses, promoting a premium lifestyle and services. However, managing a high cost of living is a delicate balance, as it must align with the perceived value and amenities offered.

Safety is another crucial aspect of effective city branding. People are naturally drawn to places where they feel secure and can enjoy their lives without constant worry about crime or accidents. A city that prioritizes safety not only enhances the well-being of its residents but also appeals to tourists and investors. Low crime rates and effective emergency services contribute to the perception of a city as a desirable destination for both leisure and business.

The hospitality sector, as part of governance, significantly impacts city branding by creating a welcoming environment that amplifies the city's unique identity, promotes economic growth, and fosters a positive image in the eyes of the world (Rondonuwu & Mandagi, 2023). City branding involves cultivating a unique identity and positioning a city in the global marketplace. Exceptional hospitality services are a fundamental aspect of this identity, showcasing the city's culture, heritage, and values. Visitors' experiences with local hospitality, including accommodations, dining, and cultural events, directly influence their perception of the city. Satisfied visitors become advocates, promoting the city's brand through word-of-mouth and social media. When cities prioritize and enhance their hospitality offerings, they create a positive and lasting impression on visitors, residents, and businesses. A welcoming and well-served environment reflects a city's commitment to inclusivity, economic growth, and tourism development.

Infrastructure and Services

Physical infrastructure is an integral part of governance in city branding, influencing how a city is perceived globally and locally. Well-planned and aesthetically pleasing infrastructure can project an image of modernity, efficiency, and progress, crucial for a positive city brand (Mandagi et al., 2021). Cities strategically design and invest in their infrastructure to convey specific messages to residents, visitors, and investors. Iconic landmarks, sustainable buildings, and smart transportation systems highlight a city's commitment to sustainability and innovation. Conversely, neglected or outdated infrastructure can tarnish a city's image, implying inefficiency or a lack of progress. Moreover, accessibility and connectivity, facilitated by a well-maintained infrastructure, are critical for a city's economic development and tourism (Shirvani & De Luca, 2019). Efficient transportation systems and easily navigable layouts showcase a city's convenience and livability, enhancing its brand as an attractive destination for both residents and businesses (Oguztimur & Akturan, 2016).

Healthcare facilities are a crucial component of a city's infrastructure which are instrumental in crafting a city's brand and image. A city's healthcare system reflects its commitment to the well-being of its residents and visitors, influencing the perception and reputation of the city (Górska-Warsewicz, 2020). Accessible, efficient, and high-quality healthcare services contribute to a positive city image, attracting businesses, tourists, and residents. Firstly, a well-functioning healthcare infrastructure establishes trust and confidence in the city's governance. It assures people that the city prioritizes their health, providing essential services and fostering a sense of security. This trust translates into a favorable perception of the city, impacting its brand image (Abin et al., 2022). Secondly, healthcare facilities are often considered a vital part of a city's economic development

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strategy. Advanced medical facilities and research centers can attract healthcare professionals, researchers, and medical tourism, boosting the city's economy and branding it as a hub for medical excellence. Furthermore, healthcare facilities can act as cultural ambassadors, reflecting a city's commitment to diversity and inclusivity. Inclusive healthcare services resonate with a city's values, promoting a positive brand that appeals to a wide audience.

In the modern era, a city's digital presence is a significant determinant of its image and reputation (Waworuntu et al., 2022). City branding, a strategic process to establish a city's unique identity and appeal, is heavily influenced by the extent and effectiveness of its digital connectivity. Through digital connectivity, cities can highlight sustainable practices, innovation, and smart urban development initiatives, contributing to a positive brand image (Wulus et al., 2022). Conversely, inadequate digital connectivity or a poorly managed online presence can hinder a city's branding efforts, leading to misrepresentation and missed opportunities for growth and development. In essence, digital connectivity is an integral tool for cities to craft and amplify their brand, fostering economic growth, attracting stakeholders, and enhancing overall livability.

Cities utilize digital platforms and technologies to showcase their cultural, economic, environmental, and social attributes. Websites, social media, interactive maps, virtual tours, and multimedia content allow cities to exhibit their strengths and distinctiveness (Poluan et al., 2022; Wulus et al., 2022). Efficient digital infrastructure enables cities to engage with a diverse audience, attracting tourism, investment, and talent. Moreover, online platforms enable real-time communication and feedback, facilitating citizen engagement and participation in governance processes (Sijabat et al., 2022).

Through digital connectivity, cities can highlight sustainable practices, innovation, and smart urban development initiatives, contributing to a positive brand image. Conversely, inadequate digital connectivity or a poorly managed online presence can hinder a city's branding efforts, leading to misrepresentation, and missed opportunities for growth and development. In essence, digital connectivity is an integral tool for cities to craft and amplify their brand, fostering economic growth, attracting stakeholders, and enhancing overall livability (Poluan et al., 2022). Figure 1 encapsulates the antecedents and elements vital for effective city branding, illustrating the multifaceted nature of this process. The elements of effective city branding, showcased in in this figure, encompass various interconnected components.

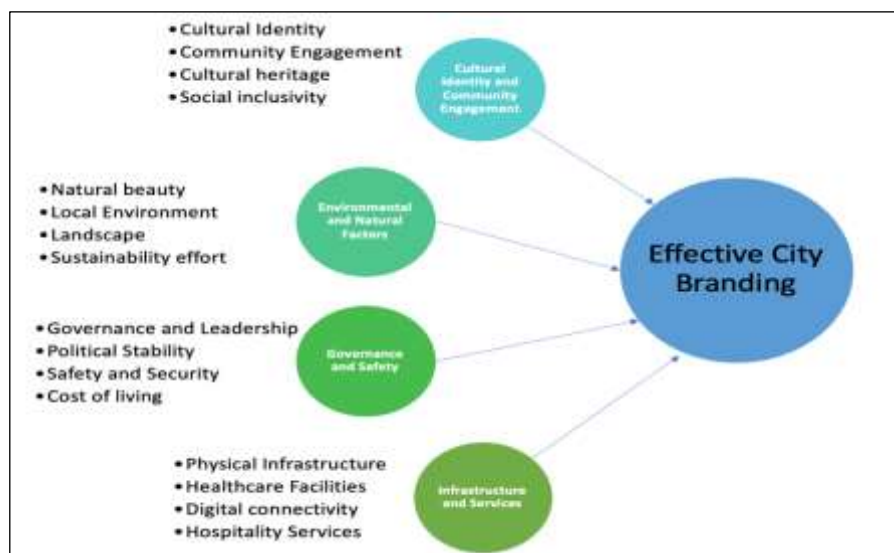


Figure 2. Antecedents for effective city branding

4. CONCLUSIONS

The study provides a comprehensive analysis of the determinants crucial for effective city branding, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of the process. The key factors identified include cultural identity, community engagement, environmental and natural elements, governance, safety, infrastructure, and services. Cultural identity, encompassing history, traditions, art, and cuisine, forms a distinctive narrative for city branding. Community engagement, extending beyond slogans, fosters belonging and positive perceptions when residents are actively involved in decision-making

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processes. Environmental factors, such as natural surroundings and sustainability efforts, contribute significantly to a city's brand, influencing its attractiveness to residents and investors. In conclusion, the study underscores the interconnected components vital for effective city branding. The multifaceted nature of the process is encapsulated in Figure 1, illustrating the interplay of various elements. Recommendations for city branding include a focus on enhancing cultural identity, fostering community engagement, prioritizing environmental sustainability, ensuring good governance, promoting safety, investing in infrastructure, and optimizing digital connectivity to amplify a city's unique brand in the global landscape.

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