

CITY BRANDING FOR RESIDENTS AND TOURISTS - IN CASE OF A HUNGARIAN TOWN, SÜMEG

Szandra Gombos, Péter Somogyi, Krisztofer Szabó, Máté Vasáros

Széchenyi István University, Hungary

City branding has been practiced consciously or unconsciously since cities exist (Kavaratzis & Ashworth 2004). So it is not a miracle, that this field of marketing contributes more and more to the academic community, and plays an even greater role in the pragmatics (Hankinson's 2001). According to Kotler and Zaltmann (1971) city marketing is the subcategory of social marketing, which is basically all activity carried out to solve social problems. Therefore our goal was to create a city marketing plan, that aspires to make people's environment and perceived quality of our subject matter, a Hungarian town called Sümeg better, and not taking into obligate consideration the interests of certain investors, and presidents of foundations (Andreasen, 2006). Of course by people we mean the residents of Sümeg, and potential tourists. Due to the complexity, and the high number of participants required to produce a touristic product (Lengyel, 2004), a unified concept, and brand strategy was needed, in order to increase the touristical traffic of Sümeg. As consumers require greater interactivity, and custom services (Piskóti, 2012), we have prepared several creative means of marketing communication. We are using the methods of in-depth interview made with the town's leadership, and quantitative research in the form of questionnaires with potential visitors, and the residents of Sümeg.

Keywords: city branding, city image

Introduction

City marketing is becoming the center of interest on both national and international level, and it requires a strict practical approach. It's the subject of numerous competitions, and conferences. The authors became an active representatives of Hungary's city branding circles, and they are putting their theoretical researches into practical use. Although the popularity of city marketing only catching up lately, it has been applied consciously or subconsciously since cities exist (KAVARATZIS & ASWORTH 2004). It appeared in Hungary around the 80' in a rather business-like approach, but due to its fail to succeed, it became a subject of theoretical approaches, and found its way to applied sciences. According to Kotler (2003) cities nowadays are always trying to find a way to attract their target market. Due to the rapid technical development and the globalization, the competition amongst cities enhanced to a great extent. The goal is to create better and better workplaces and attractions for tourists by making the quality of the services of the city higher and higher.

As the city- and place marketing is receiving more and more emphasis in the last few decades, it became one of the most dynamically developing branch of the marketing sciences. Many municipalities have achieved great success by developing a city brand, or by repositioning themselves (BIANCHINI 1993; BOYLE és HUGHES 1991). This paper introduces a similarly successful case: - based on both national and international aspect – Sümeg.

Theoretical approach

City marketing is part of social marketing. Of course latter is a very wide category, the creators of the definition, Kotler and Zaltman (1971) simply described it as the solving of social problems, others said that it aims toward the changing of the attitude of particular groups, which have deteriorative impact on the public-benefit (DINYA L. 2011). Andreasen (2006: 25) said, that social marketing is about making the world a better place for everyone, not just the great investors, and the presidents of big foundations. Piskóti (2012: 20) has split social marketing into institute-oriented, and problem-oriented sections, furthermore into non-business, and business level. The former is interpreted on the long run as its goal is making benefit for the society, the latter is a rather short term interpretation, which only looks for the maximum profit of a region or municipality.

G. J. Asworth's (2006) four-level approach examines city marketing as place marketing, based on:

- Geographical nomenclature
- Co-branding
- The place, as a product for sale
- Place management.

The latter approach is the one which embraces the definition of city-branding in its complexity. Its aim is to change the people's perceptions of a given place. It is a kind of making of an identity, which can strive for the satisfaction of the residents, encouraging investments, influencing the behaviour of the visitors, or making political profit (ASWORTH 2006).

Amongst Hungarian experts, the definition of István Piskóti is the most complex on regional- and place marketing: „marketing is a market-oriented, coordinating tool, which supports regional development. It uses a unified identity and image to communicate, and to position the region or municipality, in order to form it into a brand. So it is both a management duty and a concrete system of tools” (PISKÓTI 2012). In conclusion city marketing is the sum of complex, differentiating actions, which are looking for uniqueness, and the interests of the society (ASWORTH 2009).

City identity, city brand, city image

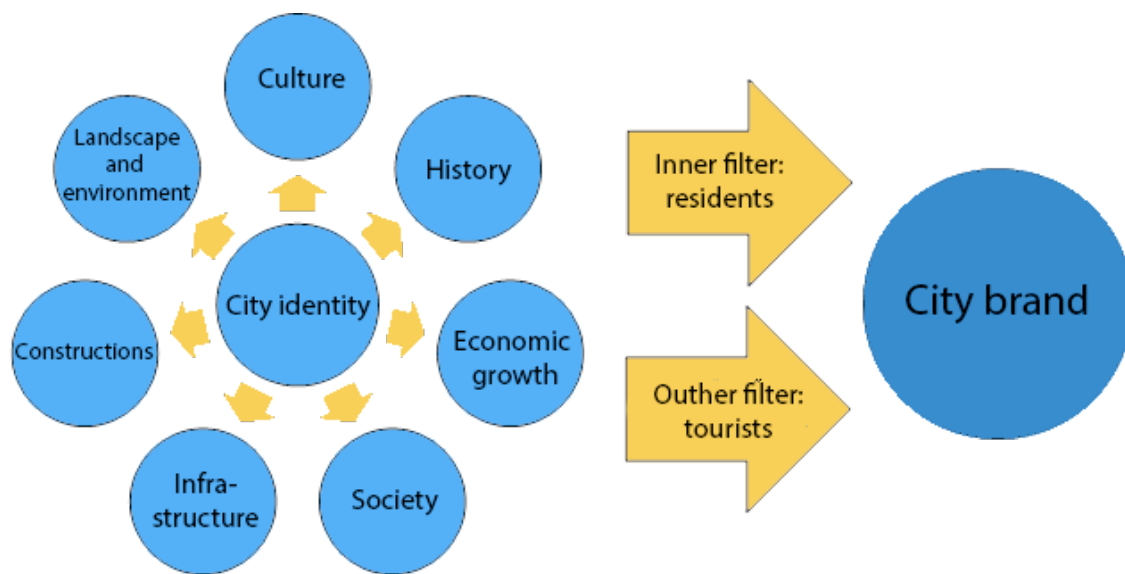
Based on the studies of Piskóti (2012), Vanolo (2008) and Riza et. al. (2012), Gombos (2015) states that city identity, city brand and city image are forming a mutually coherent, tight system. The three definitions have mutual coverage over each other to a certain extent. “City image is a subjective image forming in people's minds, which is affected by their identity, and the consciously built city brand. Furthermore the brand and the image reacts to the changes of the identity (GOMBOS 2015)”.

The structure of the image however can be examined from two points of view, on the first hand it's the internal image, which is perceived, and recreated by the residents, using their local components of identity. On the other hand, there is the external image, which is based on the perception of the participants outside the everyday life of the city (VANOLO 2008).

Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2006) say that the external image is much easier to control with tools of communication, so that must be the priority when evolving a city brand (GOMBOS 2015).

The most important factor in external image is tourism, because it greatly defines the quality of a city brand. Numerous studies proved (BIGNE et al. 2001; CHEN et al. 2007; CHI et al. 2008) the positive correlation between the place image and the satisfaction of the tourists. „A strong, positive image has positive influence on the satisfaction of the visitors, and this is also true translated reversed, because the satisfaction of the tourists and the residents has positive influence on the city image” (GOMBOS 2015). The first figure shows the important factors of a city brand from the point of view of tourism.

Figure 1. The relation between city identity and city brand in the practice (edited based on the researches of VANOLO (2008) and ZANG (2009))



Every factors shown in figure 1. is important for our subject city, Sümeg, but the study emphasizes culture, history, architecture and infrastructure, which are essential in the case of tourism.

From theory to practice

Practice shows, that there are basically three approaches in order to succesfully evolve a city brand (HANKINSON 2006; KAVARATZIS 2005):

- Event branding
- Personality branding (city rehabilitation, historical heritage, and the promotion of local customs and traditions)
- Flagship constructions (creating iconic buildings)

It is well discernible both in national and international level, that most of the cities apply the mentioned three approaches for their branding method. Of course these methods can not be defined so clearly, but there is always a most influential factor.

There are several good examples for cities to build their brand on certain events:

- The Flower Carnival in Debrecen has several decade of event branding experience behind it, forming the event into a tradition. It attracts more and more visitors year on year.
- Rio de Janeiro won the right to organize the 2016 Olympics. The city already had great experience in event branding methods (Rio Carnival), but Rio 2016 could be a great example of an event branding strategy, their logo and slogan: Passion & Transformation is a reflection of making creative content, and differentiating efforts, although the city should to deal with the negative image generated by the poverty with even greater efforts.

Furthermore there are several examples about cities in Hungary and over the seas, which build their brand on their historical heritage, and traditions.

- The tourism in Eger is built on its castle of great historical value. Their slogan: "It is your story" immediately makes connection between the visitor and the city.
- If we want to bring a good example of city marketing, we can not forget the leading branding methods of the United States. The city of Beaufort in Southern California can be a great example for any European cities, or towns let them be big or small, despite it has a population just over 13 000 people. The city's leadership utilizes the historical, and traditional values and the local enterprises at the same time for their branding strategy. Nevertheless it is unnecessary to mention only one example from the city marketing repertoire in the US, as it is almost a basic duty for cities to evolve a brand for municipalities ranging from small towns to mammoth cities.

The popularity of iconic buildings attracts great number of visitors, and even complete brands can be developed using a flagship construction:

- There are a lot of municipalities in Hungary that became the center of tourist's attention due to one iconic construction, for example the TV tower in Pécs. The leadership of the city successfully formed the tower to its own image.
- For an international example, we can rely on the researches of Asworth (2006) about the Gaudi Project. The city of Barcelona utilized the organic architectural style of Gaudi, and unified it with its own brand.

There are brands that apply much more complex approaches, like the I Amsterdam campaign in the Netherlands, which appears in every field of the city's marketing communication.

For complex city marketing methods a good Hungarian example is the „Adj Isten Szatmárban” brand. It can be connected to the village of Cégénydányád, and it combines the traditions, the brand value of the local products, and the promotion of local events.

In case if our subject town, Sümeg a similar approach could be applied when speaking of city branding techniques. A conception that relies on the present values, on the events, on culture (the legacy of Kisfaludy, a famous Hungarian poet) and also on the constructed heritages (the castle, and the baroque town center).

Research methodology - The city brand of Sümeg

The external image of Sümeg

In order to evaluate the current image of the town, we have made an online questionnaire with 250 potential visitors, which focused on the city image. After assessing the questions using mostly free associations methods, we were curious about the first thoughts and colors that came up to the minds of mostly Western Danubian responders. The results are displayed in the second figure.

Figure 2. Associations about Sümeg's present image (own edition using wordle.net)



It is clear that the current image of the town is centered around the castle, as it represents a great historical value, this is the main attraction for the visitors. The castle of Sümeg is in the care of a private entrepreneurship, commissioned by the city council and it delivers high quality services on each day of the year. The castle also defines the landscape of the city. The associated colours could be a great tool for defining the base colors of the brand's visualization.

The internal image of Sümeg

In order to define the problematics of building a brand, we made unstructured interviews with the town's leadership. We focused on getting actual and important information regarding the current situation of Sümeg.

In the local council we interviewed Végh László, the mayor, Kovács László, the deputy mayor and also the economic leader of the town. The basic problem was that the image of the city is overwhelmed by the castle, so most of the visitors are steering clear of the town, and the town center itself. The concrete aim of the town's leadership is to bring about a "living city" by enhancing the number of visitors in the town center. "It would be beneficial to handle the values of the castle's, and the city center's constructed heritage as a unified concept" (Regional Aerial Development Programme of Veszprém County 2014-2020). The conclusion of the discussion with the town council, and also the basic need of the leadership was to enhance the marketing communication of all the idle values of the municipality, let it be constructed or intangible touristic resource.

The present brand of Sümeg

As both the qualitative and the quantitative researches approved, the current brand of Sümeg is built upon the castle, Hotel Kapitány and on the programmes with middle age thematics. Even the Google Search Engine optimizes its results according to our findings.

There is not any unified concept, marketing plan or well-developed image about the city as a whole what so ever, because as we mentioned, the castle and the town center are forming two different axis in tourism traffic, dominated by the castle, despite that "the town center is considered to be such a great national value, that it might even be referred to as a potential part of the UNESCO world heritage" (Regional Aerial Development Programme of Veszprém County 2014-2020). The city council believes that with proper marketing campaign it would be possible to create demand for the idle values of the town.

Branding opportunities in Sümeg

There are numerous ways and possibilities to develop a brand in Sümeg:

- Industry: The outskirts of the town was declared industrial park in 2015, so the number of industrial investments were multiplied. However Sümeg would need further ten hectares of land for greenfield investments, because most of the inquiring investors are to be refused.
- Culture: Due to the community college law, an economics training of Wekerle Sándor Business College will launch in september 2016. This would be very advantageous for the town, as the young would stay for their studies, and there would be even greater interest from the neighbouring municipalities. According to the quality of the training system and the intensity of marketing communication, the college could even manage national or international level of acknowledgement, as every criterion is given for a successful launch.
- Sport: The main strength of Sümeg is in volleyball regarding sports. By creating a reinforcement academy, and by hosting national or even international volleyball competitions, the town could kickstart a possible sport's brand.
- Tourism: The differentia specifica of Sümeg, and also the greatest overall strength of the town lies in tourism, as its resources in this field are inexhaustible, thus defining our main focus in city branding.

The opportunities in tourism:

- Wine tourism: The enhancement of commercial value of the vines on the castle hill, the Palace Cellars. Including them in the Northern Balaton Wine Path Region would be beneficial.
- Hiking tourism: There is an out of order mill, which would be a perfect place to renovate into a hiking lodge. There are numerous possibilities for geo-tourism on the Mogyorós Hills, like the infusorial stones mine of the cave men, the geological main crusts, the Pannon Stone Park, the Prehistorical Turtle Trail, or the palaeontological exhibition. The not-so-long-ago built Afrikarium could be mentioned here as well.
- Religious tourism: The minorite church and monastery is an integral part of the tourist traffic in the town center, which is even regarded as a place of miraculous healings. The “Hungarian Sixtus” paintings by Maelbertsch in the parish has invaluable touristic potential.
- Horse riding: There is a horse riding academy called Capári, which provides high quality training in horse riding, and there is a chance for tourists to participate in a fox hunt with hounds which is a unique opportunity in Hungary.
- The legacy of Kisfaludy: It would be important to revive the legacy of Kisfaludy Sándor – a famous Hungarian poet- in cooperation with Balatonfüred, Badacsony and Keszthely, because all of these towns have parts of heritages from the poet.
- Castle tourism: The castle is the center of the traffic in the tourism sector. There are multiple programs ranging from the castle games to a pet-farm. It has an already well defined brand, managed by a private enterprise.

The most important duty is the mutual enhancement of tourist traffic both in the town and in the castle, by creating a unified brand which is not dominated by either of the factors. Thus came up the idea to build the brand on the values of the baroque town-center creating a bridge between the middle-age-themed castle, and the baroque style town. The welcoming page of the mayor on the town’s website states that Sümeg is “the baroque treasure box of Hungary”. This title is due to the baroque style buildings, like the Padányi Palace, the already mentioned two churches, and the whole streets renovated in baroque style.

Furthermore there is the historical mood of the little town and the cobbled streets. We can say that the overall image and mood of the city can be closely associated with the castle. The baroque brand could be the next step of the developing brand, because it unifies most of the values of the town in one concept, strengthening the already formed image. In order to promote the baroque as a new pillar of the city brand, the proper audience must be targeted.

Target market

We divided the target market groups into three categories for Sümeg, as a potential touristic destination. In our segmentation it was important to consider the age, the lifestyle, and whether the visitors would arrive from inside or outside of the region.

Our number one target market group is called *Family Tours*. They are families with children living west from the Danube or in Budapest between 25-55 years old. They would provide the largest portion of the demand for the touristic services. Based on the Target Group Index's typology on brands they would be categorized as conservative or various demanding regarding consumer behaviour. This market should be reached with intensive, interactive, and entertaining marketing communicational tools, which would provide fine programs for the family. It is important to provide them with proper information about the sights, and actual events and programs. In the XXI. Century the so called guerilla marketing became widely applied tools, as they tend to provide much more stimulation, and spectacularity for the consumer, which is very necessary as the attention span and the demand for interactivity have increased greatly (PISKÓTI 2012). There are numerous ways of applying such tools in Sümeg (hollywood-like giant Sümeg title on the castle hill, digital binoculars in the castle and so on).

We refer to the second target group as *Balaton*, as it targets seasonal tourists visiting lake Balaton in municipalities like Balatonfüred, Keszthely or Hévíz. This group mainly consists of German, Ukrainian and Russian tourists who are 35 to 50 years old. They are also a huge target market with a TGI lifestyle index of experience seekers.

The most efficient way to reach the Balaton target group, would be to reach them on summer events near the lake. Their attention also could be reached with spectacular and interactive ways to provide experience based communication, for example a stand with baroque-clothed hostesses tempting with local goods like wine.

The third target market group consists of people with high incomes, and those who are looking for luxurious services. The age is a secondary factor here as it could range from 35 to 70 years. The TGI lifestyle index defines them as the *Elite*. They are a gap in the market, but are definitely hard to reach. Special channels of communication are required to address the elites, a possible solution are high-end magazines with PR articles. The subject of the communication should be exclusive services, gastronomical opportunities (for example middle age themed feasts, fox hunts). Furthermore it would be possible to establish mutual action programs with top restaurants.

The appearance of the internet brought revolutionary changes in the ways of marketing to tourists as well (LENGYEL 2001). The consumers can be reached with much more personalized offers, their behaviour are easier to study, making the reaching of potential target market groups much easier.

So it is an essential factor for Sümeg to represent itself online, as the required message can be communicated, the consumer's behaviour and satisfaction can be measured, and after analysing the conclusions, there are numerous ways to complete the marketing process. The number one duty for Sümeg is optimizing its appearance on Google, so the search engine would pop up the new brand and sights of the town not only the castle. The town's website and online appearance should be unified by one visual concept. The role of the social media also increased tremendously, making the continuous presence in the form of Facebook or Twitter posts inevitable, and these portals are also great tools to map the feedback of the tourists and the residents.

Summary and Conclusions

We interpreted city marketing on two levels, the first level defined it as part of social marketing, then on the second level we used Asworth's place management concept. We specified the city identity based on external opinions, or we can say through the looking glass of tourism. According to the city brand categorization of Hankinson and Kavaratzis, Sümeg can develop a brand based on either event branding, personality branding or flagship construction, but the latter should be the most dominant, as with the already great attraction: the castle, the baroque brand concept could be put across. By making online questionnaires we clarified the perceptions about the city, and by transacting unstructured in-depth interviews, we got familiar with the situation of Sümeg's current brand in the market of city brands.

Our paper tried to underline the importance of the role of city branding, mostly for the Hungarian tourism sector. Sümeg is a great example of creative solutions based on our history, and traditions, although it would be essential to raise attention to comprehensive city branding.

References

1. ANDREASEN, A. R. (2006): Social Marketing in the 21st century., Georgetown, (USA): Sage Publications
2. ASWORTH, G. J., KAVARATZIS, Mihalis (2006): City branding: An effective assertion of identity or a transitory marketing trick? In: Place Branding, 2. évf. 3. sz. P. 183-194.
3. ASWORTH, G. J. (2009): Do Tourists Destroy the Heritage They Have Come to Experience? In: Tourism Recreation Research, 34. évf. 1. sz. p. 79-89.
4. BIANCHINI, F. (1993): Remaking European Cities: the Role of Cultural Policies. Manchester: Manchester University Press, p. 1-20.
5. BIGNE, J. E., SANCHEZ, M. I., SANCHEZ, J. (2001): Tourism image, evaluation variables and after purchase behavior: Interrelationship. In: Tourism Management, 22. évf. 6. sz. p. 607-616.
6. BOYLE, M., HUGHES, G. (1991): The Politics of the Representation of the "Real": Discourses from the Left on Glasgow's Role as European City of Culture. Area, 23. p. 217-225.
7. CHEN, C., TSAI, D. (2007): How destination image and evaluative factors affect behavioral intentions. In: Tourism Management, 28. évf. 4. sz. p. 1115-1122.
8. CHI, C., C. G. Q., Qu, H. (2008): Examining the structural relationships of destination image, tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty: An integrated approach. In: Tourism Management, 29. évf. 4. sz. p. 624-636.
9. DINYA László (2011): Fenntartható gazdaság – fenntartható értékrend. in: „Felelős marketing” – MOK 2011 Tanulmánykötet
10. GOMBOS Szandra (2015): A kultúra városimázs-befolyásoló hatásának vizsgálata [egyetemi doktori disszertáció], Széchenyi István Egyetem, Győr
11. HANKINSON, G.: (2006): The management of destination brands: Five guiding principles based on recent developments in corporate branding theory. In: brand Management, 14. évf. 3. sz. p. 240-254.

12. KOTLER Philip, JANIN C. Dipak, MAESINCEE Suvit (2003): Marketinglépések: Nyereséges növekedés és megújulás a 21. században., Budapest, Park
13. KOTLER Philip, ZALTMAN Gerald (1971): Social Marketing: An Approach to Planned Social Change. In: Journal of Marketing, 35. évf. 3. sz. p. 3-12.
14. LENGYEL Márton (2001): A turizmus általános elmélete., Budapest, Képzőművészeti Kiadó és Nyomda
15. PISKÓTI István: Régió- és településmarketing (2012): Marketingorientált fejlesztés, márkázás., Budapest, Akadémia Kiadó
16. RIZA, M., DORATLI, N., FASLI, M. (2012): City Branding and Identity. In: Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 35. évf. p. 293-300.
17. VANOLO, A. (2008): The image of the creative city: Some reflections on urban branding in Turin. Cities, 25. p. 370–382.
18. Veszprém Megyei Területfejlesztési Program 2014-2020
19. ZHANG, L., ZHAO, S. X. (2009): City branding and the Olympic effect: A case study. In: Cities, 26. évf. 5. sz. p. 245-254.