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## Original Article

# Two tales of one city: Image versus identity

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**ABSTRACT** By applying the concepts of brand personality and attitudinal loyalty of a city as a brand, the objective of this study is to investigate the perceived place brand identity versus image and to empirically examine and compare their relationships with loyalty toward a city as a brand. This is to make a comparison between two groups of internal stakeholders; namely, residents of a city (image) and city officials (identity). The results indicate that there exists a great difference in the components of loyalty between city officials and the residents of the city. The results also reveal that how brand personality of the studied city is perceived varies between the two groups of internal stakeholders evaluated in this study. As the results of this study shift the focus from tourist (external) stakeholder to the internal ones representing two different internal perspectives of a city, they constitute a significant contribution to the process of city brand personality creation. This is of importance since the starting point in communicating the attractiveness of a city to the external stakeholders is how the city is perceived as a brand from its internal stakeholders' perspectives.

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## INTRODUCTION

The concept of branding has been extensively applied to products and services in the generic marketing field (Blain *et al*, 2005), but a destination can also be perceived as a brand as it consists of a bundle of tangible and intangible attributes (Hankinson, 2004). De Chernatony and McDonald (2001) explain that a successful brand is 'an identifiable product, service, person or place, augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant unique added values which match their needs most closely' (p. 20). Accordingly, Kavartzis and Ashworth (2005) suggest that places are brandable entities too. In this regard, Gertner (2011) discusses the growing importance of place branding for both scholars and practitioners, yet there seems to be a lack of empirical research. Zenker and Erfgen (2014) add that few practitioner-oriented perspectives on place branding have been published so far.

Compared with the branding of goods and services, place branding is a more difficult and complex process (Demirbag Kaplan *et al*, 2010). It has been acknowledged that a wide range of stakeholders are involved in the branding process of a place (Marzano and Scott, 2009; Sartori *et al*, 2012). The existing literature emphasizes 'place' as a tourist destination (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Usakli and Baloglu, 2011), that is, from the perspective of an external stakeholder, prospective tourist (non-resident), visiting a specific place for a limited period of time. However, destination/place/city branding is also beginning to look at other stakeholders, such as investors, and even current residents (Balakrishnan, 2009).

Among all stakeholders, internal stakeholders such as residents, businesses and city officials are considered as first customers of a place brand (Varey and Lewis, 1999; Rafiq and Ahmed, 2000; Ahmed and Rafiq, 2003; Sartori *et al*, 2012) and a critical dimension for the building process of a place brand (Freire, 2009). It is argued that successful place-branding strategies require a participatory approach and brand commitment among all internal stakeholders (Burmam *et al*, 2009), which will eventually make them true brand ambassadors (Braun *et al*, 2013). Tourists and visitors interact with internal stakeholders of a city,

especially residents and city employees. Accordingly, having a consistent and shared internal brand vision of a place can be supportive and influential in how external stakeholders perceive the brand (Choo *et al*, 2011). Hence, loyalty and commitments of internal stakeholders of a place, particularly its residents, are essential components of reinforcing the communication of the brand message to the tourist market (Sartori *et al*, 2012).

In fact, Braun *et al* (2013) explain that current residents of a city play an important role in the formation and communication of place brands. Residents' cooperation to get the message of their city as a brand through is required for attracting tourists and potential future residents, since external target markets (for example, tourists) consider the views of residents of a city significant in their decision making, as they are perceived as insider and authentic sources of information about the place (Braun *et al*, 2013). In this regard, Merrilees *et al* (2009) consider city branding as a sub-field of place branding that emphasizes the marketing and branding of cities to the residents (and potential residents) as a place to live, to do businesses and invest. Like the corporate brand, the success of the city brand is highly influenced by how it is perceived by its internal stakeholders (McDonald *et al*, 2001; Yaniv and Farkas, 2005). Therefore, to be able to implement city-branding strategies successfully, city managers should assess and identify how the brand of a city is perceived and evaluated through the point of view of a city's internal stakeholders.

Research-wise, Lucarelli and Berg (2011) point out, more critical studies of city brands and city branding are needed. Other studies that have provided extensive, up-to-date literature reviews of destination branding (Balakrishnan, 2009), place branding (Hankinson, 2010) and city branding (Lucarelli and Berg, 2011) state that further research is needed. Boo *et al* (2009) add that the complex characteristics of a destination provides a challenge to branding and that studies on destination brands have not been extensively researched. As Ekinici and Hosany (2006) point out, while there has been plenty of conceptual research on destination branding studies, there is a

lack of empirical work. This is supported by Gertner (2011), who specifically states that there is especially a lack in quantitative, empirical research in the place branding/place marketing areas.

Furthermore, theory and practice of place branding (Bennett and Savani, 2003; Merrilees *et al*, 2009; Olsson and Berglund, 2009; Insch and Florek, 2010) show the need for a closer examination of the role of internal stakeholders in the place branding process. Accordingly, Merrilees *et al* (2012) point out that the city branding literature generally does not quantify different stakeholders' perception of the brand in one study and the connection between these perceptions has not been empirically tested thoroughly. Hence to fill this gap, the current article concentrates on city branding, by shifting attention from the external stakeholders (tourists and future residents) to the internal stakeholders (residents and city officials).

## **BUILDING BRAND EQUITY FOR A PLACE**

When it comes to the branding of anything, it generally revolves around building a strong brand and developing brand equity (Aaker, 1996). In building brand equity, destinations and places face many challenges (Lucarelli, 2012). Any strong brand obtaining high brand equity allows managers to relish higher margins, obtain greater customer loyalty, are often less vulnerable to competitor offerings and are better able to communicate with stakeholders (Gill and Dawra, 2010). However, while many studies have touched on the issue of brand equity for destinations and places, few have explicitly addressed it (Lucarelli, 2012).

But what constitutes 'brand equity' for places? According to Gill and Dawra (2010), in looking at sources of brand equity and the role of brand image in building it, it depends on the definition you use: Aaker (1996) explains brand equity as the set of assets and liabilities connected to a brand's name and symbol that adds to (or takes away from) the value provided by a product or service to a firm (or organization) or that firm's customers (stakeholders); Keller (1993) says that brand equity is the differential effect on the brand knowledge

on consumer response to the marketing of that brand. Keller adds that it is brand awareness and brand image that constitute brand equity. This is supported by Balakrishnan (2009), who discusses that the components of a brand are made up of both tangible/visual/functional elements (name, logo, symbols, graphics and so on) and intangible/symbolic elements (image, personality, values, perceptions and so on). In building a strong brand, the brand personality is essential (Aaker, 1996). And Ekinici and Hosany (2006) explain that a distinctive brand personality can help create a set of unique and favorable associations in consumer memory, and from this enhance brand equity. Brand personality is a cornerstone of brand equity (Louis and Lombart, 2010) and an efficient way to distinguish the brand from its competitors.

## **BRAND PERSONALITY OF A CITY**

A key component of brand equity is brand personality (Su and Tong, 2015). Brand personality can be defined as the set of human characteristics associated with a brand (Aaker, 1997). Aaker explains that understanding brand personality is important because consumers select brands with personalities that are acceptable to them. Accordingly, Aaker has developed a valid, reliable and generalizable scale to measure brand personality, called The Brand Personality Scale (BPS), based on a representative sample and a comprehensive list of personality traits across five key dimensions: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness. The use of Aaker's BPS and its applicability to destination brands was extensively discussed in an article by Hosany *et al* (2007), on destination image and destination personality. Their conclusion was that the BPS could in fact be tested on destination as well as place and city brands, with the idea that it could be adapted to fit that place more specifically and to gauge personality traits ascribed to places.

Undertaking a discussion on the nature of personality of the brand inevitably involves the concepts of brand identity and brand image (Demirbag Kaplan *et al*, 2010). The brand identity and brand image have been conceptualized as multidimensional constructs, where the

personality of the brand is a very important component (Glińska and Kilon, 2014). Accordingly, the personality concept can be discussed from two different perspectives, namely, the identity (how the brand owner/manager wants the brand to be perceived – and likely how they see it themselves) versus the image (how the brand is actually perceived – that is, how customers see it) (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005). Brand image according to Park *et al* (1986) is, ‘the understanding consumers derive from the total set of brand related activities engaged by the firm’ (p. 135). Brand identity, on the other hand, is defined by Aaker (1996) as, ‘a unique set of associations that the brand strategis aspires to create or maintain’ (p. 68). Brand identity is the way a company wants to present its brand to its target groups (Geuens *et al*, 2009), while brand image is these target groups’ perception and interpretation of the brand’s identity (De Pelsmacker *et al*, 2007). In other words, a brand’s identity is the way a company (or organization) chooses to identify itself toward its publics, whereas the image is the perception of the brand by these publics (Meenaghan, 1995). Brand identity can be considered as the missing link between image building and branding (Saraniemi, 2011; Cai, 2002). As Kapferer (1992) notes, ‘identity necessarily precedes image’ (p. 37).

An attractive and charismatic personality is considered to be a strong reason as to why consumers develop a deep, strong and long-lasting relationship between themselves and the brand they feel attached to. In brand management terms this is an expression of brand loyalty, which explains why personality is considered to be so important for a brand’s success (Melin, 1997). Hankinson (2007) adds that brand image and brand personality are key components of brand loyalty.

Jacobsen (2009) points out that the value of a place brand is in the mind of the consumer and not in that of the producer (or in this case, the one who manages the place, such as a city). Jacobsen further explains that the brand construct concentrates on the brand perception of the customer (image) and the self-perception of the place (identity), leading to a number of

interdependencies between these two.

In corporate branding literature it is argued that organizations seek to convey a certain image for the brand to its stakeholders, which matches the brand identity (Nandan, 2005). However, people evaluate a brand and respond to its message through their own interpretation, which will result in the formation of brand image (Nandan, 2005). It is from this perspective on the concepts of brand identity (from the perspective of those managing the brand) versus brand image (that is, those using the brand) that this current study is based on.

Hosany *et al* (2007) explain how the literature related to destination research begins to acknowledge the importance of investigating a destination’s brand personality, highlighting the need for exploring how place brand personalities form and operate. However, place branding studies have been criticized for focusing mainly on external stakeholders (Konecnik and Go, 2008; Saraniemi, 2011) and being consumer-centric in a way that they only highlight outsiders’ views. Nevertheless, as Merrilees *et al* (2012) point out, a critical component of city-branding strategies is understanding its internal stakeholders’ view. They also add that a strong city brand should enable these stakeholders and disparate groups to interact with the brand and imbue a similar meaning to it. Place branding is a public management activity and an important part of creating an effective place-branding strategy with its internal stakeholders’ engagement in the process (Glińska and Florek, 2013). We are living in a relationship-focused brand era in which internal stakeholders contribute to a brand’s value more than ever (Merz *et al*, 2009; Saraniemi, 2011). Hence, evaluating brand personality of a city from its internal stakeholders’ perspective is needed to further develop the research in this field.

In this regard, residents are integrated as a part of developing a place brand; they are the ‘bread and butter’ of places, whose interaction with external stakeholders form the social milieu of that place (Braun *et al*, 2013). In the context of city branding, residents can be considered as vital participants in the branding process whose image of the brand is influential in how external stakeholders form their image of a city. In the city branding process, their

role is more than being just place customers or passive beneficiaries (Braun *et al*, 2013). In this process residents can be partners and co-creators of value (Freire, 2009; Olsson and Berglund, 2009; Hospers, 2010). Hence, one essential component of transmitting a consistent internal and external brand image among stakeholders is a strong brand identity (Kavaratzis, 2004). Residents' role in the city branding process is complemented by a unique brand identity that the city's managers and socio-economic leaders design. To implement city-branding strategies successfully, its brand identity should have matching features to its image among the residents. To explore this issue further, through evaluating brand identity and image of a Swedish city among its internal stakeholders, namely residents and city officials, this article aims to explore whether multiple stakeholders of this city perceive its brand in the same way or not.

## LOYALTY TOWARD THE CITY AS A BRAND

According to Fournier (1998), a well-established brand personality develops trust and loyalty with the brand. However, as Oppermann (2000) points out, few if any studies have investigated destination brand loyalty, and if they have, they were likely within the tourism/tourist destination domain. Seven years later, Konecnik and Gartner (2007) explain that loyalty should not be neglected when investigating destinations as brands, as destination loyalty has rarely been studied. As Boo *et al* (2009) point out loyalty is a part of building brand equity, and there is a positive relationship among the variables that lead to overall brand equity for destinations. This positive relationship of loyalty toward the brand is also discussed by Oppermann (2000), who explains that a positive (preferential) attitude toward the brand occurs over time (that is, for those who have experienced the brand longer). Oppermann continues that this type of loyalty not only affects the positive attitude the consumer has with the brand, but it creates positive word-of-mouth effects as well.

According to Konecnik and Gartner (2007), two types of loyalty with regard to destinations can be measured: *Behavioral loyalty* implies that

familiarity with previous experiences can influence today's and tomorrow's (tourism) decisions, especially with regard to visiting a destination. These scholars refer to Opperman's (2000) work, where this type of destination loyalty should be investigated longitudinally, over an extended period of time. *Attitudinal loyalty* considers a person's attitude (affective image components) of a destination's attributes, which in turn can influence their intention to visit or recommend a place to others. It is this second type of loyalty that will be the focus of this study, due to its connection to the brand's image.

Applying these concepts of brand personality and attitudinal loyalty of a city as a brand, the purpose of this study is to investigate and compare the relationship between a place brand identity versus image and loyalty toward the city as a brand, and show how these effects are different between residents of a city (image) and city officials (identity). Accordingly, the following hypotheses will be tested:

**Hypothesis 1:** There is a difference between how brand identity from city officials' perspective and brand image from city residents' perspective are related to loyalty toward a city.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is a difference between loyalty toward a city among city officials and city residents.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is a difference between how city officials and city residents perceive the brand personality of that city.

## METHODOLOGY

In order to empirically test the proposed hypotheses, an adapted version of Aaker's (1997) scale was developed for measuring attributes related to brand personality of a city. Aaker developed a 42-item scale represented by five broad factors she titles: excitement, sincerity, ruggedness, sophistication and competence. This scale was developed based on a comprehensive study, where 631 respondents were asked to rate a subset of 37 brands on 114 personality traits. The scale has

become widely adopted, and has been used extensively as a measurement of brand personality (Musante *et al.*, 2008), including the measurement of destination brands (Hosnay *et al.*, 2007).

In the adapted scale of this study, respondents indicated their agreement with the items using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), ascribing these traits to the city themselves (perceived image/identity), similar to the measure of instrumental attributes. Moreover, to evaluate loyalty (behavioral intentions) of respondents toward a city as a brand with brand personality perceptions, three items were added to the questionnaire: intention to stay in the city they currently live in; intention to recommend the city to others as a place to move to; and the intention to recommend the city to others as a place to visit. Appendix A provides a copy of the English version of the questionnaire, from which a final, Swedish version was sent out to respondents.

To measure how brand personality affects loyalty toward a city on the identity side, the final scale was sent out to a total of 159 of those identified by the 'Development Office' for the city of Luleå, Sweden, as those who worked with strategy and development for the city (city officials). A total of 63 useable surveys were returned for a response rate of 39.6 per cent, providing a very strong representative sample of those within the city who were managing the city brand.

To measure the effect on the image side, the same survey was sent out to 6010 randomly selected current residents of Luleå, a coastal, university city in northern Sweden, with representative samples to a randomly selected group of residents aged 18 and older.

A total of 1552 questionnaires were returned. After a precise evaluation of the questionnaires, a total number of 101 responses were excluded as (i) they had substantial amounts of missing data, more than the general rule of thumb, 10 per cent, for eliminating an entire questionnaire (Hair *et al.*, 2007); and (ii) they were considered questionable (for example, the respondents had marked a single number for all questions). This total number of 1451 useable questionnaires provided a response rate of 24.14 per cent, out of which 795 were

female and 656 were male. There might not be an overall norm or measure of what can be regarded as an acceptable response rate (Baruch, 1999), but Colombo (2000) states that a typical response rate from mail surveys in marketing and advertising is typically about 20 per cent, which makes our response rates for measuring both identity and image acceptable, especially with a sample this large.

The city of Luleå, Sweden, with a population reaching nearly 75 000 inhabitants in the northern part of the country along the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia, was chosen for this study based on those managing and marketing the city approaching the local university, asking for help looking into more about the city's current image from the view of current residents. A group of researchers within the university, who worked with branding research, was then put in touch with these city officials to look into the image of the city, primarily from current residents' stakeholder perspective. In addition, the city requested that the research also looked at (and compared) this to what those who worked for the city thought of the city as a brand.

According to the city's, 'Facts in English' PDF (Luleå Municipality, 2015), the city of Luleå is approximately 2100 km<sup>2</sup>, 75 per cent of which is covered by forest. Founded in 1621, the city is situated approximately 90 miles below the Arctic Circle and is the capital of the county of Norrbotten, the northernmost county in Sweden, taking up nearly 25 per cent of the entire land mass of the country. The city of Luleå also includes 1300 islands, with the mix of salt and fresh water making the archipelago very unique. Luleå is a part of Swedish Lapland, Sweden's northernmost tourist destination. The objective of the city is to achieve 100 per cent growth in the tourism sector by 2020. The aim is to increase the turnover of this industry in Swedish Lapland from SEK 4.6 billion (approximately US\$480 million) in 2012 to SEK 8.2 billion in 2020 (approximately \$940 million) (Invest in Norrbotten, 2015).

## DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The first step in the data analysis process was to test for non-response bias on the residents'

questionnaire for the early versus late respondents (those who sent their reply after two weeks of the start of data collection). Non-response bias in this research was tested using the extrapolation method of Armstrong and Overton (1977), through a comparison between early and late respondents. An independent sample *t*-test was conducted where the means for the key demographic variables of residents by using independent sample *t*-tests, the means for the key variables, namely, level of education, income and age, were compared among those who responded within two weeks of mailing the questionnaire and those who responded after two weeks. The results, showed no significant difference at the 0.05 level in any of the comparisons. Thus, it was concluded that non-response bias is not a serious concern in this research.

Moreover, as mentioned in methodology, the data has been examined against missing values and outliers. Considering Hair et al's (2007) recommendation, respondents or variables that had a large proportion (10 per cent or more) of missing data were removed from further analysis. In order to test the normality and shape of each variable's distribution, skewness and kurtosis of items were assessed. After removing the outliers and missing values, all items' skewness was between the acceptable range of -1 to +1 and -1.5 to 1.5 for kurtosis (Hair et al, 2007).

As the next step of the data analysis process, an exploratory factor analysis was employed on both data sets of identity and image, aiming to define the basic structure of the items and determine each dimension forming this structure separately (Hair et al, 2011). First, a total of five factors were obtained for the Image data set by applying the latent root criterion of retaining factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 and KMOs bigger than 0.50 (Hair et al, 2011), namely *Sincerity*, *Excitement*, *Competence*, *Ruggedness* and *Sophistication*, in line with the original study and scale that this research is adopted from. The items had factor loadings in excess of 0.40 and each converged on their respective separate factors. The factors represented 71.6 per cent of the variance of all the analyzed variables, which is

higher than the specified limit of 60 per cent (Hair et al, 2011). Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient reliabilities, showing internal consistency of the variables forming the scale, were estimated and they were all above 0.7.

The same was achieved for the Identity data group by applying the latent root criterion of retaining factors with eigenvalues greater than 0.9 (Hair et al, 2010) and KMOs bigger than 0.50 (Hair et al, 2011). The items had factor loadings in excess of 0.40, all loaded onto one pertinent factor except from one item of *Sincerity* and one item of *Excitement* that were removed as they initially loaded on a different factor. Together, the items explained 63.7 per cent of the variance extracted. Item reliability was also acceptable, as Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was greater than the cutoff of 0.70.

In order to test the hypotheses, the data sets were combined in an SPSS file and then it was split into two groups, namely, Identity and Image, and a linear regression was performed on the data sets. Furthermore, to evaluate the first hypothesis, the results indicate that, as for the key drivers of loyalty toward a city, the standardized path coefficients and the *t*-values show that four of the dimensions of brand personality (namely, *Sophistication*, *Ruggedness*, *Excitement* and *Competence*) are strong determinants in the brand image data set, all having  $P < 0.01$ , while this reduces to three for the brand identity holding  $P < 0.0$  loyalty toward a city (Table 1).

**Table 1:** The relationship between brand personality dimensions and loyalty for city officials (identity) and residents (image)

Independent variable		Standard error	$\beta$	<i>t</i>
Identity	Sophistication	0.171	0.312**	2.347
	Ruggedness	0.174	0.010	0.082
	Sincerity	0.221	0.062	0.369
	Excitement	0.198	0.450**	2.192
	Competence	0.196	0.421**	2.095
Image	Sophistication	0.041	0.099*	3.068
	Ruggedness	0.041	0.087*	2.836
	Sincerity	0.053	0.051	1.468
	Excitement	0.047	0.271*	6.907
	Competence	0.051	0.153*	3.833

\* $P < 0.01$ ; \*\* $P < 0.05$ .

Dependent variable: Loyalty toward a city.



As a result, there exists strong evidence of accepting the first hypothesis.

In order to test the validity of the second hypothesis, and to test whether there exists a difference between the three dimensions of loyalty toward a city among city officials and the residents of the city (identity versus image), a one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare this effect on loyalty. As shown in Table 2, there is a significant difference in residents and city officials' intention to recommend Luleå as a place to visit ( $F(1, 1602) = 4.268, P < 0.05$ ) and recommend as a place to live in ( $F(1, 1601) = 4.983, P < 0.05$ ) but no difference in whether they intend to stay in this city.

Further analysis showed that city official respondents had a higher mean and were more favorable toward recommending the city as a place to visit and intention to recommend the city as a place to live in.

Another ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of being a normal citizen of a city or a decision maker of it on the five dimensions of brand personality. The results of this test revealed

that city officials and its residents had a very different perception about the city in all five dimensions (Table 3), which shows support for hypothesis 3.

Further investigation showed that, interestingly, Luleå citizens score a higher mean in evaluating Luleå as *Rugged* (of which *Masculinity* is one major component), *Competent* and *Sincere*, while city officials had a higher mean on *Excitement* and *Sophistication* (of which *Femininity* is a factor), conveying that these two groups of respondents have a completely different perception of the city. This of course affects how managers can end up approaching their city as a brand.

## CONCLUSIONS AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study indicated a great difference between how the two internal stakeholders under investigation in this city, namely, city officials and residents, perceived the city as a brand. The risk that city officials would develop a marketing

**Table 2:** Difference between loyalty dimensions among city officials and residents

Loyalty dimension		DF	Mean square	F	Mean
Intention to stay in the city	Between groups	1	0.023	0.018	City officials: 4.12 Residents: 4.14
	Within groups	1604	1.249		
Recommending the city as a place to live in	Between groups	1	3.238	4.268*	City officials: 4.28 Residents: 3.67
	Within groups	1601	0.991		
Recommending the city as a place to visit	Between groups	1	4.732	4.983*	City officials: 4.38 Residents: 3.93
	Within groups	1600	1.076		

\* $P < 0.05$ .

**Table 3:** Difference between how city officials and residents perceive different personality dimensions of Luleå

Personality dimensions		DF	Mean square	F	Mean
Sincerity	Between groups	1	4.410	9.550*	City officials: 3.04 Residents: 3.42
	Within groups	1609	0.462		
Excitement	Between groups	1	4.974	8.766*	City officials: 3.03 Residents: 2.75
	Within groups	1609	0.567		
Competence	Between groups	1	2.114	4.199*	City officials: 3.29 Residents: 4.03
	Within groups	1609	0.619		
Sophistication	Between groups	1	2.829	4.329*	City officials: 3.18 Residents: 2.32
	Within groups	1609	0.654		
Ruggedness	Between groups	1	9.471	14.478*	City officials: 3.26 Residents: 4.05
	Within groups	1609	0.654		

\* $P < 0.05$ .

strategy toward city stakeholders based *only* on what they thought (that is, identity), versus what those who were experiencing the brand thought (that is, current residents' image), creates a greater risk that mistakes can be made, money can be wasted and objectives would not be reached. Understanding your brand's image can lead to greater brand loyalty among many stakeholders in your city, but it all starts with internal stakeholders such as current residents and city employees. In general, the results of this empirical study support the importance of a participatory approach to the branding process of Luleå, Sweden. This is even more important as the results showed a meaningful discrepancy among city officials versus residents' perception of Luleå as a brand, as well as their replies to the components of loyalty toward the city.

One example of this was when residents consider Luleå as being a rugged city, while city officials perceive it as being sophisticated. Although these two personality dimensions are both related to symbolic and social identity sources such as typical brand users, brand name and reference group, they are very different in nature. While rugged brands are those related to symbols of masculinity, sophisticated brands are explained by exclusivity and femininity (Maehle and Supphellen, 2011). To illustrate this difference, in their study, Maehle and Supphellen (2011) found that brands such as Rolex and Gucci received high scores on sophistication from the participants in the study, while Jeep and Harley-Davidson scored high on ruggedness. Therefore, the inconsistency between how Luleå city official and residents perceive the brand can be problematic, especially since the appeal of the city brand for residents seems to be linked to how the external market perceives the brand of the city (Sartori *et al*, 2012).

City officials and brand authorities in Luleå can use a variety of strategic approaches to reduce this gap between city's image from residents' view and its identity. First, it is suggested that the Luleå city brand authorities should involve residents in brand development strategies to foster a shared vision of the brand values and design (Sartori *et al*, 2012). As Hankinson (2007) explains, this will help brand managers to identify a set of core brand values

together with the most important group of stakeholders, namely, the residents themselves. This will help Luleå city officials to manage conflicts in how the brand is perceived when it comes to its identity and image.

Hence, in line with previous research (Braun *et al*, 2013), this study suggests that to have successful place-branding strategies, the views, oppositions and desires of the residents should be considered as they act as brand ambassadors. For city managers, in order to develop the personality of the city as a brand, there is a need to become better at developing a marketing strategy and communicating the brand based on the image that residents have, rather than simply on what they, as city officials, think of the brand they are managing (that is, the brand's identity). This is especially important in how they look into using specific brand personality characteristics (for example, Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Ruggedness, Sophistication and so on) in developing their marketing strategy to achieve a higher level of loyalty among residents (that is, keeping current residents and attracting new ones based on the loyalty of these existing residents).

In pursuit of this goal, Luleå city officials need to urgently strengthen their communication with residents and engage them more in every stage of the city branding process. This calls for a change in their current branding strategy to move from the communication-dominant approach to a participation-dominant approach (Braun *et al*, 2013). It is a very demanding exercise in which city officials may find themselves outside of what Ind and Bjerke (2007) call the 'zone of comfort'. This of course will help them to reduce the identity-image gap in order to build a stronger, shared vision toward the brand of Luleå, especially since this shared vision is the basis for integrating residents in the process of city branding. Luleå city officials should choose to develop their brand identity with residents' input, in order to give it a more robust connection to the place (Zenker, 2011; Kavaratzis, 2012; Braun *et al*, 2013) and to foster mutuality within the marketing of Luleå toward external stakeholders.

The growth of a city depends on many factors (tourism, investment by business, keeping current

residents from moving away, as well as attracting others to move to the city). How a city can use its properly understood image to develop a more thorough and accurate marketing strategy to reach these growth criteria of course requires more research. This survey that has been done on the residents' views and evaluations of Luleå's brand can be thought of as a participatory tool; as the study of Olsson and Berglund (2009) discovered, the most preferred way of participation in city management is, 'by being asked, for example, via surveys' (p. 139). But to understand the residents' view of Luleå as a brand, more in depth, and to stimulate their genuine participation in place branding, different approaches from the political and economic sciences can be taken, such as the Delphi method, as discussed by Virgo and de Chernatony (2006), netnography (Kozinets, 2010), applied ethnography (Chambers, 2000) or even enhancing and promoting city-related online communities.

These kinds of relationship-building strategies are essential in the participatory approach, since, as Warnaby *et al* (2011) note that city branding activities should extend to, 'residents within the area, in order to develop what mainstream marketing theory would call brand loyalty' (p. 258). This study attempts to explain the determination of loyalty toward a city as a brand and how this is influenced by brand image versus identity between two internal stakeholder groups, namely, residents and city officials, respectively. Examining these relationships affords a deeper understanding of how branding works in this particular context and provides a framework by which local governments can manage and modify such loyalty.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study looked at the brand personality of only one city and therefore the use of the personality dimensions in this study could be adapted in other studies and on other city brands. There can be many measures of brand loyalty as well that can be used in future research. Furthermore, it is recognized that those on the 'identity' side of this

study (city officials) are also likely to live within the city and likely to have done so for a period of time. However, while this makes them also 'consumers' of the brand or residents of the city, it is from their management perspective that we asked them to fill out the survey on how they see the city as a brand. Hence, further research can continue to look at the city as a brand from both internal and external stakeholders' perspectives, as all of them contribute to the success of the city brand.

Further research is also needed on other destinations and the opportunity that comes with comparing various places around the world, as well as those competing domestically with Luleå. Moreover, brand equity is made up of several factors, of which image is only a part of. Using brand personality to measure the image of a city as a brand, as well as comparing identity versus image, is only one perspective on gaining a better understanding of a city as a brand. Issues revolving around the varying definitions of such brand concepts as identity, image, loyalty and equity can make future research a challenge, as the literature at times treats such concepts differently, depending on the context of the study and the background of the researcher. However, as branding theory in general, and city/place branding specifically, comes of age, such issues can eventually be resolved.

As much of the city/destination branding literature to date has been focused on a tourism perspective, it is recommended that future studies be more focused on other socio-economic perspectives. Since recent, difficult economic times have been faced by so many cities and regions, developing a city's brand to compete on a broader, socio-economic level is greatly needed. This means conducting studies to find ways for cities to compete for new residents to move and/or work there; ways for cities to maintain customer relationships (that is, take a CRM approach to their current residents and develop strategy to keep them in their city); as well as broader, business investment/job creation types of city branding efforts, for example, the crossroads of city branding as a part of employer branding.

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## APPENDIX

### Luleå as a brand

In this study we are interested in investigating "Luleå" as a brand. A brand's "personality" is like a human being's personality and different words can be used to describe it. Examples of such words are provided in the list below. We are interested in your view Luleå today.

#### WHAT DO YOU THINK OF LULEÅ'S "PERSONALITY"?

Please circle or set an "X" over the number on the scale below for how well each word describes how you see Luleå today:

	Does not describe how I view Luleå at all				Describes extremely well how I view Luleå
Down-to-earth	1	2	3	4	5
Family-oriented	1	2	3	4	5
"Small-town"	1	2	3	4	5
Honest	1	2	3	4	5
Sincere	1	2	3	4	5
Real	1	2	3	4	5
Wholesome	1	2	3	4	5
Original	1	2	3	4	5
Cheerful	1	2	3	4	5
Sentimental	1	2	3	4	5
Friendly	1	2	3	4	5
Daring	1	2	3	4	5
Trendy	1	2	3	4	5
Exciting	1	2	3	4	5
Spirited	1	2	3	4	5
Cool	1	2	3	4	5
Young	1	2	3	4	5
Imaginative	1	2	3	4	5
Unique	1	2	3	4	5
Modern	1	2	3	4	5
Independent	1	2	3	4	5
Contemporary	1	2	3	4	5
Reliable	1	2	3	4	5
Hard working	1	2	3	4	5
Secure	1	2	3	4	5
Intelligent	1	2	3	4	5
Technical	1	2	3	4	5
Corporate	1	2	3	4	5
Successful	1	2	3	4	5
Leader	1	2	3	4	5
Confident	1	2	3	4	5

Please circle or set an "X" over the number on the scale below for how well each word describes how you see Luleå today:

	Does not describe how I view Luleå at all				Describes extremely well how I view Luleå
Upper class	1	2	3	4	5
Glamorous	1	2	3	4	5
Good looking	1	2	3	4	5
Charming	1	2	3	4	5
Feminine	1	2	3	4	5
Smooth	1	2	3	4	5

"Sea City"	1	2	3	4	5
Outdoorsy	1	2	3	4	5
Masculine	1	2	3	4	5
Sporty	1	2	3	4	5
Tough	1	2	3	4	5
Rugged	1	2	3	4	5

Are there any other words that describe Luleå : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**YOUR FUTURE INTENTIONS**

Please continue to circle or set an "X" over the number on the scale below for best describes you future intentions :

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>				<b>Strongly agree</b>
<i>I could consider moving to Luleå...</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>I would recommend Luleå as a place to live...</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>I would recommend Luleå as a place to visit...</i>	1	2	3	4	5

Is there anything else you would like to say about "Luleå" as a brand?

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Finally, we would like to ask you for a little information about yourself and your background, as this information is important in our overall analysis (all info remains anonymous):

1. I am a...	<input type="checkbox"/> Man <input type="checkbox"/> Woman
2. My age is...	<input type="checkbox"/> Under 18 years <input type="checkbox"/> 18-29 years <input type="checkbox"/> 30-49 years <input type="checkbox"/> 50-65 years <input type="checkbox"/> 66+ years
3. My highest level of completed education is...	<input type="checkbox"/> The minimum "basic education" from my country <input type="checkbox"/> High school or equivalent degree <input type="checkbox"/> University degree <input type="checkbox"/> Master's/post-graduate degree <input type="checkbox"/> Ph.D./advanced degree

4. My occupation is...	<input type="checkbox"/> Student (high school) <input type="checkbox"/> Student (university)) <input type="checkbox"/> Employed <input type="checkbox"/> Own my own business <input type="checkbox"/> Retired <input type="checkbox"/> Seeking work <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): .....
5. I live...	<input type="checkbox"/> Alone (single/divorced/widow(er)) <input type="checkbox"/> I live with a partner (married/partner) <input type="checkbox"/> With my parent(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Together with someone other than a partner or parent
6. Number of children (below 18 years) currently living in your household...	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 or more
7. I currently live in...	<input type="checkbox"/> A rented apartment/house <input type="checkbox"/> A purchased apartment <input type="checkbox"/> A purchased home or condominium <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):.....
8. My approximate total household income (before taxes) per month...	...../MONTH <i>(please include the currency you are stating the above amount in)</i>
9. Your interests/hobbies (you can check as many as you like)	<input type="checkbox"/> Cooking <input type="checkbox"/> Children & family <input type="checkbox"/> Hunting & fishing <input type="checkbox"/> Clothing & fashion <input type="checkbox"/> Health & beauty <input type="checkbox"/> Shopping
	<input type="checkbox"/> Exercise and sports <input type="checkbox"/> Traveling <input type="checkbox"/> Theater, art and culture <input type="checkbox"/> Home design & decorating <input type="checkbox"/> Animals & nature
10. Where are you originally from...	<input type="checkbox"/> I am originally from Luleå but am back visiting again. I am visiting from (city):..... <input type="checkbox"/> I am originally from another part of Sweden (city):..... ..... <input type="checkbox"/> I am from another country (city & country):..... .....

**\*\*\*THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!\*\*\***  
**Please go back through the questionnaire to make sure you have not skipped any of the questions.**