

Smart City Brand Creation and Implementation

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This work-in-progress examines the means and methods whereby branding decisions relating to smart city developments are formulated and applied, with particular reference to difficulties associated with the presence of social deprivation within and/or around smart city areas. Smart city developments have been initiated throughout the world (see Angelidou, 2017; Saiu, 2017; Yigitcanlar, 2018), and are increasingly commonplace (Manville, 2014; Giffinger, Kramar, Hainlmaier and Strohmayer, 2015). Literature regarding smart cities is voluminous, especially vis-à-vis (i) the definition of the construct, (ii) smart cities and technological innovation, (iii) connections with economic growth and environmental protection, and (iv) the use of artificial intelligence, Big Data, and the Internet of Things. Araral (2020) reported the publication or presentation at conferences of at least 17,000 papers about smart cities between 2014 and 2019.

Nevertheless, a major gap in the literature exists concerning the mechanisms whereby smart cities are marketed and, specifically, branded. Problems apply to smart city branding due to the multiple identities typically present within a smart city area (Maček, Ovin and Starc-Peceny, 2019). These include an identity congruent with the presence of resident businesses, an identity based on local history and the characteristics of existing citizens, and an identity pertaining to the urban configuration within which a smart city place is embedded.

A major issue is that smart city districts and/or their environs often contain a population that is extremely diverse in terms of ethnicity, country of origin, culture, social class, income, lifestyle, and type of employment. This can result in the absence of a sense of community, unity of purpose, or common interest among various groups. Yet, a smart city's brand image has crucial implications for the attraction of inward investment and "smart employees" (Araral, 2020).

The research is progressing through a series of interviews, initially with smart city officials in the UK, Scandinavia and the USA, and subsequently with decision takers in countries outside Europe and North America. Additionally, a cross-country focus group has been set up comprising three members from each of three countries. The methodology adopted comprises argumentative narrative discourse analysis (Hajer, 2002; 2006) to obtain information on *how* and *why* decisions involving marketing and branding were determined; rather than focusing on the contents of smart city brands themselves. Importantly in the present context, argumentative discourse analysis (ADA) can explore how a discourse serves an interviewee's standpoint on an issue. Thus, it refers to "*giving*" an argument and not to "*having*" an argument. ADA regards argument as a rhetorical communicative activity that takes account of relevant contextual factors (Van Eemeren and Grootendorst, 2004). ADA has been used to examine decision-making processes in a number of urban planning contexts, as it "embraces the complexity of the organisational, social, political and policy context in which developments are introduced and supported" (Lynch, Glasby and Robinson, 2018 p.46). What branding options are considered feasible whilst others are ignored, and what rationalisations are given for the exclusion of certain alternatives? The first results of the study will be presented at the Workshop.

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