

# The essence and City branding content by reference to the Olympic city of Athens

## An initial investigation

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### **Abstract**

Purpose of this study is primarily to clarify the term City branding. Successively, we explore the ways the City branding influences the shaping of the image of a city, so that the application of this modern technique brings the desired results. The cities today face an uncompromising competition and should be established on the international stage as cities of high-traffic and glamour. Each city, in order to attract investors, new businesses, tourists and even remarkable young people, aims to become famous by occupying a good position on the world map of attractive cities. We explore the strategies of City branding as these are the essential tool for creating a successful brand (brand) of the city, by attracting different social groups, increasing competitiveness, realizing high returns from investment properties in infrastructure and city events with great impact (London, Monaco, Munich, Vienna, Salzburg, Hollywood, Rome, Paris, Barcelona, Sydney) so that local residents, businesses and institutions treat and are treated very positively towards the rest of inhabitants of the planet.

The investigation of the city of our work is the city of Athens that made use of the City branding for the Olympic Games in 2004. The question of the investigation is, what factors - strategies contributed to building a strong city brand of Athens, as an original place (place), with its natural elements and infrastructure, with hospitable people (people), pulse (pulse) and an excellent dynamic. From this work, results arose that demonstrated the real potential of city branding, as to whether it is useful and necessary, as it has a basic toolbox with modern practices that can help effectively, especially cities hosting the Olympic Games and beyond.

**Keywords:** City branding, Athens 2004 Olympic Games, Strategies

### **Branding**

In the marketing world it is essential to have strong and commercial trade name or "image". A name or "image" that will make us stand out from the similar enterprises of competition. The branding, as this contemporary financial technique is called, is playing a catalytic role in business success and special attention is paid to it.<sup>1</sup>

Branding is a term which can be translated as "brand". Based on the classic definition of the American Marketing Association, brand is a name, a symbol, a pattern or a combination of all of them, trying to identify the goods or services of one seller or a seller group in

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<sup>1</sup> Sitaras T. & Tzenos, C., 2004, "Tourism Marketing and Quality Service", INTERBOOKS Publications, Athens, p.182.

order to differentiate it from others, to achieve greater competitiveness.

According to the above definition of the brand, the branding is: first, the strategy process by which the company gives a name to the products or services; second, it is planning their appearance, third, it has to do with '' building '' or creating a sense of entrepreneurial culture and fourthly, it refers to the means by which the product-service acquires fame.<sup>2</sup>

Many confuse branding with marketing. Branding refers to the strategy of a company, while marketing, to the tactics to be followed to implement this strategy. So branding precedes marketing. And it is a dynamic and non-linear process. Marketing is what makes people buy a product / service, and Branding is what makes people connect with a product / service, to remember it or to trust one company.<sup>3</sup>

The correct procedure for developing a brand based on four stages. The first stage belongs to the research, the analysis of strategy, the second stage is the concept of development for the "identity" of the carrier, the third stage is the opening of applications and the fourth stage is the implementation of decisions.<sup>4</sup>

## **Place Marketing**

Marketing is a process associated with promoting a product on the market and its consumption by the proposed consumer through the implementation of all steps of a Strategic Plan. In the case of locations / cities we are dealing with the particular characteristics of each location / city, but especially with the objectives to be achieved through the implementation of a Strategic Marketing Location.<sup>5</sup>

Simultaneously, in Place Marketing, potential target markets are also identified, through the segmentation of these markets, and are assessed by the distribution channels as well as promotion and support. Also, the strategies, tactics and alternative application scenarios<sup>6</sup> that have to do with the improved "image" of a place with all the details that associatively come in one's mind when they hear the name of the place. It is a set of images that refer to external elements such as buildings, city properties, colours, food or practices but also reflects the inner world: feelings, desires, etc. raised through a place.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Giantsiou, K., 2013, "City Branding": Online Applications and Study of the city of Thessaloniki, University of Macedonia, p. 5,7

<sup>3</sup> Zervaki, D, 2015 "What is Branding and Brand?"  
<http://www.epixeiro.gr/marketing-sales/branding/23611-τι-είναι-αλήθεια-το-branding-to-brand>

<sup>4</sup> Polyviou, S. 2012 "Brandind, visual identity and solutions of typing and design problems of the Water Museum in Limassol" Technological University of Cyprus, Limassol, p.3

<sup>5</sup> Pattas, S, 2009, Contemporary Marketing Applications of hotel and tourist businesses in Rhodes, University of Piraeus, Piraeus p. 52,53

<sup>6</sup> Metaxas, T., 2013, "Place Marketing and Branding as tools of financial place development and competitiveness", University of Thessaly, Thessaloniki, p.12 ,  
<http://www.slideshare.net/PolisConference/place-marketing-2870000900>

<sup>7</sup> Kalantidis, A., 2011, "Questions and Answers about Place Marketing, place identity and image" <http://www.citybranding.gr/2011/01/20-place-marketing-place-identity-and.html>

Also, the destination marketing (destination marketing) or place marketing (place marketing), refers to the efforts of cities to formulate specific logos, slogans, advertisements, public relations programs etc. Also, there is an orientation towards the development of major projects related to the restructuring and revitalization of the cities, as well as the organization of major events and happenings with an international scope (international exhibitions, festivals, sporting events such as the Olympics etc.) By approaching the objective elements that compose the identity of a place, it is obvious that it depends on an extensive and complex structured set of characteristics associated with:

- the abiotic characteristics of the region, such as geomorphology, climate, etc.
- the state of the natural environment
- the volume and character of human intervention over time
- the current social developments in the region and its territorial expression

Thus, the "identity" or even the uniqueness of a place results from the special way of how the abiotic characteristics of the area in the form of human intervention in the past and the present are combined.<sup>8</sup>

### **Place Branding**

Place Branding is also known as destination branding, it is a relatively new term which defines the strategic plan to improve the image of a place. In other words, the management of the name of a place (city, country, destination) is not simply to impart new labels or logos but to consolidate and transmit basic characteristics of a unique and separate identity through a well organized and structured brand name.<sup>9</sup>

The main concern that arises is to highlight the element or elements of which a place predominates over others because the components of the "image" contributing to the development. So branding can lead both to identifying new comparative advantages and to a different, more beneficial management of the already known.<sup>10</sup>

Place branding is definitely a long-term effort and requires several years of consistent and persistent efforts to create the "identity". The places that are suitable for implementing the place branding process are those with a strong and increasing competition, because they have to improve their competitiveness and to maintain or enhance their position in the "market". As part of this competition is the transformation of the city into an independent financial organization which certainly relates not only to private or state funds but to attracting foreign investment as well.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Sapounakis, A. 2012, "Place Marketing and Branding", Thessaly University Publications, Volos, p. 42

<sup>9</sup> Drakopoulou, D, 2013 "City Branding & Marketing: The Piraeus case, University of Piraeus", Piraeus, p. 88

<sup>10</sup> Theodosiou, D. 2011 "The contribution of civilization to the social-financial development of the Municipality of Athens" National Center of Public Administration and Subsidiarity, Athens, p.21

<sup>11</sup> Drakopoulou, D, 2013 "City Branding & Marketing: The Piraeus case, University of Piraeus", Piraeus, p. 91

## **City branding: introductory meanings**

The meaning of the term city branding is a technique - method that has to be followed from the responsible bodies of a city for its prominence. It is about an important urban tool for the development of the city, where the meaning of brand and "identity" play a crucial part. It is a fact that there is a number of differentiated, although similar interpretations of the city branding process. The interpretations relate to the different approach of the term each time. So, sometimes it is seen as marketing, others as a launch, others as pure advertising, others as mere promotion, i.e. concepts that move in similar fields and often are covered by each other, serving the same or close goals.<sup>12</sup> A city branding gives a voice or a name to its culture and social capital, the glue that defines and creates a cluster and brings a community together. To be successful, and foster economic development, clusters need to identify what they stand for, what their brand is, and be able to voice it in a clear, compelling message.<sup>13</sup>

City branding has become in recent years, a prominent activity within the city marketing. Cities around the world use various channels to promote themselves in the relevant markets, such as investors, visitors, artists, and even people who are interested in maybe choosing another town as a place of permanent residence. In their effort that cities often include the use of impressive and attractive logos slogans, which appear in crowded sites and advertising campaigns, in the local and international media.<sup>14</sup>

## **City Branding: essence and content**

The city branding provides a stable framework for shaping the management - the "image" of a city. It will provide the basis for policy-making with a view to supporting local economic development. It will provide the basis for a policy-making with a view to supporting the local economic development. It is meant as the mean to achieve competitive advantage, in order to increase inward investment and tourism, and community development by strengthening the local "identity". In this sense, the importance and need for a framework that describes and explains the processes involved in city branding is as important to tackle the competition for resources, investment and tourism.<sup>15</sup>

For many decades, cities in almost throughout the world apply certain techniques and adopt parts of its marketing philosophy to achieve its operational and strategic goals. The implementation of city branding is based largely on construction, communication and management of the city's image, as it is understood that the contacts with the city take place through perceptions and images. In this sense, the real object of city branding is the image of the city, which in its turn

<sup>12</sup> Bilanaki M. El. , 2011 "The application of City branding on the Municipality of Agios Nikolaos, Crete" Panteion University, p.18,19

<sup>13</sup> Crombie B., 2011 "Branding Cities and Clusters for Economic Development" The ISM Journal of International Business, ISSN 2150-1076,1(3)

<sup>14</sup> Papaleontiou, D., 2010 "Nicosia, a city answering to challenges: City branding in the south-eastern part of Europe" Panteion University, p.7

<sup>15</sup> Giantsiou, K., 2013, «City Branding: Online Applications and Study of the city of Thessaloniki», University of Macedonia, p.12

is the starting point and the raw material for the process of urban marketing.<sup>16</sup>

The cities are now signs of an international network and compete with each other at multiple different levels. In these cities, through attractive tax environment, modern infrastructure and communications, especially through the quality of urban space, the image of the city, the urban landscape, culture and leisure - comparative advantages are built over others. So big and small cities in their efforts to maintain or upgrade their position in the hierarchy of the global urban network, consciously plan, design and develop strategic plans based on the city marketing.

It is important at this point to mention the issue of the difference in the concept of the city from the "narrow" meaning of the product as it is more commonly known. In recent years the European cities introduce the term branding in their field of view. The purpose of branding is essentially to "build" the "image". This image will affect the perceived value and will increase the value of "identity" in the mind of the customer / consumer. Similarly, the cities often try to develop a brand that distinguishes their own city from the other. Through a clean and straight logo - name of a city both residents and people from other places will be able to understand the nature of the city.<sup>17</sup>

A branding strategy (branding) of the city is considered as an important tool for the creation of a successful brand (brand) of the city in order to attract people from the above groups. The successful management of a city brand can boost: the increase of competitiveness, higher earnings in investment in real estate and infrastructure, connective city development and a great dose of pride for the city, since the inhabitants, the businesses and the institutions stand before a new sense and all of this, with new logos and new advertising campaigns, play a crucial part in the city development.<sup>18</sup>

### **Factors contributing to the success of City Branding**

The key factors for building a strong city brand is the correct management of the six points of the hexagon that we see below are:

- 1 The presence (presence) of the city, i.e. the perception of residents and visitors for it which forms the outer "image" of the place so it can act as mobile advertising. Moreover it is the international city contribution to science, culture and administration.
- 2 The place (place) itself, materials and its intangible elements (climate, environment, infrastructure, services, etc.).
- 3 The people (people) and their education, abilities and aspirations that shape the local size and create opportunities for tourism,

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<sup>16</sup> Kavaratzis, M., 2010 "From City Marketing to City Branding"  
[http://www.citybranding.gr/2010/03/blog-post\\_21.html](http://www.citybranding.gr/2010/03/blog-post_21.html)

<sup>17</sup> Bilanaki M. El. , 2011 "The application of City branding on the Municipality of Agios Nikolaos, Crete" Panteion University, p.33,34

<sup>18</sup> Daclin, J., 2011, "A common vision for city branding in the European cities. Why should there be a city brand strategy"  
<http://www.citybranding.gr/2011/02/city-branding-city-brand.html>

business, cultural, social and political exchange. Without the human factor and its particular characteristics, a city is simply an empty landscape.



#### 4 The prerequisites

(pre-requested) of a place which define the way in which people perceive the basic facilities infrastructure (schools, hospital care, satisfactory means of transport, etc.)

#### 5 The pulse (pulse) of the city that determines whether the city is interesting in the sense of providing entertainment services and the existence of separate elements that can be experienced.

#### 6 The city dynamic (potential), which expresses the potential economic and educational opportunities within the city (accessible environment for finding employment, investment or education, etc.).

The City Branding hexagon:

Source:

<http://citybranding.tumblr.com/post/4731948515/past-and-present-city-marketing>

The effective and equitable management of the six factors can lead to the correct and positive image of a city.<sup>19</sup> But there are not the known factors that improve the chances of success of a City Branding strategy. There are factors that influence the success of the very process of development of the brand such as: Partnership and leadership, vision, strategy, evaluation and creativity, the application of the name where partners should also involve other stakeholders to implementing their strategy with operations, investment attraction programs and events that highlight the name of its location.<sup>20</sup>

It is very typical and interesting, the fact that city examples are given, assessed and included among the 50 largest cities in the world, given the City Branding strategies such as: the climate, the city's parks, buildings, their attractiveness, leisure, the utilization of this city, the safety etc. where according to the Anhold - GfK Roper City Branding Index 2011, the top ten world cities are: Paris, London, Sydney, the New York, Los Angeles, Rome, Washington, Melbourne, Vienna and Tokyo.<sup>21</sup>

At this point, someone can understand the branding strategies used in recent years for the promotion and enhancement of urban conditions and rules that strengthen the image and reputation with the following

<sup>19</sup> Theodosiou, D., 2011, "The contribution of civilization to the social-financial development of the Municipality of Athens" National Center of Public Administration and Subsidiarity, Athens, p.23, 24

<sup>20</sup> Avlonitis, K., 2013, «City branding, the participation of the inhabitants in the shaping of the city identity. The Ierapetra case»T.E.I. of Crete, p.21,22

<sup>21</sup> Giantsiou, K., 2013, "City Branding": Online Applications and Study of the city of Thessaloniki, Dissertation, University of Macedonia, p. 18

result: attracting visitors, investment, strengthening of infrastructure, innovation, improving the quality of life, and the natural environment, being a unique competitive advantage.<sup>22</sup>

### **The Olympics and Athens**

The first celebration of the Olympic Games recorded in the ancient times, is in Olympia in 776 b.C. From the milestone year, they reached their peak in the fifth and sixth century B.C., so they acquired a religious significance as well, held in honour of the god Zeus, whose huge statue was at Olympia. There, they were celebrated every four years, during the second or third full moon.<sup>23</sup> The Olympics passed through various stages of acne and decline, until they were abolished in 1503 and later returned, because of two persons' actions, the French baron Pierre de Coubertin (1836-1937) and the Greek scholar and entrepreneur Dimitrios Vikelas (1835-1908). With great success, as recognized internationally, they were held in Athens, the first modern Olympic Games, focusing in the Kallimarmaro Panathinaiko Stadium. Thus, with the conduct of the Games in 1896 in Athens the history of the modern Olympic Games began.<sup>24</sup>

### **Athens: the city that was chosen to host the Olympic Games in 2004**

Athens was chosen as the 2004 Olympic Games host in the year 1997, during the 106th Session of the International Olympic Committee in Lausanne. In 1997, Athens was based on the selection of, in a large part to an invitation to the Olympic history. The Olympic Games in Athens, known as the 2004 Summer Olympics, were held from August 13 until August 29 2004.

In our opinion the City Branding of Athens as host of the Olympic Games begins with the use of mascots of the Winter Olympics in Grenoble (France) where it was established as an institution to have a mascot for the Olympic Games. For Athens, the official mascots are the two brothers, Phoebus and Athena, named after the mythical God of Olympus Apollo - Phoebus, the god of light and music and the goddess of wisdom, protector of Athens, Athena. They are inspired by the ancient "daedala" that were dolls and, apart from the religious purposes they had, they were also toys.

To better understand how the City Branding worked, we will record the experiences of strategies of other Olympic cities, where the Olympic Games were held. It should be emphasized from the outset that the comparison reference of the experience of Athens than in other Olympic cities, great care, since the environments are different. However a basic investigative element in our opinion, is whether there are differences in the methods - branding strategies used by these cities and had increased traffic and after the games, compared to Athens. Also another point of investigation will be the strategy of developing their historical, cultural and environmental contexts,

<sup>22</sup> Skouras D., Christofakis M., Karachalios N., 2013, "Branding strategies and local development in isolated mountain areas: The Tylliria - Marathasa areas of Cyprus" [www.citybranding.gr](http://www.citybranding.gr)

<sup>23</sup> Papakonstantopoulos, N., 2013, "Brief History of the Olympic Games" [http://www.kalavrytanews.com/2013/09/blog-post\\_7228.html#.VYb38\\_ntmkp](http://www.kalavrytanews.com/2013/09/blog-post_7228.html#.VYb38_ntmkp)

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.sansimera.gr/articles/54/5/84>

within the logic of transformation of the relative uniqueness, into a competitive advantage of these cities, comparing them to Athens.

It is supported (as we shall see below), that two different strategies - expectations, targeting the cities hosting Olympics e.g. there are cities that undertake the celebration of the games, because they consider the Olympics, a chance for a fresh start with a view to their economic development, while other cities take up the Olympics for quite different reasons, that are reasons of prestige and power demonstration.

For example, BARCELONA and ATHENS belong to the first category, while LOS ANGELES and ATLANTA belong to the second category. Broadly thinking in the examples above, that, the most comparable (in our opinion) cities to ATHENS are: Beijing 2008 because of the organizing and technological requirements and BARCELONA, because of the similarity of the tourist environment and experience since the BARCELONA experience is particularly important since Barcelona as well before the Olympic Games in 1992, was facing degradation problems or lack of general infrastructure, which could contribute to a long-term economic and social development. The Games in Barcelona was an opportunity for a new start and the same plan was obviously pursued by ATHENS as well.<sup>25</sup>

It should be pointed out that before the Olympics, the prevailing view was the positive impact on Athens that will host the Olympic Games, that could contribute to future regional and local development (of local areas). This is evidenced by the fact that, given the opportunity in the city / country to invest and by extension, infrastructure (investment projects aimed at expansion - modernization and improvement of hotels) and superstructure (like the Subway/Metro) for the quality service of the visitors of Athens, many courts and provincial cities as well and even a velodrome in the Marathon region where this historic area lies just a short distance from Athens.

At the same time, many have recognized that not only works but also the Marketing / City Branding, marked major successes since, is contemporary art with great economic importance and perspectives shaping the identity of cities hosting them.

In this context, we seriously took in account data from the study of Panteion University with the title «City Branding ATHENS», characterized says: from 1980 - 1985, Greece is shown as the place of entertainment, the heart out and dishes broken in music venues. From 1985-2004, Greece is shown as the country of laziness and disorganization, until 2004 when the Olympics come to prove otherwise so "City Branding ATHENS", dramatically improves the image of Athens and Greece abroad. This way Athens tried to overthrow the stereotypes with the opening of the Games but also the opening of cultural spaces (Acropolis Museum, upgrade of the Festivals of Art, Music and Cinema).<sup>26</sup> It wasn't only them, but also others were highlighted, such as the local advantages (local assets), on which the branding strategy was based, which aim was to make Athens "special". This fundamental process was the basis for the development of a specific

<sup>25</sup> Papanikos P., 1999, "The 2004 Olympics and the impact on greek tourism". Research Institute for Tourism, Athens, pp.37,38.

<sup>26</sup> Kousouti M, Oikonomidou K., Solomou E., Flevotomos D., 2010, "City Branding Athens", Study of the Panteion University, Department of Communication - Media and Culture pp. 3,6

and unique "identity" to accompany the 2004 Athens reference area forever.

It is universally acknowledged that the City Branding helps to attract and increase traffic before and after, resulting in consolidation of the tourism development in the Olympic town. For many cities that hosted the Olympic Games worldwide, we have read and take exceptional positions in the sense of training and implementation of a plan to improve the "image" and reputation, which is an integral part of the programming of City Branding, such as, for example, London. And then the City Branding helped develop strategies that make a city instantly recognizable and connecting it to one or more sectors of modern life such as Jerusalem: Holy City, Paris: City of Light, New York: City that never sleeps, Los Angeles: Capital of Cinema.<sup>27</sup>

In achieving this objective, and others it is deemed that the branding strategy has contributed much and that might result from the comparative analysis before and after the Olympic Games of Athens 2004.

The possibilities were obviously present well as the efforts of Athens were made, to establish branding strategies. Therefore, the strategies in this case were indeed an integral part of the overall integrated strategy for sustainable local development in Athens, but the effect remains to be seen at the end of the work.

#### Different views on the Olympic Games in Athens

There were also contrary, that we ought to mention to be complete in the points of our work.

There was also the view that "the Olympics by being held, would give some ideological shine on the predatory moods of the Greek capital and would simultaneously contribute to the integration of the popular masses".<sup>28</sup> Then it is also stated that "The Olympics goes, the profiling comes in" and among other things it is state that: 1.2 billion Euro, is the budgeted cost for the insurance costs of the Olympic Games and the powerful communication system - Electronic brain.<sup>29</sup> Here are terms borrowed from the book entitled: *Halt aux Jeux* of the Frenchman Albert Jacquard entitled: "Cease the Games" and it is emphasized that a championship is not fair play, but ruthless competition. Over the athletes who are mobile ads for billion viewers huge amounts are invested but many modern political consensus coercion as well.<sup>30</sup> Followed by a view that "On the other side of the Olympics" it is overemphasized the fact that: in the 2004 Athens such a brotherhood is declared only to deceive. Only to masquerade the world of money into a colorful festival.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Stagakis G., 2014, <http://Tasosvamvoukas.gr>

<sup>28</sup> Bitsakis Eftychis, 2004, "UTOPIA Review of Theory and Culture" 61, p.7

<sup>29</sup> Papadakis Kostas, 2004, "UTOPIA Review of Theory and Culture" 61, p. 10

<sup>30</sup> Portaliou Eleni, 2004, "UTOPIA Review of Theory and Culture" 61, p. 13

<sup>31</sup> Stavridis Stavros, 2004, "UTOPIA Review of Theory and Culture" 61, p. 16

## **Epilogue**

Until today, however, the objective assessment of the impact (of the Games Athens 2004), is missing, and yet sufficient scientific evidence, and for the first time it is being recorded, in understanding of good practices but also the lost opportunities resulting from the organization of the Olympic Games 2004. The sober understanding of the country's experience with the conduct of the Games 2004 can be a source of pumping courses on how the country can achieve important national goals, and how to avoid ignoring important opportunities presented before it.<sup>32</sup> Apart from the training of integrated projects of City branding, the Olympic Games in Athens so far in several cases, strategies must be planned for a particular sector (e.g. culture, conferences, fashion), a specific urban area (e.g., a deprived neighborhood) or a redevelopment project (e.g. a new residential complex). This, for Athens, will be a creation and use of communication tools in order for the city, as of today, to further improve the image and reputation, to attract additional visitors, possibly new investment as well. Alongside the manner and within the spiral of the economic hardship the effort to reverse or cancel any negative images people of the world have for Athens and Greece will be paid. The importance therefore of the object for Greece in the current economic climate is obvious.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Bettas N., 2015, "The imprint of the 2004 Olympics organization on the Greek Economy". Study of the Foundation for Economic & Industrial Research, Athens, p.3

<sup>33</sup> Defner P., Karachalis N., Metaxas t., 2012 "Place Marketing - Greece. The teaching: The teaching and practice of a multi-scientific object"  
[www.citybranding.gr](http://www.citybranding.gr)