CITY FORM AS A STRATEGY FOR CITY BRANDING:
A Comparative Study of Kandy and Galle

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Abstract

City branding concept is based on marketing the city's history, culture, natural resources, architectural values, social opportunities and lifestyle. This research will investigate the impact of city form or the physical layout of a city as a city branding strategy with respect to two well-functioning cities; Kandy and Galle. Landscape architectural character is mainly expressed through the city form. The analysis was carried out through the experience of the residents, commuters and tourists of the city. The data was collected under two questionnaire surveys to determine the current brand of the city and to analyse the impact due to each of the selected city form elements landmarks, parks and streets. The positive and negative attributes of the selected spaces were further analysed to evaluate the extent of the impact. According to the findings, the impact generated by the landmarks were high when compared to the parks and streets. And the impact of city form was higher in Kandy than Galle. These findings emphasize the factors which affect the different levels of impact from the city form to the development, establishment and endurance of a city brand.

Keywords: City branding, Form, Landmarks, Parks, Streets

1. Introduction

Most cities in the world consist of a naturally built foundation that they are known for. It could be a geographical feature, a historical event, a diverse culture or legends and myths of civilizations which creates this foundation. And this foundation with time tends to develop and variate depending on the external and internal forces that affect the city such as environmental, economic or social forces which tends to change the cities identity. This identity helps to generate an image for the city for better or worse. This created identity used by the stakeholders of the city to generate a brand for the city. This brand would promote economic, environmental, social, political, and cultural values by enhancing positive qualities of a city and attracting investors into the city. "City branding can indeed be considered as a strategic tool which takes into account and promotes the economic and cultural values in the cities and furthermore as a marketing tool which conveys the message focusing on the quality of place, history, lifestyle, standard of living, and culture as competitive advantage assets in cities."(Oguztimur, & Akturan, 2015).

Simply because of globalization, the world has become an interconnected place where international trades are made with the aid of information technology. This process has effects on the environment, on culture, on political systems, on economic development and prosperity, and on human physical well-being in societies and people around the world. "Globalization is increasing with shifting in resources, capital, and people around the world and intensification in competition among cities for investment, business, tourists, and different events is considerable." (Zhang and Zhao, 2009). "Globalization intends to help the developing cities to compete more easily with early established cities which are in a more stable situation." (Pfefferkorn, 2005)

With such circumstances, the cities become competitive with one another while trying to stay ahead in the development and promotion paths. "To prove their individuality in achieving various economic, political, social or psychological purposes, cities have long sought to separate from each other." (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005). This promotion of cities finally leads to competitiveness between them. Much like different brands which try to sell products, cities came in to branding themselves so that they would be in the top of the competition.

Branding can be described as the process of providing a meaning to a specific product, service, company or organization by generating and shaping a brand in the consumers mind. This is basically a strategy designed to help the user to identify and experience each of the things that the owners want to promote and to hand them with a good reason to select their products over the others. If the brand quality and identity are good, the chances of being recognized more by the users are high. The objective is to attract and retain loyal customers and other stakeholders by delivering a product that is always aligned with what the brand promises. The process involved in creating a unique different name and image for a product in the consumers' mind, mainly through advertising campaigns with a consistent theme. Branding aims to establish a significant and differentiated presence in the market that attracts and retains loyal customers. When it comes to cities, it is important to follow the same tactics in creating this brand and continuing it without fallbacks.

There are strategies when it comes to branding a city much like in branding a product. If these strategies are established with more clarity and reason in order to convert the visual image into a brand image a better outcome can be expected. "Along this historical route and increasing competitiveness of cities it is expected to see city branding role as action resulting from a consensus among the public and the officials about the identity of the city and also as a strategic instrument for spreading competitive advantages of cities used by many of them around the world to enhance competitiveness" (Zhang and Zhao, 2009).The branding will have a better success if they properly communicate city stories and market its' values to the users through their brands while generating sustainable urban cities.

2. Research Methodology

The methodology was based on how the city form, one of the strategies in city branding impacted on creating and maintaining a city brand. There were two different surveys used in the research. As shown in the Figure 1, the research started by analyzing how the urban design becomes a part of city branding. Then next stage was carried out to identify the strategies used in the city branding. Among these strategies, city form was taken into further analysis. City form is built up from the urban design and how it evolves over time generates and improves the city form.
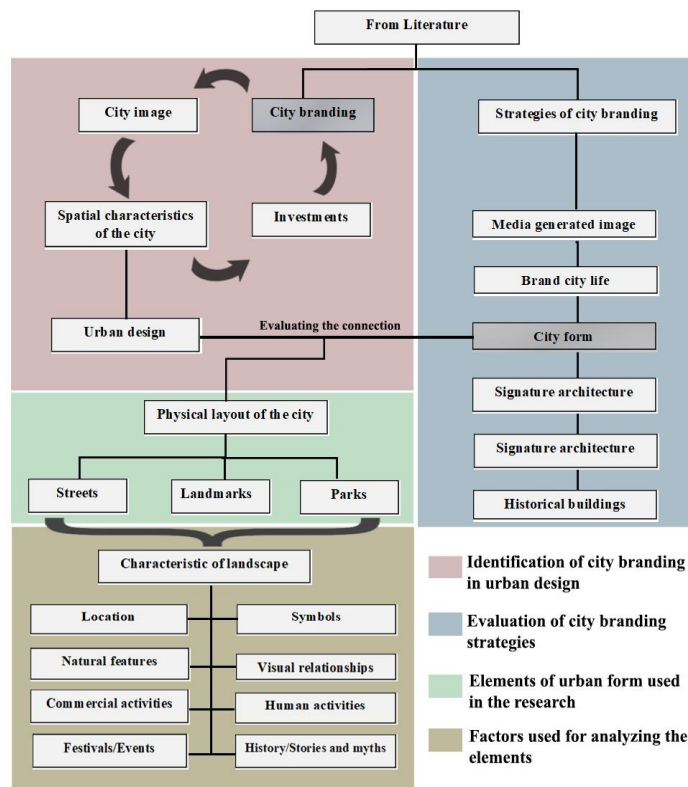

Figure 1 - Research design of the study (*Source: Author*)

The research was carried out in two cities which were selected as case studies. Among the physical layout the selected cities, few elements, namely three elements; streets, parks and landmarks were selected. These elements of urban fabric were then analyzed further by carrying out two questionnaire surveys. The data collected through each survey was analyzed through a developed sequence in order to identify the negative and positive attributes of the city form impacts.

3. Questionnaire survey

The data collection process through the survey basically focused on the perception of users. There were two surveys carried out in the sequence.

3.1 SURVEY NUMBER – 01
This survey was carried out among 30 participants from each city (total number of participants from both cities were 60). These participants included tourists, residents and commuters. There percentages differed as the city branding was a relative measure and it varied only depending on the idea, they had on the city rather than their gender variation or occupation.

Each participant was provided with a questionnaire survey to state the city brand they believe the selected cities hold (Kandy or Galle). After analyzing the results, the brand which is identified by most of the participants was selected for each city. Then in the same questionnaire, they were asked whether the city form impacted city branding. The question was explained to the participants who were less familiar with the terms. Depending on their answer, they were to select the most suitable element of the city form; a street, a park and a landmark from the given list, which supports the brand they selected at the very beginning.

From this stage the answers from the participants who selected the brand which was selected by majority of them was separated and forwarded into the next questionnaire.

3.2 SURVEY NUMBER – 02
This survey was used to further analyze the park, street and the landmark selected by the participants from each city. Here the characteristics of the places which were identified through previous literature was used to determine the reasons for the participants choices. From these outcomes, the negative and positive attributes which impacted the city form was finalized and reached to a conclusion.
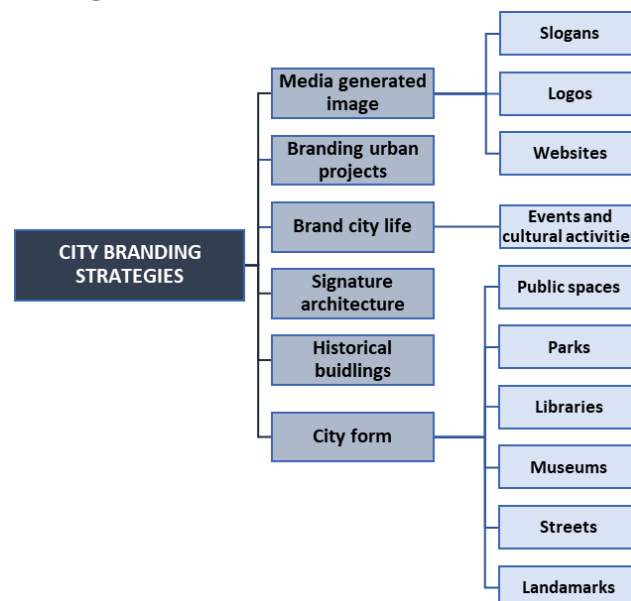
4. Strategies of city branding

Figure 2,Strategies
(*Source: Helmy.M*)

The making of a good city image is a meaningful synthesis of activity and structure. The use of image planning strategies has become an essential need for cities in order to survive in the global economy. Since successful brands give benefit beyond the physical aspect of the cities, there is a big desire to transfer the visual image into a unique brand image .There are different urban branding strategies that could be developed based on diverse city development objectives and visions, such as large-scale urban projects, signed architecture, events, media, etc. (Helmy.M,2008)

4.1. CITY FORM

City form has a powerful influence on human interactions and how the value is crated within the city. This is a critical measure of cities' infrastructure cost, sustainability and energy efficiency. It impacts on economic value creation and underlies the city's livability and social and economic resilience. City form is the physical layout and design of an urban area, town or a city. This basically contains component patterns and processes involved with the formation and transformations of those patterns. Generally physical layout includes street patterns, plot patterns and building patterns etc.

4.1.1 Landmarks

Landmarks are an objects or features of a landscape or a city or an area which helps to memorize the specific region. Wikipedia defines a landmark as "including anything that is easily recognizable, such as a monument, building, or other structure.". Landmarks often bear very important significance either in design or in history. Landmarks are usually of two types. Natural landmarks and man-made landmarks. Both usually become the attractions or direction providing points of a city or a region.

4.1.2 Parks

Parks are recreational spaces allocated for the people. They visit these places to stay fit and healthy while enjoying the surrounding. Generally, parks are known to provide economical value, social importance and health and environmental benefits to the communities. The very first park was known to be created in 19th century. A high-quality park will have an impact on a city while playing an essential role in attracting investment to the city.

4.1.3 Streets

Streets are the main transportation element of a region where all the spaces in a city gets interconnected. It runs across built environment and across natural environment where people may freely assemble, interact, and move about. Streets are either simple with just foot paths or sometimes complex with hard paved materials with more crowd gathered around. Streets could either be main streets with broad and high level of activities and side streets where it feels calmer and quieter with lot of residential character rather than commercial.

5. Selecting city brands and city form elements

From the two selected case studies, following brands and places were selected by the 30 participants from each city who faced the first survey.

5.1 CITY BRAND SELECTION

So as for selecting the city brands, the following two brands were identified for each city.

Kandy: Cultural City
According to the survey, following were the mainly stated reasons for the selection of Kandy as a cultural city.
- Attraction of tourists into the country
- Presence of Perahera event; a major cultural event
- Temple of the tooth – a sacred place of worship
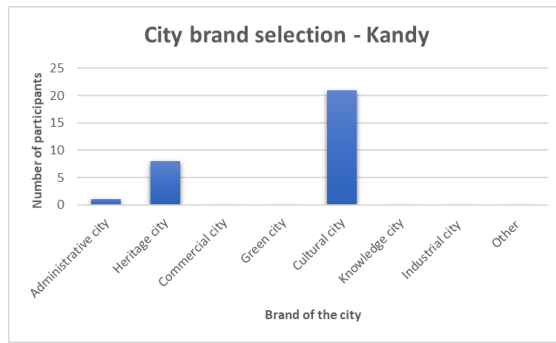- Combination of different ethnic groups

Figure 3, Selection of a city brand for Kandy (*Source: Author*)

Galle: Heritage City

Figure 4, Selection of a city brand for Galle (*Source: Author*)

According to the survey, following were the mainly stated reasons for the selection of Galle as a Heritage city.

- Influence of Dutch, Portuguese and British in the past centuries.
- Presence of Galle Fort as a heritage site
- Unique culture present within the Galle fort
- Tourist destination

The reasons they stated for this selection were always not as specific as listed above. But they were further modified and classified as above to state the most accurate reasons.
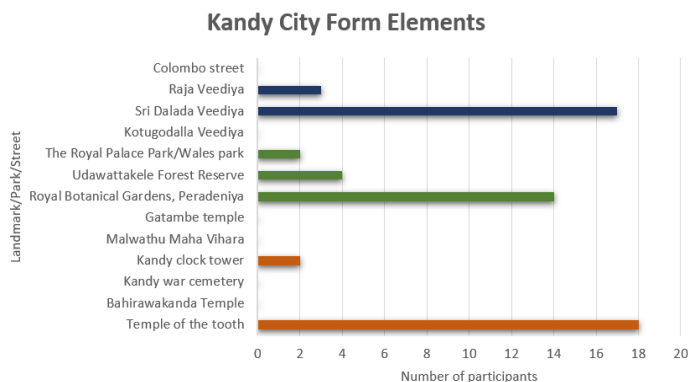
5.2. CITY FORM ELEMENT SELECTION

Figure 5 , Selection of city form elements in Kandy (Source: Author)
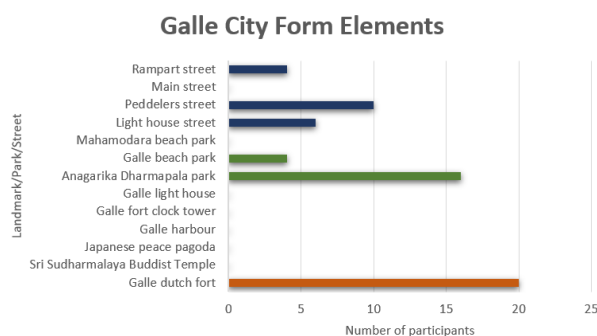
Figure 6 , Selection of city form elements in Galle (Source: Author)

The next stage of the survey was carried out to determine the city form components which impacts the city brand. Participants were provided with a series of images of places representing each selected components of the city form landmarks, parks and streets. They were asked to select the most suitable place that supports in generating the brand they selected. And since the brand of the cities were chosen after the survey; the answers of the participants who chose the brand Cultural city for Kandy and Heritage city for Galle were taken into consideration. And from both cities 20 questionnaire surveys were selected to constant the outcome result. The spaces and places given for the selection and their outcomes were as follows (Table 1).

Table 1 - Selected city form elements Source: Author

	Kandy	*Galle*
Street	Sri Dalada Veediya	Peddlers street
Park	Royal Botanical Garden	Anagarika Dharmapala park
Landmark	Temple of the tooth	Galle Fort

6. Analysis of Data

So, the places selected from the above surveys were used to analyze the characteristics (Table 2) which impacted the choice of selecting these places as the city form elements which impacts the most to the city branding.

Table 2 - Characteristics of urban places and their impact on City brand Source: Author

	Kandy			Galle		
	Land marks	Parks	Streets	Land marks	Parks	Streets
Location	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
History/Stories and myths	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓
Festivals/Events	✓	✕	✓	-	✕	✓
Natural features	✕	✓	✕	✓	-	-
Symbols	-	✕	✓	✕	✕	✕
Human activities	✓	-	-	✓	✕	✓
Visual relationships	✓	✓	✓	✓	✕	✓
Commercial activities	✕	✓	✓	✓	✕	✓

When the impacts of both cities were taken as an overall outcome, it was clear that the impacts were not similarly distributed.
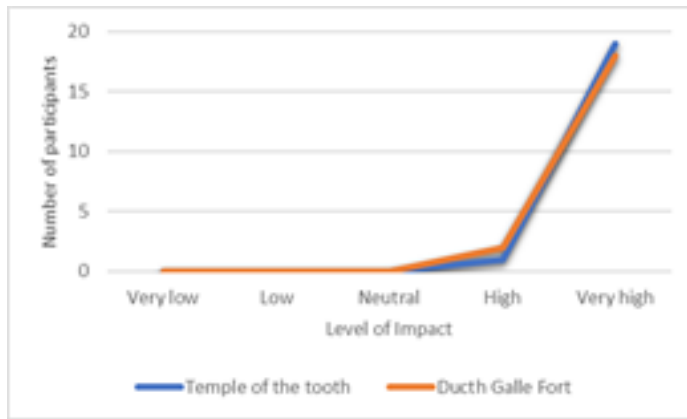
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Figure 7, Impact of Landmarks (*Source: Author*)

Both the landmarks seem to have a greater impact when calculated as an overall outcome. All the participants voted that the overall impact is higher when it comes to landmarks impact on city branding as a part of the city form. The reason for this impact was the value of these landmarks with their long histories, and locations which induces various human activities and the special events which revolve around these places.
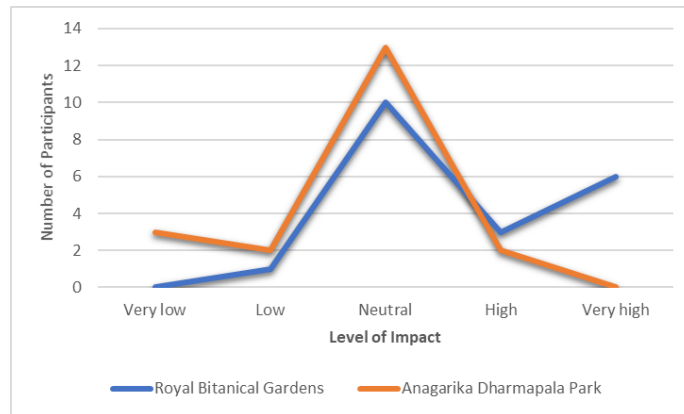

Figure 8, Impact of Parks (*Source: Author*)

The overall impact of both parks of the two cities are given in the graph below**.** According to these values the impact of the parks was mostly neutral in both the cities. There was no impact on the city brand by these parks. The main reasons were the parks were not actually delivering the city brand to the user. Parks are used as places of enjoyment rather than value.
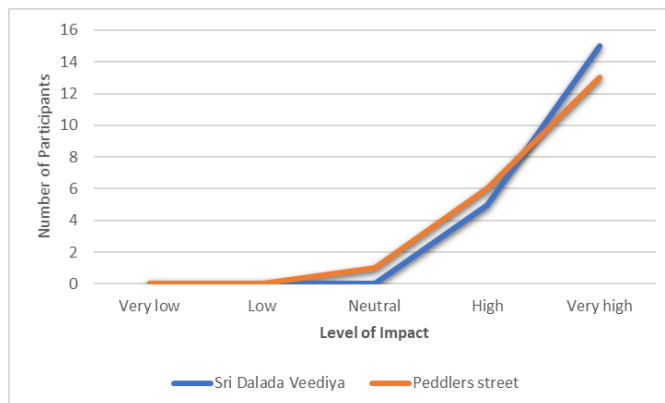

Figure 9 , Impact of Streets (Source: Author)

According to this result the street have an impact to a certain level, but not as much as that of landmarks and definitely not lower than the impact the parks has. The streets are the gathering places and places where the cities talk takes place.

It is where the city people reside, and busy streets have a way of delivering the stories to the visitors and the residents in a beautiful way. The visual connections and the features of the streets helps in achieving this.

When all three elements are compared, the impact can be summarized as follows.

As an overall impact of the city form elements, landmarks have a higher impact when compared with the other two elements. The impacts of the parks were neutral. It showed the lowest impact on city branding, while the streets also impacted on the city brand to a higher level than parks. But that impact was neutral in some cases as well. The general idea of the currently branded city images are as follows for both cities Kandy and Galle with landmarks being the prominent element in branding both the cities.
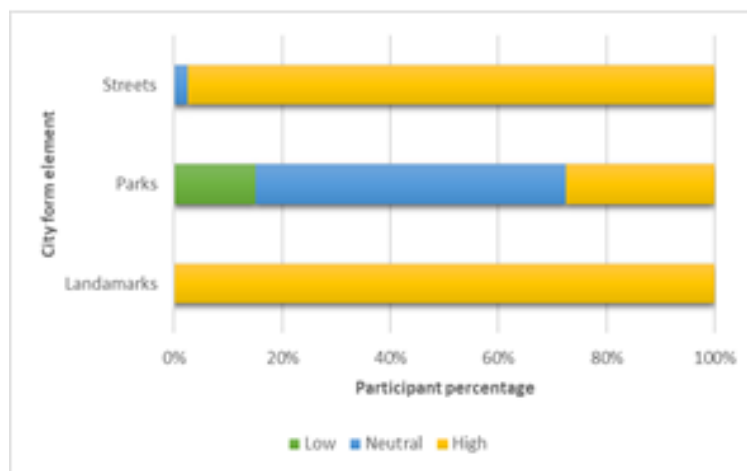

Figure 10, Summarized impact of the city form elements on city brand (*Source: Author*)

Among the city form elements, Temple of the tooth had a higher influence on branding the Kandy city as a cultural city rather than the impact of the Galle Fort on branding the Galle as a heritage city. Between Anagarika Dhramapala Park at Galle and Royal Botanical Gardens of Kandy, yet again the Kandy had a better influence by its' park than Galle. When it comes to streets Dalada Veediya impacted on branding the Kandy city as a cultural city than the Peddlers streets' branding of the Galle as a heritage city.
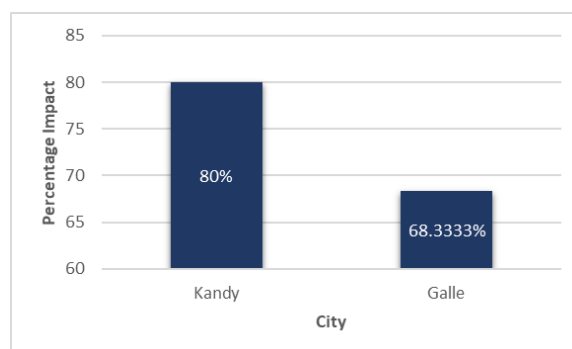

Figure 11 - The overall impact on Kandy and Galle (*Source: Author*)

When it comes to the impact of the city form as a strategy for city branding, the Kandy city had a higher impact when compared to Galle city.

7. Conclusion

City branding is a concept used by most of the cities in the world to promote their cities in order to gain investments into the city. In order to brand a city, the values of the city must be identified first. They could either be historical, cultural, heritage, social, natural or even economical values. And the organization of spatial and non-spatial characteristics of a city which makes up the image of the city should be investigated. These identified values can be fostered in a city through branding. When a city brands itself, the values become the main focal points of the residents, visitors and even tourists of the country. This in turn multiplies the investment of a city which will then be utilized for the development of the city assets which adds up the value to the city brand.

The city branding should be carried out in sequential stages in order to gain the best outcome. According to the city branding strategies explained by Rehan,M (2013) , there are six ways of promoting a brand strategically .The researched focused on one specific strategy; The city form. City form generally refers to the physical layout of a city. This form is generated through urban designing. There are large number of elements which makes up the city form and according to literature places such as libraries, landmarks, museums, parks, streets, public spaces all makes up a part of the city form. The study predominately focuses on the impact generated by landmarks, parks and streets in branding a city through the city form. Characteristics of the places were explored in depth in order to measure the level of impact by each of the elements.

The research was carried out in Galle and in Kandy city. Through the research, it was found out that most of the people brands the Kandy city as a cultural city and Galle as a heritage city. When the impact of the elements was analyzed for the above brands, it was clear that the highest impact was generated from the landmarks compared to parks and streets. The main reason for this impact was the rich historical backgrounds of the landmarks and the activities that circulated around these landmarks. The people view the landmark as a part of the city in a sense that, without it, the cities would not have been welcomed by many people as it is today. The unique locations of the landmarks also made an influence on the value it creates.

When it comes to streets, the impact created by streets were also high, but not high as the landmarks. The important character for the people to choose streets were the activities which were carried out in them and the visual relationships the streets had with the selected landmarks. Most of the activities and events in the streets had a connection with the landmark. When it comes to parks, the impact of parks on the city branding was neutral. The parks were mostly viewed as places which were designed to spend the leisure time and a place which indicated a green area in the city. The park did not add value to the city values or had much impact in branding the city. The parks were designed not in a way that it expresses the city values here as in the landmarks and the streets had various means of adding value to the city which created a high impact on the city brand. When it comes to both cities, the Kandy city had 80% impact through the city form elements to brand itself as a cultural city while Galle had an impact of about 68% from city form elements to brand itself as a heritage city. Yet none of the cities had a full impact from the city form elements.

The two-hypothesis formed at the beginning of the research were; that the city form has a great influence in branding a city and among the analyzed city form elements, streets have the most impact on city brand. Finally, it can be concluded that having a proper meaningful city form has a considerable impact on the city brand. But the landmarks have the highest impact on the city brand more than parks and streets. When designing cities, it is better to focus more on having spaces and places with characteristics which influence the city users in a way that it will help them to memorize and promote the city. A proper city brand will not only promote the city, but it will also help to protect the city assets and values created by them for the generations to come.

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