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Conceptual Evolution of City Branding: A Systematic Review and the Progress of the Terms “Social Media” and “Smart City” in Literature

Pelin ALBAYRAK FAKIOĞLU¹ , Senay OĞUZTİMUR² 

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to examine the evolution of the city branding concept and to explore the development of smart city and social media terms in city branding literature, from January 1st, 2003, to August 1st, 2023. Conducting a systematic review of 325 peer-reviewed English articles from the Emerald, Proquest, and Web of Science (WoS) databases that feature “city branding” or “city marketing” in their abstracts, keywords, or titles, the study assesses the transition from simpler branding strategies to complex and integrated approaches over the two-decade period. The research reveals an uptick in concept-related research since 2010, particularly highlighting the growing significance of smart city and social media concepts within the city branding literature. Furthermore, it identifies an increased focus on city branding efforts in Chinese cities over the last decade. By providing a comprehensive review of the developments and changes in city branding, alongside the evolving roles of smart city and social media concepts, this article is expected to contribute valuable insights to the existing body of literature.

Keywords: City Branding, City Marketing, Social Media, Social Media Marketing, Smart City, Smart City Branding.

JEL Classification Codes: M30, M31, R00

Referencing Style: APA 7

INTRODUCTION

Since the ancient times when human mobility took shape in the world, a lot of effort has been made by mankind to differentiate from its competitors, to stand out and to be preferred. Mankind strives to maintain this state of differentiation and aims to be preferred by the means of branding. Brand creation and management strategies were first created and developed on a product basis; while focus for the branding of places, cities, regions and nations started over time. The same trend is observed when the academic literature is examined; brand literature was first established to be product-oriented, but with changing marketing dynamics and structures, studies on corporate branding gained momentum. The continuing development of corporate branding has an inspiring affect on academic studies to focus on the branding of cities.

Kavaratzis (2004) defines city branding as a way for the city to gain a competitive advantage in order to attract investment and increase tourism, and thus to ensure social development and, accordingly, to strengthen local identities and increase citizens' belongingness to

the city. Middleton (2011) summarised city branding as a way of telling the city's story to the world. When the development of city branding is analyzed through academic studies, it is clear that it has developed in parallel with marketing dynamics. When examined chronologically, it is evident that branding studies focus on marketing strategies through physical elements (symbol item, logo, mega event, architectural element, etc.) in urban space management from the 1980s until almost the millennium. Since the 2000s, there has been a tendency towards the idea that branding should be evaluated and the process should be carried out in a long-term programme through abstract elements (the story of the city, city residents, stakeholders, behavioural patterns of the city, governance culture, etc.) in addition to physical elements. Today, because the city is a structure that is complex and difficult to control, it needs to concentrate on far more than product or institutional branding. The creation of branding activities should be with an integrated and multi-stakeholder participation, with collaborative understanding and sensitivity, while also taking technological developments into account.

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Integration of technological developments into all areas of life, problems and concerns regarding global warming, and the prominence of themes such as sustainability and resilience in urban management have directly enhanced the concept of smart city management, especially in the last 10 years. Considering the integrated structure of branding literature that has developed over time and as a result of the literature reviews, it can be contemplated that more emphasis is placed on the smart city phenomenon within the scope of the branding process; there are articles on smart city branding and the use / importance of smart city strategies in branding (Chan *et al.*, 2019; Molinillo *et al.*, 2019; Parks and Rohracher, 2019; Pevcin, 2019; Valdez *et al.*, 2018). On the other hand, it is seen that the developments in Web 2.0 and Web 3.0 technologies have caused a radical change in branding practices (Song and Yoo, 2016). It can be argued that these developments directly affect every component of the city; these new communication technologies are effective in a wide range of environments from city residents, institutions, visitors, business lines. In this context, as a result of the literature review on branding, it is seen that most of the articles written in the last 10 years have mentioned the social media phenomenon and this technology is actively used in branding strategy and branding effectiveness measurement.

Within the scope of the article, articles on city branding published in the WoS, Proquest and Emerald databases in the 20-year period between January 1st 2003 and August 1st 2023 were scanned. Data from 2003 onwards was chosen in order to adequately track the rapid evolution and development in marketing and urban management paradigms led by the Web 2.0 technology. The study aims to examine the change and development of city branding literature by systematically scanning the articles published on city branding in the last 20 years, and at the same time, while analyzing this development, to examine the development of the existence of smart city and social media concepts in branding literature and to show to what extent they are used in branding literature.

In line with the objectives, this study will try to answer the following research questions;

- How has the concept of city branding changed and developed in the process?
- How do the concepts of smart city and social media develop in the index of city branding?
- When the published articles are analyzed, are there any points that draw attention and should be underlined?

In this context, within the scope of the article, firstly, a conceptual framework will be created in order to examine the development of the literature and the change in the themes of branding in the 20-year period. Also, contributions of the authors to the definition of the concept and the process of the inclusion of “smart city” and “social media” in this process will be explained. In the second part, the findings extracted from the data generated from the literature review will be mentioned. Finally, the information obtained from the findings will be compiled and the article will be completed by submitting interpretations and presenting suggestions for future studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Exploring the Conceptual Evolution of City Branding

Under this topic, firstly, the basic historical development of the city branding concept will be summarised. Then, the studies on city branding will be evaluated by presenting a compilation on the changes / similarities in the approach to the concept in the articles examined in the last 20 years within the scope of the research.

A Brief History of City Branding

It is observed that academic studies on the concept of city branding have developed increasingly especially since the 1980s. It is plausible to associate this development with the dominance of neoliberalism policies in the world during these periods and to say that the conceptual development has been clearly affected as a result of the effects of neoliberalism policies on economic, political and social life.

The first studies on the creation of a city's branding process were based on branding studies in corporate structures. However, as studies progressed, it has been fathomed that the branding process of cities, although basically similar in principle, is a much more complex process than the branding process in corporate structures; it involves many uncontrollable elements and should be carried out with the participation of multiple stakeholders.

Much of the published research into city branding originates in the disciplines of marketing and urban studies, two fields that have tended to follow parallel rather than interdisciplinary paths (Dinnie, 2011). The transformation of city branding into an integrated structure and a multidisciplinary field that should include many elements has enabled each academician to work on city branding according to their own field of interest and expertise.

City Branding Literature in 20 years

In the studies conducted throughout the period and with the criteria specified in the methodology within the scope of the article, it is clear that the perception and process of city branding has changed and developed over the years. Lucarelli and Olof Berg (2011) concluded that studies generally focus on three perspectives. These are;

1. branding as production,
2. branding as appropriation,
3. critical studies of city brands and city branding.

When current studies are analyzed, a similar structure is evident to be preserved in the articles written on the subject. Studies on the subject have increased exponentially after the 2010s; and since, many different points have been underlined rather than a single focal point. The complex, multidisciplinary and integrated structure of city branding has been discovered and studies have directed their focuses accordingly.

In the first years of the scanned articles, articles especially mention the effect of branding on tourism and its economic contribution to the city. In today's intensely competitive tourism marketplace, it is often mentioned that it is important for cities to create a positive image in order to differentiate from others and become attractive (De Carlo et al., 2009). Making the city attractive by using significant architectural icons such as mega events and mega projects in branding is very effective. On the other hand, it is stated that the combination of activities such as competition-oriented city branding in addition to traditional tools in local economic policies creates a successful economic policy (Blume, 2006) and branding is seen as an economic instrument in cities where the service sector has become the main sector. In this context, it can be argued that branding was directly associated with tourism and the economic structure of the city in the first years under study.

It is contemplated that this approach, which is associated only with economy and tourism, is not considered three-dimensional and is more akin to the branding of the corporate structure. Practices progressing in this direction have aroused concern in some authors. There is a distanced and critical approach to the concept; these concerns shed light and will continue to do so on future studies and prepare the ground for developing the concept. Stigel and Frimann (2006) stated that the implementation of the corporate branding process in cities has many handicaps; first of all,

it is very difficult to understand the complex structure of the city, it is difficult to establish an absolute and healthy consensus; these problems will create a contradiction in the creation of a unique identity. In support of this view, Kavaratzis (2009) stated that branding has a nature that is affected by disruptions and difficulties in political and administrative processes; branding requires long-term coordination, but the complex nature of the city creates a contradiction in this regard, and that marketing should be an urban development subject that concerns urban residents beyond urban tourism development.

In the following years, it is clear that the topics addressed in the articles have diversified, especially following the contribution of the narrow scope of city branding practices in the previous years and the criticisms against it. It can be argued that globalisation, the climate crisis, the change in all paradigms with the emergence of Web 2.0 and the reflections of the failures of neoliberalism on social and physical life are also effective in this. Articles written in the last 10 years emphasise participation and multi-stakeholder management in city branding (Chen & Qu, 2020; Herezniak & Anders-Morawska, 2015; Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015; Kaya & Marangoz, 2014; Lindstedt, 2015; Merrilees et al., 2012) It is underlined that city branding is not only about attracting tourists and/or investors, but also about the welfare of the inhabitants of the city; that the inhabitants, existing business owners and NGOs representing the city should also take an active role in the branding process, and that the vision and identity created should be adopted by everyone. In addition, Herezniak and Anders-Morawska (2015) state that it is important for stakeholders to play an active role in the creation of the brand and progress towards common goals, as well as in the measurement and evaluation of the effectiveness of the created brand.

The fact that digitalisation is effective in city management and city image as well as in all areas of life has caused this issue to be intensively covered in city branding articles. Studies mainly focus on the effects of innovations in communication technologies on city image, city management and brand; and on the effective use of technological innovations in city management.

The responsibilities imposed on societies and city managers by globalisation and the climate crisis and changes in economic, social and physical structure have caused these themes to rise to prominence in city branding. It is stated that smart city management comes to the forefront by acting in an integrated manner with digitalisation, and smart cities can be evaluated as a branding strategy (De Almeida, 2023; De

Jong, 2019; Gretzel & Collier De Mendonça, 2019; Sirkis et al., 2022) being part of historical, social, economic, cultural, and tourist imaginary constructions. The goal is to understand how the territorial brand, based on regional development theories, is being used in the metaverse city of Seoul, South Korea. The method used was a case study associated with bibliographic and documentary research, using a pro-protocol with four analytical categories. The main results referred to a metaverse territorial-regional brand, bringing discussions about a new geographical-virtual-immersive metaverse scale. It also addressed the use of recognition and competitiveness strategies between interactive-immersive territories. The conclusion confirms that Seoul's metaverse territorial-regional brand is strategically divided into three situations: (1 and it has been observed that there is a focus on this issue in recent studies.

As a result, when we look at the points mentioned in city branding literature and the development and change of the concept in the research conducted in the last 20 years, it is evident that the scope of branding has expanded, contributions have been made to eliminate the problems caused by the complex structure of the city, trends in urban management and changes in the world are followed and that these are evaluated within the framework of the concept.

Connecting the Concepts of City Branding, Smart City and Social Media

Within the scope of the study, it is seen that the use of smart city and social media concepts in the city branding literature has increased over the years and it is thought that in a changing world, the concepts affect each other continually and improve the image of the city in a positive way. For this reason, in the publications made in the last 5 years, it has been stated that social media, which is an ICT tool, is an important item in developing a strategy in smart city development, that innovations in this technology offer an advantage for the concept to spread more easily, that the smart city concept cannot be fully mentioned without social media, and that it must be used for brand communication (Gretzel, U., Mendonça, M. C., 2019; Gryszel, P., Pelka, M., Zawadzki, P., 2023; De Almeida, G.G.F., 2023).

Smart City Concept in City Branding Literature

The European Commission (2015) explains the concept of smart city as using technological solutions for the management and efficiency of the urban

environment. The concept of smart city promises the potential for significant urban change by realising the city's technological potential through a more efficient use and better organization of urban systems (Wiig, 2016). The concept is a process that needs to be considered multidimensionally and managed with a multidisciplinary approach and shows the vision of the city in terms of the sustainability of the cities of the future.

It is recommended that smart city strategies effectively include the use of ICT. In this context; it can be said that social media is an efficient technology that smart cities use to disseminate and realise their strategies; and on the other hand, social media users can both play a participatory role in the management of smart cities and promote them (E-WoM).

In the articles scanned within the scope of the research, when the position of the smart city concept in city branding literature is examined, it is seen that the concept of "smart city" has been included in literature since 2014. In general, it is clear that the connection between branding and smart city gives cities the opportunity to be more competitive, attractive and sustainable. The use of the smart city concept in branding is basically mentioned as a valuable label that should be included in the branding strategy of cities of the future (Carrizo Moreira *et al.*, 2023; Gretzel and Collier De Mendonça, 2019; Ojo, 2020; Pevcin, 2019; Pirnar *et al.*, 2017; Sirkis *et al.*, 2022) Gretzel and Mendonça (2019) state that the "smart city" label allows cities to attain economic prominence and attract enterprises and investors. Concurrently, it is evident that the creation and management of smart cities and the branding process are similar to each other. Both concepts require long-term plans and need to be evaluated in cooperation with experts in different fields from a broad perspective. In both concepts; using technological innovations contributes positively to the process, improving the quality of life of city residents is one of the main goals, and prioritising the theme of "sustainability" is very important for a successful process. Therefore, it can be clearly said that the correct management of smart city will affect the city brand, and the correct management of the brand will affect smart city. In 2020, the Covid-19 crisis that engulfed the globe caused many practices to change in every field. Pasquinelli et al. (2021) stated that this crisis will push cities to transform into smart cities and therefore the smart city theme will be used more frequently in branding activities. When today's

conditions are evaluated, it is seen that the use of smart applications in city management is faster due to Covid-19, and more importance is given to self-sufficient, environmentally sensitive cities. In summary, analyzing literature reveals that, in recent years; the smart city concept is a city management model used under the theme of sustainability and resilience, and that the correct use of this model for city image will generate a positive label. The analysis of literature also shows that in a world where ICT is very effective, smart city integration will make the city very advantageous and these advantages will both increase the quality of life of the city residents and make the city attractive to visitors and entrepreneurs.

Social Media in City Branding Literature

Cities are increasingly interconnected in a global and increasingly digitalised world (Sassen, 2004). Technological innovations in transport and rapid development in web technologies deeply affect economic and social activities. Especially with the development of the Web 2.0 technology, critical changes have occurred in social relations, and the effects of this have been reflected in urban economies. Social media applications are amongst the new media technologies that entered our lives with Web 2.0.

During the period analyzed in this literature review, it was observed that the first use of the concept of social media was encountered in 2011, which coincides with the period when the use of social media applications became more widespread and started to be used in marketing. In the first few years when the concept was first used in branding literature, it is recommended that social media is an important element of contemporary marketing, that these applications can be used as a channel for promotional activities and communication with the user, and in this context, managers are advised to use this innovation in their branding strategies (Jankowska, M., 2012; Sevin, E., 2013; Shirley Beresford, B.J., 2014; Kavaratzis, M., Kalandides, A., 2015; Lindstedt, J., 2015). In support of this opinion; Sevin (2013) states that social media is the more efficient digital mean of communication toward city governments, requires lesser budget, is wider spread, and is much easier to show; Tjiok (2017) states that the role of social media cannot be overlooked as they are a wonderful means by which to encourage communication and education, even promotion, in an approachable way; and Schade v.d. (2018) states that in the contemporary environment, social media communication is getting more important for city brand communication, as it

enables city brand managers to convey the congruent characteristics to specific target groups at reasonable cost. On the other hand, the most important feature of Web 2.0 technology is that the users also become the producers, which brings bidirectional interaction to the forefront. The most valuable communication channel that directly affects the city image is word of mouth (WoM). Through social media, millions of people can have an impact on cities with e-WoM with very little effort, without the need for any physical contact. In other words, the city dweller can easily become a part of the branding process with social media. In this context, it can be argued that user generated content is a treasure for policy makers and marketers. It is also emphasised in the scanned articles that this interaction socially motivates people towards the city and has a unifying power.

When the articles published especially in the last 5-6 years are examined, it is clear that there are evaluations on the active use of social media in processes such as participation and impact assessment/measurement. Considering the complex structure of the city, in order to create a successful image, participation should be supported and feedback and evaluations should be continuously tracked. With social media applications, it is effortless for all stakeholders who are related to the city to participate and to be informed about the participation activities. Social media is also a very efficient channel for measuring and evaluating the impact of current or future/planned activities.

Recent publications and researches state that for sustainability; the future of cities is smart cities. Also, Molinillo *et al.* (2019) states that the use of social media is necessary and should be used in many areas in the process of branding smart cities.

METHODOLOGY

Findings show that city branding literature has changed in parallel with the ever-changing world dynamics. This research aims to examine the change and development in the city branding literature in the last 20 years. On the other hand, it is contemplated that the concepts of social media and smart city are part of the evolution of the city branding concept; they have important contributions to the process of change and development of city branding, while also developing in the process themselves. Therefore, it is seen as a secondary objective to question the existence of these concepts in the city branding literature and to examine their development. The reason for analysing the last 20 years is the rapid

Table 1: Distribution of articles in each database, scanned according to the determined criteria (Produced by the author)

Database	Equation Search	Number of Papers	Duplicates	Total
Emerald		82		
Proquest	<u>Search Terms:</u> "City Marketing" OR/AND "City Branding" in Abstract, Keywords, Titles <u>Time Period:</u> 01.01.2003- 01.08.2023 <u>Language:</u> English	163	98	325
Web of Science		178		

developments in web Technologies (Web 2.0), which have led to radical changes in the dynamics of the world throughout this period, and these advancements have induced distinctive interpretations in marketing and urban management. Within the extent of this study, a systematic literature review was conducted. The research method was planned based on the following criteria;

1. Search fields
 - Peer-reviewed journal articles
 - Articles written in English
 - Articles published between January 1st 2003 and August 1st 2023
 - Articles in the Emerald, Proquest and WoS database
 - Articles with "city branding" or/and "city marketing" in their abstracts, keywords, titles
1. Exclusion criteria
 - Books and book chapters, conference papers, non double refereed papers, reports of institutions and organisations, master's and doctoral theses,
 - Studies focussed only on country branding rather than city branding,
 - Duplicates

As a result, as can be seen in the distribution in Table 1, 423 articles were found and after removing duplicates, a total of 325 articles were examined.

Within the scope of the study, the terms "social media" and/or "smart city" were searched in the filtered articles (except for the bibliography of the articles) that were generated when examining the city branding literature. With this analysis, the existence and development of concepts mentioned in the branding literature was questioned. As a result, it was found that there were 46

articles with the term "smart city", 90 articles with the term "social media" and 19 articles in which both terms were used at the same time.

RESULTS

In this part of the study, the systematic review will be evaluated in detail and different focal points in the development of the literature will be mentioned. Firstly, it will focus on the change in publications over the years; then it will be questioned which journals and authors are at the forefront of the concept, which countries are more focused on in the publications, and which research methods and research types are used.

Numerical Change in Literature by Years

Under this topic, a graph was prepared from the data between 2003 and 2022 and the trend of the number of articles was analyzed (2023 was omitted in the graph because data for an incomplete year would be misleading). Figure 1 shows the change in the number of city branding publications over the years, scanned according to the determined criteria.

The graph reveals that there has been a dramatic increase in the number of articles written on city branding especially since 2010. This is the period where Marketing 3.0, which is value-oriented marketing, has emerged, and with this change in marketing understanding, the concept of brand is more frequently discussed in every field. In an environment where globalization affects everyday life with developing technology, competition is increasing, and competitive advantage can be gained only by considering complex elements; the development and modernization of classical marketing theories is anticipated. The graph clearly shows that city branding is also affected by this trend and is an emerging subject. In relation, during the same period, the existence of the social media concept started to be discussed in city branding literature and increased in general.

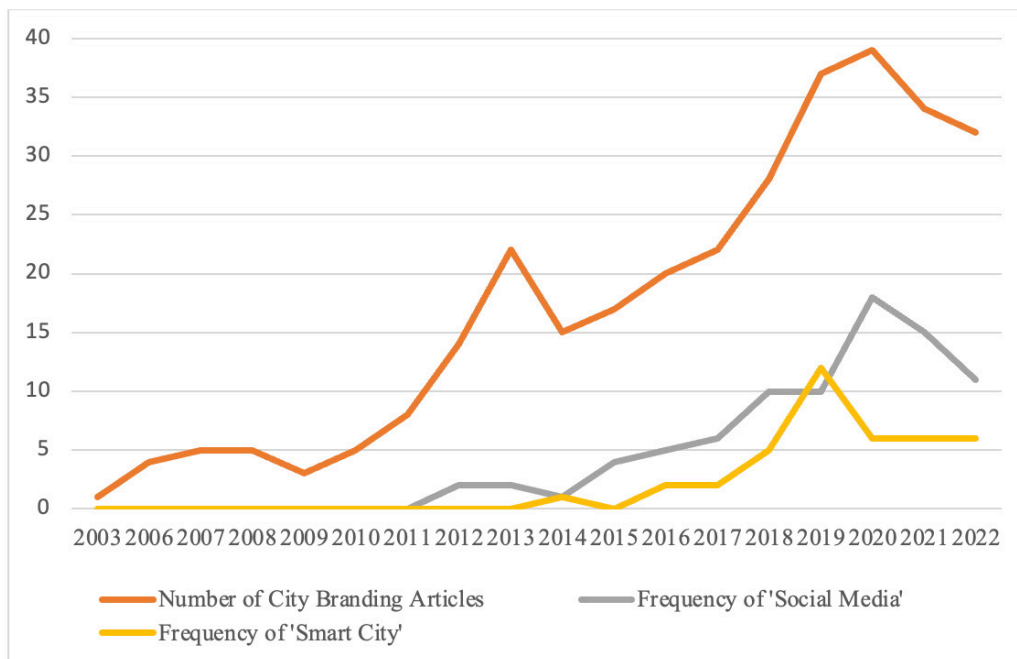


Figure 1: Number of City Branding Articles and Frequency of the terms 'Social Media' and 'Smart City' by year (Produced by the author)

The presence of the concept of smart city in city branding is first seen in 2013, but after 2015, it shows an increase similar to other concepts in literature. It is thought that the smart city concept has become popular in the last 10 years with; the integration of expanding digitalisation into the city, sustainability and especially the theme of resilient cities. The concept is a city management model that requires long-term planning in itself and it is slowly being integrated into the concept of branding. For these reasons, the smart city concept is thought to be a few years behind social media and less used in branding literature.

Distribution of Publishers and Subject Areas in Journals

A total of 184 journals have been published on city branding; 145 of these journals have published only once on the concept during the period under investigation, while the remaining 39 journals account for more than 55% of the scanned articles. Table II shows the names of these journals, their years of establishment, subject areas, quartile levels and the number of publications on the subject. Top 10 journals are listed below (see Appendix-1 for complete list of 39 journals).

Table 2 shows that the number of publications on city branding in the two journals: *Sustainability* and *Journal of Place Management and Development*, is significantly higher than the other journals. 65 of

325, that is 20% of scanned articles were published in these two journals. These two journals have been in publication for less than 15 years, yet they have spent significant effort on city branding in a short period of time. The distribution of journals in which the term "smart city" is mentioned in the articles show that, as expected, almost half of the articles in which the term "smart city" is mentioned are published in the top 3 journals on Table-II. Conversely, in the articles in which the term "social media" is mentioned, there is a more heterogeneous distribution. Considering that "social media" is mentioned in around 30% of all articles and "social media" is a more flexible subject, this heterogeneous distribution is expected.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of journals according to their subject areas. The graph reveals that city branding is a concept that is discussed under the domains of urban planning, architecture, sociology, tourism and business administration. Accordingly, the majority of journals published on the subject are on Social Sciences and Business, Management and Accounting. With the prominence of sustainability and resilience elements in urban management, city branding is being considered through these elements in journals published in the field of Environmental Science.

Table 2: Distribution of top 10 journals that has published about the concept (Produced by the author)

Publication title	Year of Establishment	Subject Area	Number of Article (2003-2023)
Sustainability	2009	*Computer Science *Energy *Environmental Science *Social Sciences	34
Journal of Place Management and Development	2008	*Business, Management & Accounting *Social Sciences	31
International Journal of Tourism Cities	2015	*Business, Management & Accounting *Environmental Science *Social Sciences	14
Cities	1983	*Business, Management & Accounting *Social Sciences	9
European Planning Studies	1993	*Social Sciences	6
International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship	2007	*Business, Management & Accounting *Economics, Econometrics & Finance *Health Professions	6
Journal of Product & Brand Management	1992	*Business, Management & Accounting	6
Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences	2009-2019	*Psychology *Social Sciences	5
Urban Studies	1964	*Environmental Science *Social Sciences	5
Place Branding and Public Diplomacy	2008	*Business, Management & Accounting	4

Finally, another point that should be mentioned is that the *Sustainability* journal, which has “Energy” as one of its subject areas, has a large number of publications on city branding. When the subjects of the articles published in the magazine are examined, it is seen that there are publications that generally associate city branding with digitalisation and ecological civilisation, which is one of the main reasons why “Energy” ranks fourth in Figure 2.

Distribution of Authors Contributing to the Literature

More than 800 authors have contributed to the concept of city branding, some of these authors have contributed more to the index, and some articles have attracted more attention and citations than others. Table III shows the 5 most cited articles, all of which have received more than 200 citations, and the oldest of these articles was published 15 years ago.

The aim of this analysis was to; find out the city branding point of view of the articles that attract attention and are considered valuable and are cited; and find out the authors who contribute more to the index.

The most striking data in Table III is that Kavaratzis’ articles published in 2012 and 2015 are among the top 5 most cited articles. The author has contributed to the concept with a total of 4 articles in the literature review (within the scope of the review, Kavaratzis is one of the authors with the maximum number of articles), and the fact that half of his publications are among the top 5 most cited articles shows that the author is closely associated with the subject and is a pioneer (the author’s other two articles are among the top 80 most cited articles). Another finding is that the most cited articles in Table III are publications aimed at filling theoretical gaps.

Only one of these most cited articles included the term “social media”, the other 4 articles did not include

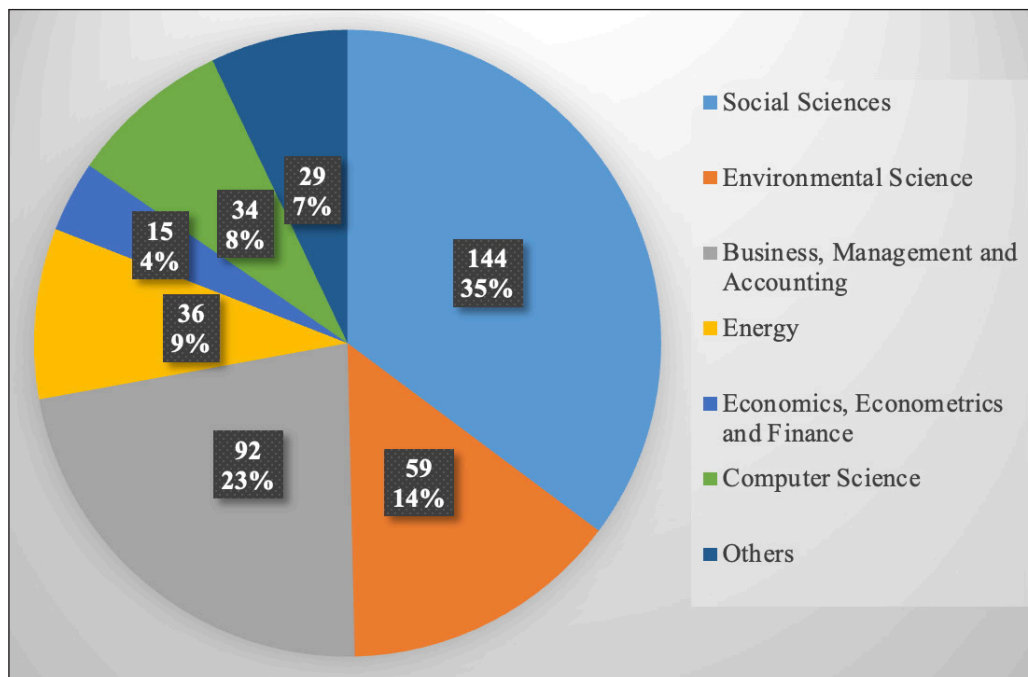


Figure 2: Figure 2: Distribution of Subject Areas in Journals (Produced by the author)

No	Article Title	Number of Citations	Publication Title	Year	Authors
1	City branding: a state-of-the-art review of the research domain	324	Journal of Place Management & Development	2011	Lucarelli, A., Olof Berg, P.
2	Policy Boosterism, Policy Mobilities, and the Extrospective City	257	Urban Geography	2013	McCann, E.
3	The image of the creative city: Some reflections on urban branding in Turin	247	Cities	2008	Vanolo, A.
4	From “necessary evil” to necessity: stakeholders’ involvement in place branding	242	Journal of Place Management & Development	2012	Kavaratzis, M.
5	Rethinking the place brand: The interactive formation of place brands and the role of participatory place branding	220	Environment & Planning	2015	Kavaratzis, M., Kalandides, A.

Table 3: Authors contributing to the literature and articles that are cited the most (Produced by the author)

the terms “smart city” and/or “social media”. Considering the publication dates of the most cited articles, it can be argued that these dates are early for the widespread use of the concept of smart city. On the other hand, the term “social media” was published only in the article published in 2015 by Kavaratzis and Kalandides, where social media use was recommended as a part of measuring participation.

Distribution of Articles According to the Countries to which the Cities of Study are Affiliated

Another striking point revealed by the study is that there are some countries that are particularly focused on. In this context, the cities studied in the articles were individually filtered, and then the numerical distribution was made by classifying them according to the countries to which the city is affiliated, aiming to determine which countries have more studies on city branding. The percentage of countries with more than 5 studies in literature is more than 75%, therefore, not all countries are shown in Figure 3, only countries with more than 5 studies are included. In addition, there are a total of 57 articles in the literature that do not include any city in their research.

Figure 3 clearly reveals that the country whose cities have been studied the most within the scope of branding is predominantly China. In the distribution of the number of articles by years (Figure 1), it was revealed that there

has been a significant increase in the literature on city branding, especially in the last 10 years, and following the same trend, the articles that are based on cities in their research are also concentrated in the last 10 years.

90% of the articles researching the cities of China have been published in the last 10 years; there is a heterogeneous distribution and there is no concentration on any city. The second country in the graph is the UK, but it is seen that almost half of the studies on the cities of the UK are on comparison with cities of other countries, while this ratio is almost 10% in the articles on the cities of China. In other words, the articles on the cities of China are domestic, while UK articles include UK cities and cities of other countries and compare them. When other countries’ studies are examined, a similar pattern is generally observed. In articles on developed countries, many cities and countries are included for comparison rather than focusing on a city. In articles on developing countries and/or countries that have recently invested in their cities and are trying to transform their cities into a competitive element in the global arena, the research is domestic based. Finally, it can be argued that in literature on city branding, the significant presence and efforts of especially developing countries are evident in the graph.

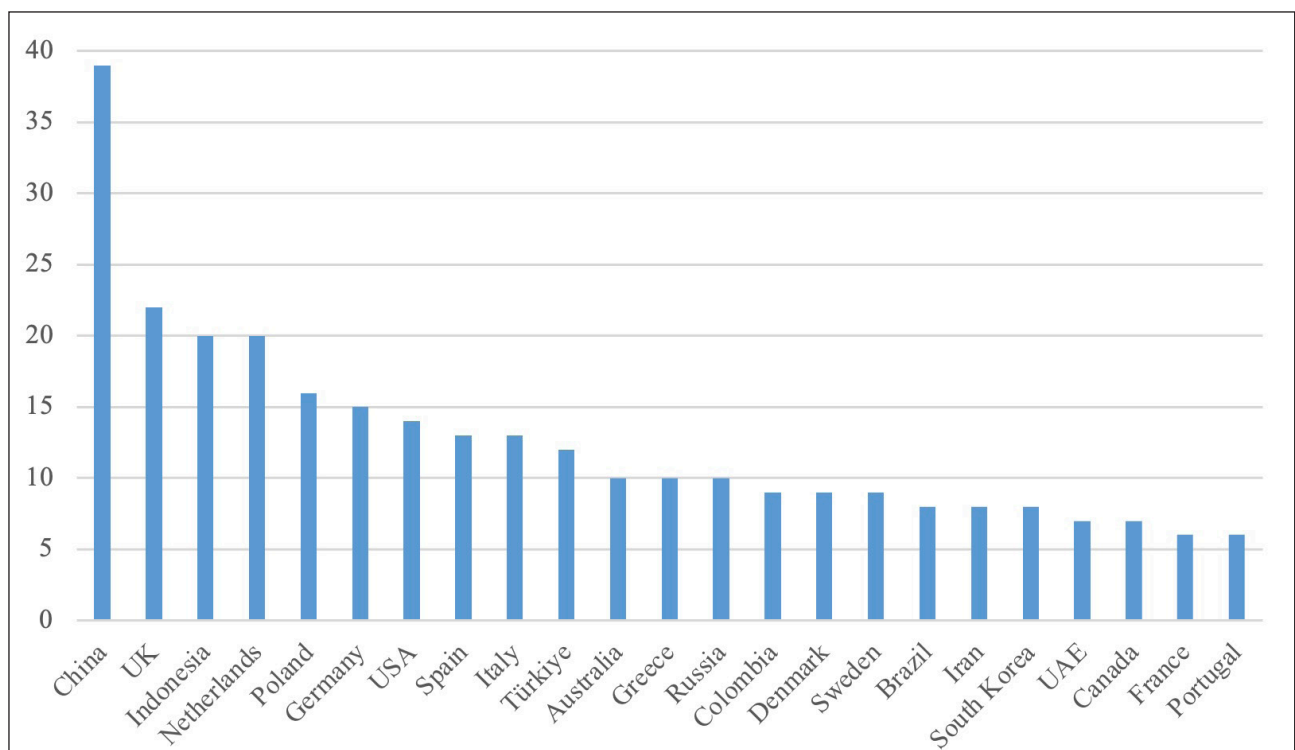


Figure 3: Distribution of Countries (Produced by the author)

Distribution of Research Methods and Article Types Used

The last finding to be analyzed as a result of the literature review is the distribution of research methods used in the literature and the types of articles written. Figure 4 shows the numerical distribution of the research methods used in the articles. More than half of all studies were published by conducting qualitative research. When we look at the distribution according to the years, it is seen that qualitative research method is always the more preferred method for each year.

Figure 5 shows that 65% of the studies are research papers. Looking at the intensity of theoretical studies over the years, it is clear that the existence of theoretical studies on the concept is more prevalent especially between 2010-2013. These studies can be attributed to the developments in Marketing 3.0 and Web 2.0 and in this context, the increase in literature on city branding during those periods.

In summary, in the studies conducted within the scope of the concept of city branding, it was observed that the majority of studies used qualitative research (Figure

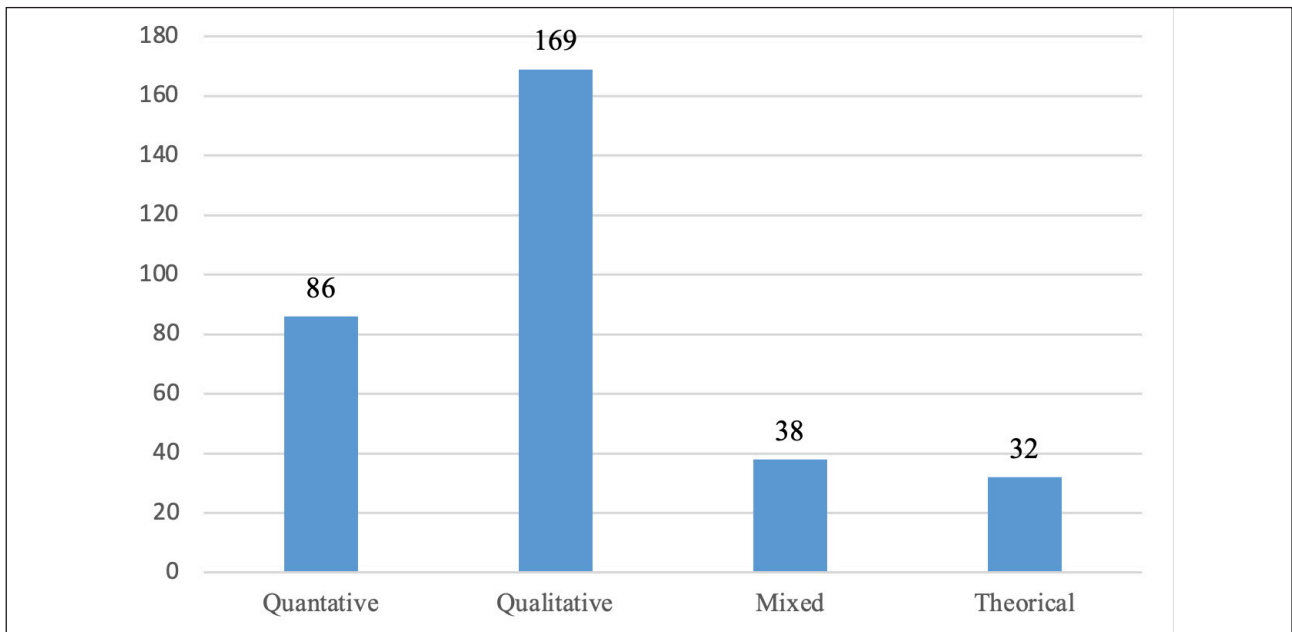


Figure 4: The volume of articles in terms of research methods (Produced by the author)

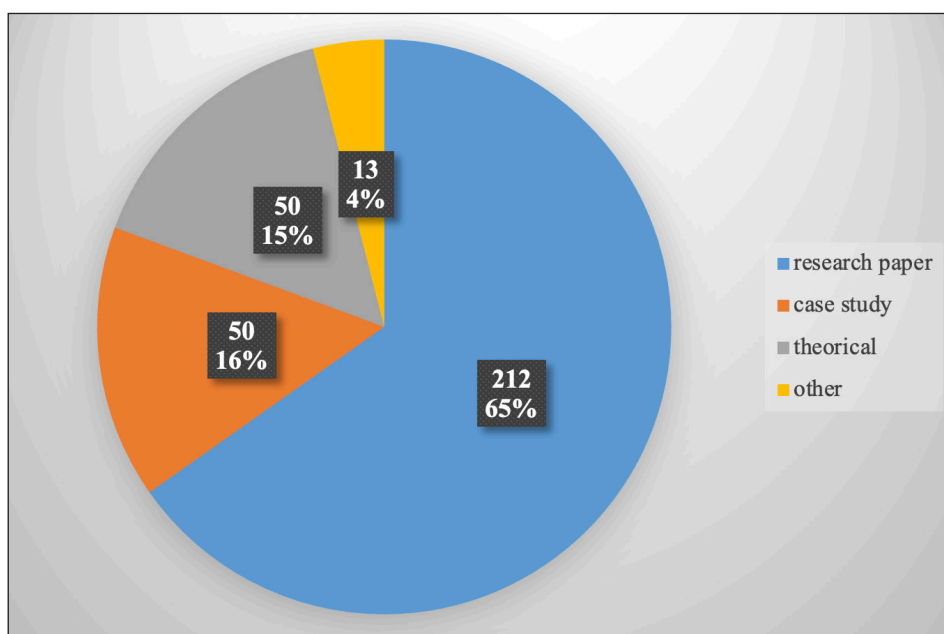


Figure 5: The volume of article types (Produced by the author)

4); 169 of total studies conducted qualitative research, while a total of 124 studies used quantitative and mixed research. It can be argued that studies conducted in social sciences contain more qualitative research than studies conducted in physical sciences. The concept of city branding is a subject that can be better evaluated in the field of social sciences, so it is not surprising that qualitative research is dominant in the analysis of research methods.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Within the scope of the study, taking into account the criteria specified in the methodology, the articles published on city branding in the last 20 years have been systematically scanned. The aim of the study is to examine the change in city branding literature and to question the development of the presence of smart city and social media concepts in literature while examining this change.

In academic terms, it can be stated that the concept of city branding has developed with neoliberal policies and globalisation. With the transformation of cities into economic instruments and the shift of the main sector in cities to the service sector, cities are being pushed to the forefront within the framework of certain labels in order to gain competitive advantage in the global arena (Kavaratzis, M., 2004; Middleton, A.C., 2011). When the course of city branding is examined chronologically within the scope of the systematic analysis, as reviewed in detail in the section 'City Branding Literature in 20 years', it is seen that it has changed with the developing marketing paradigms, evolved from a product and marketing-oriented approach to a more integrated and complex system at the same time; it has drawn a framework to create a system that tries to adopt and bring to the forefront; branding strategies that integrate advanced technology, and city management models that are formed with climate crisis in consideration. One of the important findings of the study is that the scanned articles are centered around two elements; articles focusing on the physical structure and urban sociology of the studied cities, that is, articles that examine the unique characteristics of the city, and articles that study city branding by drawing conclusions from a more global framework that examines changing world politics and digitalisation.

Another important finding of the study is that city branding initially focused on concrete elements such as tourism and economic development, but over time, more abstract elements such as the social structure of the city

and technological developments have taken place in city branding strategies. Considering the course of change in the articles scanned during the period under study; creating a city brand should now be a process; that aims to make the city more integrated and more resilient; that develops participatory policies by putting the city dwellers at the center; that is focused on long-term planning stages.

When the existence of the concepts of 'smart city' and 'social media' in the city branding literature is examined, it is revealed that these concepts have been in existence especially in the last 10 years and that they have a two-way interaction with branding. It is generally stated in articles that the smart city model is important for the cities of the future in order to increase efficiency by integrating sustainability and technology into the city and that the correct use of this concept will be a good label for branding. When we look at the use of the concept of social media in branding, it is stated that it is a low-cost but very effective strategy for brand managers. On the other hand, it is a good tool for measuring and evaluating the effects of the strategies created. It is also an advantage for city users to integrate easily into the city and to be the brand ambassador of the city.

In the last part of the article, certain findings from the literature review are explained and it is aimed that the analyses will help in finding answers to the research questions of the article.

The study reveals that the number of articles on city branding has accelerated during the period analysed and that the concepts of social media and smart city have been included in these articles at a remarkable rate, especially in the last 10 years. This remarkable increase shows that the concept of city branding has also been affected by the trends in technological developments and marketing dynamics in the world and has become inclusive of these issues. In addition, the subject areas of the journals that have published articles related to the subject show that city branding is within the radar of those specialised in social sciences and business, which is an expected result. Another important finding encountered while searching for answers to the research questions of the article is China, where significant publications on the concept have been made in the last 10 years. Although Chinese publications were not analysed, the fact that a remarkable number of publications on Chinese cities have been made in English in the last 10 years shows that the country has focused on branding and played an active role in the development of the literature. The last point to be mentioned is that, as the subject areas

may give an idea, qualitative research on the concept is generally carried out and the method has not shown an outstanding change in the last 20 years. The use of the quantitative research method, which is used extensively in engineering, biology and science studies, has not changed in city branding studies in 20 years; articles have progressed through qualitative data rather than numerical data.

In conclusion, the literature review readings based on the 325 articles examined have answered the research questions, have been able to show the development and trend of the existence of the concept and the two concepts examined within the concept in the process, and the analyses based on these articles have been found to be helpful in finding answers to the research questions.

This study is limited to WoS, Proquest and Emerald databases, which have a significant volume in academic publications written in English, and in this context, the progress of the concept and the existence of two different themes within the concept are questioned by drawing a broad framework. It is anticipated that this comprehensive study will form the basis for further studies, and that detailed analyses can easily be made on different elements within a narrower period or theme through this general framework. Language limitation is another important limitation that should be mentioned in the discussion section of the study; the imposition of this barrier has led to the omission of the content of publications written in languages spoken by dense populations such as French, Spanish, German and Chinese. Analysing studies written in different languages in future studies will surely provide more detailed and varying information on national studies, as well as a comparison between the international literature and the national literature. Another suggestion for future studies is to categorise the articles as; developing countries and emerging countries (based on the city that the articles examine). Examining the change in practices and mentality in countries at different levels of development in a deeper way can help clarify the differences in the city branding literature according to region.

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Appendix-1. Distribution of complete 39 journals that has published about the concept (Produced by the author)

Publication title	Year of Establishment	Subject Area	Number of Article (2003-2023)
Sustainability	2009	*Computer Science *Energy *Environmental Science *Social Sciences	34
Journal of Place Management and Development	2008	*Business, Management & Accounting *Social Sciences	31
International Journal of Tourism Cities	2015	*Business, Management & Accounting *Environmental Science *Social Sciences	14
Cities	1983	*Business, Management & Accounting *Social Sciences	9
European Planning Studies	1993	*Social Sciences	6
International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship	2007	*Business, Management & Accounting *Economics, Econometrics & Finance *Health Professions	6
Journal of Product & Brand Management	1992	*Business, Management & Accounting	6
Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences	2009-2019	*Psychology *Social Sciences	5
Urban Studies	1964	*Environmental Science *Social Sciences	5
Place Branding and Public Diplomacy	2008	*Business, Management & Accounting	4
GeoJournal of Tourism and Geosites	2013	*Earth and Planetary Sciences *Social Sciences	4
Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie	1967	*Economics, Econometrics & Finance	3
TPR	1977	*Social Sciences	3
Urban Geography	1980	*Social Sciences	3
Antipode	1969	*Earth and Planetary Sciences *Social Sciences	2
Brazilian Journal of Marketing	2015	*Business, Management & Accounting *Economics, Econometrics and Finance	2
Cogent Business & Management	2014	*Business, Management & Accounting *Decision Sciences	2

Economics and Sociology	2008	*Business, Management & Accounting *Economics, Econometrics and Finance *Social Sciences	2
Energies	2008	*Energy *Engineering *Mathematics	2
European Spatial Research and Policy	2009	*Social Sciences	2
IDPR	1997	*Social Sciences	2
Int. J. Tourism Policy	2008	*Business, Management & Accounting	2
International Journal of Architectural Research	2011	*Engineering *Social Sciences	2
International Journal of Cultural Policy	1997	*Social Sciences	2
International Journal of Event and Festival Management	2010	*Business, Management & Accounting	2
International Review for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development	2013	*Environmental Science Social Sciences	2
Journal of Business Strategy	1980	*Business, Management & Accounting	2
Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development	2011	*Arts and Humanities *Business, Management & Accounting *Social Sciences	2
Journal of Urban Design	1996	*Arts and Humanities *Social Sciences	2
Landscape Research	1970	*Environmental Science *Social Sciences	2
Management Letters	2001	*Business, Management & Accounting *Economics, Econometrics & Finance	2
Marketing Theory	2001	*Business, Management & Accounting	2
Polish Journal of Management Studies	2010	*Business, Management & Accounting	2
Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal	1998	*Business, Management & Accounting	2
Social Semiotics	1991	*Social Sciences	2

Strategic Direction	2002	*Business, Management & Accounting	2
Transportation Research - Procedia	2014	*Social Sciences	2
Urban Forestry and Urban Greening	2002	*Agricultural and Biological Sciences *Environmental Science	2
Urban Planning	2016	*Social Sciences	2