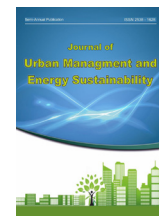


Journal of Urban Management and Energy Sustainability (JUMES)

Homepage: <http://www.ijumes.com>



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Assessing the significant factors influencing the formation of the city image in order to effective urban branding management, (Case study: Shiraz, Iran)

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 2021-05-26

Revised 2021-10-07

Accepted 2021-11-14

Keywords:

City image

Branding management

Identity

Shiraz city

Survey

ABSTRACT

Urban branding, as a new approach toward urban development, improves city image in different ways by changing the visual image of the city into a brand image. This study aims to assess the importance of factors affecting city image formation in Shiraz city. The main questions of this investigation are what dimensions composing the inner image of Shiraz, as well as what is the significance of each of these dimensions. This is a descriptive-analytical study using a questionnaire tool. The statistical population is the citizens of Shiraz with the sample size of 384 people using Cochran's formula. Validity of questionnaire questions was verified by professors and experts in the field of urban planning, and reliability of research questions was calculated with Cronbach's alpha 0.86. To analyze the data of the questionnaire, SPSS17 software has been used. The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed normality of the data. Finally, the one-sample t-test was used to investigate the research hypotheses. The results showed that the "architectural and urban attraction" and the "environment" component had the highest impact on the formation of the city's image in the effective urban branding management, followed by the components of "economics and business" and "international city position", "culture", "social issues", "self-knowledge of citizens", and "infrastructure and transportation, and traffic communication", respectively (with sig= 0.000 and 95% confidence level).

DOI: [10.22034/ijumes.2022.552732.1072](https://doi.org/10.22034/ijumes.2022.552732.1072)

Running Title: Urban branding management and formation of the city's image



NUMBER OF REFERENCES

88



NUMBER OF FIGURES

1



NUMBER OF TABLES

5

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1. Introduction

In today's developed world, cities act as rival firms and try to attract more capital market share, outstanding talents, and global attention. For this, it is required to pay attention to the issues of urban branding and sustainable urban landscape (Nazemi & Manazeri, 2012: 1). The concept of urban branding is one of the concepts considered in recent years. It is directly related to the implementation of marketing models in cities. It is a theoretical concept based on the basic concepts of urban imagery and urban identity. An urban brand provides an image and a package about a place with an emphasis on the unique features of the city to allow the city to compete with its rivals. The process of urban branding is also sequential (Dannie 2011). A brand name can provide a good starting point for the urban brand as well as an appropriate framework by which the urban image is managed, and urban branding can be one of the most important factors for the success of that brand. In most famous cities of the world, it has been concluded that an urban brand should be purposefully formed according to the characteristics and capabilities of the city on the one hand and international needs and requirements on the other hand. Conscious branding gives cities a new identity (Mohammadipour Zarandi et al., 2016: 121). Today, cities, according to their capacity, history and future, have a special image, identity and reputation that distinguish them from other cities. Today's world is full of images and imaginations, i.e. visual and auditory perceptions and imaginations that send many messages to the audiences' minds (Tsygankov 2016). The favorable image of the city in the minds of residents and other people can attract more investors, tourists, and immigrants (Hankinson 2009). Nowadays, image, implication, mentality, and generally desirable labels are one of the basic goals of every city (Sanderoz 2016). In fact, "urban branding" is one of the best ways to positively display a city to attract more investors, tourists and immigrants. Urban branding plays a key role in the development of urban policies, because it pursues economic development on the one hand, and it acts as a conduit for the city identity on the other hand. Urban branding enhances competition for resources and the development

of tourism investment. Thousands of investors and visitors, who come for excursions and investments, improve the local living, in addition to bringing money. Urban branding increases the attractiveness of the city for large firms and convinces them to invest in that city, leading to the sustainable economic development of the city. Identifying the favorable components of urban branding directly influences the achievement of these benefits. In recent years, urban branding has attracted the attention of urban experts and planners more than ever and has gradually become the most valuable and expensive asset of a city. The important point is that place branding has not been done in Iran at all. The branding strategy for Iran has been not designed and implemented at the national and international levels. The lack of national branding has led to the formation of uncoordinated behaviors, attitudes, and speeches at the national and international levels and has created contradictory and disturbing images of Iran in the minds (Lezgi & Siami, 2017: 4). Urban branding is one of the concepts considered in recent years and is directly related to the implementation of marketing models in cities. It is a theoretical concept based on the basic concepts of urban imagery and urban identity (Balmer & Greys, 2003). The key to successful branding is to establish a relationship between the brand and the consumer, and the brand's functional attributes and symbolic values. This definition of branding shows the relationship between branding and the goals of urban marketing and the management of the city's image (Pourzandi et al., 2016: 120). Like branding, cities meet functional, symbolic and emotional needs, and the characteristics that meet these needs must be coordinated to the unique position of the city. In fact, an urban brand refers to one or more signs with the help of which we can give a new meaning and identity to urban places, and branding creates awareness of this experience and enhances the attractiveness of cities (Munda 2009). Daclin (2010) believes that urban branding is a fundamental factor for the development of policy-making in cities since it leads to economic growth and development of cities, on the one hand, and it provides a conduit for identifying the city's identity, on the other hand. If the branding of urban symbols has an

opportunity to manifest them in the arenas of cities, with the goals of appropriate advertising and marketing, they will have the opportunity to grow and compete in all economic, and cultural areas, and urban identity and will enhance citizens' pride and identity (Daclin 2010).

It is very important how an urban place is presented and this can be a good motivation for tourists to visit and come back. The reputation of a place is not created in a vacuum and is not only due to the choice of tourists. The marketers of a tourist place should create the image of the place in a way that it can compete with its main rivalries (Divandari et al. 2011). Therefore, it is critical for city management institutions to identify and measure the key features of the city. Some studies have developed brand equity research for tourism destinations as a multidimensional structure including brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived value, brand image, and perceived quality (Gómez et al. 2018). City managers need comprehensive knowledge influencing the city to be able to make the right decisions and plan for the city properly. To create healthy communities and understand the costs and benefits of different development models, they must have sufficient knowledge, meaning that they need to know the current image of the city to design the image they want and define activities to improve it. Identifying the image of the city is an important part of recognition in the strategic urban planning process. In Iran, some cities have a favorable image, and others have a negative or weak image in the minds of people inside and outside the city. In fact, modeling a desirable image for a city is not limited to cities with a negative image, but, rather, many cities go through this process to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their current images to take steps to improve them (Luque-Martínez, 2007: 335). Urban branding to assist the urban economy at the international level makes it necessary to conduct research in this field. Since Shiraz city has not been studied directly in this field, the present study is novel and innovative. Therefore, this study attempts to examine the inner image of Shiraz, and to answer two main questions, one is what dimensions composing this image, as well as what is the significance of each of these dimensions.

Accordingly, the objectives of the present study are as follows: 1- To determine the impact of the factors of social issues, citizens' self-knowledge, environment, infrastructure, transportation, and traffic communication, economics and business, and culture on the formation of the brand image of Shiraz; 2- To determine the impact of the factors of architectural and urban attractions and the international city position on the formation of the brand image of Shiraz. According to the abovementioned, the research hypotheses can be expressed as follows: 1- The factors of social issues, citizens' self-knowledge, environment, infrastructure, transportation, and traffic communication, economics and business, and culture seem to significantly influence the formation of the brand image of Shiraz; and 2- The factors of architectural and urban attractions and the international city position seem to significantly influence the formation of the brand image of Shiraz.

1.1. Literature Review

There have been numerous studies on the subject of research. Each one has its own point of view and each one analyzes the concepts of city image and urban branding. Table 1 shows some of the studies with relation to the subject of this study.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Urban image and branding

For the first time, Kevin Lynch has introduced the "mental image of the city" concept in his book entitled "The Image of the City". In this book, unlike Cullen who emphasized the objective dimensions of the landscape, Lynch discusses the mental dimensions of the urban landscape. He considers three perceptual, physical and functional factors to be important in the urban landscape. To study the mental image of the city, he considers each urban setting with three components: identity, structure and meaning (Khakzand et al., 2014: 17). Kotler et al. believe that the image of a city can be positive and attractive, negative and weak, a combination of the two (when the image has negative and positive elements), or contradictory (when the image is negative for one group and positive for another). Lynch states that people have a relatively detailed

Table 1. Summary of applied researches related to the significant factors influencing the formation of the city image in order to an effective urban branding management

Researchers	Year	Title	Purposes	Results
Asadi & Rafeian	2018	Investigating Effective Factors on Historical Neighborhoods Regeneration with Emphasis on Urban Branding Approach (Case Study: Sang-Siah Neighborhood in Shiraz		They have defined four components of "spatial interventions", "non-spatial interventions", "place marketing and promotion interventions", and "word-of-mouth and indirect effects of branding".
Brahes	2018	Place Branding as Urban Policy: (Im)political Place Branding		
Hernández-Mogollón et al.	2018	The contribution of cultural events to the formation of the cognitive and affective images of a tourist destination		The results have shown that intangible attractions help to promote and develop the images of tourist destinations.
Gómez et al.	2018	Urban Branding in European Capitals: An Analysis from the Visitor Perspective	They have aimed to analyze the application of urban branding in five European capitals of London, Paris, Berlin, Rome, and Madrid using a measurement model to connect brand equity to its antecedents and consequences.	The City Branding Index (CBI) has been developed to determine and compare the brand equity of the five European capitals selected. The findings have indicated that the brand equity of European capitals includes the awareness and perceived quality of a city as a destination and the effect of attitude on the brand and brand image.
De Noronha et al.	2017	Confused Branding? An Exploratory Study of Place Branding Practices among Place Management Professionals		The results have shown that the strategic potential of place branding is negatively influenced by a focus on operational thinking, which prevents further innovation in the approaches to place management.
Bahari et al.	2017	Designing a City Branding Pattern for Entrepreneurship Development (Case Study: Garmi City)	have aimed to design an urban branding model for entrepreneurship development in Garmi city	The paradigmatic branding model from causal conditions, contextual conditions, intervening variables, strategies, and consequences of branding (entrepreneurship development, social capital development, investment attraction, and tourism development, rural development, and the reduction of migration) for the city, has been considered the research result.
Yousefi et al.	2016	Development of a comprehensive branding model for mega-cities (Case Study: Tehran Mega-city)	They have aimed to develop a new model for branding mega-cities based on the case study of Tehran City, considering unique Iranian features.	The results have indicated a comprehensive model for mega-city branding with the explanation of key dimensions and variables using a local approach

and coherent mental image of their cities that is created by the interaction between place and the individual. According to him, this image is critical for their work and emotional well-being. The image of a city is unique to each person and depends on his/her past experiences and the displays of that particular place. There are two types of images: 1. External: how the public or other community outside the place perceives that place; and 2. Internal: how the inhabitants see their place in the community or their neighborhood. These two images each affect the other. If a society has a negative image of a community, the community itself will have a poor image of itself (Gholipour et al., 2010: 39).

The American Marketing Association defines a brand as a “name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of other sellers. Philip Kotler also defines a brand as a name, term, sign, symbol, design, or a combination of them intended to introduce the products or services offered by a seller, or group of sellers to distinguish them from the products of rival companies. The brand is a mindset or

image of a specific product and unique service that creates a relationship between the consumer and the provider (Lezgi and Siami, 2017: 4).

Urban branding management also refers to a set of activities intended to turn a spatial location into a tourist destination. Contrary to popular belief of “destination branding is based only on its communication and history”, it refers to the identification, organization and coordination between all existing variables (potential and actual) influencing the image of the tourism destination. The term “place branding” is sometimes synonymous with place marketing, which refers to competing to attract tourists, visitors, investors, citizens, and other local resources in cities (Avraham & Ketter, 2008). The urban brand is an important asset for the effective development of the city and distinguishes it from other cities and enhances its success. Urban branding includes the historical, social, political, and international identity of each city and encompasses the economic activities, and welfare and entertainment facilities of that city. Urban brands enhance identity of place and initiate people’s meaning making over the place directly involving them in the branding process (Fig. 1).

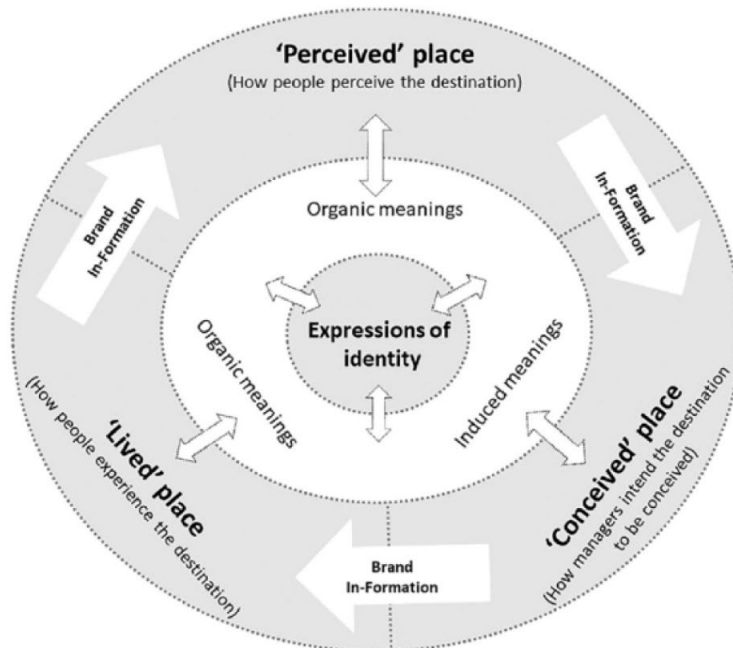


Figure 1. The ongoing formation of the place brand, Source: Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2021

Table 2. Definitions of urban branding from the perspective of theorists, Source: Authors

Theorist	Definition of urban branding
Hall (1999)	The essential goal of city branding is to “provide a consistent and focused communication strategy”.
Cai (2002)	Urban branding means choosing a combination of brand factors including name, term, logos, sign, design, or a combination of the above by establishing a positive imager to gain a recognition and differentiation with the city as the destination.
Julier (2005)	Urban branding is considered an attempt to create and enrich the city's qualities.
Anholt (2009)	Urban branding is the identity and the competition of cities.
Järvisalo (2012)	City branding means the main things that people should know about the certain place
Renistou (2013)	Urban branding is a method to increase urban attraction and it is a fundamental factor of urban recognition and identity.
Banerjee & Sideris (2015)	The concept of urban branding is the management of the city' s mental image using urban and landscape design tools, the use of social and cultural capacities alongside information technology.

In short, urban branding is a short term that creates value for that city and makes a competitive advantage (Mousavi et al., 2017: 162). Trueman et al. (2001) showed in their study a robust analysis of the city as a brand that takes into account a wide range of stakeholders. Rainisto (2003) states that in place brands it is possible to benefit the value of a place' s image. However, the important question would be whether a city can be seen as a brand. The following definition of brands assists in answering this difficult question: a brand is a product or service made distinctive by its positioning relative to the competition and by its personality, which comprises a unique combination of functional attributes and symbolic values. The key to successful branding is to establish a relationship between the brand and the consumer, such that there is a close connection between the consumer' s physical and psychological needs and the brand' s functional attributes and symbolic values. This definition of brands and branding reveals the relationship between branding and the goals of city marketing and management of the city's image. Like brands, cities meet functional, symbolic, and emotional needs, and the characteristics that meet those needs must be coordinated with the unique position of the city (Kotler et al., 1999: 141).

3. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present study is applied descriptive-analytic research in which the required data were collected by the library study and field survey through the tools of observation and questionnaire. After examining the reliability and validity of the questionnaire to validate it, some questionnaires were distributed among the residents of Shiraz. The present study aimed to evaluate the factors affecting the formation of the city's image in effective urban branding management (Case study: Shiraz). The statistical population included the citizens of Shiraz. According to Cochran's formula, the sample size was estimated to be 384 people. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by professors and experts in the field of urban planning, and its reliability was investigated by Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach's alpha=0.86) (Table 3). In the questionnaire, the factors affecting the formation of the image of the city in effective urban branding management are divided into 8 separate groups: social issues (12 items), architectural and urban attraction (6 items), environment (8 items), infrastructure and transportation and traffic communication (8 items), self-knowledge of citizens (5 items), economics and business (6 items), the international city position (4 items),

Table 3. Dimensions and variables used in the study, Source: Authors

Dimensions	Variables	References
Social issues	Illegal immigration	Farang (2022); VanHoose et al. (2021); Moradi & Daneshvar (2021); Castillo (2021); Bonakdar & Audirac (2021); Jokela (2019); Macías-Rojas (2018); Luyt (2018); Dinardi (2017); Fraser (2017); Wilbraham (2017).
	Cleanness of streets and alleys	
	Low unemployment rate in the city	
	Low number of beggars in the city	
	Irregular migration of people from other cities to Shiraz	
	Security of citizens	
	Low drug use in the city	
	Unity of people at the city level	
	Women, the elderly, and children' sense of comfort when travelling around the city	
	Lack of home burglary	
Architectural and urban attractions	Lack of motor vehicle theft	Wang & Feng (2021); Poulot (2021); Cardoso (2021); Schoenmakers (2020); Bonakdar (2020); Lai (2020); Lemarié & Domann (2019); Farag (2018); Dai et al. (2018); Richter (2017); Ho (2017)
	Lack of shoplifting	
	Necessary facilities for citizens' leisure and entertainment	
	Existence of sports facilities in the city	
	Memorability of urban symbol and signs in Shiraz	
	Existence of suitable places for walking (parks, promenades, sidewalks, etc.)	
Environment	Existence of suitable places for rest and entertainment	Aydoghmesh & Rafieian (2022); Bole et al. (2022); Schaaf (2022); Strüver et al. (2021); Allison (2020); Taecharungroj & Mathayomchan (2020); Zimmer et al. (2020); Koukoufikis (2019); Hoppe (2018); De Munck & Bellavitis (2017); Schmiz (2017).
	Architectural appearance of the city	
	Attention to the environment (residents, officials, stakeholders, etc.)	
	Healthy drinking water	
	Existence of earthquake risk	
	Visual homogeneity (buildings)	
	Air pollution	
Infrastructure and transportation and traffic communication	Citizens' responsibility for protecting the environment	Korkiya et al. (2022); Inkinen & Jokela (2021); Koukoufikis (2019); Dürr & Fischer (2018); Lindner & Meissner (2018); Rodenbiker (2017); Oliveira & Padilla (2017); Kirby (2017); Trivers (2017).
	Noise Pollution	
	Observance of environmental regulations by the factories located in and around Shiraz	
	Public transport services (bus, subway, etc.)	
	Ease of travel from Shiraz to any city	
	Traffic problems	
Self-knowledge of citizens	Adequate parking in the city	Garay-Tamajón & Morales-Pérez (2022); Fraser (2021); Herbert et al. (2020); Garcia Rangel (2019); Naeff (2018); Georgiou (2018); Oliveira & Padilla (2017); Souza Faro (2017).
	Urban signs (traffic/navigation)	
	Private transport services (taxi services)	
	Traffic behavior	
	Feeling the urgent need for traffic control in the city center	
Economics and business	Being hardworking	Wang & Feng (2021); Bonakdar & Audirac (2020); Sommella & D'Alessandro (2020); Letlape & Gumbo (2019); Dürr & Fischer (2018); Dinardi (2017); Vanolo (2017); Dawson (2017).
	Being modern	
	Politeness and decency	
	Hospitality	
	Sociability	
International city position	General level of prices at the city level	Inkinen & Jokela (2021); Teixeira (2020); Lai (2020); Koukoufikis (2019); Pompe (2019); Lindner & Meissner (2018); Fraser (2018); Dinardi (2017); Saunders (2017).
	Adaptation of the urban commercial texture to the citizens' daily needs	
	Housing costs at the city level	
	Appropriateness and variety of stores	
Culture	Many accommodations for tourists	VanHoose et al. (2021); Wang & Feng (2021); Roast (2021); Bonakdar & Audirac (2020); Schwab (2020); Dinardi (2017); Richter (2017); Oliveira & Padilla (2017).
	Variety of restaurants and hotels in the city	
	Reputation of Shiraz City in the world	
Culture	Shiraz citizens' acquaintance with foreign languages (English, French, etc.)	Inkinen & Jokela (2021); Teixeira (2020); Lai (2020); Koukoufikis (2019); Pompe (2019); Lindner & Meissner (2018); Fraser (2018); Dinardi (2017); Saunders (2017).
	Citizens' readiness to compete in international markets	
Culture	Citizens' readiness for the international development of Shiraz	VanHoose et al. (2021); Wang & Feng (2021); Roast (2021); Bonakdar & Audirac (2020); Schwab (2020); Dinardi (2017); Richter (2017); Oliveira & Padilla (2017).
	Conservatism of guilds in Shiraz	
Culture	Acceptance of new initiatives and technologies	VanHoose et al. (2021); Wang & Feng (2021); Roast (2021); Bonakdar & Audirac (2020); Schwab (2020); Dinardi (2017); Richter (2017); Oliveira & Padilla (2017).
	Citizens' proficiency and innovation in business	

Table 4. Cronbach's alpha values of the dimensions used in the study, Source: Authors

Social issues	0.81
Architectural and urban attraction	0.80
Environment	0.80
Infrastructure and transportation and traffic communication	0.84
Self-knowledge of citizens	0.86
Economics and business	0.85
International city position	0.85
Culture	0.87
Total	0.86

Table 5. Results of one-sample t-test to prioritize the factors affecting the formation of the city's image in effective urban branding management in Shiraz, Source: Authors

Factors	One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 0.05					95% confidence interval	
	T-Value	Mean	Degrees of freedom	Significance level	Standard deviation	Lower limit	Upper limit
Social issues	-30.903	3.93	383	0.000	0.673	1.130	0.995
Architectural and urban attractions	-17.952	4.46	383	0.000	0.686	0.590	0.474
Environment	-21.469	4.29	383	0.000	0.754	0.764	0.636
Infrastructure and transportation and traffic communication	-28.79	3.62	383	0.000	0.935	1.46	1.280
Self-knowledge of citizens	-29.035	3.77	383	0.000	0.828	1.31	1.154
Economics and Business	-22.589	4.12	383	0.000	0.759	0.951	0.799
International city position	-23.907	4.11	383	0.000	0.721	0.952	0.807
Culture	20.460	4.02	383	0.000	0.935	1.07	0.883

and culture (3 items) (Table 4). SPSS software was used to analyze the data obtained from the questionnaire. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed the normality of the data. Thus, the one-sample t-test was used to test the research hypotheses.

4. Findings

To understand the components related to the factors affecting the formation of the city's image in the effective urban branding management, first, the items related to each component were combined and examined using the one-sample t-test. According to the data from the questionnaire, the "architectural and urban attraction" component with an average of 4.46 (sig.=0.000 at the 95% confidence level) and the

"environment" component with an average of 4.29 (sig.=0.000 at the 95% confidence level) had the highest impact on the formation of the city's image in the effective urban branding management, respectively. The two components of "economics and business" and "international city position", with an average of 4.12 and 4.11 (sig.=0.000 at the 95% confidence level), respectively, had a significant impact on the formation of the city's image in the effective urban branding management, followed by the components of "culture", "social issues", "self-knowledge of citizens", and "infrastructure and transportation, and traffic communication" (the averages of 4.02, 3.93, 3.77, and 3.62, respectively, with sig.=0.000 at the 95% confidence level) (Table 5).

5. Discussion and conclusion

This study sought to answer two main questions, one is what dimensions composing the inner image of Shiraz, as well as what is the significance of each of these dimensions. In developing countries, urban planning and management have characteristics such as being ambitious and unrealistic, inattention to real executive facilities, lack of legal system and coherent organizational structure, lack of financial resources, lack of skills and technical knowledge, lack of citizen participation, etc. The main responsibilities and duties of city managers always change according to their tastes and opinions and there are no common definitions for these terms to understand them. While common definitions and standard processes for each of the above terms can be very useful in quick decision-making and evaluations. Accordingly, each manager can use the policies he obtains from urban management to implement projects more efficiently, provide better public services and a healthier setting, define more realistic and achievable goals, and consequently make the city more beautiful and economical for citizens. Urban brand development is the dominant basis of planners in making decisions on the urban dwelling. Urban branding to assist the urban economy at the international level make it necessary to conduct research in this field. Since Shiraz city has not been studied directly in this field, the present study is novel and innovative.

The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed the normal distribution of the data. Therefore, the one-sample t-test was used to test the research hypotheses. To understand the components related to the factors affecting the formation of the city's image in the effective urban branding management, first, the items related to each component were combined and examined using the one-sample t-test. According to the results of the t-test, the "architectural and urban attraction" component with an average of 4.46 (sig.=0.000 at the 95% confidence level) and the "environment" component with an average of 4.29 (sig.=0.000 at the 95% confidence level) had the highest impact on the formation of the city's image in the effective urban branding management, respectively. The two components

of "economics and business" and "international city position", with an average of 4.12 and 4.11 (sig.=0.000 at the 95% confidence level), respectively, had a significant impact on the formation of the city's image in the effective urban branding management, followed by the components of "culture", "social issues", "self-knowledge of citizens", and "infrastructure and transportation, and traffic communication" (the averages of 4.02, 3.93, 3.77, and 3.62, respectively, with sig.=0.000 at the 95% confidence level).

In recent years, many studies have been carried out on urban branding, both in Iran and abroad, each of which has presented different results according to its goals. However, all of them have finally concluded that urban branding brings a reputation for cities, leads to the attraction of many investors and tourists, and consequently, results in the economic development of cities. For example, one can refer to the following studies: [Bahari et al. \(2017\)](#), in their study, have developed a paradigmatic branding model from causal conditions, contextual conditions, intervening variables, strategies, and consequences of branding (entrepreneurship development, social capital development, investment attraction and tourism development, rural development, and the reduction of migration) for the city. Moreover, the results of the study by [Yousefi et al. \(2016\)](#) have indicated a comprehensive model for mega-city branding with the explanation of key dimensions and variables using a local approach. [Hernández-Mogollón et al. \(2018\)](#), in their study, have indicated intangible attractions help to promote and develop the images of tourist destinations. The results of the study by [De Noronha et al. \(2017\)](#) have shown that the strategic potential of place branding is negatively influenced by a focus on operational thinking, which prevents further innovation in the approaches to place management. [Yi et al. \(2017\)](#), in their study, have indicated that in addition to tangible attractions such as architecture, intangible features such as popular culture governing tourism destinations are also effective in shaping tourists' perception of the authenticity of attractions. The present study also showed that factors of culture and urban attractions are effective in the formation of the image of the city, so the results of these two

studies are consistent. In fact, the present study sought to find the factors affecting the formation of the image of the city in urban branding management and determine the significance of each of them. The results of the present study showed that all the studied dimensions including social issues, architectural and urban attraction, environment, infrastructure and transportation and traffic communication, self-knowledge of citizens, economic and business, international city position, and culture, significantly influence the formation of the city's image in the urban branding. All these factors should be considered according to their significance. Considering the abovementioned and the results of this research, the following can be suggested:

- 1- The present study suggests to senior city managers provide the ground for the attraction of capital to their cities by spreading the obvious identity of their cities through the introduction of them to all investors. This can be achieved by appropriately informing and introducing the identity of the city to attract investors, along with branding.
- 2- The present study suggests to city managers increase their share of attracting investors by using strategic planning and developing the welfare and residential infrastructures of their cities.
- 3- In the case of Shiraz, the presence of many natural and historical attractions, suitable transport network, desirable climate in different seasons of the year, and inhabitants' sense of hospitality, are the factors that should be introduced through proper culturalization, information, and advertising by urban and regional managers.

Conflict of interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this manuscript.

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HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Sadeghi, AR.; Khakzand, M.; Dehghan MA. (2022). Assessing the significant factors influencing the formation of the city image in order to effective urban branding management, (Case study: Shiraz, Iran). *J Urban Manage Energy Sustainability*, 3(2): 19-31.

DOI: [10.22034/jumes.2022.552732.1072](https://doi.org/10.22034/jumes.2022.552732.1072)

