

Global Competition needs Smart Solutions, Urban Design Elements on City Branding

Hossein Mohamad Hassani

(MA in Urban Design, Hossein Mohamad Hassani, Urban Design and planning Department, Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran, h.mhassani@yahoo.com)

1 ABSTRACT

Globalization is one of the most important issues that changes cities. Global competition makes cities to need a range of solutions in order to be different from opponents and attract more economical investments. Branding is a customary topic for economics but globalization, attracting more investments and tourists to cities caused the topic an emerging subject for urban design and planning. Contemporary researches on integrated sustainable city can be turned into reality with city branding approaches. One of the fundamental decisions of urban studies approaches is to manage urban and spatial planning according to the urban design elements on city branding and identity of place. City branding is a smart solution for urban development, creation of jobs and providing a greater place to live and work.

Advertisement and communication technologies could have a key effect on city branding. Mobile apps and websites can be used to deliver city branding goals and a lot of cities used ICT as a key policy to present their brand. But urban design elements on city branding should be represented in these activities in order to express the unique brand of the city and the elements are not the same in different cities. These elements should be identified and appraised in the cities rather than relying on stereotypical responses to a commercial order.

This study considers key urban design disciplines and previous attitudes on city branding to offer a framework for urban design elements on city branding. This concept introduces the elements in main approaches and dimensions. In order to introduce urban design elements on city branding, this study uses a laboratory experiment that happened during Fourth International Conference on Urban and Extra Urban Studies 2013, Amsterdam, The Netherlands and concluded fourteen urban design elements for Amsterdam brand.

2 GLOBALIZATION AND URBAN STUDIES

The idea of the city branding was a subject of economics; but in last decade, the importance of space political economy grows gradually and researchers also have paid attention to this topic as an urban issue. Cities do not need gentrification solutions and the role of urban design should not be overlooked because urban design projects have a dominant effect on city's future economy (Cuthbert 2005, 56). Increasing investment and marketing constraints have addressed a new interest in local differences to create particular image of the city for new target groups and stakeholders. One of the urban planners and administrators tasks is to facilitate people interaction with the environment and new developments of the city according to the context of the city, rather than relying on the stereotyped responses and methods (Erickson and Roberts 1997, 35-37).

Erickson and Roberts have suggested that civic spaces are frequently bound to commercial leisure and retail industries. Yet many local government authorities encounter competition with large out-of town shopping centers. City authorities would like to market the town center as a more interesting alternative than the shopping mall. If they do not appraise their unique urban identity, branding activities will lead to places as indistinguishable as the branches of chain stores in cities (Ibid, 35). Marketing and urban studies are some of the impressive items in city branding. Growing global competition on absorbing financial and human sources have maximized the interest of city managers (Simmonds and Hack 2000, 271). Banalscapes are the outcome of branding process without urban design approaches on city identity in public space, so the lack of urban design analyses in branding may loss urban identities and local differences (Munoz 2010, 78).

Contemporary changes in cities economical approaches from industrial to post-industrial have highlighted urban regeneration. For example, over 5000 transactions shows that from 2000 to 2006, at least 10.000.000 square meters of industrial land has been disposed of by companies in 96 locations throughout the Netherlands. By the end of 2006, about 75 % of these locations were redeveloped (Figure 1). This is surprising in a small country like the Netherlands with few available development areas and the sites were often located in central urban areas (Havermans, Meulenbroek and Smeets 2008, 7-8).

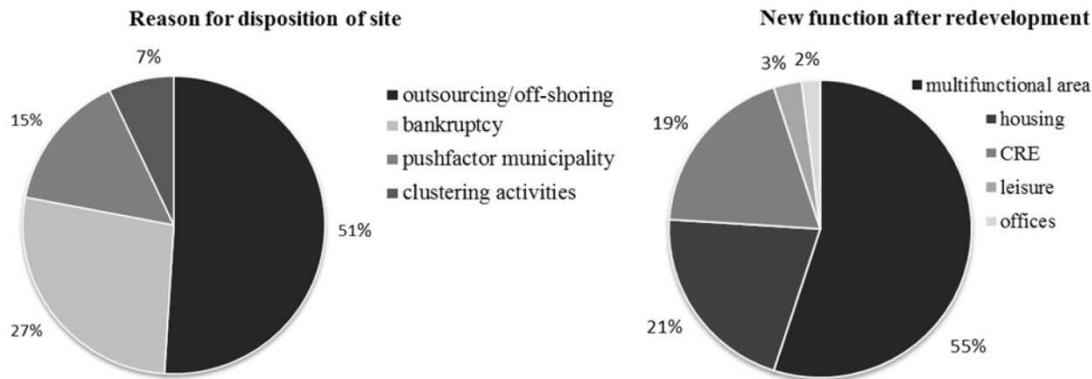


Fig. 1: Reasons for disposition industrial sites in the Netherlands and new functions after redevelopment. Source: Haverman, Meulenbroek and Smeets 2008, 8.

A minority of urban designers and planners have exposed to this topic recently. Many discussions in this topic have been issued by economists and they have emphasized that interdisciplinary approaches should become more prevalent in city branding (Dennie 2010, 4). Marketing specialists have done considerable effort in city marketing and many examples of these activities are available. They point out that a city is not a product and cannot be treated as products (Kavaratzis and Ashworth 2005, 507). Due to the complex urban issues in city branding the necessity of an interdisciplinary group for city branding is crucial. Thus marketing experts can work more closely with urban designers to determine the process of city branding.

Using websites and mobile apps are common to exhibit branding elements. Nowadays, almost all city branding campaigns have at least a website and provide a range of mobile apps, such as, tourist information mobile applications, to express the unique elements of the city. Based on the needs of target groups a range of ICT products for cities can be offered. These are smart tools should express the brand of city and appraise the unique elements of city. Urban designers and planners can distinct both unique visual and verbal means of city in all scales of the urban socio-spatial continuum and can represent them for the other experts, like as websites and mobile apps producers. The purpose of this study is to represent a conceptual framework of city branding elements in terms of urban design approaches to clarify them for all experts, which are a part of promoting city branding, including ICT experts. This paper explore the literature review of city branding and strategies of the topic, moreover, key urban design approaches on the topic will issue. Finally urban design elements on city branding are introduced and a laboratory experiment in Amsterdam is used in order to introduce an example for the mentioned elements.

2.1 Literature Review

In 1960s and the idea of place marketing emerged by Kotler and Levy. O'Leary and Iredal were the first authors introduced marketing as a challenging issue for the future and described that as "designed to create favorable dispositions and behavior toward geographic locations" (Zenker, Eggers and Farsky 2013, 134). A brand is something more than an identification name and the image of places cannot change by logos or advertisement easily (Kavaratzis and Ashworth 2005, 508). A brand is the collection of physical, psychological and social attitudes that are related to a product (Simones and Dibb 2001, 218-19). Besides, visual and aesthetic commendation of the urban landscape may lead to dispositions the residents' relationship with the place (Govers and Go 2009, 256-57).

Place marketing can be considered as a range with two borders. First one is describing urban capabilities and unique identity for target groups, and the second one is selling the place like a product and emphasis on advertisement and avoid the ugly backs of the place that may create a schizophrenic inspiration to place (Ericson and Roberts 1997, 53-58). Place marketing often misunderstands as place selling. Place marketing highlights an economic matter and the increasing of social functions to forms a major goal. It is a customer-orientated approach, which should consider existing and potential "customers" of the city; yet place selling concentrates solely on the promotional aspects of marketing. Place selling disregards the true aims and range of place marketing and branding (Zenker 2011, 41).

City branding theory is in the initiative stages of the accomplishment. This is expected that the global competition and contemporary economical necessities cause cities to enhance their unique brand in order to achieve urban development and regeneration goals (Dinnie 2010, 7). Branding is a deliberate process of boosting the symbolic value of a production or service in comparison with the other commentators (Zenker and Beckmann 2013, 7). A simple definition for place branding is applying product branding for places; yet places are more complex than products and a logo or new slogan cannot create a new identity for places (Kavaratzis and Ashworth 2005, 508). Place marketing and place branding are used instead of each other occasionally. Place marketing and place branding are used instead of each other occasionally. In fact place marketing concentrate on advertisement but place branding engaged to promote place identity and image (Pergelova and Angulo Ruiz 2011, 2).

In recent years, losing local identity issues and the target groups' image of the city are known as branding, although marketing was used frequently in the early years of 90s. A city can strengthen the uniqueness of its images by place branding. Branding can help the target groups to distinguish the city from its competitors and introduce a decent destination for investors, tourists or other stakeholders so target groups should be considered as an important section in literature review.

2.2 Target Groups

A variety of authors introduced residents, visitors, and investors as the main target groups in the process of city branding. Residents have a higher priority and visitors and investors are in the later priorities because the majority of strategies and policies, such as economic, cultural and formal, are designated to increase the quality of life for city residents. All of these groups have different perceptions and demands from the places, for example, tourists are looking for great shopping and cultural activities and financial investors are interested in economic; therefore city customers will not be interested in a dot on the map and they need a decent place for their intended purposes (Zenker and Braun 2010, 2).

Target groups in branding practice are much more complex. Visitors can be divided into business and leisure time tourists (Zenker and Beckmann 2013, 7). Professional visitors can be categorized as archaeologists and architects; besides, residents can be separated into current residents (internal group) and potential residents (external group). Within these groups, target groups may be specifically introduced, such as students or creative classes (Florida 2002, 67-79). These two target groups show a different knowledge structure that is based on different levels of experience (Figure 2). External target groups represent more common and stereotyped associations, whereas internal target groups possess a heterogeneous place brand perception (Zenker and Beckmann 2013, 8).

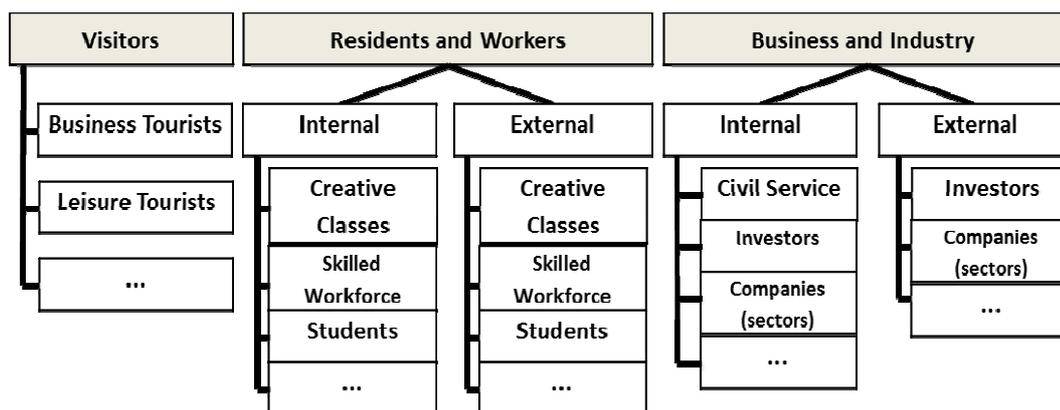


Fig. 2: Target groups in city branding. Source: Author

3 A FRAMEWORK FOR URBAN DESIGN ELEMENTS ON CITY BRANDING

Urban design can be defined as the multi-disciplinary activity of shaping and managing urban environments. It is interested in both the process of this shaping and the spaces it helps shape. Combining technical, social, and expressive concerns, urban designers use both visual and verbal means of communication, and engage in all scales of the urban socio-spatial continuum (Madanipour 1997, 22). Urban design has influenced by various interdisciplinary factors based on new challenges, such as economical necessities and marketing (Dinnie 2010, 7). In spite of the fact that lots of marketing authors have issued different essential elements

on the topic, urban designers, as professionals who are noticing urban qualities, did not express urban design elements of the topic. Urban design is highly sensitive in identifying and appraising of the city identity. Urban designers and planners can make a professional interaction with municipal authorities to represent implementation strategies and policies as supplementary planning guidance according to the statutory plans. This is a batch process with marketing experts and the other stakeholders.

Dimension of brand evaluation method issued by Zenker is a decent way to measure the current situation and target picture of branding elements. This evaluation may be considered for all identity base elements; moreover, Asset and Brand Strength method can be helpful due to the fact that elements can be compared each other by possible maximum points. This study has presented Three-dimensional city branding elements scoring model based on the combination of above methods to evaluate brand elements (Figure 3). Each element scored from -5 to +5 points in three dimensions and the summation of the element's points determines the current situation or target picture total point. X-axis corresponds to points of uniqueness, Y-axis related to the positive and negative effects of the element and Z-axis evaluate the strength and weakness points of the element base on the questionnaire outputs. The questionnaire should be prepared comprehensively to measure brand elements in terms of responder opinion for current situation and target picture in three axes. Current situation is the present image of element and target picture illustrates the responder expectations of element for the future as showed in figure 4.

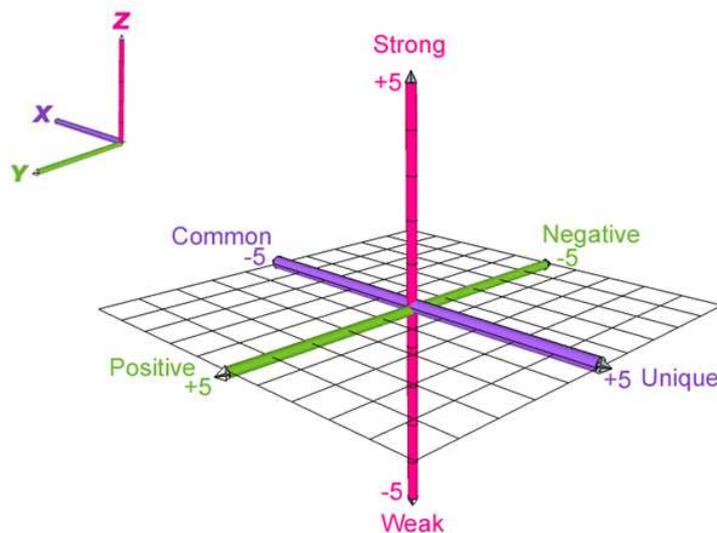


Fig. 3: Three-dimensional city branding elements scoring model. Source: Author

This paper considers spatial, visual, physical and public realm organizations as the key urban design disciplines (Zekavat, 2002, 30-32). This study uses previous attitudes on city branding and urban design disciplines to offer a framework which explore urban design elements on city branding. This concept introduces city branding elements in approaches and dimensions. The focus of this paper is on identity appraisal approach and the other approaches may be considered in later researches.

Urban design elements on city branding is a framework for appraising unique identity elements in urban areas. This framework offers 26 elements in 3 dimensions for identity appraisal approach that helps to categorize the elements in urban areas in order to strengthen cities' differences. Besides, Urban design elements on city branding contains an evaluation model for identified features. Using this framework can address some weaknesses of branding campaigns due to the fact that usually they do not express a distinct process for exploring unique elements of urban areas.

The goals of this framework can be issued as follows:

- Promoting tourism economy
- Boosting social pride among residents
- Upgrading the global position of the city
- Promoting livability in urban areas

- Apprising the difference and unique identity of the city for target groups

Identity appraisal approach is the first main groups that signify urban design elements on city branding. These are introduced in ecological, social and artificial environments as three dimensions of this approach. The second approach is implementation, which indicate factors and mechanisms of the implementation process. Fundraising, backup infrastructure, participation themes are different dimensions of implementation approach. And the third one explain the supplementary approach that happened during branding process by monitoring and advertisement (Figure 4). Three-dimensional city branding elements scoring model is an evaluation model for prioritising the strength of every branding elements and features. Positioning in current situation and target picture exhibit the most important elements among 26 identity appraisal elements and features. Besides, positioning represent some of the elements which earned zero points. These elements and features are considered as not applicable branding elements in the city. So the elements will be different in different cities. This framework clarify branding elements for all experts, which are a part of promoting city branding, including ICT experts in order to relay on the unique elements of the city rather than relying on stereotypical responses to a commercial order.

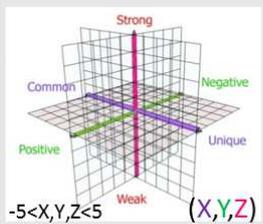
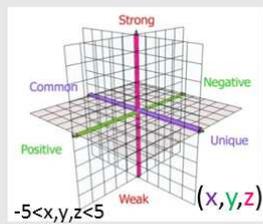
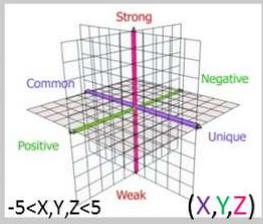
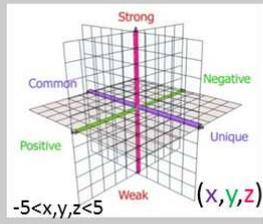
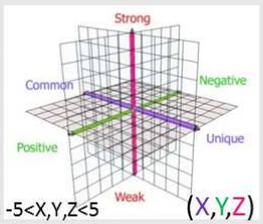
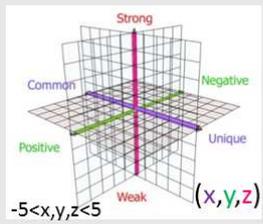
Approaches	Dimensions	Positioning		Points	Target picture	Points
		Elements and Features				
Identity appraisal	Ecological environment	Natural features		X + Y + Z		X + y + Z
		Weather				
		Natural Landscape				
	Social environment	Walkability		X + Y + Z		X + y + Z
		Urban Spaces				
		Bikability				
		Events				
		Food				
		Public transportation				
		Art festivals				
		Tourist attractions				
		Civic buildings				
		Mixed-uses				
		Formal- informal activities				
		Urban landscaping				
		Religion				
	Artificial environment	Iconic buildings		X + Y + Z		X + y + Z
		Activity Nodes				
		Spatial order				
		Tall buildings				
		Urban landscaping				
		Mixed-uses				
		City silhouette				
		Urban fabric				
		Night scape (lighting)				
	Public art					
	Implementation	Fundraising				
Backup infrastructure						
Participatory approach						
Supplementary	Monitoring					
	Advertisement					

Fig. 4: Urban design elements on city branding. Source: Author

3.1 Empirical Study

In 2003, the city of Amsterdam have started a branding campaign to strength the position of Amsterdam as a major cultural center has been threatened by a growing competition from other cities both within and outside The Netherlands. They established a picture of priorities and opportunities for the current situation and target picture, representing the sixteen dimensions in the form of a spider’s-web (Figure 5).The spider’s-web provided the city necessities to work on. Living conditions in the city, for example, Liveable City and Residential City need considerable improvement (Kavaratzis, 2008).

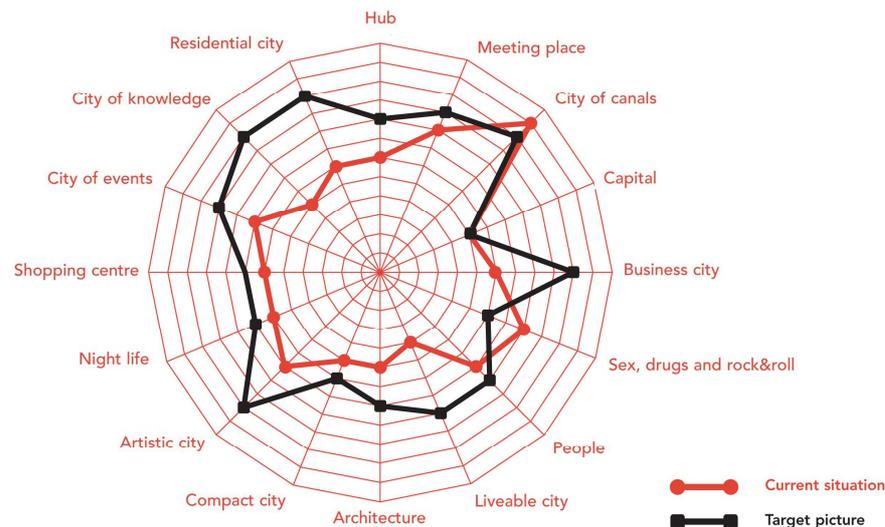


Fig. 6: Proposal Amsterdam brand dimensions in the form of a spider's-web. Source: City of Amsterdam 2003, 17.

In spite of the fact that Amsterdam authorities have chosen a strategy that addresses, or intends to address, the needs not only of the tourism sector, a wider base of urban elements and target groups in the selection of these dimensions should be considered with caution for two reasons. First, all cities are obviously versatile and most of dimensions are not unique to Amsterdam. Secondly the process of choosing the specific dimensions shows clear signs of a top-down approach and there is no framework for priorities and introducing these dimensions.

There is perhaps a question arising from these points of criticism. Could cities have chosen an urban design based strategy or a stronger theatrical framework to introduce unique identity elements of the city? This is related to the wider question of how to apply or evaluate the efficacy of branding elements in cities? In order to conclude urban design elements on city branding for a city in practice, this study uses a laboratory experiment with urban studies researchers' in Spaces and Flows: International Conference on Urban and Extra Urban Studies, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, as participants in the questionnaire.

Identity appraisal elements of Amsterdam were derived from 20 participants using qualitative in-depth interviews and the laddering technique, the participants average age was 29.2 years ($SD=2.59$), 34 per cent were male. Despite its merits, the present study features two main limitations. First, do in-depth interviews with 20 participants reveal all the relevant associations of the identity elements of Amsterdam brand? Second, all of the participants did not live in Amsterdam and they could not express nonphysical elements of the city brand well and they are small target group of city branding. Despite this limitation, Amsterdam is one of the well-known cities for architects, urban designers and planners so they have enough information to evaluate the current situation and target picture of the city and all of participants have the opportunity of visiting the city before the conference.

The empirical study has signified fourteen urban design elements applicable for Amsterdam brand. Three-dimensional city branding elements scoring model shows that social elements are dominant elements for the research target group. Canal architecture, semicircular spatial organization of the city center and Rijksmuseum, have taken the most points in current situation ($E1,2,3,\dots,n$) and target picture positioning ($e1,2,3,\dots,n$) (Figure 6). This study shows that social environment identity elements have a dominant effect on urban design elements of Amsterdam brand and it emphasizes the importance of appraising nonphysical identity elements in city branding. The focus of this paper is on identity appraisal approach and it is evident that, implementation and supplementary approaches should be considered for different target groups in later researches to achieve all urban design elements of Amsterdam brand.

Some of the concluded elements may be considered as negative elements for the image of the city in terms of target group points of view, for example in this study participants reduced the importance of the Red-Light district as an identity element for Amsterdam in target picture (the element score 7) in comparison with current situation (the element score 9). Besides, some elements may be contained more than one feature, like as iconic building that covers 4 features in Urban design elements on city branding for Amsterdam..

Approach	Dimensions	Positioning Elements	Current situation	Points	Target picture	Points	Examples	
Identity appraisal	Ecological environment	Natural features (City of Water) E1		8		10	 E1	
		Weather (Cloudy weather) E2		2		4		
		Natural landscape		0		0		
	Social environment	Walkability			0		0	 E1 E2 E4
		Urban Spaces			0		0	
		Bikability (Bickability) E1		8		10		
		Events		0		0		
		Food			0		0	
		Public transportation (Canal Transportation) E2		12		13		
		Art festivals			0		0	
		Tourist attractions			0		0	
		Civic buildings		4		7		
		Mixed-uses (Shopping streets) E3/			9		7	
		Formal-informal activities (Red light District) E4			8		12	
		Urban landscaping (City of Flower) E5			0		0	
		Religion						
	Artificial environment	Iconic buildings (Canal Architecture) E1/ (Rijksmuseum) E2/ (City of Bridges) E3/ (Modern Architecture in District of Zuid) E4		9/10/1 1/6		13/13/1 0/9	 E1 E2 E4	
		Activity Nodes		11		11		
		Spatial order (Semicircular Spatial Organization of the City Center) E5						
		Tall buildings (City of Tower Clocks) E6		9		11		
		Urban landscaping				0		
		Mixed uses		0		0		
		City silhouette		0		0		
		Urban fabric				13		
		Night scape (lighting)/ (Night Life) E7		11		13		
		Public art				0		

Fig. 6: Urban design elements on city branding for Amsterdam. Source: Author

According to the above chart, urban design elements on city branding for Amsterdam are concluded respectively as follow table. These elements have been prioritized in current situation and target picture (Figure 7). Moreover, the elements can be used to provide urban development policies and principals in an urban design guideline on city branding for Amsterdam. It would be the subject of an urban design and planning project that will pursuit the proposed framework goals.

Positioning	Scores (out of 15)	Positioning	Scores (out of 15)
Current situation		Target picture	
Canal Architecture	13	Canal Transportation	13
Canal Transportation	12	Night Life	13
Semicircular Spatial Organization of the City Center	11	Canal Architecture	13
Night Life	11	Rijksmuseum	13
City of Bridges	11	City of Tower Clocks	13
Rijksmuseum	10	City of Flower	12
City of Tower Clocks	9	Semicircular Spatial Organization of the City Center	11
Red light District	9	City of Water	10
City of Water	8	Bickability	10
Bickability	8	City of Bridges	10
City of Flower	8	Modern Architecture in District of Zuid	9
Modern Architecture in District of Zuid	6	Shopping streets	7
Shopping streets	4	Cloudy weather	4
Cloudy weather	2	Red light District	4

Fig. 7: Urban design elements on city branding priorities for Amsterdam. Source: Author

4 CONCLUSION

Data collection, data analysis, making solution and evaluation are dominant stages in urban design process (Shirvani 1985, 111) and urban design elements on city branding are very helpful to represent the unique brand of a city in urban development process. This study introduces a conceptual framework of city branding elements in terms of urban design approaches to clarify them for all experts, which are a part of promoting city branding, including ICT experts in order to relay on the unique elements of the city rather than relying on stereotypical responses to a commercial order.

This study offered a framework to represent urban design elements on city branding and signifies that a range of ecological, social and artificial dimentiones must be considered in city branding. Moreover, three-dimensional city branding elements scoring model is a way for positioning current situation and target picture of the elements in target groups' point of views. The focus of this paper is on identity appraisal approach and it is evident that implementation and supplementary approaches should be considered for different target groups in later researches to represent all urban elements on a city brand.

To manage future urban development, an urban design and planning guidance on city branding may be a valuable document that explores branding principals for cities. Urban design and planning guidance on city branding can be considered as an official document for cities and municipality can supervise urban development according to the guidance principals, policies and guidelines. It would be the subject of further urban design and planning researches, in addition, urban authorities have to consider advertisement and monitoring during the long term city branding process. Urban design elements on city branding described in this paper is the beginning of a comprehensive study, the purpose of which will be to contribute to the realization of the city branding both theoretically and empirically.

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