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The Development and Change in City Branding: A Content Analysis of the Literature

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THE DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE IN CITY BRANDING: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE LITERATURE

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to systematically review the city branding literature to provide an explicated and organized view and highlight further research opportunities. In that sense, the articles published on “city branding” and “city marketing” between 1988 and 2014 were explored via content analysis. The analysis of 146 articles suggests that there is a growing interest from different disciplines for city branding as a research domain. Therefore, it is concluded that, city branding is a multi-disciplinary area. There is a wide array of journals that are interested in and published articles on city branding. However, especially, the domain-specific journals contributed most that research area to develop. It was found that that 102 different cities from 38 different nations are studied and comparison among the cities are highly common. Most of the studies are research based and qualitative methods and case study approach are commonly used. However, there is a general tendency to describe the data but not interpret the relations between the concepts and theories. Therefore the knowledge is idiographic. Even if there is a western domination, the worldwide geographical coverage is

increasing. It was surprising to find that, mostly, the citizens/residents are searched as stakeholders and there is a few studies searching the views of visitors/tourists. The usage of multi-methods and inductive approach will enrich the city branding literature, by doing so, domain specific models and strategies can be developed rather than using the strategies developed within the marketing management..

Keywords: *City branding, city marketing, content analysis*

Jel Codes: *M31 (Marketing), R00 (General Urban, Planning)*

THE DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE IN CITY BRANDING: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE LITERATURE

1. Introduction and Background

In the last three decades, economic globalization and the free capital flows have increased competition between locations¹. City branding, as a research domain attracts an increasing number of researchers from different disciplines and practitioners². Branding gives an added value that is essential to the target groups. A brand is defined as “a name, a term, a sign, a symbol, a design, or a combination of some of the foregoing that identifies the goods and services of a seller or group of sellers and differentiates them from those of their competitors”³.

The main premise of city branding is to make the cities attractive to the visitor and investors, thus to improve local and national economy⁴. At this sense, city branding is defined as “the use of various marketing practices has become a popular way to promote a place’s attractiveness for business, tourists, residents and students”⁵. It is not only used for gaining competitive advantage but also for increasing inward investment and tourism, and achieving community development⁶. Cities are the multinationals of the 21st century⁷.

The early examples of place management are the promotional activities undertaken by public authorities. However, today, there is a conscious application of marketing approaches by public planning agencies. The principles of marketing and branding are explored not just as an additional instrument but as a philosophy of place management⁸. But the developments within the marketing discipline make a distance from general marketing to place, and thus scholars attempt to convert recent marketing theories and concepts to the place marketing literature, i.e. corporate branding⁹, stakeholder theory¹⁰, branding¹¹, brand equity¹², brand personality¹³.

¹ Sáez et al., 2013

² Lucarelli, 2012

³ Sáez et al., 2013

⁴ Hernandez and Lopez, 2011

⁵ Andersson and Ekman, 2009

⁶ Kavaratzis, 2004

⁷ Borja and Castells, 1997

⁸ Kavaratzis, 2004

⁹ Kavaratzis, 2004

Additionally, place marketing, and place branding is one of the multi-disciplinary areas in which several disciplines make contributions such as marketing theories, public relations, international relations, public administration, public diplomacy, communication, geography and tourism¹⁴. In recent years, the growth of the field has intensified¹⁵. The first journals dedicated to the field are *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* (2004) and *Place Management and Development* (2008). It is reasonable to assume the direct effect of the journals on the research domain¹⁶. In spite of the increasing interest, there is not a consensus on the terminology and the definitions¹⁷ and low levels of cross-referencing¹⁸. That makes it important to explore the development and change in the literature in order to put forward a clear picture that will provide a common ground for the future improvements.

On the other hand, urban branding is in no circumstances has been in the agenda of planners over many decades. From the time on the middle nineteenth century, cities have addressed marketing efforts on residents and economic sectors instead of tourists. Long since, city marketing is accepted to be referred to place promotion initially. Since the mid-1980s, however, local authorities started to use city marketing as part of their urban development policies. At the moment, local authorities see the attraction of new business activities and residents as top priorities¹⁹.

The purpose of this study is to systematically review the city branding literature via content analysis in order to provide an explicated and organized view. This study aims to review the articles published on “city branding” and “city marketing” between 1988 and 2014 (January to mid February).

¹⁰ Merrilees, et al., 2012

¹¹ Kavaratzis, 2007

¹² Lucarelli, 2012

¹³ Kaplan, et al., 2010

¹⁴ Sevin, 2014

¹⁵ Gertner, 2011

¹⁶ Lucarelli and Berg, 2011

¹⁷ Aholt, 2005

¹⁸ Lucarelli and Berg, 2011

¹⁹ Jansson and Power, 2006

2. Research Methodology

In the first stage of data identification, three databases- ABI/Proquest Global, Emerald, Sciencedirect were searched by using the “city branding” and “city marketing” keywords. As a result 973 articles were reached.

In the second stage the articles in the peer-reviewed journals were chosen, studies focused on geographical entities other than cities (such as destination, country, nation, town, urban marketing/branding), books, research published in edited books and conference proceedings, and editorials were excluded. Also the duplicated articles within the databases were deleted. As a result final sample size is defined as 146 articles. Then a code scheme is developed in relation with the literature²⁰. The codes are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Code scheme used in the content analysis

Bibliographical Data
- <i>Author(s)</i>
- <i>Title</i>
- <i>Year of publication</i>
- <i>Journal</i>
Methodology
- <i>Type of study</i>
- <i>Time frame</i>
- <i>Methods used</i>
Empirical Foundation
- <i>Number of cities studied</i>
- <i>Name of city</i>
- <i>Name of country</i>
- <i>Sample units</i>

3. Research findings

The findings of the content analysis are given below in details. The sum of the city branding literature covered in this study is given at the Appendix.

²⁰Gertner, 2011; Lucarelli and Berg, 2011

Publications and the diversity within the literature

The city branding is a multi-disciplinary research domain. The diversity within the related literature is defined as the main characteristics of the mentioned research domain. That finding confirms the previous research (Lucarelli and Berg, 2011), and also puts forward the growing interest of different disciplines to the area. Table 2 displays the journals and the number of articles. There are 53 different academic journals from four different disciplines- namely tourism, marketing, city planning, and geography- published 146 articles on city branding. Three journals- *Cities*, *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, and *Journal of Place Management and Development*, are more domain-specific and approximately 43% of the articles are published within.

Table 2: The Journals and The Number of Articles

The Journals	Frequency	%
Cities	22	15
Place Branding and Public Diplomacy	20	14
Journal of Place Management and Development	20	14
Journal of Brand Management	6	4
The Town Planning Review	5	3
Place Branding	4	3
Tourism Management	4	3
Annals of Tourism Research	3	2
European Journal of Marketing	3	2
Urban Studies	3	2
Journal of Destination Marketing&Management	2	1
Administrație Şi Management Public	2	1
Australasian Marketing Journal	2	1
Corporate Communications: An International Journal	2	1
European Planning Studies	2	1
International Journal of Public Sector Management	2	1
Journal of Business Research	2	1
Journal of Business Strategy	2	1
Procedia Engineering	2	1
Tourism Review	2	1
Viesoji Politika ir Administravimas	2	1
Administrative Theory & Praxis	1	1
Amfiteatru Economic	1	1
Annales Universitatis Apulensis Series Oeconomica	1	1
Applied Geography	1	1
Asian Journal on Quality	1	1
Canadian Social Science	1	1
Contemporary Logistics	1	1
Development	1	1
Economy, Transdisciplinarity Cognition	1	1

Table 2 continued

The Journals	Frequency	%
Management & Marketing	1	1
Management Research and Practice	1	1
Facilities	1	1
Frontiers of Architecture and Civil Engineering in China	1	1
Frontiers of Architecture Research	1	1
Innovation: Management, Policy & Practice	1	1
Intereconomics	1	1
International Journal of China Studies	1	1
The Journal of Brand Management	1	1
The Service Industries Journal	1	1
Tourism and Hospitality	1	1
Transformations in Business & Economics	1	1
Urban Affairs Review	1	1
International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research	1	1
International Journal of Retail&Distribution Management	1	1
International Marketing Review	1	1
International Public Management Review	1	1
Journal of Business Research	1	1
Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	1	1
Marketing Intelligence & Planning	1	1
Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences	1	1
Public Relations Review	1	1

In the study, the period between 1998-2014 is analyzed. Figure 1 displays the number of articles according to years of publication and it is concluded that, there is a growing interest especially since 2010. The year 2014 refers to only January and mid February.

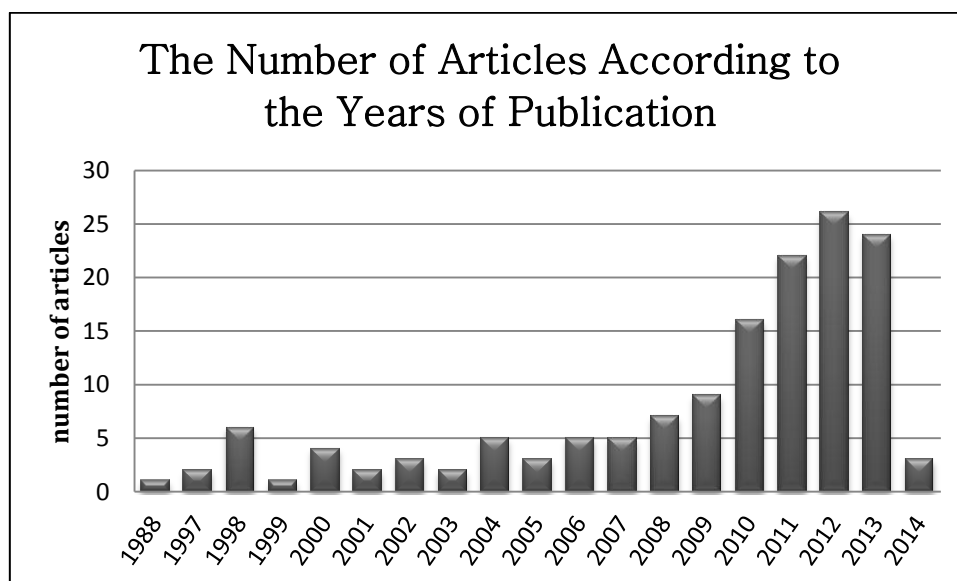


Figure 1: The Number of Articles According to The Years of Publication

Methodologies used

In sum, most of the studies are (92 out of 146) research paper whilst the others are conceptual/theoretical papers. Within these research papers, qualitative methods (46%) are much more used than the quantitative methods (23%). Only 17 articles (out of 146 articles) applied multi-methods. Case study (32 out of 67 qualitative studies) is the commonly evaluated qualitative method. The most popular data collection method is the usage of secondary sources such as statistics, documents and other researches. Interviews with various groups are the secondly most preferred data collection methods. In order to ensure the requirement various groups are used such as households, individuals, students, tourists, professionals. One of the most outstanding issues is that the usage of digital platforms as data collection technique is getting more popularity by years and in means of number as well.

Table 3: Methods Used

Methods used	Frequency	%
Quantitative	33	23
Multimethods	17	12
Qualitative	67	46
Theoretical (literature, conceptual)	29	20

In the light of the given research, it is understood that in some of the articles (75 out of 146) a specific time-frame is studied and mentioned. Some of them studied a single year, whilst some of them studied periods (Table 3).

Empirical Foundation

Regarding the cities studied in the city branding literature, it was found that more than 120 different cities from 38 different nations are studied. Most of the studies prefer to focus not directly just one city but to compare cities. A considerable part of the comparisons are done in between cross-national terms. The papers concentrating solely one city are linked the subject to a significant event such as expo, Olympics etc. Except the outstanding leader 8 cities, Berlin, Amsterdam, Birmingham, Bradford, Manchester, Shanghai, London and New York respectively, the rest of the studies profile in a dispersed formation around the all over world cities. Due to the fact, focusing on the cities do not let the literature analysis to go further as much as focusing on the nations does. Within the same way of thinking when the

nations are evaluated it is observed that the United Kingdom (20 articles), China (14 articles), Netherland (10 articles), United States of America (10 articles) and Australia (8 articles) dominates the top five nations studied- given in Table 4 in details. It is concluded that there is a growing interest to the city branding not only in Europe but in other continents as well. But the leading countries are the ones which are the first world countries within high ranked global cities.

Table 4: The Nations Studied

Name of country	Frequency	%	Name of country	Frequency	%
UK	20	13	Hungary	1	1
China	14	9	Israel	1	1
Netherland	10	6	Jordan	1	1
USA	10	6	Kazakhstan	1	1
Australia	8	5	Korea	1	1
Spain	8	5	Lithuanian	1	1
Germany	7	4	Mexico	1	1
Romania	5	3	New Zealand	1	1
Denmark	4	3	Philippines	1	1
Italy	4	3	Poland	1	1
Turkey	4	3	Portugal	1	1
Canadian	3	2	Puerto Rico	1	1
France	3	2	Scotland	1	1
Belgium	2	1	Singapore	1	1
Ireland	2	1	South Africa	1	1
Malaysia	2	1	Swiss	1	1
Argentina	1	1	Taiwan	1	1
Czech Rep.	1	1	United Arabic E.	1	1
Finland	1	1	Colombia	1	1

The documents (45%) are the most used sample units in the city branding research domain. The other sample units are displayed in Table 6 in details. It was surprising to find that, even the visitors/tourists forms an important part of the stakeholders, only seven studies conducts a research on visitors' and tourists' views. Mostly, the citizens/residents (23 articles) are searched as stakeholders. One emerging point to be mentioned is that digital platforms achieve increasing ratio while compared with traditional sources.

Table 5: The Sample Units Used

Sample unit	Frequency	%
Documents, statistics, plans, strategies, researches	73	45
Citizens (individuals, informant, interviewee, residents, household)	23	14
Papers	22	13
Professionals (planners, businesses, tourism agencies, tour guides...)	9	5
Online forums, social media, web sites	8	5
Visitors, tourists	7	4
Municipality, government	6	4
Photos	5	3
Newspapers, magazines	4	2
Companies, industries	3	2
Advertisement, brochures	2	1
Students	2	1

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of this present study is to explore the city branding literature via content analysis in order to provide an explicated and organized view of the literature, and highlight further research opportunities. The analysis of 146 articles published between 1988-2014 suggests that there is a growing interest for city branding as a research domain from different disciplines- namely tourism, marketing, city planning, and geography. There is a wide array of journals that are interested in and published articles on city branding. However, especially, the domain-specific journals- *Cities*, *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, and *Journal of Place Management and Development*- contributed most that research area to develop.

As Gertner (2011) concluded for place marketing and place branding literature, this study also confirms that there is not a “robust theory under construction” in the city branding literature. Nevertheless, in the literature of city branding, most of the studies are research based and the qualitative methods are the most used techniques. Qualitative methods are inductive by nature and can be used to build theories. Inductive analysis requires detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations²¹. “The researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data”²². The research papers analyzed in this study are factual and descriptive and do not generate any propositions or testable models. The purposes for using an inductive approach are to “ (a) condense rawtextual data into a brief, summary format; (b) establish clear links between the evaluation or research

²¹Thomas, 2006

²²Strauss and Corbin 1998

objectives and the summary findings derived from the rawdata; and (c) develop a framework of the underlying structure of experiences or processes that are evident in the raw data”²³.

In general case study is used in the research domain. Case study is a qualitative research approach used within a large number of disciplines, such as sociology, anthropology, history, psychology, law, medicine, and education, political science, economics, urban planning, public administration, public policy, social work and management²⁴. Three important features of case study makes it a suitable technique for these different disciplines: (1) data is collected from a natural setting and therefore can be used to generate theories from practice; (2) the researcher can answer “how” and “why” questions, (3) it is an appropriate way to research an area in which few previous studies have been carried out (Halaweh, 2012).

Case studies construct an understanding about the investigated phenomenon and- adjacent to a constructivism position- reveal new concepts and new relations or modify existent concepts/theories (Grunbaum, 2007). However, in the city branding literature, there is a general tendency to specify the cases therefore the knowledge is idiographic. The case study findings just present a picture of the phenomenon- such as branding applications, events (expo, Olympics etc), websites- but not interpret the relations between the concepts and theories. That is also criticized within the literature. Kavaratzis (2007) concluded that there still remains many issues on city marketing applications and there is a need for further theoretical development and practical clarification. Anholt (2005) highlighted that there is limited clarity and agreement about terminology and definitions on city branding. In fact, “there appears to be more agreement over what city branding and place branding is not, than over what it is”²⁵. Gertner (2011) suggested the complexity of city branding literature. In general, the concepts and theories developed within and derived from the marketing discipline²⁶. Whilst city branding should serve the stakeholders having different demands, it should also pursue economic development. In other words, city branding has symbolic, social and economic impacts²⁷. That creates the need to develop a framework describing and clarifying the processes involved in city branding²⁸. Therefore, the literature requires studies that rely on inductive approaches and multi-methods to define and analyze the relations among the factors embedded in city branding.

²³ Thomas 2006

²⁴ Grunbaum, 2007

²⁵ Björner, 2013

²⁶ Kavaratzis, 2005

²⁷ Lucerelli, 2012

²⁸ Kavaratzis, 2005

Empirically, there is a raise of interest to city branding not only in Europe but in other continents also. It was found that that 102 different cities from 38 different nations are studied. United Kingdom (20 articles), China (14 articles), Netherland (10 articles), United States of America (10 articles) and Australia (8 articles) are the top five nations subjected to city branding studies. Even if there is a western domination, the worldwide geographical coverage is increasing. There is also a comparative approach in the studies.

The documents are the most used sample units in the city branding research domain. The documents are supported by in-depth interviews with the participants who have active roles in city branding. Data triangulation is important in case study approach since it provides thick descriptions. However, as previously mentioned, the studies just give findings from multiple resources descriptively but not make interpretations. It was surprising to find that, mostly, the citizens/residents are searched as stakeholders and there is a few studies searching the views of visitors/tourists. It is believed that using multi-methods and searching the viewpoints of different stakeholders can enrich the city branding literature.

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Appendix: City Branding Literature- 1988-2014

Year	Number of Article	Author(s)	Journal (no of articles)
2014	3	Larsen (2014) Zhou and Wang (2014) Sevin (2014)	Journal of Destination Marketing&Management (1), Cities (2)
2013	24	Carta (2013), Edizel (2013), Yang et al. (2013), Zenker et al. (2013) Llinares et al. (2013), Rehmet and Dinnie (2013), Neuts et al. (2013), Lei (2013), Zavattaro (2013), Hakala et al. (2013), Braun et al. (2013), Ahmad et al. (2013), Khirfan and Momani (2013), Zhao (2013), Merrilees et al. (2013), Boland (2013), Braun et al. (2013), Gelders and Van Zuilen (2013), Herstein and Berger (2013), Sáez et al. (2013), Hernandez-Garcia (2013), Chunying (2013), Björner (2013)	Frontiers of Architecture Research (1), The Town Planning Review (2), Cities (3), Journal of Destination Marketing&Management (1), Applied Geography (1), International Journal of China Studies (1), Place Branding and Public Diplomacy (3), Journal of Place Management and Development (1), Canadian Social Science (1), Contemporary Logistics (1), Journal of Business Research (1), Journal of Place Management and Development (6), Corporate Communications: An International Journal (1), Journal of Business Strategy (1)
2012	26	Romanczyk (2012), Moreira and Silva (2012), Irimias (2012), Xue et al. (2012), Avraham and Daugherty (2012), Riza et al. (2012), Hashim (2012), Freeman et al. (2012), Krr et al. (2012), Alons and Bea (2012), Tapardel and Alexe (2012), Hayden and Sevin (2012), Kowalik (2012), Kemp et al. (2012), Popescu et al. (2012), Lucarelli (2012), Dragolea and Cotirlea (2012), Pinzaru (2012), Muratovski (2012), Braun (2012), Zenker and Seigis (2012), Torres (2012), Trueman et al. (2012), Mueller and Schade (2012), Lucarelli (2012), Merrilees et al. (2012),	Amfiteatru Economic (1), Annales Universitatis Apulensis Series Oeconomica (1), Cities (1), European Journal of Marketing (2) Journal of Brand Management (1), Journal of Place Management and Development (6), Management & Marketing (1), Management Research and Practice (1), Place Branding and Public Diplomacy (6), Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences (1), Public Relations Review (1), Tourism Management (1)
2011	22	Ning and Hoon (2011), Carrasquillo (2011), Navarro and Martinez-Martinez (2011), Colomb (2011), Mak (2011), Giovanardi (2011), Mahnken (2011), Ripp et al. (2011), Zhu et al. (2011), Semm (2011), Sheng (2011), İsmail and Mohd-Ali (2011), Zenker (2011), Dynon (2011), Crombie (2011), Karvelyte and Chiu (2011), Brandt and de Mortanges (2011),	Tourism Review (1), Transformations in Business & Economics (1), Viesoji Politika ir Administravimas (1) Cities (3), Development (1), Economy, Transdisciplinarity Cognition (1), Facilities (1), Journal of Brand Management (1), Journal of Place Management and Development (6), Place Branding and Public Diplomacy (3), Procedia Engineering (1), Procedia Volume (1), The ISM Journal of International Business (1), The Service Industries Journal (1), The Town Planning Review (1), Tourism

		Sevcik (2011), Cozmiuc (2011), Kalandides (2011), Hernandez and Lopez (2011), Lucarelli and Berg (2011),	Management (1)
2010	16	Shin (2010), Bramwell and Rawding (2010), Hospers (2010), Northover (2010), Zavattaro (2010), Lange et al. (2010), Sinkiene and Kromalcas (2010), Altinbasak and Yalçin (2010), Kim (2010), Popescu and Corbos (2010), Ooi and Pedersen (2010), Kaplan et al. (2010), Prayag (2010), Hospers (2010), Kim et al. (2010),	Administrație Și Management Public (1), Administrative Theory & Praxis (1), Annals of Tourism Research (1), Asian Journal on Quality (1), Cities (2), European Journal of Marketing (1), European Planning Studies (1), International Journal of Culture (1), Tourism and Hospitality Research (1), Journal of Place Management and Development (2), Marketing Intelligence & Planning (1), Place Branding and Public Diplomacy (2), Viesoji Politika ir Administravimas (1)
2009	9	Hspers (2009), Russell et al. (2009), Zhang and Zhao (2009), Merrilees et al. (2009), Russell et al. (2009), Ashworth and Kavaratzis (2009), Kavaratzis (2009), Negrete (2009), De Carlo et al. (2009),	Australasian Marketing Journal (2), Cities (1), Journal of Brand Management (1), Journal of Business Research (1), Journal of Place Management and Development (2)
2008	7	Boland (2008), Hospert (2008), Vanolo (2008), Harmaakorp et al. (2008), Herstein and Jaffe (2008), Peel and Lloyd (2008), Gaggiotti et al. (2008),	Place Branding and Public Diplomacy (2)
2007	5	Luque-Martinez et al. (2007), Liu and Chen (2007), Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2007), Trueman et al. (2007), Trueman et al. (2007)	Cities (2), Innovation: Management, Policy & Practice (1), Place Branding and Public Diplomacy (3), The Town Planning Review (1)
2006	5	Murphy and Boyle (2006), Shukla et al. (2006), Florek et al (2006), Virgo and de Chernatony (2006), Kavaratzis and Ashwort (2006),	Cities (2), Frontiers of Architecture and Civil Engineering in China (1), Place Branding and Public Diplomacy (1), Journal of Brand Management (1)
2005	3	Smith (2005), Popescu and Corbos (2005), Parkerson and Saunders (2005),	Tourism and Hospitality (1), Tourism Review (1), Place Branding (2), Journal of Brand Management (1)
2004	5	Richads and Wilson (2004), Avraham (2004), Kavaratzis (2004), Caldwell and Freire (2004), Trueman et al. (2004),	Annals of Tourism Research (1), Administrație Și Management Public (1), Place Branding (1)
			Urban Studies (1), Cities (1), Place Branding (1), The Journal of Brand Management (1), Corporate Communications: An International Journal (1)

2003	2	Hospers (2003), Bennett and Savani (2003)	Intereconomics (1), International Public Management Review (1)
2002	3	Bradley et al. (2002) Doel and Hubbard (2002), Westerbeek et al. (2002)	Cities (2), International Marketing Review (1)
2001	2	Bennett and Koudelova (2001), Hankinson (2001)	International Journal of Public Sector Management (1), Journal of Brand Management (1)
2000	3	Avraham (2000), Wu (2000), Geenberg (2000), Ward (2000)	Cities (2), Urban Affairs Review (1), Urban Studies (1)
1999	1	Wait (1999)	Urban Studies (1)
1998	5	Warnaby (1998), McCarthy (1998), Dahles (1998), Van Limburg (1998), Lennon and Seaton (1998)	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services (1), Cities (1), Annals of Tourism Research (1), Tourism Management (1), International Journal of Public Sector Management (1)
1997	2	Chevrant-Breton (1997), Warnaby and Davies (1997),	European Planning Studies (1), International Journal of Retail&Distribution Management (1)
1988	1	Ashworth and Voogd (1988)	The Town Planning Review (1)

