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Article

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Scientific Papers of the University of Pardubice, Series D: Faculty of Economics and Administration

Provided in Cooperation with:

Faculty of Economics and Administration, University of Pardubice

Suggested Citation: Herbočková, Lucie; Žítek, Vladimír; Klímová, Viktorie (2024) : City marketing: How do residents perceive their home?, Scientific Papers of the University of Pardubice, Series D: Faculty of Economics and Administration, ISSN 1804-8048, University of Pardubice, Pardubice, Vol. 32, Iss. 1, pp. 1-12,
<https://doi.org/10.46585/sp32011978>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/334824>

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City Marketing: How Do Residents Perceive Their Home?

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Abstract

City marketing strives to promote a specific city and its parts and emphasises its different characteristics, attractiveness, and competitive advantages. This concept is based on the idea of a high quality of life for its residents and attractive conditions for external target groups. The paper deals with city marketing in Brno, the second-largest city in the Czech Republic. The aim of this paper is to analyse the marketing activities of the city of Brno and to evaluate what image the city has in the eyes of its residents. We conducted a questionnaire survey among 552 residents. In addition to this quantitative approach, we also used qualitative methods, which consisted of interviews with experts from practice. Research has proved that the city is aware of the importance of marketing, but marketing activities have not yet been sufficiently developed. Brno is a city that is considered a good place to live, and the majority of respondents are actively interested in what is happening there. On the other hand, the city's marketing efforts are not visible enough to residents. The research confirms that cities in Central Europe should pay more attention to their marketing. The paper provides policy implications for the implementation of city marketing oriented to residents.

Keywords

City marketing, Brno, Marketing strategy, Residents, Image, Brand

JEL Classification

P25, R58, M31

Introduction

City marketing is part of a broader concept called territorial marketing. Both city and territorial marketing focus on the promotion of a specific geographical space. However, city marketing specifically focuses on the promotion of a particular city and its parts, emphasising its different characteristics, attractiveness and competitive advantages (Dinnie, 2011). In contrast, territorial marketing covers a larger geographical scope, promotes the common strengths of all cities, towns and regions inside the territory and brings its competitive advantage to the global market (Wawrzyniec, 2009; Ventura, 2014). In the current literature, city marketing is not considered only as a way of promotion but is perceived as a more complex procedure that must be connected with other processes, such as urban planning or citizen participation (Deffner et al., 2020). Territorial marketing plays a significant role in attracting residents, investors, tourists, talents, and enterprises by highlighting the competitive advantage of an area and its individual institutions (Kotler et al., 1993; Anholt, 2010; Metaxas, 2010).

Our paper deals with city marketing in Brno, the second largest city in the Czech Republic, which is located in Central Europe. In general, it can be stated that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have relatively little experience with the application of territorial marketing. The beginning of the implementation of territorial marketing in the Czech Republic dates back to the period after the end of communism in 1989. Since that moment, the country has faced significant economic and social changes. In connection with joining global competition and building a knowledge economy, Czech cities and regions recognise the importance of using marketing activities to attract foreign investors, tourists and international events (Rumpel, 2002).

Our research helps to better understand the marketing activities of a medium-sized city in Central Europe. This topic is not sufficiently represented in the scientific literature, although a few partial research studies have been carried out (Glinka, 2017; Koszembar-Wiklik, 2019). Research to date has been more focused on cities in Western

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and Northern Europe, which have a longer history of urban marketing implementation (Eshuis et al., 2018; Schade et al., 2018). Furthermore, when such research exists, it usually focuses on tourism and tourism destination marketing (e.g. Sredanović and Šulc, 2022; But et al., 2023). However, our focus is on residents. We did not want to investigate capital cities, as their research is the most common. We focused on the country's second-largest city because the position of these cities is very specific. Brno is considered a centre of innovation and research, so we pay attention to target groups that are close to these knowledge activities. The uniqueness of our research also lies in the fact that we conducted our own questionnaire survey among 552 residents. The aim of our paper is to analyse the marketing activities of the city of Brno and to evaluate what image the city has in the eyes of its residents. Through our research, we want to answer three research questions:

- *RQ 1: Is the marketing of the city of Brno sufficiently ensured in its strategic documents?*
- *RQ 2: How do people perceive the city of Brno in which they live?*
- *RQ 3: How do residents perceive the marketing activities of the city of Brno?*

Literature Review

Territorial marketing is defined and understood differently by many authors due to the different levels of implementation, i.e., village, town, city, district, region, and country (Daldanise, 2016). Due to the complexity, there may occur the misinterpretation as the concept may be perceived and explained differently by academics and researchers, e.g. regional marketing, city marketing, place branding or place marketing (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005; Anholt, 2016; Dinnie, 2022). Generally, it is explained as a way of managing the territory's image through strategic and process innovations, coordinated policies, and governance in social, economic and cultural areas. The concept primarily strives for a stably attractive territory with a high standard of living, political stability and harmony, demand for local products, long-term vision and mission, investment attractiveness, cooperation within triple helix and developing the competitive advantage (Ancarani, 2001; Ventura, 2014; Cleave et al., 2016).

The basic idea of city marketing is that the territory of the city is perceived as unique based on its competitive advantage. Many comparative advantages contribute to the attractiveness of the territory. From the marketing perspective, the significant ones are the authentic brand of the territory, good reputation, authenticity, and satisfaction of the citizens (Dinnie, 2011; Hudson et al., 2017). The uniqueness of the territory based on its competitive advantage is defined primarily as (a) an attractive place with a highly positive image; (b) an image of the place that corresponds to its target groups; (c) an attractive locality for internal and external investors; (d) a place that provides opportunities for both the territory and local stakeholders (Ventura, 2014; Anholt, 2016; Hudson et al., 2017).

Target groups

The task of city marketing is to identify, attract and retain defined target groups in the territory. Generally speaking, this concept represents the relationship between the demand of target groups and the supply given by the city governance, public institutions and private entities (Pollitt, Van Thiel and Homburg., 2007). There are many ways and criteria how to define target groups, e.g. in terms of social, geographic, demographic and cultural (Ježek et al., 2007). Most professional literature distinguishes internal and external target groups (e.g., Ancarani, 2001; Dinis, 2004; Cant and Machado, 2011; Tsiotsou and Goldsmith, 2012). The internal target group represents interested entities who live and actively operate in the given space. The internal target group mainly includes residents, workers, students, academics, entrepreneurs and investors. In contrast, the external target group comes to the city from outside and can be, for example, foreign investors, tourists, potential students, future researchers, visionaries, potential employees and other visitors. For comparison, Kotler et al. (1999) define four primary target groups (a) visitors, (b) residents and employees, (c) businesses and industries, and (d) international export markets as well as other territories within domestic markets. The concept of territorial marketing emphasises the idea of a high quality of life for its internal target groups and attractive conditions for external target groups (Ježek et al., 2007).

Marketing strategy and implementation

The connection between regional development and territorial marketing is straightforward, which is why it is important to formulate a marketing strategy in such a way that it is in line with the wider development goals of the given territory (Almeida and Cardoso, 2022). Local governments in Europe play a major role in formulating and adopting local public policies and are responsible for the implementation of political decisions (Halaskova and Halaskova, 2016). Initiating a marketing strategy is, therefore, a task for city management. However, for its effective and efficient functioning, the participation and cooperation of all interested stakeholders is necessary (stakeholder mobilisation). This approach is called a bottom-up approach (Eshuis et al., 2014). Once the decision has been made about the involvement of stakeholders, the preparation of the strategy itself can begin. The first step must be to carry out a detailed diagnosis of the territory, including statistical data, market case studies, studies of the competitive environment, external factors, and citizens' opinions. This diagnostic phase is usually concluded with a SWOT analysis or another similar type of analysis. The next phase is strategic marketing planning, which includes a collective definition of a vision, mission and objectives for the development of a territory. (Borseková et al., 2017) The strategy must also contain specific measures and projects that will be implemented. These can be specified in more detail in a separate document - an action plan. Once the strategy document is prepared and approved, the

implementation of the marketing strategy can begin. The implementation of the strategy is often entrusted to the responsible staff of the local self-government. A specialised agency can also ensure the implementation of the strategy. E.g., the city of Eindhoven (Netherlands) established the municipal marketing agency Eindhoven365 with the primary goal of building the Eindhoven brand (EHV365, 2024). However, this is not usual in Central European countries.

Methods

The methodological part of this paper characterises the investigated area, describes data sources and the way of working with them. The research deals with the marketing activities of the city of Brno in the Czech Republic. The study is based on our empirical questionnaire survey and uses also other data sources.

Investigated territory

Brno is the capital of the South Moravian Region and the second-largest city in the Czech Republic. It had approximately 396,000 inhabitants in 2023, and the number of its inhabitants has a slightly increasing trend; compared to the year 2013, it increased by about 5% (CZSO, 2023). The number of inhabitants would probably be larger if a higher housing supply existed. In addition, another 120,000 people commute there for work or school (CZSO, 2024), so there are approximately half a million people in Brno every day. It has an advantageous geographical location, as it is located near three capital cities: Prague (200 km), Bratislava (130 km) and Vienna (130 km). Five public universities, one state university and several private colleges are located in the city. Besides them, several public research institutions operate there. Brno is considered a centre of research and innovation. In the South Moravian Region, expenditures on research and development amount to more than 3% of GDP, which represents the highest value among all Czech regions (CZSO, 2023). A substantial part of research and innovation activities is concentrated in Brno and its surroundings. The rest of the region has a more rural character. Many Czech and multinational companies from the high-tech sector, especially from the information and communication technology sector (e.g., IBM, AT&T, Avast, Red Hat, Y Soft), operate in Brno. Brno is also known for its electron microscopes; approximately a third of the world's production is produced there (JIC, 2023). The long history of research in Brno is also evidenced by the work of important scientists such as Johann Gregor Mendel (genetics), Viktor Kaplan (turbines) and Armin Delon (electron microscopy). The development of Brno (and the entire country) was influenced by the change of regime in 1989 and the subsequent transition to a market economy and a democratic system. In 2004, the country joined the EU. However, the Czech Republic belongs to a group of countries from Central and Eastern Europe (so-called "catching-up" countries), which started their development in the 1990s and have a lower level of development than Western European countries (Prokop et al., 2021).

Data sources and methods

Territorial marketing often focuses on tourism and tourists. However, this is not the subject of interest to us. In our research, we pay attention to the perception of the city by its inhabitants. We applied both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

As part of qualitative research, we focused on the analysis of city marketing in Brno. We studied all available strategic and planning documents, other city documents, local surveys and websites. We were also interested in logos, brands and communication strategy. This part of the research took place in 2022 and 2023. We have also conducted a number of formal and informal interviews with experts from practice. A significant part of these conversations took place within the framework of 15 lectures and workshops that we organised for the students of our university between 2022 and 2024. At these events, experts who deal with the marketing activities of the city and the region presented their experiences. These professionals were mainly managers of various departments of the Brno City Municipality, the Office of the South Moravian Region and independent organisations established by these or other public authorities. In this qualitative research, the subject of our interest was whether the city of Brno applies a strategic approach to marketing and how marketing is organised and staffed.

A key part of our research is a quantitative questionnaire survey, which took place in two phases in spring 2022 and autumn 2022. We conducted our own survey among residents, in which 552 respondents participated. Because Brno is a city of innovation and research, we were primarily interested in the group of its residents who are close to these matters. The majority of respondents have a tertiary level of education or are studying at a university. The survey was focused on permanent residents and other people without permanent residence who lived in the city for at least 12 months (students, workers, and family members). The survey was conducted online (via Google Forms), and the respondents were contacted by email and social networks (mainly LinkedIn and specific Facebook groups). We also used non-discriminatory snowball sampling and asked our respondents to invite their acquaintances to fill out the questionnaire. This method has limits in terms of sample representativeness, but it was important for us to get as many responses as possible. Basic information about the respondents is presented in Table 1. The majority of respondents were women and people under 45 years of age. The nature of the sample is influenced by the data collection method, as online tools are more widespread among the younger population. People of senior age do not even correspond to the target groups we are interested in.

Table 1. Respondents sample (N=552).

Gender			Age					
Women	Men	n.a.	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65
64.1%	33.6%	2.3%	33.5%	38.3%	17.1%	7.5%	3.6%	0.0%

Source: authors' own processing.

In the questionnaire, the respondents indicated which target groups they were part of. One respondent can belong to several target groups (e.g. a student who has a job at the same time). More detailed information about the target groups that participated in the questionnaire survey is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Target groups.

Code	Title (number of respondents)	Brief description
TG1	ITS workers (70)	people employed in information technologies and services
TG2	University students (249)	individuals enrolled in higher education institutions
TG3	Parents (60)	mother/father on parental leave who temporarily left their job
TG4	Academicians (96)	scientists and teachers working at a university or public research institution
TG5	Investment workers (31)	people working in the investment environment and actively involved in investment activities
TG6	Start-up employees (28)	individuals working in emerging and innovative enterprises
TG7	Hobby and non-profits (56)	employees of a hobby/non-profit/charitable organisation/firm

Source: authors' own processing.

The questionnaire was structured into three distinct sections. The first section aimed to identify the respondents based on residency and their alignment with the targeted groups. The second section delved into residents' perceptions of the city. The final section gathered socio-demographic data. The questions from section 2 included in this study are listed in Table 3. The collected dataset was converted into numerical values (yes = 1; no = 0) with binary results. The data were further processed and visualised in MS Excel.

Table 3. Questions included in the study.

No.	Question	Possible answers
1	Are you actively interested in life in your city?	Yes; No
2	Are you aware of any efforts by your city to enhance its image and engagement with the residents?	Yes; No
3	How would you rate the city's efforts in organising events, promoting, and communicating with the public?	1 (the best); 2; 3; 4; 5 (the worst)
4	What are your primary sources for information about what's happening in your city? (Multiple options can be selected.)	Social media; Regional television; Press; Local press; Websites; Billboards/local notice boards; At public events; City information centre; City's mobile application; Other:
5	In your opinion, which target groups is the city's marketing primarily focused on? (Multiple options can be selected.)	Residents; Visitor/Tourist; Employer/Employee/Self-employed; Students; Researchers; Seniors
6	How would you define your city in words or slogans?	
7	What do you consider to be the main strengths of your city?	

Source: authors' own processing

We supplemented our data with relevant information from the external survey "The Character of the City of Brno in the Attitudes of its Inhabitants" (Brno, 2022). This study was carried out by a private company on the basis of a public tender from the city of Brno. One thousand sixteen respondents were involved in it. Compared to our own research, this one was not focused exclusively on marketing activities but rather on the wider development of the city.

Results

In this part of the paper, attention is first paid to the way how the city of Brno conducts marketing activities. Subsequently, attention is paid to the perception of the city and its marketing activities by its residents.

Basic features of marketing activities of Brno city

Brno does not have any explicitly defined marketing strategy or similar document. However, the #brno2050 strategy partially tries to fulfil this role and has a predisposition to the principles of territorial marketing. This strategy represents the primary strategic document for the development of the city of Brno until 2050. It introduces a vision for the city's future that aims to constantly improve the quality of life for its citizens and attract prospective inhabitants (qualified people). One of the significant features of this plan is its proactive involvement of the citizens, enabling them to participate directly in shaping the city's future direction. The strategy is supplemented by two associated documents: the Plan 2030 and the Action Plan (Brno, 2017). Thus, the strategy is highly relevant as a base document for city marketing as it presents Brno as a city actively planning, emphasising its inhabitants' quality of life, sustainability, and inclusivity. The key target groups of the strategy are residents, local communities and businesses. In accordance with marketing principles, it can be stated that this strategy has defined indicators for evaluating its fulfilment. One of the main sources of data for evaluation is a regular questionnaire survey called „Image of the city as seen from the inside“.

The city's main marketing activities are provided by the statutory city itself and its employees. In particular, this department manages marketing activities, builds a unified city image, coordinates city brands, prepares a marketing concept, creates a unified visual style and arranges marketing research (Brno, 2024a). In 2022, the city established a Marketing Council as an advisory body. The Council consists of experts from the commercial sphere, representatives of the municipality, municipal companies and the academic sphere. Its task is to help the city with the definition of priorities and long-term goals, and the creation of conceptual marketing documents. The city does not use an external marketing agency, which is common in many large European cities.

The city of Brno has a logo (Figure 1) that symbolises it as a formal institution (municipality). However, it is not a logo that represents a specific geographic area. In addition to the logo, the city uses several brands intended for specific activities (e.g., culture, transport, participatory budgeting). These brands are communicated through social networks, websites, events and offline channels (e.g., press and billboards). However, the city lacks a comprehensive brand strategy. It has only simple guidelines for the use of the logo (including defining appropriate and inappropriate ways of use). In 2024, the uniform visual style will be modified.



Fig. 1. Logo of the Brno city.
Source: Brno (2024a).

Table 4 shows the brands used by the city and the relevant social networks. The most frequently used social network is Facebook. The brands "Brno my city" and "Dáme na vás" are most often presented on these networks. The first of them informs citizens about what is happening in Brno. The second of them is connected with participatory budgeting. The city is preparing a new communication strategy, for which a public contract is currently being announced. This strategy should be completed in 2025 (Brno, 2024b).

Table 4. Social media and brands.

Social media	Brands
Facebook	BRNOMycity / Bezpečnější Brno (Safer Brno) / Kultura Brno (Brno Culture) / Sochařské Brno (Brno Sculptural) / OnStage / Chytré Brno (Brno Smart) / Kreativní Brno (Brno Creative) / Brnoinmotion / parkovanivbrne.cz (parking in Brno) / Dáme na vás (We'll do it your way.)
Instagram	BRNOMycity / Kreativnibrno (Brno Creative) / damenavas.cz (We'll do it your way.)
Youtube	BRNOMycity / Kultura Brno (Brno Culture) / Brno in Motion / Dáme na vás (We'll do it your way.)
X	BRNOMycity / dataBrno
LinkedIn	Magistrát města Brna (Brno – municipality)

Note: City-funded institutions use other brands. **Source:** Brno (2024b).

Perception of Brno city from the perspective of residents

Brno is a city that is considered a good place to live. This is evidenced by the data in Figure 2. Approximately 94% of residents are very and rather satisfied with the city as a place where they live. Only about 6% are rather or very dissatisfied. A similar survey with 999 respondents was also conducted in 2013 (Brno, 2013), in which 91% of respondents expressed their satisfaction with living in the city. Less than 1% were strongly dissatisfied. The rest of the respondents consider the city to be average. It is, therefore obvious, that citizens have a long-term positive attitude towards Brno.

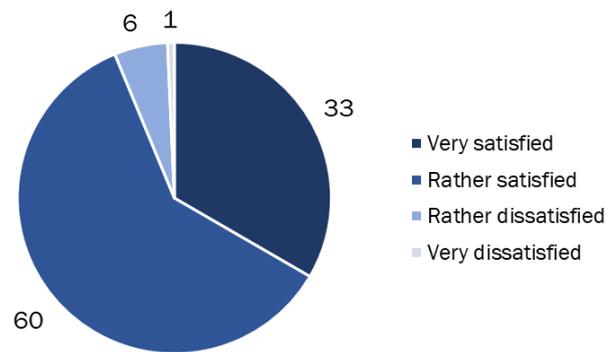


Fig. 2. Citizens' satisfaction with the city of Brno as a place where they live (N=1016)

Source: Brno (2022).

Our survey showed that the majority of respondents are actively interested in what is happening in the city (Table 5). People who work in the investment environment (TG5) are the most interested. On the contrary, students (TG2) are the least interested in events in the city.

Table 5. Share of respondents (in %) actively interested in life in the city of Brno (N=552).

	TG1	TG2	TG3	TG4	TG5	TG6	TG7
Share of actively interested	90	83	90	88	97	89	89

Source: authors' own questionnaire survey.

In the research, we also focused on the sources from which people get information about what is happening in the city. Figure 3 shows the five most common responses. Social networks are used sovereignly most often. Billboards and local notice boards and websites are also widely used. On the contrary, only a small proportion of residents mentioned city mobile applications, city information centres and regional television.

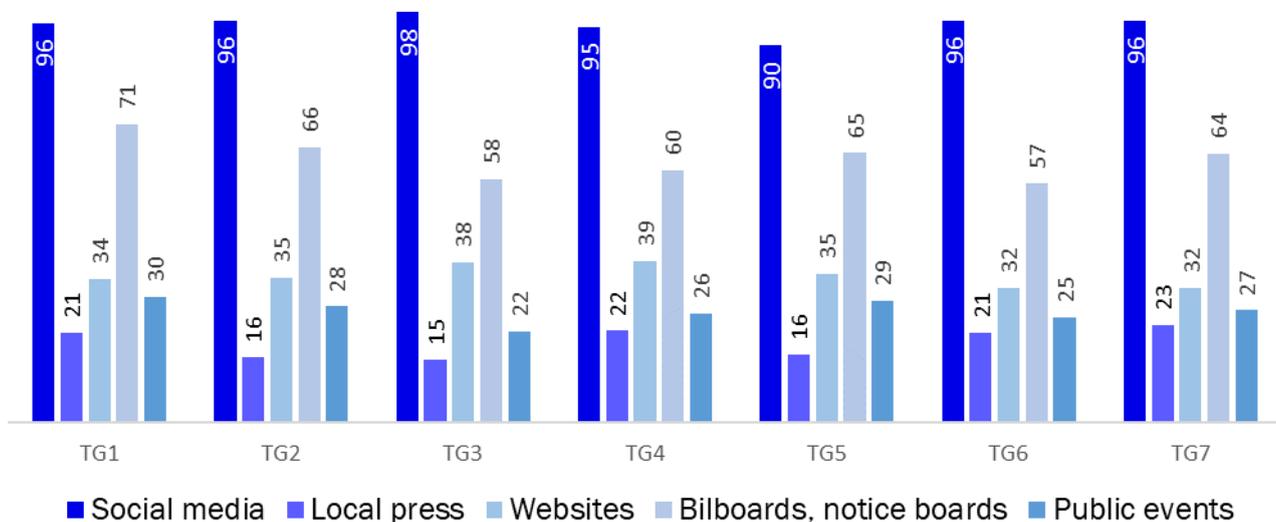


Fig. 3. Source of information about what's happening in Brno city (% of respondents, N = 552).

Source: authors' own questionnaire survey.

We also investigated whether residents are aware of any efforts by the city to strengthen its image and involve its citizens (Figure 4). Quite large differences were identified here. The city's efforts are most noticed by information technology workers (TG1). On the contrary, the city's activities are least visible to start-up workers (TG6) and people working in the investment environment (TG5). Respondents also evaluated the city's efforts in organising events, promoting and communicating with public (Figure 5). On a five-point scale (1=best, 5=worst), residents most often chose grades 3 and 4, which does not indicate a positive perception of the city's marketing activities. In this field, people are rather dissatisfied, and there is a huge space for improvement.

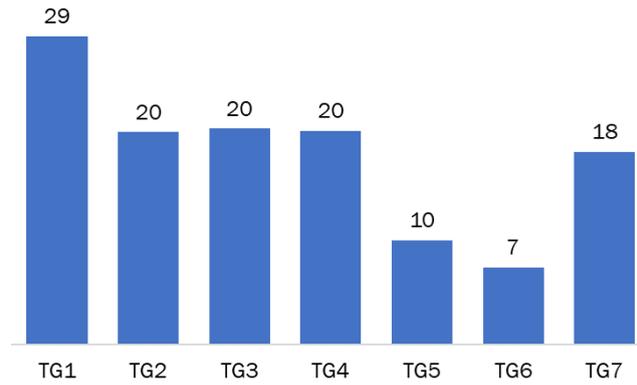


Fig. 4. Awareness of the city's effort (% of respondents, N = 552).
Source: authors' own questionnaire survey.

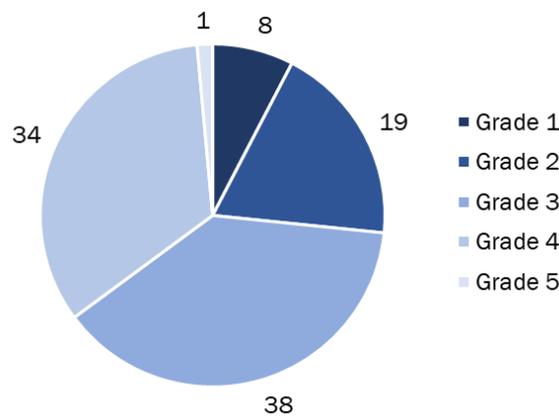


Fig. 5. Evaluation of the city's effort; grade 1 = the best, grade 5 = the worst (% of respondents, N = 552).
Source: authors' own questionnaire survey.

We compared the findings from our research with data from the external study (Figure 6) regarding satisfaction with the possibility of participating in city affairs. Citizens were most satisfied with being informed about what was happening in the city. On the contrary, they were less satisfied with the possibilities to participate in local planning and to meet city representatives.

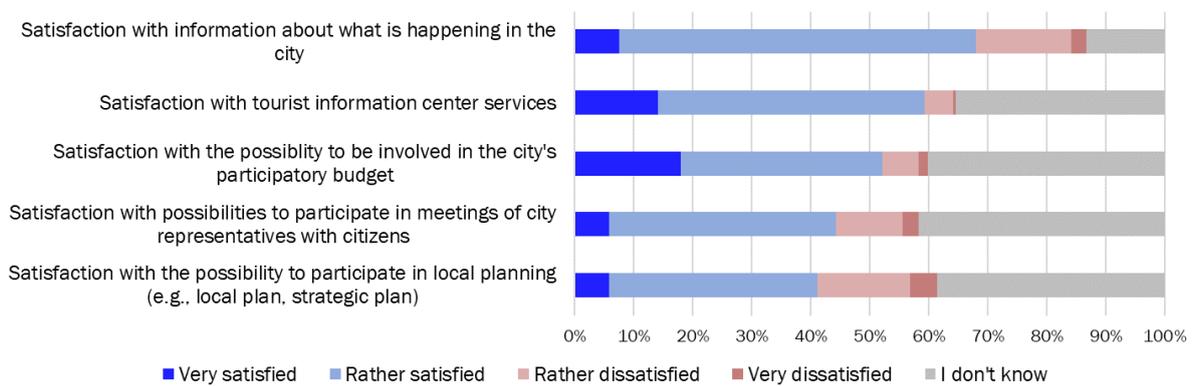


Fig. 6. Satisfaction of citizens with information and the possibility to participate (N=1016).
Source: Brno (2022).

In our survey, we asked residents to define the city through words or a slogan (Figure 7). Respondents most often stated that it is a student city and that "Brno is not a city, Brno is a lifestyle". They also often stated that this city is innovative, modern, and developing, and it has good gastronomy. Positive associations significantly prevailed, and only a few respondents reported negative perceptions.



Fig. 7. Brno city definition.

Source: authors' own questionnaire survey.

Our research also investigated what the respondents consider to be the main strengths of Brno (Figure 8). The size of the city was identified as a stronger aspect. The city is quite small, but everything people need is available there. The city is well-connected, distances are short, and many places are accessible on foot. People are also close to nature. Residents are satisfied with public transport, quality gastronomy and a rich social life. At the same time, it is a quiet city and not crowded with tourists. The city offers plenty of opportunities for study and work. Overall, respondents perceive the city as a good and popular place to live.



Fig. 8. Strengths of the Brno city.

Source: authors' own questionnaire survey.

Discussion and policy implications

City and regional marketing, traditionally focused on tourism, is now facing new challenges. Cities began to realise the need to identify their competitive advantages in order to succeed globally. It is necessary to compete for residents, potential inhabitants, skilled workforce, talents, businesses and investors. A city's marketing strategy should reflect its unique features and, at the same time, create an environment that attracts a wide range of stakeholders. Brno is perceived primarily as a city of research, innovation, and universities, and its marketing strategy should focus on this competitive advantage. The importance of implementing marketing strategies to maintain an image of innovation for some territories was also confirmed in research by other authors, such as Mashiah (2024), who focused attention on the branding of the most innovative nations, or Schade et al. (2018) who dealt with city brand benefits for attracting highly skilled workers in German cities. In Central Europe, the suitability of these strategies has been confirmed, especially in the example of Polish cities and regions (e.g. Glinka, 2017; Koszembar-Wiklik, 2019; Fazlagić et al., 2021). In general, we recommend cities to create a customised strategy based on their unique competitive advantages. Although other cities may serve as a source of inspiration, each city must tailor its approach according to its environment and qualities. This is an important task for the city of Brno as well.

Our research showed that residents are satisfied with the city of Brno as a place where they live. The respondents of our survey stated that they perceive Brno as an innovative, lively student city with a specific lifestyle. They also appreciated that it is a relatively quiet city that is not overcrowded with tourists. This supports our arguments that the city should focus its marketing strategy on building the image of the city as a city for innovation and knowledge. As we already mentioned in the Introduction, the second largest cities have a specific position and often build their competitive advantage in research, new technologies, and creativity. An example can be the second largest Estonian city Tartu, which presents itself with the slogan "The City of Good Thoughts" (<https://tartu.ee/en/news/city-good-thoughts-has-new-image>), or the second largest Slovak city of Košice, which strives to build the image of the city as a city favourable for ICT and the creative sector (Ondoš et al., 2024). As the strengths of the city of Brno, our respondents stated that the city is just the right size, it is easy to move around in, it is close to nature and quality gastronomy is developed there. Ostrožná (2014) comes to similar conclusions on the example of the city of Ostrava, and she draws attention to the fact that the city's residents perceive its image better than its visitors or people who have never visited the city. Zenker and Beckmann (2013) dealt with the different perceptions of the city brand by internal and external groups using the example of the city of Hamburg. They also drew attention to the different attitudes of both groups and the need for a specific approach to individual target groups.

A crucial part of the marketing approach is to involve locals and other target groups into the marketing activities of the city. This was, for example, confirmed on the example of Polish (Maziashvili and Kowalik, 2022) or Portuguese cities (Casais and Monteiro, 2019). However, our research showed that people in Brno are not sufficiently aware of the city's efforts to enhance its image and engagement with the residents. Residents are most satisfied with the information and the possibility to participate in the participatory budget. For this purpose, the city has created a special brand, a Facebook profile and a promotional campaign. We consider the presentation of the participatory budget to be a good example of how to involve the public. Our assertions are in line with other research that dealt with the involvement of citizens in the affairs of municipalities through participatory budgeting (Binda and Niedziela, 2021 or Bednarska-Olejniczak et al., 2021).

Today, social networks are an integral part of cities' marketing activities. Using the example of Brno, it was proven that people most often get information about events in the city from social networks. In addition to classic websites, the city of Brno uses five types of social media. The highest number of special brands is located on Facebook. Similar conclusions were reached by Svobodová (2017), who, using the example of Czech regional cities, confirmed that the social network Facebook is the most used platform for communication with target groups. On the other hand, city marketing efforts can be significantly enhanced by incorporating advanced marketing tools like data analytics and artificial intelligence (Ameen et al., 2022). Furthermore, it is essential to include local citizens as ambassadors (not only passive spectators), proactive representatives and those for whom the strategy is made. This kind of engagement motivates individuals to promote their community actively, therefore incorporating a personalised element into marketing endeavours (Eshuis et al., 2014; Romão et al., 2018).

The marketing strategy should be prepared and implemented in cooperation with important stakeholders. First of all, these are various local communities, such as professional and interest platforms and subjects of the innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystem. This is an integral part of the bottom-up approach from which the strategy should be based. These communities are essential for successfully targeting certain target groups. If the city's marketing is oriented towards the knowledge economy, it is important to cooperate with, for example, innovation centres and universities. Partnerships with universities also bring with them plenty of opportunities to organise various events. For example, scientists' nights and hackathons are popular. The necessity of marketing cooperation between universities and cities was also confirmed by Glinka (2017), who demonstrated it using the example of the Polish university cities of Poznań, Wrocław and Krakow. The same author mentioned cooperation between cities and sports clubs as an example of good practice. Rekettye and Pozsgai (2015), who focused on European Capitals of Culture cities, also appeal to the contributions of marketing cooperation between cities and universities. Stoklasa and Matušínková (2022) pointed to the connection of the city's identity with local businesses through research focused on consumers' perception of regional brands. Last but not least, cities should cooperate with experts on marketing. An example can be the establishment of the Marketing Council as an advisory body in Brno, as mentioned above. Some cities even set up their own marketing agencies. A typical example is Eindhoven in the Netherlands with its agency Eindhoven365 (EHV365, 2024). Cities can also cooperate with external companies and designers on partial branding activities. It is common for logo design and communication strategy development. In addition, we believe that cities in Central Europe should cooperate with each other and with each other through a shared online platform. Similar platforms exist in developed countries and serve as a hub for exchanging principles, experiences, inspirations, events, and insights related to territorial marketing.

Conclusion

The paper dealt with the application of city marketing in Brno and the perception of the city's marketing activities by its citizens. We applied both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The key is our own questionnaire survey, which included 552 residents who were divided into seven target groups. The definition of the target groups is based on the fact that Brno is known primarily as a city of research and innovation and is among the leaders in

Central Europe.

In the research, we sought an answer to the question (RQ1) whether the marketing of the city of Brno is sufficiently ensured in its strategic documents. It was confirmed that the city is aware of the importance of marketing, but marketing activities are not yet sufficiently developed. Brno does not have any explicitly defined marketing strategy or similar document, but the #brno2050 strategy partially tries to fulfil this role. The city lacks a comprehensive brand strategy as well. However, the communication strategy is being prepared.

The research also dealt with how people perceive the city of Brno in which they live (RQ2). The questionnaire survey showed that Brno is a city that is considered a good place to live. They also stated that Brno is not a city, but a lifestyle. This testifies to their strong relationship with the city and to the fact that they feel part of it. The majority of respondents are actively interested in what is happening in the city. We were also interested in how residents perceive the marketing activities of the city of Brno (RQ3). Unfortunately, the city's marketing efforts are not enough visible to residents. They also often feel that city representatives prefer tourists in their marketing activities.

The paper also presents the policy implications that emerged from our research. In particular, we recommend a tailored marketing strategy, a clear definition of target groups, greater public involvement, using advanced online tools (including artificial intelligence) and cooperation with stakeholders and marketing experts.

The research we conducted has its limitations, which should be taken into account. The conclusions of our research refer to a single area and, therefore, can be generalised and transferred to other conditions only to a limited extent. In considering the scope and limitations of territorial marketing strategies, it is essential to recognise the primary focus on local inhabitants as the target groups and the various subgroups within this population. Using an online questionnaire brings certain limitations in terms of its reliability and generalizability, mainly due to the nature of its online distribution. We are aware that the structure of the respondents does not correspond to the structure of a representative sample. However, we primarily targeted that part of the population that is close to innovation, research and knowledge.

The limits of our research also result in ideas for further research. First, it would be advisable to expand the research to other similar cities in Central and Eastern Europe and compare them. For example, the second largest cities in these countries or regional cities in the Czech Republic may be suitable. If further research is focused on the same city, i.e. Brno, a more representative sample of respondents should definitely be engaged. Even visitors to the city and people who have never visited the city can be involved in the research. By comparing the views of internal and external groups, we can obtain results that will better reflect the real image of the city. The evaluation of individual marketing tools, strategies and brands also represents a huge space for future research.

Acknowledgement

This paper was supported by the project „Do regional policy measures lead to a balanced development of the territory?“ (MUNI/A/1533/2023).

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