

Community Brand Concept

Methodology

1. Introduction

2. Creating your brand

2.1. Brand Research

- 2.1.1. Stakeholder research: Find out what the locals think about your community
- 2.1.2. Business community research: Find out what site selectors, companies and business people think about your community

2.2. Brand positioning – Market intelligence - What makes your community different from others?

- 2.2.1. Your advantages and assets
- 2.2.2. Your competitors
- 2.2.3. Market gaps
- 2.2.4. Your community value proposition

2.3. Brand Creative Development

- 2.3.1 Brand Storm: brand mission statement (promise), and brand messaging
- 2.3.2. Brand visual concepts and brand standards

3. Actions by the City to support the brand concept

Disclaimer: *This methodology is based on a real community brand concept of a vibrant European city and is presented to you only as a guidance how to structure your own community marketing strategy. Please do not copy and paste. Instead, use the offered marketing categories and statements only as examples for inspiring your own wording.*

1. Introduction

What your community brand means?

The idea of your community's brand is perhaps easier to understand if you replace it with the word "reputation".

What is your community's reputation at home and abroad? What are your community's unique characteristics? What makes your city memorable? What people think of you?

Everyone contributes to your city's brand.

You cannot just invent your city's reputation with marketing or communications. Your reputation is the result of real encounters, actions and experiences. Your reputation, your brand, is the real essence of your community - the impact the city has on people, and the impact that people have on the city and each other.

The brand concept for your city represent your shared vision for the future of the city. Your community is may be growing and changing. The brand helps you focus on goals you want to reach and challenges you want to overcome together. It helps you make wise decisions and strengthens all the positive characteristics that make your place unique.

The brand concept helps guide all kinds of activities taking place in & by the community.

The shared experiences that make up your brand materialize wherever and whenever one encounters the city: at events, while travelling, online, through speeches, in customer service situations, and in many other ways. The city brand is not just a logo or slogan for marketing materials. Your brand concept is a guiding hand for all kinds of communications activities and concrete actions. You want to highlight the city as a desirable location for both business & living and help create the buzz that can make your community a more interesting destination for visitors and events.

Your community's unique spirit of openness and participation.

Your community's brand is not an announcement. It's an invitation. All people who in one, or another way are related to your community are encouraged to contribute together, including citizens, companies, organisations and visitors.

Your local culture helps to make your community unique. It encourages everybody to create and enjoy ideas, initiatives, events and activities that make the best use of your urban environment and improve your quality of life.

This open and responsible participation would be perceived as the spirit of your community. It's what tourists and other travellers remember from their visits. You welcome everyone to join in and share their experiences of your community with the rest of the world.

2. Creating your brand

2.1. Brand Research

2.1.1. Stakeholder research: Find out what the locals think about your community

- ***What people think about your community Identifiers*** - the interesting characteristics for which your community is known. Ask your locals what is this which makes the unique, recognizable style and atmosphere in your community that they are proud of. Don't want to make things overly polished. You are authentic and the city has a certain edge.

What possible community identifiers could be:

Fascinating contrasts, such as pulse and peace, light summers and dark winters, the city and nature, science and arts, are just a small step apart. This helps energize the community to create unique urban culture and explains why your visual identity is raw and concentrates on real life experiences. This comes across in how your urban culture is developing, the transforming cityscape, events of all shapes and sizes, as well as in all communications.

Authentic community. Is your open and participatory culture keeps producing new and unexpected phenomena? This culture encompasses unique thinkers, designers, artists, events and happenings that are local but also may be internationally recognized for their contributions to arts, science, urban culture and business life. The secret to authentic community lies in its rich and varied neighborhood identities. You can discover all kinds of local happenings and citizen initiatives that represent authentic urban culture and benefit the whole community.

- ***What people think about your community requirements*** – the detailed basic necessities that must be considered and remembered by your target groups (for target groups profile refer to Marketing Strategy methodology Chapter 3)

Community Infrastructure:

Successful cities must offer fully functioning facilities, infrastructure and services, and the ability to be competitive in a rapidly changing and transforming society. By taking excellent care of quality of life and public services, your community should be able to foster the world's most alluring knowledge hubs, an attractive business scene, and advanced everyday life. Successful community is widely recognized for its urban infrastructure, public services and support for entrepreneurship.

Platform for people to take pioneering actions:

Popular city provides a platform for people to take pioneering actions. It is important your community invests in this development to stay ahead of competing cities.

Even the best facilities and services in the world will mean something to your target groups only if your communications make them aware of your strengths.

Your community strengths should be highlighted by your brand cornerstones:

Examples:

- *Modern, accessible, evenly dispersed community infrastructure*
- *Smart, functional, compact and safe community* where you design modern urban life together.
- *User-centric design thinking* - an ideal testing ground for scaling digital innovations.
- *Transforming community* - this is opening up incredible opportunities for new ideas and actions.
- *Fast-growing city* – ecosystem providing opportunities, people can be inspired to take pioneering actions

2.1.2. Business community research: Find out what site selectors, companies and business people think about your community

City's goal is to be a solution-oriented partner whose skills and services add significant value to the initiation of new ideas and experiments.

What is important for your business community:

- Infrastructure, local culture, safety
- Are you constantly developing a solution – oriented culture and a way of working, and most importantly, are you aimed to remove unnecessary obstacles that hinder people from making an impact and living a better everyday life?
- Are your city - management communications open, up-to-date, honest and interactive. Do you believe in one community for all? Do you continue to develop digital channels and services to make them more user-friendly?
- Does the City aim to develop the style and tone of communications to be more receiver-oriented, human and appealing?
- Are communications focused on user experience and solutions?

For reviewing live examples of research summary please refer to Example 1 and Example 2 below:

Example 1: Brand research summary

Example 2: Re-branding research summary

Example 1

Brand Research Summary

Our community is currently recognised for its facilities, not for content. Our sights and history awaken some interest but do not offer sufficient reasons to visit.

However, intellectual and social capital is advanced in our community. It's why we need to start highlighting our attractive urban culture, innovative knowledge hubs, and quality of life.

What currently differentiates our community?

- Our community as a way of life
- Communal urban culture
- Experiencing nature
- Transformation and the future

The brand research also highlighted traditionally important factors that do not strongly differentiate us against the competition. These include: the urban coastline, closeness to nature, seasonal cycles, cleanliness, safety, and our specific design. However, some of these factors are appropriate key messages for specific target group profiles.

The research studied businesses, citizens, and tourism and it was found that they are interrelated and should not be treated completely separately when it comes to marketing.

Rewarding, fulfilling, active life is challenging without economic well-being. Without active urban everyday life, interesting cultural content will not get created for locals and visitors.

The City wants to help people make an impact. Research found that bureaucracy is considered our greatest weakness. Securing employment and entrepreneurship require more flexibility. We need to build better services for international specialists to support and accelerate employment and integration. Key sectors, especially tourism, could employ more people than they currently do. Our community is not a typical mass tourism destination but offers excellent potential for developing conference tourism and more individual lifestyle tourism, as well as events.

The City organisation must transform to become an enabler, coaching partner and supporter. When our local people create interesting content during their work and leisure time, the city can become more appealing for everyone.

Our community is advanced, authentic and open to all community's exotic small-metropolis atmosphere is attractive to people and provides the potential to differentiate. Our place is felt to be an advanced yet rugged and authentic hometown. Safe, high-quality living environments are increasingly valued around the world. Everything works in our community.

However, the city also needs more colour, vibrant life, contrast and renewal. We must become more attractive to talent. Creative groups are interested in tolerance, a moderate cost of living, and flexible permit procedures.

Our communications content and visual image should be unified. We also need the courage to create urban space that is alive, diverse and open. We want to enable, encourage and energise people to create new content and activities, so we can all enjoy our urban space and fill it with life, character and attitude – and make an impact.

Example 2

Re-branding Research Summary

REPOSITION THE CITY'S BRAND

Our community enjoys a globally-loved brand; however this brand is narrowly defined and not necessarily conducive to recruiting new residents and businesses.

State, regional, and local leaders have made great strides over the past few years in developing and promoting the regional business climate, and that work needs to continue. Every subcommittee and working group identified the struggles of marketing their business to people who are not familiar with our city, and how persistent misperceptions were hampering business growth and recruiting.

Whether a business is looking to recruit and hire employees, connect with domestic and international markets, or do business with larger companies from outside the region, there are challenges in communicating the business and residential opportunities here.

From concerns about spousal employment, reluctance to move for a single offer without many competitor firms, or questions about affordable quality of life, persistent misperceptions of our town are hampering business growth and talent attraction.

While our community has made great strides in addressing flooding, crime and education, these issues are not solved – but they are being tackled proactively.

Our city has seen recent major investments in flood protection, crime prevention and education, and is showing the world that it is a city willing to confront its challenges. If our brand is not broadened and corrected, it will remain a constraint to future business development and residential growth.

2.2. Brand positioning – Market intelligence - What makes your community different from others?

2.2.1. Your advantages and assets

Members of your community have the passion to solve meaningful problems and create the world's most advanced everyday life. But how will this make your city stand out in the future?

You may have a unique combination at the core of your brand:

1. Well educated hardworking people
2. Motivated, accessible leadership
3. Rich and unique local culture
4. Modern technical and social infrastructure, good connectivity to other centers for economic growth
5. Low costs for doing business and affordable living costs

This combination, driven by values-based decision-making, gives your community the unique opportunity to stand out among competing cities.

A big advantage for any community is urban activism. People are working together to grow a communal well-being. Is this desire for a good and meaningful life intrinsic value for your society?

2.2.2. Your competitors and you

You define your competitors based on your vision for development. Who you want to be in 20 - 30 years? What kind of industries your community wants to attract in long term? What kind of workforce development you want to invest in? What kind of tourist destination you want to be known of? What kind of talent you want to attract? What makes you different from other cities? What makes you memorable? What's new? Why is your future so exciting, so alluring?

2.2.3. Market gaps

Based on your vision for development, targeted market segments and your competitors' profile, you analyze the supply and demand and find out where are the gaps on these markets which your community can fill up.

2.2.4. Your community value proposition

Based on the market gaps you've discovered you develop your unique value proposition – and that is the ground for your community brand.

In general, value proposition meaning, no matter it concerns business or community, is a promise of value to be delivered, communicated, and acknowledged. It is also a belief from the customer about how value will be delivered, experienced and acquired.

Value proposition is still not your brand. However, your brand is highly synthesized form of your value proposition.

How a community value proposition may look like – please refer to the Examples below:

Examples of community value propositions

Helsinki, Finland

- Most attractive city for people and companies that want to work towards a better world
- Everyday life increasingly smooth, comfortable and fun.
- Shared intellectual and social capital: people, well-being, expertise, equality, accessibility, technology, connectivity
- Unforgettable fusion of Nordic nature and urban culture

People with impact, Encounters with impact, Actions with impact!

Greater Sacramento Region, US:

Talent, Affordability, Connectivity!

- ✚ Shared ecosystem of talent
- ✚ 2 top UC schools
- ✚ Affordable real estate,
- ✚ Distribution & talent solutions
- ✚ Connected to the Bay Area innovation hub

California, US:

- ✓ California has 51 Fortune 500 HQs.
- ✓ California companies are 2156% more profitable than Texas companies
- ✓ 38% more profitable than New York companies.
- ✓ This profit amount includes California state taxes and regulations."

Frankfurt, Germany:

- A famous financial hub
- Easy to reach and very well connected
- Economic and geographical center of FrankfurtRainMain Region
- Dynamics, stability, crisis resistance
- Quick and direct market access is guaranteed by local institutions and educational facilities."
- Great diversity of resident companies in target industries
 - creative industries
 - IT and telecommunications
 - biotechnology & life science
 - logistics,

Wallonia, Belgium:

"Wallonia is a successful and welcoming region which has taken its future firmly in hand and opens its arms wide to you"

- An accessible region in the heart of Europe
- 500 million consumers on your doorstep
- "European creative district" 2013
- Skilled workforces available
- Supporting competitiveness
- One of the best healthcare systems in Europe

Life is good in Wallonia!

2.3. Brand Creative Development

2.3.1 Brand Brain- Storming: defining visual concepts and messaging

As it was already said, your community's brand is your community's reputation. It is a promise which is to be fulfilled everywhere in your city: in public transport, at customer service desks, in schools, travel blogs, city construction site bulletins, outdoor concerts, and more.

Any and all of you can contribute to your community's brand creation. Different stakeholders experience and specifics should be taken under consideration - e.g. the urban environment (all of the city spaces), digital channels, social media, customer service facilities and encounters, city communications and marketing channels, as well as at events and happenings.

Your brand is expected to have its own features:

Personality, reflecting community's attitude, style and behaviour:

- Active and inspiring
- Dedicated to its values
- Open-minded
- Proud of its authenticity
- Diverse

Tone of voice

You want to communicate your community's closeness to people, openness, and wholesome self-confidence.

Visual identity

Through visual communication you convey the uniqueness and authenticity of your community. In addition to presenting your best-known landmarks, the purpose of visuals is to summarize the unique, genuine and human atmosphere of your place that stands out against other cities around the world. You may use imagery that represents people and the emotion that people can feel and experience in your community. We may show genuine, everyday images of your place, of your locals living good and meaningful lives, doing things together, and the joyful and fun details.

2.3.2. Brand standards

Logo

Logo development and design is possibly one of the most important elements in marketing and branding. If a community does not commit to a set of brand standards and re-designs or re-sizes their logo constantly the message sent is one of disorganisation and lack of commitment. The branding standards used in logo development should include size, color and placement. All of which should be consistent regardless of the logo use. For example, the logo used for letterheads should be identical to the logo used on packaging, signage, and hangtags and so on.



Fonts

Font standards are also essential when working to build brand differential. Mixing fonts and experimenting with lettering is not considered strong practice in most marketing circles. When deciding on their brand standards communities should commit to using only one or two fonts and should continue with these choices.



Graphic design

The points mentioned above are also important when considering graphic design. If a community decides to use 'real-life' photography in their marketing material then they should be consistent with this design choice and refrain from introducing any other graphic format such as illustrations or animation. These brand standards should also continue throughout all of the community's current positions including websites, advertising and brochures or catalogues.



3. Actions to support brand concept

When city is undergoing major transformation, and this transformation needs to be decisively led in the right direction within the brand concept created by all stakeholders, concrete actions to implement the common vision for the future may include:

- Unification of marketing communications content and visuals of all community projects under the umbrella of the brand concept (refer to Example [“Helsinki Brand Camp”](#))
- Ongoing & improved coordination between city departments responsible for business and public services which support the brand (the community promise) on one hand and stakeholders on the other hand
- Ongoing & improved coordination between city departments responsible for city promotion as touristic destination on one hand and touristic businesses on the other hand
- Consistent ongoing international marketing;
- Developing and offering spaces and locations for events and happenings;
- Improving digital services

Note: Some of the actions to support brand concept are also included in the Branding Campaign Action Plan. However, while the branding campaign is focused on specific time window and is meant to promote the brand to internal and external audiences, the actions which are subject of this chapter are long – term actions taken from all community stakeholders in the years to come. These actions aim to encourage stakeholders to take advantage of the strength of the community reputation and to brand its own projects in accordance with the community brand concept. The instrument used by City Counsel of Helsinki – Helsinki Brand Camp – is a very good practice in this regard.

THE TEN THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT BRANDING

Courtesy by Roger Brooks International

1 . Branding is the art of setting yourself apart from everyone else . Being a place that has “something for everyone” can be anywhere and says nothing about your community .

2 . A brand is a perception – what people think of the city when they hear its name mentioned . It’s also a promise that the city will deliver on the perception (good or bad) .

3 . Logos and slogans are not brands . They are just marketing messages and graphic images used to support and reinforce your ownership position . Brands are about owning your niche in the marketplace . While logos are included as part of this branding effort, they should not be the focus . After all, have you ever gone anywhere because they had a great logo? Or avoided a city because you didn’t care for their logo? While logos and marketing tag lines get 98% of the political attention locally, they only make up two percent of a brand .

4 . Never use focus groups for brand development unless you want a watered down generic brand that can fit just about anyone, anywhere . City’s Brand Development Team and subsequent Brand Leadership Team are not focus groups, but a group of local businesses and organizational representatives whose primary purpose was to develop this plan that will reinforce and support the perception and promise being developed and marketed both in and outside the city .

5 . A great brand evokes emotion . It’s a feeling someone has about you . This is why you must focus on activities more than physical attributes such as historic buildings, parks, and other public facilities

6 . All successful brands are built on product, not marketing . You can develop new advertising, graphics, websites, mobile apps, signs, and posters, but if the product doesn’t change or improve, what have you accomplished? Any increase in sales will not be sustainable . At the end of the day the community will be defined by its product and activities, not marketing .

7 . You never “roll out” a brand . It’s earned – good or bad . The good news for well established community is that it already has a strong foundation on which it can build its brand, meaning the downtown revitalization effort and event-based activities, and thus the new marketing efforts can begin almost immediately .

8 . You cannot do branding by public consent . Yes, this effort include public outreach, asking area residents to weigh in on the brand direction . But in the end, the idea found to be most feasible is the brand direction being used and detailed in this plan to push the agenda forward . This has been a grassroots effort . The City facilitated the process, but the private sector and business community played a vital role in the brand development .

9 . You build the brand on feasibility, not just local sentiment . Typically, the most feasible brand direction is built on a foundation already here . In case of community with rich historical legacy offering unbridled fun that can still be experienced today may be it is time to take it all to the next level .

10 . Brands are built on public relations – advertising is used to maintain your ownership position . After all, brands are about ownership . Region Champagne in France owns the Champagne brand, the city of Jerez de la Frontera in Andalusia, Spain owns the Sherry brand, Region Napa Valley owns the wine brand; Nashville owns the country music brand; Lancaster, Pennsylvania owns the Amish brand; Orlando and Anaheim own the kids and family brand; and Las Vegas owns the “adult playground” brand . A brand is also a feeling consumers have of you – and feelings are communicated by word of mouth, press coverage, articles, and, these days, social media – publicity .