

Book Review

Review of a Monograph by Ewa Glińska

City Branding: Concepts, Conditions, Models

(Warszawa, Wolters Kluwer 2016)

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**Ewa Glińska, *Budowanie marki miasta: koncepcje, warunki, modele*
Wolters Kluwer 2016, 352 pp.**

What is specific to Ewa Glińska research work is the combination of research with her role of an advisor to local authorities. Observations from working with the local self-government first inspired her to write an interdisciplinary PhD thesis that brings together elements of urban sociology and territorial marketing and now have led to an interesting habilitation monograph. Ewa Glińska developed her interest in place marketing based on studies of Polish cities but also by analysing its trends at a global level. She became particularly interested in a research trend focusing on building brands for particular places, which is critical for the specificity of small and medium-sized cities. A passage from city marketing to city branding clearly favours the integration of diverse management efforts within a given territory.

Ewa Glińska noticed a cognitive gap in management sciences, i.e. the absence of a city branding model for small and medium-sized urban centres. Their specificity necessitates separate theoretical foundations for city branding policy as well

as a deepened reflection on the distinctive identity determinants for brands of such towns and cities. A number of research questions arise here creating a framework for a broader reflection.

In her monograph titled *Budowanie marki miasta. Koncepcje, warunki, modele*, [City Branding. Concepts, Conditions, Models] published in 2016 by the Wolters Kluwer publishing house, Ewa Glińska investigates the possibilities of adapting the concept of city branding to fit with management processes in territorial self-government units. The author focuses on the idea of brand identity for small and medium-sized cities; the subject which has never been considered at a theoretical or empirical level in Poland. Earlier studies on place branding centred usually around big cities, regions or countries. The author rightfully draws our attention to the relevance of city branding policy for small and medium-sized cities in the context of building their more extensive development strategies. Her considerations are based on the analysis of a broad spectrum of foreign and Polish literature, her own empirical studies and experiences from acting in the capacity of an advisor to different territorial self-government units.

No doubt, Ewa Glińska identified a gap in theories offered by management sciences, i.e., the absence of a city branding model that would take into account the specificities of small and medium-sized cities and fit their identity development. To close this gap, more comprehensive quantitative studies of small and medium-sized cities were necessary. Besides, there are no research tools that would be validated and properly adapted to assess the outcomes of territorial self-government activities in the field of brand management policy. Ewa Glińska's findings have helped in formulating recommendations for territorial self-government units concerning city branding models. Surely, the approach proposed by the author allows us to avoid pitfalls resulting from an uncritical choice of solutions that have been developed for commercial operators, in small and medium-sized cities.

The main goal of Ewa Glińska is to draft theoretical foundations for city branding policy highlighting its identity elements with regard to the segment of small and medium-sized cities. Their specificity requires taking account of the complexity of the urban product and the viewpoint of an extended network of local stakeholders. Ewa Glińska examined particular city branding strategies against the size of cities, coherence of brand strategy in relation to brand identity distinguishing factors, selectivity in the approach to highlighting city brand distinctive elements in relation with the environment, and the similarity of characteristics of city brand personalities in the context of commercial brand personality models.

The author conducted her studies based on an in-depth analysis of literature on brand management and quantitative and qualitative empirical studies. That allowed her to assess the evolution of the concept of using a brand in management sciences and present the specificity of branding in relation to territorial self-government units, paying particular attention to city branding. Glińska examined

the dynamics of brand value creation based on interactions between diverse stakeholder groups.

The author demonstrated that a place brand is much more complex than a commercial brand mainly due to the complexity of city as a product. In her monograph she also highlighted economic, social, and political context of place branding. Product complexity translates into the complexity of city branding. The identity of a city brand emerges in a dialogue with an extended group of stakeholders (“multi-dialogue”).

In her monograph, Ewa Glińska carries out a critical analysis of “place branding” models, which mostly target “tourist destinations”. The analysis of the existing models helped her in developing her assumptions that are useful in the analysis of small and medium-sized cities. The review of place *branding* models and their critical analysis from the point of view of their usefulness in the creation of brands for small and medium cities are important components of the monograph. Such an analysis was missing in the Polish literature on the subject.

The author highlighted the role of different stakeholder groups and their interactions in place branding. Focusing on the interactive dimension of the development of regional brands is an important conclusion in the context of discussions on co-decision and co-creation of such brands by different stakeholder groups. The need to bring together functional and representation attributes in city branding calls for synergies of different local policies in accomplishing common goals connected with a city brand.

The key strength of the publication lies in the empirical studies that covered self-governments of small and medium-sized cities in Poland divided into three groups depending on the advancement in introducing brand strategies into city management practices. Glińska distinguished cities which have integrated aspects of branding into city management practice to a low, medium or high degree. In her approach, she used Kavaratzis’s city branding model and its organisational and promotional components. To divide cities into three groups the LCA – Latent Class Analysis was used. In the next stage of the study, she profiled these groups. Glińska analysed organisational and promotional distinguishing factors for each class, paying attention to leaders of marketing activities (48 cities). These leading cities have established specialised departments within their administrative structures that deal with promotion; they also engage various stakeholder groups in their promotion and use various tools of marketing communication. Self-governments in this group spend relatively more on promotion activities and employ specialists to handle them. The study included also measuring the perception of selected attributes of cities by target groups, such as residents, tourists, and entrepreneurs. Ewa Glińska conducted qualitative studies in the form of focus group interviews with the involvement of local stakeholders to identify areas, which could provide foundations for building city identity within city branding. She constructed a wide

set of 37 variables that may be decisive for arriving at a desired image of the city and have become components of brand identity. The author distinguished seven key dimensions that altogether make up the image of a city and she asked respondents to evaluate them on a seven-point scale. In her studies, she demonstrated that self-governments in small and medium-sized cities much more frequently highlight functional aspects of their image. She also showed that self-governments who declared having a clear brand idea described in a strategic document much more frequently made references to non-functional identity attributes, such as the overall atmosphere of the city, its history and culture. Moreover, in a survey conducted among promotion managers in city offices she tested their ideas about the identity of the city they managed (personification of specific characteristics of city identity).

Ewa Glińska's monograph makes a significant contribution to the development of management sciences with respect to place marketing and managing small and medium-sized cities. At a theoretical level, the author carried out a comprehensive analysis of branding small and medium-sized urban centres paying attention to the development of place identities. Compared to other publications on place marketing, the author has strongly emphasised participatory approach to city branding. This approach highlights the role of an active social dialogue with local stakeholders in place branding and in identity building.

At a theoretical level, the author divided small and medium-sized cities into segments according to their advancement in the implementation of brand strategy. She also distinguished key city identity and brand personality distinguishing factors. This area may become an exciting subject for her further studies. Research methods used in this case may provide the basis for further comparative empirical studies conducted on bigger groups of small and medium-sized cities.

In practical terms, the monograph can be used for management purposes by self-governments in small and medium-sized cities as well as in consulting services outsourced by these cities in connection with city branding. The tool needs to be improved to boost its operational capacity and to adjust it to the specificity of small and medium-sized cities. Ewa Glińska is right when she stresses that the future of research on city brands becomes increasingly linked with the need to search for new attributes decisive for the unique comparative advantage more frequently founded on non-functional attributes of individual urban centres. When it comes to functional attributes, cities are usually becoming more alike.

Summing up, when assessing this monograph, we need to highlight its comprehensiveness that stems from the wide use of international literature on place marketing and brand management. Its unquestionable advantage also consists in focusing on the specificity of branding small and medium-sized cities, which have not been separately examined in Poland or covered by empirical studies. Glińska's

innovative input in the development of management sciences can also be confirmed by the results of empirical studies profiled for small and medium-sized cities.

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