Chapter XII
Developing Patterns for Thinking About City Marketing Initiatives

José-Rodrigo Córdoba
University of Hull, UK

Nicolas Jullien
Môle Armorcain de la Recherche sur la Société de l’Information et l’Usages d’Internet, France

Jocelyne Trémenbert
Môle Armorcain de la Recherche sur la Société de l’Information et l’Usages d’Internet, France

ABSTRACT

This chapter defines three different patterns to understand how city marketing initiatives are designed and implementing, and how information and communication technologies (ICTs) can support the implementation of such patterns. The word pattern is used to characterize particular ways of thinking which embed values and beliefs about city marketing. The first pattern (idealist) assumes that a visionary type of image of cities can be developed to attract people to cities. The second pattern (strategic) emphasizes dialogue and participation in shaping up marketing initiatives by considering the underlying beliefs and values of people and how these can be “branded”. The third pattern (power-based) aims to be inclusive of intended and unintended effects of marketing so as to develop initiatives for the people and by the people. In the chapter, the role(s) of ICTs are discussed. Experience of using these patterns to understand the situation of two cities (Hull, UK, and Brest, France) leads us to suggest the intertwining of these patterns, and hence the importance of people’s engagement to facilitate better use of ICTs in the context of city marketing initiatives.

Copyright © 2009, IGI Global, distributing in print or electronic forms without written permission of IGI Global is prohibited.
INTRODUCTION

Current thinking in city marketing emphasizes the renewal of cities through imaging, flagship projects and improvement of quality of life. Cities are important part of societies and 'hubs' to sustain economic and cultural growth as suggested by those advocating a network paradigm for society. Despite efforts to increase cities attractiveness using marketing, we still see often how cities continue marginalizing certain groups at the expense of others by using information technologies in a very uni-directional ways (Criado & Ramilo, 2003). This, together with marketing strategies guided by only economically driven goals make little or no impact in important citizens groups. Take for example the city of Hull in the UK, a medium size city with approximately 300,000 inhabitants and with one of the largest council estates in Europe. Economic development after World War II has seen a mixture of results. Generally speaking, the city is still regarded as a pocket of social deprivation, low educational levels and little in terms of economic opportunities despite being declared as a ‘pioneering city’ by council officials. The city has offered a number of opportunities for immigrants and asylum seekers, and one can say the city can still get by. What is interested is whilst those in charge of city development aim to create a city image through regeneration of the city centre, the provision of better transport, shopping and leisure facilities, the motivations for people to live and stay in the city are still unknown. These strategies are very similar to those adopted by the city of Brest (Le Cam, Ruellan, & Cabedoche, 2006). Both cities share a history of deprivation, demographic decline in surrounding rural areas and the loss of the fishing industry (Clout, 2006). Both cities thrive to become more attractive places for people to live.

These and other examples prompt us to ask a number of questions: But what are the main drivers about city marketing for policy makers and city officials? How can we better understand the reactions of those groups of people who will get affected by city marketing initiatives? What can be improved to guide use of information technologies in city marketing? From a systemic and socio-technical perspective, this chapter aims to provide some answers to these questions. It will do so by proposing a number of ‘thinking patterns’ that provide some insights to understand city marketing in the context of a worldwide network society paradigm which is affecting cities (Castells, 1991).

The word ‘pattern’ refers to a set of ideas, assumptions, beliefs and activities regarding the use of information technologies. These are shared across different groups and organizations, and inform information systems development (Hirschheim & Klein, 1989; Hirschheim, Klein, & Newman, 1991; Mingers & Willecocks, 2004). Through the definition of these patterns, the chapter will also refer to the role(s) of information technologies in improving the marketing of cities.

Our chapter aims to respond to what we see as a lack of theoretical elements to describe city marketing worldwide and in particular the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). In this regard, the work of Kavaratzis (2005), seems to be an exception in proposing a conceptual framework which could be used by those responsible for ICTs for cities. The lack of theory is compounded by what we see as an uncritical acceptance of the rise of the ‘entrepreneurial city’ (Hall & Hubbard, 1998) which aims to rescue the economy and life in modern cities through marketing or branding (Paddison, 1993). Taking city marketing as a current point of analysis, we develop a number of ways of thinking about it on the basis that marketing is about “trying to have what the consumer wants” (Holcomb, 1994).

To begin our discussion, we continue where we left with a story about the city of Hull in the UK.