Chapter XVI
Using Information Communication Technology to Decentralize City Marketing: Challenges and Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

This chapter introduces the reader to the idea of city marketing. This idea has developed over time, globally, as cities continue to grow rapidly. The chapter assesses how city marketing as a concept and a practice has generally developed with particular reference to Botswana, Southern Africa. Using evidence from documented material this chapter critically reviews city marketing as perceived and applied by planners and policy makers. The chapter looks at how Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) can be used to market cities such as Gaborone, the capital city of Botswana. Literature and experiences from other parts of the world are used to underscore city growth as a serious development issue. City dwellers are identified as key stakeholders in city marketing because they have a more permanent association with the city in contrast to those who come into the city to visit or for business, tourism, and other purposes.

INTRODUCTION

By focusing on the locals therefore, the chapter upholds the need to decentralize city planning and management arguing that participation by locals is central to city marketing processes and that effective ICT use could facilitate this. Views around what could contribute to development of sustainable cities in the context of the developing world using Botswana as a point of reference are advanced. Ideas that this chapter generates are expected to serve as useful springboards for research and analyses of the practice of city marketing in Africa and other parts of the developing
world. The chapter serves as a contribution to the promotion of the concept of city marketing as it continues to gain currency with special interest in the role of ICT in urban development.

The chapter observes that the idea and practice of city marketing does not seem to be fully developed in the context of the developing world. Yet as a practice it seems to hold great potential for positive influences on the development of cities and their sustainability, that is, if it is applied early enough in the lives of cities. Exploitation of this potential seems to be particularly possible in these regions of the world where most of the current cities seem to be relatively new cities. In this context cities which are relatively young such as Gaborone might not need to reinvent the wheel.

As cities grow at an alarmingly high rate they make city growth a daunting development phenomenon. In the information era however, growing cities have a strong fall back in the form of ICTs to face the challenges of city growth which involves a need for communication about the processes and their impacts on people. The thesis of this chapter is that there is limited awareness about the importance of city marketing for systematic city growth in this context. It is argued that this lack of awareness has significantly influenced the ways in which cities are viewed, planned and utilized. This also seems to have impacted the extent to which participation in city development and the way the benefits of city development processes are distributed among the members of society with a special concern about the locals. This chapter therefore highlights the dynamics of city growth in the context of national development and the connections between that and the position and role of cities in the global system. It serves to fill the gaps in information about the magnitude of urban growth as both a desirable development and at the same time a frightening prospect if not well integrated into the broader development landscape. The chapter points to the existing paucity of data about trends of city growth due to the erratic attention given to this and challenges planners and researchers to intensify efforts in this area. Without such data which the chapter suggests could be effectively generated through effective application of ICTs in city planning and city marketing, the rapidly growing cities will not achieve any significant levels of sustainability. Posing a set of questions about sustainability of the new cities such as Gaborone, the chapter characterizes a sustainable city as one that is inclusive in its planning, marketing and management processes. Such a city builds its growth on the sound principles of decentralized decision making and democratic governance. It uses Information Communication Technologies to be proactive and also responsive to some of the biggest challenges of this era which are poverty, diseases, unbridled depletion of the environment, inequity in the sharing of the benefits of development, globalization and of course the biggest ever challenge to face humanity which is climate change (C 40 Climate Summit, New York, 2007)

This chapter briefly introduces the idea of city marketing against the background of the unprecedented growth of cities. The chapter outlines the challenges that come with this growth particularly in the context of the developing world. Statistical evidence which is described as frightening is used to demonstrate the magnitude of this problem and a pertinent question is asked about awareness, preparedness and concern by most countries in this context about this phenomenon. Focusing on city development in Africa, a brief contrast is made between old and new cities pointing to the fact that very much against expectations, growth in the new cities is not accompanied by any significant rates of economic growth and increases in the quality of life. Evidence for this is the failure by these cities to meet the four principles of livability, good governance, bankability, and competitiveness in the global systems. Instead, new cities are showing signs of lack in sustainability. Using Gaborone City as a unit of analysis the chapter points to implications of uncontrolled city growth,