

# ***Brand, Branding and Strategic Development. Amsterdam, Model for Bucharest***

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**Abstract:** *The new approach of urban marketing in Amsterdam is a possible point of reference in the attempt of throughoutly understanding the efficiency and effectiveness of marketing as part of urban marketing and in creating a bridge between the theory and the concrete application of this type of marketing. This study presents, from a synthetic – descriptive perspective, the key elements of the urban marketing campaign applied in the Dutch capital and assesses the vectors that generated its success. It assesses the quantitative and qualitative effects that had as main consequences the increase of the familiarity and of the preferences of the target – groups( tourists, investors and residents) for Amsterdam, the increase of the number of visitors and of investments as well as the increase of the position Amsterdam ranks in the relevant international classification by comparison with its most important competitors. In the second part of the study, the strategy applied in the Dutch capital has served as point of reference for the identification of possible options for the marketing strategy in Bucharest that leads to the strategic development of Romania’s capital.*

**Keywords:** *brand, city brand, brand strategies, tourism, advertising campaigns, strategic development*

## **1. Preliminary aspects regarding the brand and branding**

Few words about brand and branding...

„A brand incorporates an entire set of physical and socio-psychological attributions and faiths associated with a product” (Simoes&Dibb, 2001). It means more than the modulation of its precision: it means the creation of associations. „A brand is a product or a service realized distinctively by positioning it from the competition, its personality containing a unique combination of functional characteristics and symbolic values” (Hankinson & Cowking, 1993). So, the branding is a deliberate process of selection and corroboration of these qualities, because they can provide an added value to the basic product or service.

„A successful brand represents a product, a service, a person or a place traceable in a way in which the buyer or user finds relevant through the unique added value which best fits with his needs. Moreover, its success results from its capacity to sustain the added value against the competition” (Chernatony & Dall’Olmo, 1998).

De Chernatony and Dall'Olmo (1998) identify twelve perspectives upon the brand definition from the profile literature. After analyzing these opinions, they suggest that „the brand is a multidimensional construction, in which the managers amplify the products with additional values, facilitating the process through which the consumers recognize and appreciate these values”. From the consumer's point of view, the central part of the brand is represented by its image, which contains the perceptions upon its quality and values, and the associations and feelings for it. So, the identity of the brand, its position and image are seriously interconnected.

Phillip Kotler (1991) defines the brand as „a name, a term, a sign, a symbol or design, or a combination of these, which has the purpose to nominate the goods and services of a seller or group of sellers and to differences them from the competition”.

Another vision upon the brand is the one of Schmitt (1999) which states that „brand is an affluent source of sensitive, affective and cognitive associations which result in memorable experiences regarded to that”. This is one of the premises which are the base for cities' „search”; all, either megalopolis or simple urban settlements, desire to become the source of positive associations in the mind of individuals, to generate an added value symbolically and economically, and the most indicated tool for reaching this purpose is the city branding.

Helbrecht (1994) discusses about the relevance of the urban marketing's philosophy and the methods used by the local administration of the cities, for development: „urban marketing permits the reach of a new quality level in the local development policy from the coverage, creativity and flexibility point of view. New resources, as ideas, capital and knowledge on local plan are mobilized, the urban marketing causing a strategically approach of the public planification, in collaboration with the private sector”.

Florian (2002) fills the above statements, arguing that the urban centers „seem capable just to develop themselves according with a uniform and traditional way of thinking of the global market”. He adds that the cities are gradually becoming „impersonal, anonymous and, finally, uninhabitable (...) The cities need soul!” So, the cities need to develop and promote original, inimitable personalities and to provide that „unique experience” that beats this „superficial urban monoculture” which covers the world.

The above mentioned induce the conclusive question: can the urban brand operate as an umbrella, covering a multitude of stakeholders and audiences? Can the urban branding create in the mind of all the people that meet the city, the feeling that they are facing an entity with whom they can settle a relation? The application of the corporative branding to the places, requires the treatment of their brand as an integrator entity of the city's products, and, of course, its association with „stories” about the place; they have a special status, because their effect will not be felt by their simple joining with the place, but through their organic incorporation in the brand's construction.

## **2. Amsterdam – brand, branding and strategic development**

### *2.1 Motivations of marketing*



Amsterdam is a city with a long tradition and powerful reputation regarding culture and innovation. Nevertheless, in the last period, its position of major national and international cultural center was jeopardized by the growth of the competition from the cities inside and outside the Netherlands. The researches made by the local organizations proved that its position in different international charts wasted, with obvious deficiencies at „host city for conferences” and „business location” (City of Amsterdam, 2004, p. 11).

Seen as a touring destination, before, Amsterdam was threatened by some European cities. The touring image of the city was based on two major themes (Ashworth& Tunbridge, 1990, p. 132):

- The urban image from the starting modern period, which created an urban image portrayed by the painter Vermeer, formed by almost compact buildings, separated by narrow channels, showing the wealth of „Golden Age” of the commercial city;
- The actual popular image born at the end of the `60, based on a culture of liberalism and indulgence – a radical hippie-Mecca.

The problem of this image was actually its success and international recognition, so at the end of the `70s Amsterdam could just be associated with the lack of prejudices, alcohol consumption and illegal substances.

Even if Amsterdam backslide more places in the chart, it still is an active player on the international touring and marketing market. So, European Cities Monitor placed in 2005, the capital of Holland on the „6th place favorable to businesses, but on the 18th on the list of most effective cities in the actions of own improvement” (www.citymayors.com).

The exacerbated competition, commits the cities to emphasize on the preeminence of the strengths. So, Amsterdam disputes the national supremacy with Hague, the political center de facto, with Rotterdam, which represents a real commercial challenge and even with smaller cities which hold historic, cultural or educational distinctive images. „The general faith is that a more efficient use of the marketing will determine the growth of the visitors’ number and the use of the products and services of Amsterdam. Pointing out on the international public and maintaining or even modifying, in a positive way, the place occupied in different charts, are the main objectives (City of Amsterdam, 2004, p.12).

In this context, the local actors proposed 2 objectives:

- Improvement of Amsterdam's position in these charts represents a clear example of the role which urban marketing has, being an answer to the interurban competition;
- Transforming the international image of the metropolis<sup>1</sup>, to attract a large variety of tourists.

To achieve these objectives, the city called on the urban marketing, which was seen as a powerful instrument in the hands of the urban management which, used accordingly, structured and systematic, can facilitate the city's development. The implementation of urban marketing as a philosophy and management of places is confirmed by the statement of a member of the local council: „the urban marketing means to love your city and to motivate your affection in front of the public” (Kavaratzis& Ashworth, 2005, p. 506). Seen from this perspective, the urban marketing is not used as a crisis solution which offers immediate answers to urgent issues, but as a proactive strategy, a warning mechanism for issues, which requires consistency and orientation on long term, to be effective.

## ***2.2 Researches undertaken and ways of vision development***

By studying the specialty literature about urban marketing, we can observe the importance which has to be offered to the researches and audit, elements which constitute the first step of the marketing process. The effort implied by it is based on the knowledge about the existent demand, the images created internally and externally, and the problems which the city's marketing proposed itself to improve or solve.

The first stage of new marketing for Amsterdam, was a benchmarking study, elaborated by a communication agency which compared the urban marketing practices in 4 cities (Barcelona, Berlin, Dublin and Rotterdam). The choice for the cities was realized by estimating the main competitors of Amsterdam, possible by the improvement of the position for the first three cities and the long rivalry between Amsterdam and Rotterdam. The main conclusion of the study was the need of improvement of the marketing efforts for Amsterdam, because it could not „emphasize the advantages as well as other urban areas, it did not make enough international advertising actions of urban improvements, and did not choose the key values capable to catch the essence of the metropolis” (City of Amsterdam, 2004, p. 13) and to transmit it empathically to the public.

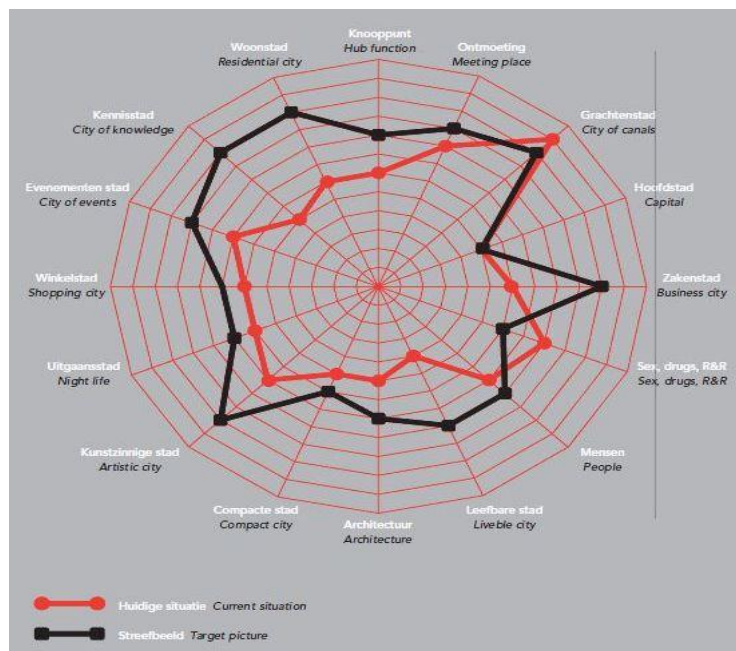
Moreover, the study disclosed a lack of responsibility for the Amsterdam brand, essential element in the other cities; so the main lessons learned by Amsterdam, referred to the choice for some specific sectors and prioritization of the actions, to an urban profile which fits to the reality of the city, to the balance of responsibility allocation between public and private sector and the meaning of branding use.

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<sup>1</sup> Associated, in the last period, with the wanton attitude towards drugs and prostitution. This image shadows some of the most attractive characteristics of the city.

Based on this analysis, the city's officials decided to elaborate a new vision for the future of the metropolis, to create a new brand and a public-private platform, responsible with their setup and management.

A consultancy company was responsible for providing suggestions about methods, purposes and processes of the marketing effort and proposed a new organizational structure, more effective. To settle the new values on which the marketing and urban branding were to be built on, there were made a series of interviews with different actors of the city, to identify the vision of individuals upon the elements which made de city unique. The obtained results were combined with other sources, such as the specialty literature about urban marketing and the statements about the city, from different sources, including from documents of public policies and travel guides. The hereafter image illustrates the 16 dimensions of the city, as they resulted from the analysis of the collected data, dimensions considered to best represent the versatility of Amsterdam and its meaning for the audience (City of Amsterdam, 2004, p. 15):



**Figure 1. The 16 dimensions of Amsterdam Brand**

(Source: *City of Amsterdam*, 2004, p.19)

The diagram presents two problems: the majority of these dimensions are not characteristic just to Amsterdam, while the decisional process regarding the specific attributes denotes a top-down approach; so, the consultancy company tried to treat the different dimensions in a bottom-up manner, through some questionnaires made for the residents. The spider web aspect of the diagram reflects the priorities and opportunities of the present image of the city, but also the

main objectives of the marketing strategy, being a real guide regarding the necessary actions for improving the urban image.

There were six dimensions considered proprietary, that were selected, in the attempt to win a clearer vision upon the issues: City of Culture, City of Channels, City of Meetings, City of Knowledge, Business City and Residential City. The first three dimensions are considered strengths, while the others are considered weaknesses, not being taken into consideration by those questioned and requiring a closer attention. So, the explicit objective of the marketing effort was maintaining the solid position held by the first three dimensions, doubled by the strengthen of the other three priorities. Moreover, Amsterdam decided to underlie its brand on three essential values: creativity, innovation and commercial spirit; their tenacity over century's makes them coordinates which can express the „true” value of the metropolis.

### **2.3. Target groups**

The urban marketing activity for Amsterdam was based on seven primary target groups (see Table 1).

#### **The target groups of the marketing activity for Amsterdam city**

**Table 1**

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- The decision makers from the business sector (international companies which have branches in the Amsterdam urban area);
  - Logistics service providers;
  - The creative sector (design companies, media, media producers, ITC, fashion, small firms);
  - Highly skilled workers (young, talented and creative people, and scientists that are attracted by the business environment, by the urban society of knowledge and by a high quality life);
  - Active resident workers (residents attracted by Amsterdam's metropolitan atmosphere);
  - International visitors (foreign tourists and congress participants attracted by Amsterdam's facilities and surroundings);
  - Amsterdam's inhabitants and those from the city's surroundings, seen as the city's ambassadors.
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(Source: *City of Amsterdam*, 2004, p. 39)

This selection has generated critics regarding a series of problems: the popularity of the creative industries, Amsterdam's urban atmosphere, the active residents' intentions, the climate of the knowledge society, the way in which the city enters the competition for being the center of knowledge in Holland and abroad. Because the marketing tends to be comprehensive, it can generate

problems in defining the target groups and thus, deficiencies and confusion in the actions undertaken and their perceived messages.

Unlike commercial firms, out of considerations regarding social justice, political equilibrium, security and sustainability, a city cannot find himself in the position of excluding certain groups of users. This urban marketing's intrinsic characteristic raises difficulties in defining the target groups. Despite all of this, in the specific case of Amsterdam there has been and there still is a consensus regarding the main result of the marketing effort, that also becomes a sine qua non condition for the next stages: convincing residents to embrace the city's essential values, making them to "feel" the urban brand and to become proud of their city.

#### ***2.4. The marketing activity's organization***

The main coordinator of Amsterdam's marketing effort was, and still is Amsterdam Partners – public-private partnership (see Table 2); the organizing can be resumed to the following – there are two sources of financing and responsibility: first, the ACCU (an internal coordination council) which coordinates the actions undertaken by the various municipal departments and second, AmPro which is responsible for the private funding resources' security and management. Some projects are developed by the municipality, while other by the private sector, and there are also joint projects. The final responsibility for all projects and for the global strategy is taken up by the AmPro partnership.

#### **The components of the AmPro partnership**

**Table 2**

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- Seven municipal departments (for example, the Communication Department, the Department for Economic Affairs);
  - The Amsterdam Area (eight neighbouring municipalities and the Province of Northern Holland);
  - The business community (the Regional Chamber of Commerce and many private organizations, from small firms to multinational companies);
  - Covenant Partners (eight organizations already involved in the urban marketing activity, that have an active role in supporting and counseling in strategy problems and practical elements).
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(Source: *City of Amsterdam*, 2004, p. 42)

For the urban marketing, the importance of coordination is crucial, especially in the case of examining the urban managers' daily activities (Czarniawska, 2002, p. 34). Most of those involved in Amsterdam's marketing effort, as well as the reports based on it grant a major importance to the cooperation between the parties involved, and describe urban marketing to be a coordination activity. Although urban marketing can integrate various public policy areas and

can include measures for promoting inter-organizational cooperation, it does not represent a synonym for coordination.

The city's organizational structure is one of the strengths of the whole marketing effort. Thus, the consensus regarding the strategy and the organization method represents a significant advantage for the Dutch metropolis's marketing. Also, there is a common agreement that both the urban marketing and the branding activity are long term activities that require time for establishing "routes" inside the city which, at a later time, will be capable of transmitting the urban message throughout the whole world.

### ***2.5. Implementing the urban marketing***



After creating AmPro and establishing the strategy, a decision of continuing some major projects was taken: cultural events, hospitality, a new Internet portal, the "PEARL" projects.

#### ***A. Cultural events***

Because Amsterdam has the reputation as a cultural center, the cultural events and festivals play an important role in the marketing process. This fact is revealed by the existence of the position as Manager for Events and Festivals, one of the three major positions that can be held at AmPro or by the effort made by the city's officials for organizing the Bollywood Oscars. As "the most visible urban moments", the events are considered the most powerful marketing instruments and the ideal instruments for improving Amsterdam's profile, and at the same time, for attracting international attention. A favorite tactic is the organizing of events for the thematic years<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> 2005 - „The Year of Water”, 2006 - „The Year of Rembrandt”, 2007 - “Amsterdam Feel the Rhythm – Music & Dance”, 2008 - „Amsterdam Hidden Treasures”, 2009 – “Amsterdam Art City”, 2010 – “Amsterdam Water Sensations”.



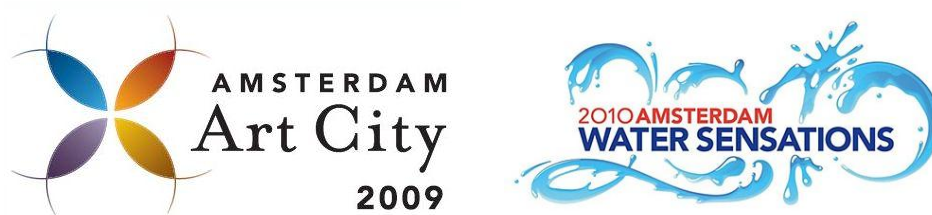


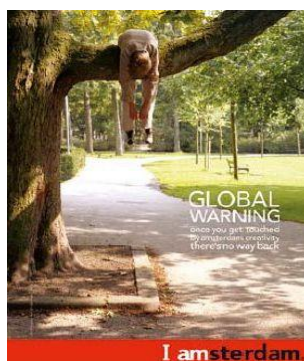
Figure 2. „The Logos of thematic years 2009 – „Amsterdam Art City” and 2010 - “Amsterdam Water Sensations”



Figure 3. Promotional posters of the different cultural events organized in Amsterdam under the aegis „I amsterdam”

In 2007, the brand “I amsterdam” was associated with 50 international events, festivals and conventions like: Picnic '07, Amsterdam's International Fashion Week, Amsterdam's Dance Festival, “Dream Amsterdam” and many others. In this manner, “I amsterdam” gained from the exposure/visibility that festivals or events brought to the city's marketing context.

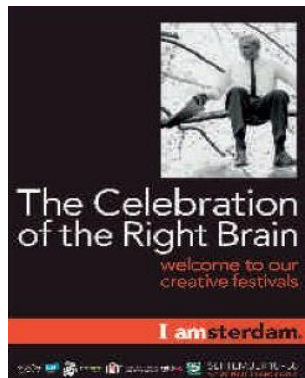
Also, AmPro has supported events in the area of marketing communication. In addition, the organizing of various campaigns in 2007 was integrated and internationalized, focusing more on multimedia. A good example is the campaign organized under the theme “Global warning, once you get in contact with Amsterdam's creativity, there is no way of going back”. This campaign was meant to attract tourists into visiting Amsterdam in September, to find inspiration for creativity, because in that period would take place eight events throughout two weeks time. This combination of creativity and business sense places Amsterdam and the whole region on a high rise position as a European creative business center.



**Figure 4. Promotional posters of the campaign “Global Warning” – 2007**  
(Source: Amsterdam Partners, 2007, p. 5)

In 2008, approximately 40 international events, festivals and congresses were connected with the “I amsterdam” brand, including Picnic '08, Amsterdam's International Fashion Week, Amsterdam's Dance Festival, “Dream Amsterdam” and many others. The visibility gained by these events and festivals has also helped on retaining the attention around “I amsterdam”.

Also, AmPro has offered support for the events that regard the marketing communication area and in 2008 it has organized a series of campaigns in a more integrated and internationalized manner, and with a clearer multimedia focus. A good example is the series of festivals – that took place in September – dedicated to “Celebrating the right hemisphere of the brain”. The campaign was in such a way conceived to stimulate the creative inspiration among the target groups, and no less than eight events were organized in a two week timeframe. This diversity in creativity, combined with the entrepreneurial spirit has given Amsterdam the status of the most creative business city in Europe.



**Figure 5. Promotional posters of the campaign “The Celebration of the Right Brain”, 2008**

(Source: Amsterdam Partners, 2008, p. 5)

The problem involving Amsterdam's approach to events is the focus on the product. Of course, the interesting and useful aspect of culture is the consumption of cultural goods; in order to understand this consumption, it is necessary that those responsible to look beyond the range of events that the city can offer and focus onto the consumer's experience, whether he is a resident or a foreign tourist. The main objective for the events and festivals should be not only attracting attention, no matter its type, but also creating and strengthening the association with different qualities.

### ***B. Hospitality***

The objective of this project is the city's transformation into one more hospitable for foreigners. The main task is identifying the place and the way in which visitors tend to feel welcomed or not, and determining the actions and measures imposed to improving this situation. The project is organized into four groups of activities (City of Amsterdam, 2004, p. 34):

a) **The Red Carpet:** this project's component is aimed at offering a higher access to information to visitors inside the city and in the surroundings, but also to stimulate the wish to visit attractive and well-known routes, and to generate a sentiment of welcome among the tourists.

b) **Cooperation:** because hospitality is seen as a collective problem, Amsterdam wants to facilitate the cooperation between different parties and exploit local inputs by organizing workshops, discussions with interested parties and consultations with local entrepreneurs. In addition, the training of some very influential groups on the urban image is taken into account, such as the cab drivers.

c) **Communication:** the belief that hospitality should be visible for all determines activities in order to intensely advertise in the local media, but also to obtain new ideas and suggestions from the local population.

d) **Highlights:** this part of the project aims at using various events and activities, seen as opportunities for joint action, in order to achieve the hospitality goals.

### ***C. A new Internet portal – The policy regarding international media***

The previous policies meant to attract the international media's attention were considered inadequate and passive. The goal of these projects is to make the city itself trigger the media's attention, to update the offered information and to create a contact point a counseling center for foreign journalists. The city's website has been updated and thus, the information is more accessible for the current and potential visitors. In accordance with the most recent theoretical suggestions, the presence on the Internet is considered a major developing instrument for the urban image and a strong method of communication and experimentation of the city. Part of the portal is dedicated to companies and is developed in cooperation with Amsterdam's Foreign Investment Office. Its goal is to become the base for a single contact point, in order to help the companies establish and maintain their operations in the Amsterdam area.



#### *D. The “Pearl” Projects*

Some of the ongoing infrastructure projects or other regular projects (for example, the Zuidas construction project and the Uitmarkt festival) were selected to be linked with the urban marketing, in order to maximize the strong effects that they have on the urban image. Thus, these projects will represent priorities for the departments responsible, will be communicated to the interested parties in accordance with the urban brand communication and will have priority on different communication platforms. They create a strong bond between the urban marketing strategy and the local authorities’ public policies programme for maximizing the marketing effort’s efficiency.

#### *2.6. The rebranding campaign*

The rebranding campaign launched in September 2004 represented the completing piece for the main marketing activities of Amsterdam. The campaign’s fundamental idea was linked to the fact that throughout the years, Amsterdam had too many brands, like for example: “Amsterdam Capital of Inspiration”, “Capital of Sports”, „Amsterdam Has It”, “Small City, Big Business”, “Cool City” or “Amsterdam: living city”.



**Figure 6. The brand „Amsterdam Small City, Big Heart”**  
(Source: [www.amsterdamny.gov](http://www.amsterdamny.gov))

The new approach implies that a brand needs continuity because its slogans need time to be recognized and efficient. The slogans from the past were not sufficient to “house” Amsterdam’s key values and benefits, because they focused on a single dimension or concentrated on a single target group. Moreover, the management of Amsterdam’s brand was considered to be faulty, with the existence

of no agreement regarding the style's use and uniformity. "A new "touchable" position was considered needed not only for the city, but also for the region, a new brand that would depict the metropolis's essential elements" (City of Amsterdam, 2004, p. 4).

Through the new approach, "AmPro has chosen a slogan that would come to serve as an umbrella not only in the practical sense, but also intrinsic, that would be versatile without being implicit" (City of Amsterdam, 2004, p. 45) and that would be a "spokesman" for Amsterdam's values and advantages. Thus, a new slogan: "**I amsterdam**" was chosen as an emblem for the urban marketing's plans, "a motto that creates the city's brand and the Amsterdam's citizens' brand" (www.iamsterdam.com).



**Figure 7. The promotion of "I amsterdam"**

The fact that the slogan is clear, short and powerful was the motive for choosing it: "I amsterdam" is considered to be easy to retain and has a great potential for the people to identify with it. The goal was that numerous organizations, companies and events could benefit from the new brand, but not into an unrestricted manner; in the debut period, when the brand was still vulnerable, AmPro's careful supervision was needed in order to ensure the brand's correct use and its users.

**I amsterdam.**

**Figure 8. The logo „I amsterdam”**  
(Source: *City of Amsterdam*, 2004, p. 27)

In regards to the slogan itself, for determining its effectiveness, not only the manner in which it addresses the target groups must be determined, but also its link with the main dimensions and its capacity to express creativity, innovation or commercial spirit, things that at first sight are difficult to identify. Choosing the slogan seems to be based more on the fact that the phrase "appeals" to the public, being similar with the „I ♥ New York" slogan. A positive aspect of the "I amsterdam" slogan results from impregnating it into the inhabitants' mind and into

the urban infrastructure, only the residents feel that they “are” Amsterdam, an element with great potential for the whole marketing effort.



**Figure 9. The promotion of “I amsterdam” through outdoor posters and in media**

The “I amsterdam” promoting campaign is subtle and ingenious.



**Figure 10. Used promotional materials**

“The people from Amsterdam are Amsterdam. The diversity of Amsterdam’s business community, as well as the citizens’ wide and innovative perspectives represent the living force of our city. That is why, we, Amsterdam’s citizens wish to speak about it. Amsterdam is our city and is time that we express with pride our dedication and devotion for Amsterdam” (selected from “I Amsterdam manifesto”, [www.iamsterdam.com](http://www.iamsterdam.com))

### ***2.7. The effects of the marketing activity***

Amsterdam has succeeded in avoiding two frequent traps of urban marketing. First, the marketing effort was not started and finished with an add campaign. Second, AmPro has chosen a strategy meant to address not only the needs of the tourist sector, but also a larger audience that included the economic activities and all the target groups. Thus, one can say that the urban marketing applied for the city of Amsterdam has reached a much more refined implementation phase compared with the one from the past, and it presents an approach towards demand, one of the main characteristics for the city's management philosophy.

Yet, the negative aspects of the branding activity cannot be ignored; these are inevitable elements in the case of such a complex area as the urban marketing for such a diverse city as Amsterdam. The main critics focused around three ideas: the selection of the 16 dimensions that represented the city and their translation into six priorities, the three central values and the problem regarding the examination of the somewhat abstract slogan; the selection of some vaguely defined target groups that posed problems in efficiently forming and transmitting the messages; not utilizing the whole branding potential and its use as a promotional instrument. These critics have posed the following question directly linked with analyzing the urban marketing's and the branding efforts' effectiveness: "could Amsterdam have chosen a better strategy or have done a more processed implementation?". The answer can be given by analyzing different international rankings but still, the methodologies used and the implicit goals of the organizations that make them remain a polemical topic (see Table 3).

#### **The position that Amsterdam ranks in the Urban Brand Index between 2005-2008<sup>3</sup>**

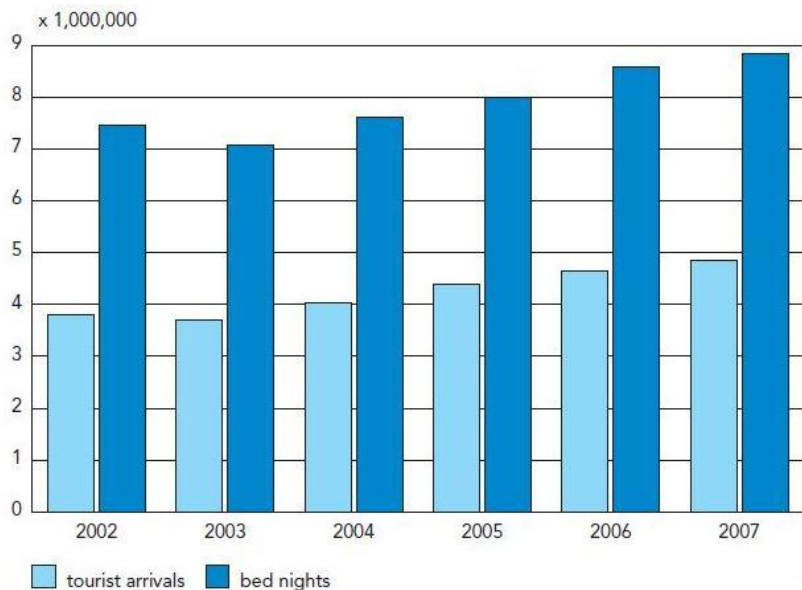
**Table 3**

<b>Poziție</b>	<b>Oraș 2005</b>	<b>Oraș 2006</b>	<b>Oraș 2007</b>	<b>Oraș 2008</b>
1.	London	Sydney	Sydney	London
2.	Paris	London	London	Paris
3.	Sydney	Paris	Paris	Sydney
4.	Rome	Rome	New York	New York
5.	Barcelona	New York	Rome	Rome
6.	Amsterdam	Washington DC	Melbourne	Barcelona
7.	New York	San Francisco	Barcelona	Melbourne
8.	Los Angeles	Melbourne	Vancouver	Berlin
9.	Madrid	Barcelona	Amsterdam	Amsterdam
10.	Berlin	Geneva	Montreal	Madrid
11.	San Francisco	Amsterdam	Toronto	

(Source: Anholt, 2005-2008)

<sup>3</sup> In 2009, Amsterdam was not one of the first 11 cities of the Urban Brands Index.

Another rebranding effect was the rise in revenue from tourism<sup>4</sup>. Thus, despite terrorism, natural disasters (such as the Indian Ocean tsunami's effects and an extremely prolonged hurricane season), there has been recorded an increasing number of tourist's arrivals between 2003-2007.



**Figure 11. Tourist arrivals and bed nights in Amsterdam, 2002-2007**

(Source: *City of Amsterdam, Research and Statistics Economic Development Department, Fact sheet, No. 4a, October 2008, p. 1*)

The 4,9 million tourists that arrived in Amsterdam during 2007 counted for 8,8 million nights of accommodation. In 2007, the tourist's flux has risen with approximately 4% in comparison to 2006 (204.000 tourists). In 2006 the rise was of 6%, and in 2004 and 2005 of 9%. In 2007, the rise in nights of accommodation was of only 3%, less than in other years. This tendency was due to the fact that tourists shortened their stays, to a mean of 1,82 nights, compared to 2003 when the mean was of 1,91 nights. This descending trend has characterized all the hotels from Holland. Thus, the national mean for the duration of a stay was of 1,78 nights in 2007, unlike 1,90 in 2003.

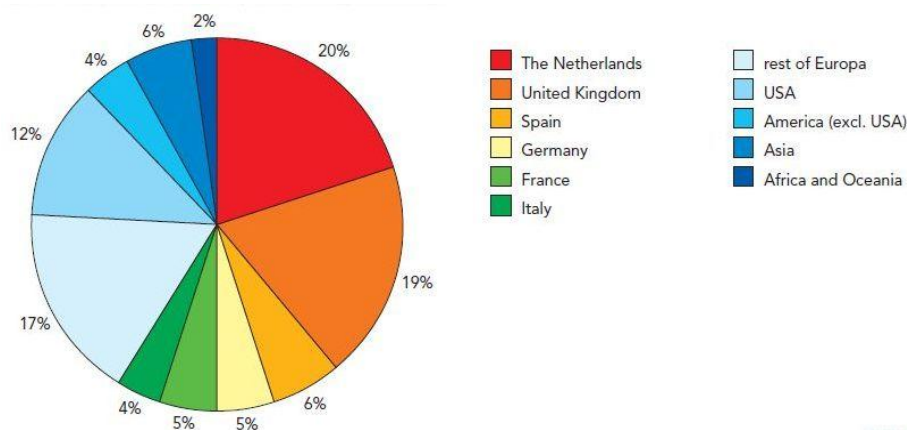
Most tourists that visited Amsterdam came from Western Europe (36%), Holland (20%) and North America (14%). In 2007, the number of tourists from Western Europe and North America has fallen for the first time since 2003. The fall manifested especially from the British (-6%), the Americans (-7%) and the Canadians (-8%). Despite the falling British economy and the mortgage crisis in the US, this decrease in the total number of tourists was mostly owed to the strengthening of the euro. Yet, the decline was mostly compensated by the rise in

<sup>4</sup> For example, in 2005, the tourists that visited Amsterdam spend here 3.3 billion Euros.



autochthonous tourists (+26%), with a total number that reached one million in 2007, almost double than in 2003. Thus, in the last five years, the number of Dutch tourists in Amsterdam outnumbered that of the British (937.000) and Americans (597.000). The rise in the Amsterdam's popularity among the autochthonous visitors was probably due to the favorable economic conditions in Holland, but also to the great interest manifested toward short term trips.

In the same period, other growing tourist markets were represented by south-eastern Europeans, Brazilians and Chinese.



**Figure 12. Tourist arrivals to Amsterdam by country of origin, 2007**

(Source: City of Amsterdam, Research and Statistics Economic Development Department, Fact sheet, No. 4a, October 2008, p. 2)

In 2008, Amsterdam placed itself on the ninth position in the most popular cities survey. The Amsterdam's high accessibility made him attractive for a significant number of visitors from the neighbouring regions, as well as from other European cities (London, Paris, Madrid, and Barcelona). Also, the city attracted tourists from economically developed regions, with high buying power (Southern Germany, Northern Italy, California, New York, Texas, Illinois and Florida). Tourists were interested in: the city's architecture (39%), cultural attractions (38%), atmosphere (26%) and museums (24%), but also in stores (11%) and coffee shops (7%). Even the city's residents were given positive appreciation for their tolerance and knowledge in foreign languages. Amsterdam's weak points were the trash (11%) and congestion (10%).

In conclusion, "the new brand's results" analyzed in terms of the areal bounded by "income-number of visitors-investments-the position on the global market", have determined:

- from the mental position point of view (subjective approach): a rise in knowledge and preference for Amsterdam among the selected target groups;
- a rise in the number of visitors and private investments;

- from market position point of view: a rise in Amsterdam's position in the relevant international surveys compared to its biggest competitors.

### **3. Amsterdam, model for the strategic development of Bucharest**

The capital of Netherlands can serve as a mark for the construction of brand strategy of Bucharest. How?

- In the urban competition, Amsterdam refers to Hagan and Rotterdam, which generates an exacerbated competition. An advantage of Bucharest results precisely from the low competition on the Romanian market (Sibiu, Iași, Brașov), which could facilitate a fast imposition.

- At regional level, the first step of Amsterdam's rebranding can be the first stage of the urban marketing for Bucharest: benchmarking. The study could follow the Dutch model of city marketing practice comparison from other 4 or 5 cities which are the main competitors at international level for the Bucharest's market – Belgrade, Sarajevo, Zagreb, Budapest, Sofia. Even if the discrepancies of landscape, patrimony, administrative and managerial can apparently be an obstacle, the marketing experts should not copy, but to adapt the actions, to the specific urban profile, to adapt them on Bucharest's reality, on its offer and to create a vision for the lasting development of the capital.

- The choice of target groups in Amsterdam case is, maybe, the most important lesson which must be assimilated by the local authorities: the chosen values must propel Bucharest, to be realistic and to address first of all to the residents, allowing them to empathize with the brand, to become attached and proud of it, and, implicit, capable and keen to promote it. The most important target audiences for Bucharest could be:

- the residents which are confronting now with dissatisfactions related to the city which they live in and need profound changes to modify their vision;
- actors from the business area – both from national companies and, especially from international ones; they must be encouraged to locate their business in Bucharest or in its suburban area by being offered a friendly business climate and some financial incentives; an obvious advantage would be the relatively youth of the city, its opening towards new initiatives and the possibility of exploring an inadequate exploited market (both at urban level, and national one, due to the accessibility of the capital's position);
- the human resources with a good professional background or with a high development potential, which could be attracted by the quality level of life, educational system and the exploit of their qualities at their real value;
- foreign tourists came for business, or traveling;
- creative sector, especially marketing, design, advertising, mass-

media companies, by promoting a co-operation climate between the local authorities and the right persons that could create and sustain on long term the urban branding strategy;

- The organization of the marketing activity for Bucharest, could adopt the Dutch model AmPro, following, first of all, an effective allocation of the responsibilities and the focusing of the expertise on the important elements of the branding strategy, from identification, to positioning and defining and launching the brand image. The collaboration becomes, in this case, the sine-qua-non premise of the private-public partnership, especially for maintaining the brand's viability and making periodic changes necessary to adapt to the dynamic reality. In the body part of the partnership for Bucharest branding there could be:

- departments from the Bucharest City Hall (such as, the International Relations, Public Relations and Informing Direction, Urban Planning and Territorial Development, Patrimony Administration, Investments and Development Tourism Direction, but also others that can have relevant responsibilities in the area);
- business sector (Romanian companies, foreign investors, international companies);
- Non-governmental organizations which emphasize on the civil society involvement and to consult it along the marketing process (the NGOs' objectives should be varied, to address effectively to the target groups: social, economical, ecological, touring etc.)
- Organizations specialized on marketing and urban branding issues (consultancy companies, advertising agencies).

- „The Pearl Projects” used by Amsterdam by their inclusion in the branding activity, serve as example; the building project of the University Campus in Bucharest, which will place it on the top of the educational destination in Europe, could be a key element that would amplify the echoes of the urban image and to offer a sample of the urban authorities' efficiency;

- The slogan chosen for the Bucharest brand must be a clear, short and comprehensive in the same time, containing a large scope of values, desired to be promoted. Also, it must avoid the confusions, but which could be interpretable in a positive way, the different aimed target groups having different perspectives about the urban logo and brand;

- As the Dutch capital, Bucharest can be promoted so:
  - as a business city, but to gain this status, the authorities must appeal to fiscal and financial levers;
  - as a knowledge city which implies the placement of the capital on the global map of knowledge society, by encouraging the IT sector, the TIC use and extension of the wireless Internet connections;
  - as a residential city. This is the biggest challenge for Bucharest, because of the confrontation with the space issues, but also the aspect of the apartment blocks with communist architecture, which

do not assure the physical and psychical comfort of the residents and cannot represent an impulse for relocation in the city. This situation will change soon, due to the action, started in 2009, of renovation and redecoration of the buildings' frontages which, is desired, to transform the city in a friendly environment which could compensate at least by aspect, the disadvantages of the compact apartments.

- The local authorities can capitalize better the contrasts between old and new and to concentrate on organizing some events and festivals with international resonance (Night of the Museums, City Days, dance shows, festivals of Globus Circus), capable to vitalize the key values and emphasize the proprietary dimensions of the city.

### **Conclusion**

If the urban brands are built in the minds of people, then the fundamental option to identify and quantify the changes and efficiency of strategies is the research of target group: visitors, investors and residents.

Also, if the supposition that „people are those who make the city” is true, then it is opportune to give an additional attention to the residents and there should be more activities undertaken, to imply them in the urban marketing. For example, the communication platform opened to all the residents „We Amsterdammers”, offers financial support to the different activities that ensure the contact between the groups of residents, organizes events (such as „Amsterdam Day”) and develops campaigns with the same objective.

Bucharest „city for business”, „residential city”, „knowledge city”, „contrasts city: old and new”... are just some proposals...

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