



ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, ARTS & HUMANITIES

SCHOOL OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

**PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF BRANDING STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED
BY THE ADDIS ABABA CITY ADMINISTRATION, ETHIOPIA**

**BY
SIYMAY GIRMAY**

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ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

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**Public Perception of Branding Strategies Implemented by the Addis
Ababa City Administration, Ethiopia**

By
Siymay Girmay

**A Thesis to be submitted to the school of graduate studies of Addis
Ababa University in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the
degree of Master of Arts in Public Relation and Strategic
Communication**

Advisor
Abdisa Zeraï (PhD.)

June, 2025

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this thesis titled “**Public Perception of Branding Strategies Implemented by the Addis Ababa City Administration, Ethiopia**” is my original work. It has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other academic or research institution. All sources of materials used and quoted in the study have been properly cited and acknowledged.

Declared by:

Name: Siymay Girmay

Signature: _____

Date: _____

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF MEDIA AND
COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC RELATION AND
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION**

This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Siymay Girmay, entitled “Public Perception of Branding Strategies Implemented by the Addis Ababa City Administration, Ethiopia” and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Public Relations and Strategic Communication, complies with the regulations of the university. It complies with the regulations of the university and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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Advisor: _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Chair of Department or Graduate Coordinator

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Advisor: Dr. Abdisa Z.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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Abstract

In the 21st century, cities compete not only for economic growth but also for reputation, identity, and global recognition. City branding has emerged as a strategic tool to craft a distinctive urban image and stimulate socio-economic development. This study critically examines the public perception of branding strategies implemented by the Addis Ababa City Administration in Ethiopia, a rapidly urbanizing African capital. Despite the city's efforts in beautification, infrastructural investment, and promotional campaigns aimed at repositioning its global image, there is limited empirical evidence evaluating how these strategies are perceived by the public and how well they align with community values, civic pride, and urban identity. Grounded in stakeholder theory, participatory governance, and place identity frameworks, this research adopts a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative survey data from 194 administrative officials and qualitative interviews. The study assesses public awareness levels, the alignment of branding messages with community expectations, and the perceived impacts on city image, pride, and trust in local governance. Key findings indicate that while branding initiatives have enhanced Addis Ababa's visibility, challenges remain in ensuring inclusivity, cultural representation, and coherence between administrative intent and citizen experience. The analysis reveals a gap between top-down strategy formulation and grassroots engagement, with public perception influenced by factors such as transparency, message consistency, and socio-political dynamics. Furthermore, the study highlights the need for more participatory and adaptive branding approaches that reflect the city's diverse cultural heritage and evolving socio-economic landscape. The implications of the findings are significant for urban policymakers, communication strategists, and branding practitioners seeking to foster sustainable, inclusive, and authentic city identities. This research contributes to the growing body of African urban branding literature and offers a contextualized model for understanding the dynamics between administrative branding efforts and public sentiment in emerging urban centers.

60.8% of respondents were male, and 39.2% were female 44.3% held a first degree, 27.8% had a diploma, and only 4.6% possessed a PhD. 45.9% had 7-10 years of experience. The largest group (27.5%) was from the Urban Planning and Development Commission. 65.5% served at the officer level, while mid-level and senior management combined constituted 23.7%.

- **Key words:** City Branding, Public Awareness, Branding Strategies, Public Expectations, Community Values., Public Pride, Perceived Image.

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CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In an increasingly globalized and competitive urban landscape, cities are compelled to distinguish themselves by developing strong, strategic identities that resonate both locally and internationally. City branding is a strategic process that involves crafting a unique image and identity for urban spaces, aimed at shaping public perception, attracting tourists and investors, and fostering civic pride among residents (Keller, 2013). It transcends traditional marketing by integrating urban development, governance, culture, and communication into a cohesive brand narrative. The significance of city branding lies in its ability to position cities favorably, foster economic development, and build a sense of belonging and pride among citizens (Hankinson, 2004; Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005).

Globally, cities such as Amsterdam, New York, and Singapore have successfully employed branding strategies to enhance their global visibility, promote tourism, and strengthen civic identity. The historical roots of city branding can be traced to place marketing practices of the late 20th century, which evolved into more sophisticated branding efforts that involve participatory governance, cultural representation, and identity-building (Anholt, 2007). In the digital age, the effectiveness of city branding is amplified by the rapid dissemination of information through online platforms. Cities now rely on digital media and social networking sites to foster two-way communication with citizens, enabling greater public engagement and feedback (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

However, the implementation of city branding strategies is not without its challenges. Scholars have identified several barriers including cultural diversity, which requires branding messages to be inclusive and reflective of various community identities (Baker & Balmer, 1997); limited financial and institutional resources (Kavaratzis, 2004); and the risk of public distrust when branding messages do not align with actual experiences (Hanna & Rowley, 2011). Despite these obstacles, opportunities for innovation persist. For example, collaborations between governments, businesses, and communities can amplify branding efforts through resource

sharing and joint messaging (Saxena & Croft, 2005). Importantly, involving citizens in the branding process contributes to a sense of ownership, trust, and emotional connection, which are vital for sustained success (Bramwell & Lane, 2000; Zenker & Braun, 2010).

In the Global South and Africa in particular, city branding is gaining traction as a tool for managing urban growth and shaping national identity. Several African cities have launched branding initiatives with varying degrees of success. In Accra, Osei (2016) emphasized the importance of administrative involvement and public consultation. In Lagos, Mogaji (2018) found that branding must reflect local values to be effective. Chikanda (2019) illustrated how branding in Johannesburg shaped urban identity, while Adeyemo (2020) highlighted administrative and financial constraints in African cities. Bamfo (2021) argued that branding strategies, when inclusive and context-sensitive, can enhance urban economies and promote civic engagement, as demonstrated in Nairobi.

Middle Eastern studies further reinforce these findings. Al-Hazmi (2018) examined Riyadh's branding success through citizen-centered communication, while Jabeen et al. (2019) and Al-Qudah (2021) highlighted the role of social media in Dubai's and Amman's branding initiatives. Western scholarship also emphasizes collaboration, stakeholder inclusion, and consistency in messaging as critical for effective branding (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2015; Zenker et al., 2017).

In the Ethiopian context, Addis Ababa one of Africa's fastest-growing cities and the diplomatic capital of the continent has begun implementing city branding initiatives. The Addis Ababa City Administration has undertaken urban beautification projects, promotional campaigns, and infrastructure investments aimed at reshaping the city's image, attracting global attention, and improving its livability. However, the city faces complex challenges such as rapid urbanization, political transitions, and socio-economic inequalities, all of which influence the branding process (World Bank, 2021). Although these initiatives are ambitious, their success hinges on public acceptance, understanding, and engagement.

Despite the growing global and regional literature on city branding, there is a significant gap in empirical research focusing on how branding strategies are perceived by the public and evaluated by city administration personnel in the Ethiopian context. While several Ethiopian studies touch

on tourism and urban planning, they often overlook branding as a strategic, multidimensional, and participatory process. There is limited knowledge about how Addis Ababa's branding initiatives align with the public's values and expectations, influence civic pride and identity, or succeed in presenting a unified city image.

This study seeks to fill that gap by examining the public perception of branding strategies implemented by the Addis Ababa City Administration. Specifically, it will assess the level of public awareness regarding these strategies, explore how they align with community values, evaluate their impact on public identity and city image, and identify key factors influencing public perception. Theoretically, the study is grounded in stakeholder theory, participatory governance, and place identity frameworks, all of which support the need for inclusive, responsive, and evidence-based branding strategies. By providing empirical insights from both the administrative and public perspectives, the study aims to contribute to more effective and community-oriented city branding efforts in Addis Ababa and similar urban contexts in Africa.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In today's highly interconnected and competitive world, cities are not only administrative and economic centers but also brands that must strategically shape and communicate their identity to both internal and external audiences. City branding has become a key tool for urban governments to attract tourism, investment, talent, and civic engagement, while also promoting a coherent and appealing image of the city (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005). It involves crafting and communicating the distinctiveness of a city through visual symbols, narratives, infrastructure development, policy decisions, and cultural promotion.

However, the effectiveness of city branding strategies depends not merely on their design but largely on public perception and acceptance. When branding strategies align with the lived experiences, aspirations, and cultural values of local populations, they can foster civic pride, reinforce local identity, and create strong emotional connections between residents and their city (Zenker & Braun, 2010). On the other hand, when these strategies are perceived as top-down, disconnected, or externally imposed, they may face resistance, indifference, or even public distrust, thereby reducing their intended impact (Eshuis, Braun, & Klijn, 2013).

In recent years, many African cities have adopted branding as part of their urban development and image-building agendas. Cities like Accra, Lagos, Johannesburg, and Nairobi have launched branding campaigns to reflect modernity, resilience, culture, and innovation (Osei, 2016; Mogaji, 2018; Chikanda, 2019; Bamfo, 2021). While such initiatives are increasingly visible, empirical studies have shown that these branding strategies often face significant challenges related to public awareness, participation, and alignment with community values. Moreover, many African city branding efforts tend to focus on promotional aspects while neglecting the importance of inclusive engagement and grounded narratives that reflect local realities (Adeyemo, 2020).

In the case of Addis Ababa Ethiopia's political capital and a rapidly urbanizing city with historical and geopolitical significance city branding is becoming a strategic instrument to promote urban development, attract foreign investment, and position the city on the global stage. The Addis Ababa City Administration has initiated several campaigns and policy shifts aimed at projecting a modern and globally competitive image. These efforts are often reflected in infrastructural development, slogans, public space redesign, and administrative reforms. However, there is limited scholarly understanding of how these branding strategies are perceived by the general public or whether they are viewed as inclusive, credible, and representative of the city's multifaceted identity.

While some studies have touched on branding and urban development in Ethiopia, the specific issue of public perception of city branding and how these strategies align with community values, influence public pride, shape urban identity, and reflect local participation remains largely unexplored. Even less is known about how city administration officials understand and evaluate the success, challenges, and effectiveness of these branding efforts. This lack of integrated empirical evidence represents a major gap in the literature on urban governance, branding, and public communication, particularly in the Ethiopian context.

Given the complexity and diversity of Addis Ababa's population, combined with the rapid socio-economic transformations underway, a deeper understanding of public attitudes toward branding initiatives is urgently needed. This study seeks to bridge this gap by assessing the level of public awareness regarding city branding, evaluating the alignment between administrative strategies and community expectations, measuring the impact on civic identity and image, and analyzing the key factors that influence how residents perceive these efforts.

By doing so, the research will contribute to the development of more inclusive, participatory, and effective city branding strategies that reflect the voice of the people and strengthen the relationship between urban policy and public perception in Ethiopia's evolving urban landscape.

1.3. Basic research question

In line with the above study of the problem, the following research questions were formulated to be answered as a result of the research study:

1. What is the current level of public awareness about the city branding initiatives implemented by the Addis Ababa City Administration?
2. To what extent do the branding strategies of the Addis Ababa City Administration align with public expectations and community values?
3. How do the city branding strategies affect public pride, city identity, and the perceived image of Addis Ababa?
4. What are the main factors that influence public perception of the city branding strategies implemented by the Addis Ababa City Administration?

1.4 Objectives of the study

1.4.1 General objectives

The general objective of this study is to examine the public perception of the branding strategies implemented by the Addis Ababa City Administration, with the aim of understanding how these strategies influence public awareness, civic identity, and alignment with community values, and to identify the key factors shaping citizens' attitudes toward the city's branding efforts.

1.4.2 Specific objectives

The specific objectives of this paper are:

- To assess the level of public awareness regarding the city branding initiatives of the Addis Ababa City Administration.
- To investigate how well the city's branding strategies align with public expectations and community values.
- To evaluate the impact of city branding strategies on public pride, identity, and the perceived image of Addis Ababa.

→ To identify and analyze the key factors that influence public perception of the branding strategies implemented by the Addis Ababa City Administration.

1.5 Justification of the Study

City branding has emerged as a powerful tool in enhancing urban identity, attracting investment, promoting tourism, and fostering civic pride. However, the effectiveness of such branding largely depends on how the public perceives and interacts with these strategies. In the case of Addis Ababa, despite ongoing efforts to position the city as a dynamic, inclusive, and globally competitive capital, little is known about how these initiatives are perceived by its citizens.

This study is justified by the need to bridge the gap between branding strategies designed by city authorities and the actual perceptions of the public. It will provide empirical evidence that can help decision-makers refine branding efforts to align with the values, needs, and aspirations of the community. Furthermore, it will contribute to the broader discourse on urban branding in African contexts, where city administrations often face complex socio-economic and political challenges.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research holds significance for several stakeholders:

For the Addis Ababa City Administration: It will offer valuable insights into how their branding strategies are being received, thereby informing policy revisions and communication strategies that are more responsive and citizen-centered.

For urban planners and branding professionals: The study will shed light on the intersection between urban governance, public perception, and branding effectiveness, especially in a rapidly urbanizing African context.

For academic and research communities: It will enrich the limited empirical literature on city branding in Ethiopia and contribute to the theoretical understanding of public engagement in place branding.

For the public: By incorporating public perspectives, the study promotes inclusivity and empowers residents to take part in shaping the city's identity.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study is geographically centered on Addis Ababa, the vibrant capital city of Ethiopia and a significant hub for the nation's cultural, political, and economic activity. The selection of Addis Ababa as the focal area is particularly relevant due to its ongoing urban transformation and the active role of the city administration in shaping public perception through deliberate city branding strategies. The city's rapid development, socio-political dynamics, and diverse population provide a unique and rich context for examining urban branding practices in an African metropolis.

The scope of the study specifically targets the branding strategies implemented by the Addis Ababa City Administration and focuses on understanding public perception of these strategies. Rather than directly surveying the general public, the study gathers insights from city administration personnel and relevant stakeholders, aiming to uncover how internal branding intentions and administrative frameworks are aligned with or perceived by the wider community. This approach allows for a nuanced examination of how branding efforts influence civic pride, local identity, and community engagement from the perspective of those designing and executing the strategies.

Methodologically, the study adopts a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Surveys and interviews will be conducted among selected officials and departments within the Addis Ababa City Administration, enabling the researcher to analyze the strategic objectives, communication methods, and internal evaluations of the branding campaigns. This design ensures a comprehensive understanding of how branding is conceptualized and implemented, and how it is expected to influence public perception and urban identity.

The study is delimited to branding strategies implemented over the last five to ten years, covering initiatives aimed at promoting Addis Ababa's image locally and internationally. While it focuses on administrative perspectives, future research may complement this work by exploring public opinions directly for a more holistic view.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

This study encountered several limitations that may have affected the comprehensiveness and generalizability of its findings. One major limitation was the potential bias in responses from city administration officials, as their roles in implementing branding strategies may have led to an optimistic portrayal of the initiatives' effectiveness. The focus on administrative perspectives also meant that the diverse views of public residents were not directly captured, potentially limiting the breadth of insights into the branding strategies' impact.

The geographical focus on Addis Ababa, while providing a valuable case study, restricted the applicability of findings to other urban contexts with differing cultural, social, and political environments. Additionally, the mixed-methods approach posed challenges in integrating and analyzing data, which complicated the interpretation of results.

Resource and time constraints limited the sample size and diversity of participants, which may have impacted the overall richness of the data collected. Furthermore, the subjective nature of public perception meant that responses varied according to respondents' socio-demographic backgrounds, affecting the generalizability of conclusions.

Lastly, the study concentrated on public perception and did not assess the technical or administrative performance of the branding strategies themselves. Despite these limitations, the study provided meaningful insights into how the Addis Ababa City Administration's branding efforts are perceived and their implications for community engagement.

1.9 Definition of terms

- **Public Perception** refers to the collective views, attitudes, and opinions held by a community or society about a particular subject, often influenced by social, cultural, and media factors (Kotler & Keller, 2016). It shapes how people interpret and respond to policies, brands, or social phenomena.
- **Branding Strategies** are deliberate plans and actions taken by organizations or entities to create, maintain, and enhance the identity and reputation of a brand in the minds of target audiences, aimed at differentiation and value creation (Aaker, 2014).

- **City Branding** is the strategic process of developing a unique identity and image for a city, designed to attract residents, tourists, investors, and foster civic pride through consistent communication of its values and strengths (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2008).
- **Public Awareness** refers to the extent to which the general population is informed about and understands specific information, initiatives, or issues, which influences their attitudes and behaviors (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010).
- **Community Values** are the shared beliefs, norms, and priorities that guide behavior and decision-making within a social group, reflecting the collective identity and culture of the community (Putnam, 2000).
- **Public Expectations** denote the anticipations or beliefs that members of the community hold regarding the performance, behavior, or outcomes of organizations, institutions, or government initiatives (Oliver, 2014).
- **Public Pride** is the feeling of satisfaction, esteem, and emotional attachment that individuals or groups have toward their community or city, often linked to collective achievements and identity (Zhao & Hu, 2017).
- **Perceived Image** refers to the mental picture or impression that individuals or groups hold about a brand, place, or organization, shaped by personal experiences, communication, and social influences (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993).

1.10 Outline of the Thesis structure

In this section, the outlines of this research are clarified. This thesis consists of 5 chapters of which the first chapter covers the detail background of the study, a problem statement of the study, basic research question, objective of the study, delimitation and significance of the thesis

Chapter two contains a review of literature related to the research problem of the study, i.e. literature regarding the main area under study.

Chapter three is the methodology chapter and discusses the research method and gives a detailed outline of the research philosophy, approach, strategy and data collection methods to be used in the research.

Chapter four includes both data presentations and the analysis of the results which is obtained from the methods adopted. This chapter tried to relate the research questions and objectives of the study.

Chapter five is the last chapter and it narrows down the research to the findings of the study, conclusions in accordance with the research questions and gives the recommendations.

Figure 1.1: *Thesis outline*



Source: constructed by the author

CHAPTER TWO

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

In order to answer the research questions several steps need to be taken. One of these steps is viewing relevant theory about the concepts under study which is done in this chapter. The review of literature involves the systematic identification, location and analysis of documents containing information related to the research problem being investigated. The main purpose of literature review is to determine what has been done already related to the research problem being studied (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003)

Addis Ababa, serving as both Ethiopia's capital and a chartered state, is a dynamic hub in Africa, hosting the African Union headquarters and a significant UN presence. Its unique administrative status grants the city considerable autonomy. The city's population has experienced substantial growth, reaching an estimated 5,956,680 in its metro area by 2025, driven by a robust 4.44% annual growth rate and rural-to-urban migration. Covering 527 square kilometers, the city has a population density of around 5,165 individuals per square kilometer. Demographically, it's characterized by a higher female population, diverse ethnic groups including Amhara (47%) and Oromo (19.5%), and a strong Orthodox Christian majority (82%). Addis Ababa also boasts Ethiopia's highest literacy rates and improved public health indicators, with over 98% of homes having access to clean drinking water.

Administratively, Addis Ababa is divided into 10 subcities (kifle ketema) and 99 wards (kebele), each with distinct neighborhoods like Piassa in Arada, and Gerji in Bole. These settlements reflect historical land grants and contribute to the city's diverse urban fabric. Over the past two decades, Addis Ababa has seen significant state-led infrastructural development. This includes major investments in roads and transport, highlighted by the ambitious Corridor Development Project (CDP), which aims to upgrade routes, enhance connectivity, and improve urban aesthetics with features like wider walkways, bike lanes, and public transport facilities. The city has also focused on creating green spaces and public areas, transforming spaces like Friendship Square and the redeveloped Meskel Square into vibrant community hubs. The Riverside Green Development Project is another notable effort, blending flood protection with leisure areas along the Kebena and Little Akaki Rivers.

2.1. Theoretical Concepts and Definitions

2.1.1. Definition and Evolution of City Branding

City branding, a relatively recent phenomenon, has evolved significantly from its initial, simplistic approaches to a sophisticated field encompassing diverse theoretical perspectives and practical applications. Initially conceived, as a mere marketing exercise focused on attracting tourists and businesses, the understanding of city branding has broadened considerably. It's now viewed as a strategic process involving the development and communication of a city's unique identity, values, and aspirations to build a strong reputation and achieve specific economic, social, and environmental goals (Keller, 2012, Mehdi and Abbas, 2018). This shift reflects a growing recognition that a city's brand is not simply a logo or slogan; it's a complex reflection of its tangible and intangible assets, its residents' perceptions, and its place within a global context (Acuti, Mazzoli, Donvito, & Chan, 2018).

Early conceptualizations of city branding often drew parallels with corporate branding, emphasizing the importance of consistent messaging, brand management, and the creation of a clear brand identity (Acuti, Mazzoli, Donvito, & Chan, 2018). However, this corporate-centric approach has been increasingly critiqued for neglecting the inherent complexity and multifaceted nature of cities. Cities, unlike corporations, are not monolithic entities. This inherent heterogeneity necessitates a more participatory and inclusive approach to city branding, acknowledging the need to build consensus and manage diverse stakeholder expectations (Anholt, 2007; Keller, 2012; Fatmawati & Maharani, 2023).

The evolution of city branding has also been influenced by broader theoretical advancements in place branding, destination marketing, and urban studies. Place branding, a broader concept encompassing the branding of regions, nations, and even smaller geographical areas, provides a useful theoretical framework for understanding the strategic challenges and opportunities associated with city branding (Morgan, Pritchard & Piggott, 2002; Ashworth & Voogd, 2009). Destination marketing, a field focused on attracting tourists and businesses to specific locations, offers practical insights into the marketing and communication strategies that can be employed to build a city's brand awareness and reputation. Urban studies shows, with its focus on the social, economic, and political dynamics of urban areas, provides crucial contextual understanding for

evaluating the impact and effectiveness of city branding initiatives (Breheny, 2009, Etty Indriani, 2024).

Furthermore, the rise of globalization and the increasing interconnectedness of cities have profoundly influenced the evolution of city branding. Cities now compete globally for talent, investment, and tourism, making the development of a strong and differentiated brand imperative for attracting economic opportunities and enhancing their international competitiveness (Florida, 2002). This competition has led to a more strategic and sophisticated approach to city branding, with a greater emphasis on integrating branding initiatives with broader urban development plans and policies (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 2002). The emergence of digital technologies and social media has also played a crucial role in shaping the evolution of city branding (Etty Indriani, 2024). These platforms have provided new avenues for cities to engage with their target audiences, build relationships with residents and stakeholders, and monitor their brand perceptions (Park, 2018; Wood, 2011).

2.1.2. Key Elements of City Branding Strategies

Effective city branding requires a systematic and integrated approach, encompassing a range of key elements designed to build a strong and compelling brand identity and achieve specific strategic objectives. These core elements can be broadly categorized by Breheny, (2009, Keller, 2012, further Mehdi and Abbas, (2018), and further used by Etty Indriani, (2024) as follows:



Figure 2.1: key elements and relationship of city branding strategy presented by author canvas soft, 2025

Brand Positioning and Value Proposition: This element forms the foundation of any successful city branding strategy. It involves defining the city's unique selling proposition (USP), identifying its core values, and determining its target audience(s). The positioning statement should clearly articulate what distinguishes the city from other competing destinations and why it should be chosen by its target groups. It's crucial to conduct thorough market research and stakeholder analysis to understand the city's strengths and weaknesses and identify opportunities to leverage its unique assets (Kapferer, 2008). The value proposition needs to be authentically reflective of the city's character and avoid unsubstantiated claims or 'branding spin'. A city that positions itself as a 'green' hub must genuinely invest in environmentally sustainable practices to support this claim (Acuti, Mazzoli, Donvito, & Chan, 2018; Fatmawati & Maharani, 2023).

Brand Identity and Visual Elements: A consistent brand identity is paramount for creating a recognizable and memorable brand. This involves developing a visual identity system, including a logo, typography, color palette, and imagery, that captures the essence of the city's brand personality and values. The visual elements should be used consistently across all communication channels and brand assets to reinforce the brand message and build brand equity. The design should be carefully considered to appropriately represent the city's cultural heritage

and aspirations (Aaker, 2018). The brand identity needs to be flexible, accommodating the diverse aspects of the city without being diluted or confusing (Fatmawati & Maharani, 2023).

Brand Messaging and Communication: This element focuses on developing and delivering compelling communication messages that effectively convey the city's brand identity and value proposition to its target audiences. The key is to craft messages that resonate with the emotions and aspirations of the target groups. This demands careful consideration of the channels used – traditional media, digital platforms, social media campaigns, public relations efforts, and influencer marketing – to ensure maximum reach and impact. The messaging must be tailored to the different audiences, recognizing that a message appealing to tourists might not resonate with potential investors or residents (Pickton & Broderick, 2005). The messages need to be authentic, avoiding generic or clichéd language.

Stakeholder Engagement and Co-creation: Successful city branding requires active engagement with all relevant stakeholders, including residents, businesses, government agencies, and tourism operators. Building consensus, fostering collaboration, and considering diverse perspectives are essential for creating a brand that resonates authentically with the city's identity. Stakeholder engagement can take many forms, from conducting public consultations and focus groups to establishing collaborative partnerships and co-creation initiatives (Pearce, 2005). This participatory approach is crucial to avoid the risk of imposing a brand from the top down, which may lead to resistance and lack of buy-in from key stakeholders (Alvarado-Karste & Guzmán, 2020).

Brand Measurement and Evaluation: This critical element focuses on developing metrics and tracking mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of the city branding strategy. This involves establishing clear benchmarks and performance indicators, regularly evaluating brand awareness, perceptions, and sentiment, and assessing the impact of branding initiatives on key outcomes, such as tourism, investment, and economic development (Keller, 2012). The data gathered should be used to inform strategy refinement, ensuring continuous improvement and adaptation to changing circumstances. This also includes monitoring social media mentions, website traffic, and media coverage to gauge the success of communication efforts (Dakwah, Handriana, & Herman, 2022).

Brand Governance and Management: Effective city branding requires strong leadership and a well-defined governance structure to ensure the consistency and coherence of the brand over time. This involves assigning responsibility for brand management, establishing clear roles and accountabilities, and developing internal guidelines and processes to maintain brand integrity and prevent inconsistencies in messaging and communication. (Balmer & Greyser, 2003). A dedicated brand management team, or a designated individual within a relevant department (e.g., economic development, tourism), is usually responsible for implementing and monitoring the strategy.

Integration with Urban Planning and Development: City branding shouldn't be a standalone activity; it should be deeply integrated with broader urban planning and development policies and strategies. A city's physical environment, infrastructure, and urban design directly influence its brand image and attractiveness. Therefore, branding initiatives must align with urban development projects, ensuring that the city's physical assets reflect its brand identity and values (Hall, 2002; Alvianna, Hidayatullah, Pratama, Aristanto, & Waris, 2022). This creates a synergistic relationship, enhancing both the city's physical appeal and its brand reputation.

Sustainability and Long-term Vision: City branding should not be a short-term marketing campaign; it requires a long-term perspective and commitment to sustainability. The brand should reflect the city's commitment to environmental, social, and economic sustainability, ensuring its resilience and long-term viability. This involves incorporating sustainability principles into all aspects of the branding strategy, from the choice of materials and communication channels to the development of sustainable tourism practices (Bramwell & Lane, 2011). A city's sustainability credentials are increasingly important to attract both residents and investors.

Storytelling and Narrative: Cities possess rich histories, cultures, and stories that can be powerfully leveraged to build a compelling narrative that resonates with target audiences. Instead of relying solely on factual descriptions, effective city branding employs storytelling techniques to evoke emotions and create a sense of connection with the city (Holt, 2004). This involves crafting narratives that highlight the city's unique character, heritage, and aspirations, attracting both individuals and businesses that connect with the city's values and narrative.

Crisis Management and Reputation Repair: Even the strongest city brands can face reputational crises. It's crucial to have a robust crisis management plan in place to address negative events or perceptions that could damage the city's brand image. This requires establishing proactive monitoring systems, developing crisis communication protocols, and building relationships with key stakeholders to facilitate rapid and effective responses in times of crisis (Coombs, 2007). A well-managed crisis can actually strengthen brand resilience if handled effectively and transparently (Amrullah, Nurbaeti, Ratnaningtyas, Manumpak, Singh, & Budi, 2022).

In conclusion, literature shows that a successful implementation of these elements requires collaboration across multiple stakeholders, including local government, businesses, cultural institutions, community groups, and residents. It necessitates flexibility and adaptation to changing circumstances and a willingness to continually evolve the brand to reflect the city's dynamic environment. By holistically integrating these elements, cities can develop effective branding strategies that enhance their image, attract investment and tourism, strengthen community engagement, improve quality of life, and build a sustainable future.

2.1.3. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in City Branding

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) serve as quantifiable measures that help cities assess the effectiveness of their branding strategies. KPIs can be categorized into several domains: economic performance, brand awareness, and quality of life indicators.

Economic Performance Indicators: Economic performance is often measured through tourism revenue, foreign direct investment (FDI), and local business growth. For instance, cities that have implemented effective branding strategies have reported increases in tourism revenues. A study by Zenker and Beckmann (2013) highlighted those cities with strong brand identities saw a significant rise in tourist visits, resulting in an average revenue increase of 15% over a five-year period.

Brand Awareness Metrics: Brand awareness is crucial in determining the effectiveness of city branding. Metrics such as brand recognition, recall, and preference can be measured through surveys and online analytics. A research by Van Hamme and de Lange (2016) found that cities with comprehensive marketing strategies, including social media engagement, experienced a

30% increase in brand recognition over two years. Online sentiment analysis can also be utilized to measure public perception and engagement with the city brand (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2015).

Quality of Life Indicators: Quality of life plays an essential role in city branding, as it influences residents' satisfaction and their likelihood of recommending the city to others. Indicators in this area include safety, educational opportunities, healthcare access, and cultural offerings. The “Global Liveability Index” by The Economist Intelligence Unit serves as a prominent example, ranking cities based on various quality of life factors (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2022). Cities that improved their livability scores often correlate this enhancement with targeted branding campaigns focused on community engagement and service improvement.

2.2. Branding Strategies Implemented by City Administrations

City administrations are increasingly recognizing the importance of branding to attract residents, businesses, and tourists, fostering economic growth, and enhancing their global image. Effective branding transcends mere slogans; it involves a holistic approach encompassing marketing, urban development, and consistent messaging across all city services. This section delves into the specific branding strategies employed by city administrations, focusing on marketing and promotional campaigns and the strategic utilization of infrastructure and urban development initiatives.

2.2.1 Marketing and Promotional Campaigns

Modern city branding necessitates sophisticated marketing and promotional campaigns designed to target specific demographics and communicate a clear, compelling message. These campaigns leverage various channels, including digital media, traditional advertising, public relations, and experiential marketing, to achieve a high level of brand awareness and recognition.

2.2.1.1 Digital Marketing and Social Media

The ubiquitous nature of the internet and social media platforms provides city administrations with unparalleled opportunities to engage directly with their target audiences. Cities are utilizing websites, blogs, social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, etc.), and targeted online advertising to showcase their unique attributes, promote events and initiatives, and

respond to citizen queries. Effective digital strategies often incorporate data analytics to track campaign performance, refine targeting, and optimize resource allocation.

For example, the city of Amsterdam actively uses Instagram to showcase its canals, museums, and vibrant cultural scene, attracting tourists and potential residents (Amsterdam Marketing, 2023). Their strategy includes high-quality photography, engaging videos, and interactive content such as polls and Q&A sessions. Similarly, many cities utilize targeted Facebook advertising to reach specific demographics, promoting job opportunities, affordable housing initiatives, or upcoming community events, such as the “This is Austin” campaign promoting local businesses and events (City of Austin, 2022).

The effectiveness of digital marketing hinges on consistent messaging, visually appealing content, and proactive community engagement. Cities must address negative feedback promptly and use the platform to build relationships with their stakeholders. Failing to manage online reputation can severely damage a city's brand image (Kavaratzis, 2019).

2.2.1.2 Traditional Advertising and Public Relations

While digital marketing dominates contemporary strategies, traditional channels, such as print advertising, television commercials, and radio spots, still hold relevance, especially for reaching older demographics or reinforcing brand messages within the local community. Public relations initiatives, including press releases, media partnerships, and proactive engagement with journalists, play a crucial role in shaping public perception and disseminating positive narratives about the city.

Cities often utilize print advertisements in local newspapers and magazines to promote community events, job fairs, or new infrastructure projects. Television commercials and radio spots can be particularly effective in reaching broad audiences and disseminating succinct, memorable messages. For instance, the city of New York has run successful campaigns on local television channels to promote tourism and cultural events, highlighting iconic attractions such as Broadway and Central Park (NYC & Company, 2021).

Effective public relations strategies involve cultivating strong relationships with local and national media. By proactively sharing information about positive developments, city

administrations can shape media narratives and avoid negative coverage. Press releases announcing significant achievements, such as economic growth or infrastructure improvements, can generate positive media attention, as seen in the recent revitalization efforts in Detroit (City of Detroit, 2022).

2.2.1.3 Experiential Marketing

Experiential marketing focuses on creating memorable experiences that directly engage consumers and strengthen their emotional connection with the city brand. This approach includes organizing festivals, concerts, sporting events, and other public gatherings that showcase the city's culture, character, and appeal.

For example, cities like Chicago organize the “Chicago Gourmet” food festival to highlight local cuisine, while San Francisco hosts the “San Francisco Street Food Festival,” showcasing local food vendors and attracting tourists and residents alike (Chicago Gourmet, 2023; San Francisco Street Food Festival, 2023). These events provide opportunities for citizens and visitors to interact directly with the city brand, fostering a sense of community and pride. The success of such campaigns is measured through event attendance, social media engagement, and media coverage (Erdiana & Yurisma, 2022).

2.2.1.4 Branding Guidelines and Style Manuals

Consistent application of brand elements across all city communications is crucial for building a strong and recognizable brand identity. City administrations often develop comprehensive branding guidelines and style manuals that dictate the use of logos, fonts, colors, and messaging. These guidelines ensure a unified and professional image across all city materials, from websites and signage to marketing collateral and public announcements. Adherence to these guidelines is crucial for maintaining brand consistency and preventing brand dilution (City of Los Angeles, 2021).

2.2.2 Infrastructure and Urban Development as Branding Tools

The physical environment of a city plays a pivotal role in shaping its brand identity. Infrastructure development and urban renewal projects can serve as powerful branding tools, showcasing a city's commitment to progress, sustainability, and quality of life.

2.2.2.1 Sustainable Urban Development

Cities are increasingly emphasizing sustainable practices in their urban development strategies, recognizing the environmental and economic benefits of promoting green initiatives. Investing in green spaces, promoting cycling and public transportation, and implementing energy-efficient building codes can enhance a city's brand image as environmentally conscious and forward-thinking. This resonates with environmentally conscious individuals and businesses, potentially attracting talent and investment (Hospers, 2011).

Examples include the development of green corridors, rooftop gardens, and the promotion of electric vehicles, as seen in cities like Copenhagen, which has committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2025 (City of Copenhagen, 2020). These initiatives not only improve the city's environmental performance but also enhance its appeal to residents, tourists, and businesses seeking sustainable environments.

2.2.2.2 Public Spaces and Urban Design

The design and functionality of public spaces significantly impact a city's brand perception. Investing in aesthetically pleasing parks, plazas, and pedestrian-friendly streets can create attractive and vibrant public spaces that enhance the overall quality of life and attract residents, tourists, and businesses (Kavaratzis, 2004). For instance, the High Line in New York City has transformed an abandoned railway into a thriving urban park, becoming a symbol of innovative urban design (The Friends of the High Line, 2023).

Cities are increasingly incorporating citizen input into the design and development of public spaces, creating more inclusive and responsive urban environments. Participatory design processes allow residents to express their preferences and ensure that public spaces cater to the needs and desires of the local community, as demonstrated by the community-driven park projects in Seattle (Seattle Parks and Recreation, 2022).

2.2.2.3 Transportation Infrastructure

Efficient and accessible transportation systems are crucial for enhancing a city's livability and attracting residents and businesses. Investments in public transportation, cycling infrastructure, and pedestrian walkways can significantly improve a city's brand image. Such initiatives

demonstrate a commitment to sustainability, accessibility, and improved quality of life (Karagiannis & Andrinis, 2021).

Cities like Amsterdam are investing in modern and efficient public transportation systems, including light rail and improved subway systems, while also promoting cycling as a primary mode of transportation (Amsterdam Public Transport, 2023). Chicago's "Complete Streets" initiative promotes cycling infrastructure, creating dedicated bike lanes and enhancing pedestrian walkways to improve urban mobility (Chicago Department of Transportation, 2022).

2.2.2.4 Cultural and Creative Infrastructure

Investing in cultural venues, such as museums, art galleries, theaters, and performance spaces, can significantly enhance a city's brand appeal. A vibrant cultural scene attracts tourists, supports local artists, and enhances the overall quality of life (Bustomi & Avianto, 2022). Cities like Paris have successfully branded themselves through their rich cultural infrastructure, with landmarks like the Louvre and the Pompidou Center drawing millions of visitors annually (Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau, 2023).

Cities are also investing in creative infrastructure, such as maker spaces, co-working hubs, and incubators, to support innovation and entrepreneurship. These spaces provide opportunities for creative industries to thrive, fostering economic growth and enhancing the city's brand image as a hub for innovation, as seen in the rise of tech hubs in cities like San Francisco and Austin (Startup Genome, 2022).

2.2.2.5 Smart City Initiatives

The adoption of smart city technologies, such as intelligent transportation systems, smart grids, and digital platforms, can enhance a city's brand image as technologically advanced and forward-thinking. Implementing smart city initiatives can improve efficiency, reduce costs, and enhance the quality of life, creating a more attractive environment for residents and businesses (Kumar et al., 2019).

Examples include the use of sensor networks to monitor traffic flow in Barcelona, which has significantly improved urban mobility (Barcelona Smart City, 2023), and the development of

mobile applications to provide information and services to citizens, as seen in Singapore's Smart Nation initiative (Smart Nation Singapore, 2023).

2.2.2.6 Architectural Landmarks and Urban Design

Iconic architectural landmarks and thoughtfully planned urban districts can become powerful symbols of a city's identity and appeal. These features play significant roles in shaping perceptions of a city's aesthetic qualities, modernism, history, and cultural heritage. Cities like Chicago, with its iconic skyline, and Barcelona, known for Gaudi's architecture, have effectively utilized their architectural heritage as part of their branding strategies (Chicago Architecture Foundation, 2022; Barcelona Tourism, 2023).

2.2.2.7 Public Art and Street Art

The integration of public art and street art into the urban landscape can contribute to a city's unique character and brand identity. Art installations, murals, and sculptures can enliven public spaces, attract residents and tourists, and showcase the city's cultural vibrancy and creativity. Cities like Melbourne have successfully implemented public art strategies to enhance their urban environment and foster community engagement (Melbourne City Council, 2022).

2.2.3 Digital and Social Media Strategies for City Branding

In today's digital age, city branding heavily relies on innovative digital and social media strategies. These platforms provide cities with the ability to engage directly with diverse audiences, enhance their visibility, and promote their unique identities. This section outlines the various digital and social media strategies cities employ to build and maintain their brand image.

2.2.3.1 Engaging Content Creation

Creating engaging content is at the forefront of effective digital strategies. Cities utilize high-quality visuals, compelling stories, and interactive formats to capture the attention of potential visitors and residents. For instance, cities like Barcelona leverage visually stunning videos and images to promote their cultural events, highlighting local festivals and architectural landmarks (Barcelona Tourism, 2023).

Additionally, cities employ storytelling techniques to convey their unique narratives, helping to foster an emotional connection with their audience. For example, the city of Melbourne shares

stories of local artists and entrepreneurs, showcasing the vibrancy of its cultural scene (Melbourne City Council, 2022).

2.2.3.2 Social Media Platforms

Cities utilize various social media platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok, to reach different demographics. Each platform offers unique features that can enhance engagement.

Instagram is particularly effective for visual storytelling, allowing cities to showcase their landscapes, events, and attractions through photos and videos. The city of Amsterdam, for instance, uses Instagram to highlight its rich culture and scenic beauty, attracting tourists and locals alike (Amsterdam Marketing, 2023).

Facebook serves as a platform for community engagement, where cities can promote events and initiatives, share local news, and encourage discussions among residents. The “This is Austin” campaign effectively utilizes Facebook to connect with the community and promote local businesses (City of Austin, 2022).

TikTok has emerged as a powerful tool for reaching younger audiences. Cities like San Diego have created fun, engaging short videos that highlight local attractions and events, utilizing trending challenges and sounds to increase visibility (San Diego Tourism Authority, 2023).

2.2.3.3 Influencer Collaborations

Collaborating with social media influencers is a growing trend in city branding. Influencers with large followings can help amplify a city's message and reach new audiences. For example, the city of Nashville has partnered with travel influencers to showcase its music scene and culinary offerings, resulting in increased tourism and engagement (Visit Nashville, 2023). These collaborations often include sponsored posts, content creation, and participation in local events, enabling influencers to authentically share their experiences with their followers.

2.2.3.4 User-Generated Content

Encouraging user-generated content (UGC) is another effective strategy for city branding. By inviting residents and visitors to share their own experiences and photos, cities can create a sense

of community and authenticity. For instance, the city of Toronto encourages residents to use specific hashtags when posting about local events or attractions, which helps to build a collective narrative around the city's brand (Toronto Tourism, 2023). Cities can further leverage UGC by featuring it on their official social media channels or websites, showcasing the diverse experiences of those who live in or visit the city.

2.2.3.5 Data Analytics and Performance Tracking

To refine their digital strategies, cities increasingly rely on data analytics to track engagement and measure the effectiveness of their campaigns. By analyzing metrics such as likes, shares, comments, and follower growth, city administrations can gain insights into what content resonates most with their audience. For example, cities like Los Angeles utilize social media analytics tools to assess the performance of their campaigns, allowing them to adjust their strategies based on real-time feedback (City of Los Angeles, 2022). This data-driven approach ensures that cities remain responsive to the preferences and interests of their target audiences.

Conclusion on Branding Strategies, literature review shows above effective city branding requires a holistic approach integrating marketing, communications, and urban development strategies. By leveraging digital marketing, traditional channels, and experiential marketing, cities can communicate a compelling message that resonates with their target audiences. Investing in sustainable urban development, creating attractive public spaces, improving transportation infrastructure, and fostering a vibrant cultural scene can enhance a city's brand image as a desirable place to live, work, and visit.

Finally, a city's brand identity is built over time through consistent messaging, thoughtful urban planning, and a dedicated commitment to creating a positive and memorable experience for all stakeholders. The success of any branding initiative requires ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure alignment with evolving community needs and aspirations. Future research should focus on the long-term impacts of various branding strategies on city economic development, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability. Further investigation into comparative case studies across various cities, considering their size, cultural context, and economic diversity will provide valuable insights into optimal branding approaches.

In other hand, Digital and social media a strategy in detail literature shows that it is an essential component of contemporary city branding efforts. By creating engaging content, leveraging various platforms, collaborating with influencers, encouraging user-generated content, and utilizing data analytics, cities can effectively promote their identities and engage with both residents and visitors. As technology continues to evolve, city administrations must remain adaptable and innovative in their digital strategies to maintain a strong and appealing brand presence.

2.3. Measuring Public Perception and Branding Strategies on Branding Success

2.3.1 Measuring the Importance of Public Perception in City Branding

The success of any city branding initiative hinges critically on public perception. A positive image isn't merely a desirable outcome; it's a fundamental driver of economic growth, tourism, investment, and overall city prosperity (Anholt, 2010). However, simply stating this importance isn't sufficient. Rigorous measurement is crucial to understand the effectiveness of branding strategies and to adapt them based on real-world feedback. Several methods exist for gauging public perception, each with its strengths and limitations.

Quantitative Methods: Surveys, both online and offline form the backbone of quantitative assessment. These are particularly useful for gathering large-scale data on specific aspects of a city's image. Well-designed surveys can measure residents' and tourists' perceptions across a range of attributes, such as safety, cleanliness, cultural offerings, economic opportunities, and overall livability (Ashworth & Voogd, 2006). Statistical analysis then reveals the relative importance of these attributes and identifies areas needing improvement. For example, a survey might use Likert scales to gauge respondent agreement with statements like "The city is a safe place to live" or "The city offers diverse cultural experiences." Furthermore, conjoint analysis can help determine the relative importance of different city attributes in influencing overall perception (Louviere et al., 2000).

Beyond surveys, quantitative data can also be derived from secondary sources. Social media analytics, for example, can track sentiment towards the city across various platforms (like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram). Analyzing the frequency and tone of mentions, as well as the topics discussed, provides valuable insights into public narrative (Keller, 2016). This approach

offers the benefit of real-time monitoring, allowing for immediate responses to emerging issues. However, the data needs careful interpretation as it may be subject to biases, including the selective nature of social media participation and the potential for manipulation (e.g., astroturfing).

Qualitative Methods: Qualitative methods offer a deeper understanding of the "why" behind the numbers. In-depth interviews allow researchers to explore the nuances of public perception, uncovering the underlying reasons behind particular opinions (Bryman, 2016). Focus groups provide an opportunity to observe group dynamics and explore shared understanding and dissenting viewpoints. These methods are particularly useful for identifying unanticipated issues or exploring complex perceptions that might not be captured by quantitative measures. For example, a focus group discussion might reveal underlying anxieties about gentrification or concerns about environmental sustainability that aren't explicitly reflected in survey responses.

Mixed Methods Approaches: The most effective approach often combines quantitative and qualitative methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Quantitative data can provide a broad overview of public perception, while qualitative data provides context and deeper insights. For instance, a survey might reveal a negative perception of a city's public transportation system. Follow-up interviews could then explore the specific reasons behind this negative perception, uncovering factors such as unreliability, overcrowding, or lack of accessibility. This integrated approach provides a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of public perception than either method alone.

Challenges in Measurement: While various robust methods exist, challenges remain in accurately capturing public perception. Sampling bias can skew results if the selected sample is not representative of the broader population. Response bias, where respondents provide answers they believe are socially desirable or align with the researcher's expectations, needs careful consideration (Tourangeau & Yan, 2007). Furthermore, measuring intangible aspects of city image, such as its "personality" or "soul," requires creative approaches that go beyond simple attribute ratings.

2.3.2 Measuring the Relationship between Public Trust and City Branding

Public trust is an increasingly important element in successful city branding. It's not enough for a city to project a desirable image; citizens and stakeholders must also believe that the city government is competent, transparent, and accountable (Levi, 1998). The relationship between public trust and branding success is multifaceted. High levels of public trust can amplify the positive effects of branding initiatives, improving the credibility of the city's message and enhancing its attractiveness to outsiders. Conversely, low levels of trust can undermine even the most sophisticated branding efforts, leading to skepticism and resistance.

Measuring public trust requires similar approaches to those used for measuring overall public perception. Surveys can directly assess levels of trust in various city institutions and initiatives, using scales to measure agreement with statements relating to trustworthiness, competence, and fairness (e.g., "I trust the city government to act in the best interests of its citizens"). Qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups, can explore the reasons behind differing levels of trust, identifying specific policies, actions, or communication strategies that impact public confidence (Edelman, 2018). Social media analytics can offer valuable insights into public sentiment regarding the trustworthiness of city officials and their actions. Analyzing social media conversations surrounding specific city policies or events can provide real-time feedback on public trust levels.

However, accurately measuring public trust presents some unique challenges. Trust is a complex and multifaceted construct, influenced by personal experiences, cultural context, and individual predispositions (Putnam, 2000). It's not easily reduced to a single numerical score. Furthermore, public trust can fluctuate in response to specific events, making longitudinal studies crucial for tracking changes over time. A sudden crisis (e.g., a natural disaster or a major scandal) can significantly impact public trust, irrespective of long-term branding efforts. Therefore, continuous monitoring of trust levels is crucial for effective city branding.

2.3.3 Public Engagement in the Branding Process

Public engagement is no longer a desirable add-on to city branding initiatives; it's a critical component of success (Holliday, 2017). Engaging citizens and stakeholders throughout the process, from the initial research phase to the implementation and evaluation stages, can improve

the quality of branding strategies, build ownership and buy-in, and enhance the overall effectiveness of the campaign. A participatory approach fosters a sense of collective identity and shared responsibility for the city's image.

Measuring the effectiveness of public engagement requires a focus on both process and outcome. From a process perspective, researchers can assess the extent to which various stakeholder groups were meaningfully involved. Methods include tracking participation rates in public forums, analyzing the content of citizen submissions and feedback, and evaluating the responsiveness of city officials to public input (Matthews, 2014). Quantitative data on participation rates, feedback volume, and the diversity of voices represented can provide an overview of the engagement process. Qualitative methods, such as interviews with participants, can further explore the quality of engagement and assess the degree to which citizens felt their input was valued and incorporated.

Outcomes of public engagement can be measured by examining the extent to which citizen input shaped the final branding strategy. For example, researchers can analyze how many citizen suggestions were adopted, how the final brand message reflects public priorities, and how the branding campaign resonates with diverse segments of the population (Bruggeman et al., 2019). Surveys and focus groups can assess the extent to which the public feels represented by the city's brand and whether the branding process increased public satisfaction with city government. This evaluation needs to go beyond simply assessing participation; it must also assess the genuine influence of public input on the ultimate brand strategy.

2.3.4. Economic and Social Impacts of Branding Strategies

The effectiveness of city branding can also be evaluated through the economic and social impacts of implemented strategies. Understanding these impacts can help city planners and marketers refine their approaches to branding.

Economic Impacts: Economic impacts of city branding are multi-faceted, often leading to increased tourism, improved local business performance, and enhanced property values. A comprehensive analysis by Dall'Olmo Riley and Droulers (2018) showed that cities with strong brands could see up to a 20% increase in property values, driven by heightened desirability and

perceived quality of living. Additionally, cities like Barcelona have leveraged their brand identity to host international events, significantly boosting local economies (Hernández-Mogollón et al., 2020).

Social Impacts: On the social front, effective city branding can foster a sense of community and belonging among residents. Initiatives that promote local culture, heritage, and public spaces often result in higher civic engagement. A case study in Ghent, Belgium, illustrated how the city's branding strategy, which emphasized community participation, led to increased social cohesion and local pride among residents (Van den Broeck, 2021).

Long-Term Sustainability of Branding Strategies: Lastly, the sustainability of branding strategies plays a vital role in their effectiveness. Cities that prioritize long-term vision over short-term gains tend to see more sustainable impacts. Research by Ashworth and Kavaratzis (2017) suggests that cities focusing on inclusivity, sustainability, and authentic cultural representation tend to build resilient brands that withstand economic fluctuations and enhance residents' quality of life.

2.5 Empirical review: On Surveys and Public Opinion Analysis

Surveys and public opinion analysis provide critical insights into the perceptions of both residents and visitors regarding a city's brand. These methodologies can reveal how branding efforts resonate with target audiences.

Public Surveys: Surveys are commonly employed to gauge public awareness and attitudes towards a city's brand. A survey by the City Branding Research Consortium (2021) indicated that 70% of respondents felt positively about their city's brand after engaging with various promotional materials. Moreover, these surveys can help identify which aspects of the brand are most appealing and which areas require improvement.

Focus Groups and Qualitative Research: In addition to quantitative surveys, qualitative research methods such as focus groups can provide a deeper understanding of public perceptions. These discussions can uncover insights about emotional connections to the city brand and specific elements that resonate with residents (Hernandez & Mantecon, 2018). For instance,

focus group discussions in Valencia, Spain, revealed that the city's rich cultural heritage was a primary driver of its branding success (Valencia City Council, 2019).

Online Sentiment Analysis: With the rise of digital communication, online sentiment analysis has become a valuable tool for measuring public opinion. Social media platforms, blogs, and forums offer a wealth of data that can reflect the public's perception of a city brand in real time. A study by Chikani et al. (2020) demonstrated that cities leveraging sentiment analysis on social media were able to adjust their branding strategies quickly based on public feedback. This adaptability is crucial in maintaining a positive city image, especially during crises.

2.5.1. Common Criticisms and Controversies in City Branding Strategies

City branding is aiming to enhance a city's image and attract investment, tourism, and talent, faces significant criticisms and controversies, particularly concerning public acceptance. Gaining genuine public buy-in is crucial for successful branding, yet it's often a significant hurdle. Several key challenges hinder this process.

2.6.1. Challenges in Gaining Public Acceptance

One of the primary challenges in city branding lies in securing public acceptance and engagement. This is multifaceted and involves several key issues:

Lack of Transparency and Public Participation: A frequent criticism is the lack of transparency in the branding process. Many city branding projects are developed behind closed doors, with limited or no meaningful public consultation (Anholt, 2014). This top-down approach fosters resentment and distrust, leaving citizens feeling alienated from a process that directly impacts their lives and city's identity. The absence of public forums, surveys, or participatory design workshops undermines the legitimacy of the resultant brand and diminishes its effectiveness (Goetz, 2017; Morgan & Pritchard, 2018). This lack of inclusivity can lead to a brand that doesn't truly reflect the city's diverse population and its authentic values.

Authenticity and Representation: A successful city brand must reflect the city's true character and values, avoiding superficial or clichéd portrayals. However, the pursuit of a marketable image sometimes leads to a sanitized or idealized representation that ignores the city's complexities and challenges (Dinnie, 2011). This can result in a brand that feels inauthentic,

disconnected from the lived experiences of residents, and even offensive to certain segments of the population. For instance, a brand focusing solely on a city's affluent areas might alienate residents in less privileged neighborhoods, creating a sense of exclusion and reinforcing existing social inequalities (Ashworth & Voogd, 2008). The challenge lies in balancing the need for a compelling narrative with a truthful and inclusive representation of the city's diverse population and realities.

Commodification and Gentrification: City branding initiatives are often criticized for contributing to commodification and gentrification. Attracting investment and tourism, while positive goals, can lead to rising property values, displacement of long-term residents, and a shift towards commercialization that erodes the city's unique character (Knox, 2011; Bridge & Watson, 2002). The focus on attracting affluent consumers and investors can inadvertently marginalize existing communities and accelerate the displacement of lower-income residents. This negative consequence undermines the social equity goals that many city branding initiatives claim to support. The tension between economic development and social justice needs careful attention and planning.

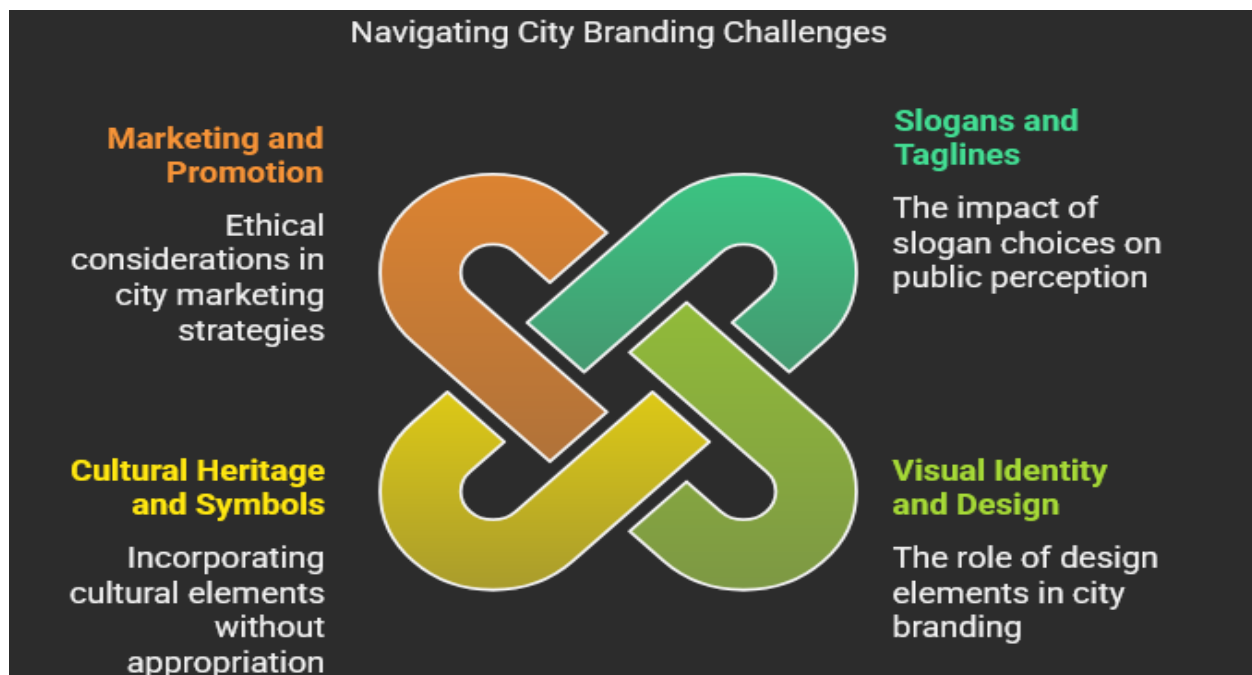
The Risk of Brand Dilution and Inconsistency: Effective city brands require consistency in their messaging and application across various platforms and initiatives. However, maintaining consistent messaging across departments and organizations within a city can be difficult (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Inconsistent messaging, or conflicting branding efforts from different agencies, can dilute the brand's power and create confusion among residents and outsiders. This dilution weakens the intended impact of the branding strategy and reduces its overall effectiveness. A lack of coordination and a strategic framework can undermine the brand's integrity and perceived value.

Resistance to Change and Nostalgia: Introducing a new city brand can encounter resistance from residents who are attached to traditional identities and images of their city. This resistance stems from a sense of loss or nostalgia for the familiar and a fear of change (Harvey, 1989). Overcoming this resistance requires careful engagement with the community, acknowledging existing attachments, and demonstrating how the new brand can build upon and enhance the city's positive attributes, preserving its heritage while adapting to a changing environment.

Measuring the Effectiveness and Impact: Evaluating the success of a city branding initiative is a complex and challenging task; While some metrics, such as tourism numbers or foreign investment inflows, can be quantified, the deeper impact on civic pride, social cohesion, or residents' well-being is more difficult to measure (Ashworth, 2013; Dann, 2011). A lack of robust evaluation mechanisms can lead to a perception that city branding is ineffective or driven by aesthetic concerns rather than achieving tangible, positive outcomes for the city and its inhabitants.

2.5.2 Controversies Surrounding Specific Branding Elements

Beyond the general challenges of public acceptance, several specific elements of city branding strategies often generate controversy:



Slogans and Taglines: The choice of slogans and taglines can be highly contentious. A poorly chosen slogan might be perceived as cliché, insensitive, or out of touch with the city's values. The selection process must involve sufficient public consultation and careful consideration of potential negative interpretations. A tagline that fails to resonate with residents can undermine the entire branding campaign (Urry, 2002).

Visual Identity and Design: The visual elements of a city brand, including logos, colors, typography, and imagery, can also spark controversy. Some designs may be considered overly simplistic, uninspired, or even offensive. The design process needs to be transparent and participatory, ensuring that the visual identity reflects the city's unique character and resonates with the community.

Use of Cultural Heritage and Symbols: City brands often utilize cultural heritage and symbols to create a sense of place and identity. However, the use of such elements can be controversial if they are appropriated without proper consideration of their cultural significance or if they reinforce stereotypes and inequalities. The use of culturally sensitive elements needs careful planning and consultation with relevant communities.

Marketing and Promotion: Controversies can also arise from the methods used to market and promote the city brand. Some marketing campaigns may be viewed as misleading, unethical, or culturally insensitive. The marketing strategy should be carefully planned to ensure that it is ethical, transparent, and reflects the city's values (Wood, 2011).

Furthermore, current research understood that from review, successful city branding requires more than just creating a catchy slogan or logo. It demands a holistic approach that prioritizes genuine public engagement, transparency, authenticity, and ethical considerations. Addressing the challenges of public acceptance is crucial, requiring a shift from top-down approaches to more inclusive and participatory processes. By acknowledging and addressing the criticisms and controversies surrounding city branding, cities can develop strategies that are more effective and sustainable, truly reflecting the spirit and aspirations of their diverse populations.

2.6 Empirical Review

Empirical studies on city branding have significantly increased in recent years as urban centers worldwide strive to enhance their images to attract tourists, investors, and residents. Scholars have widely examined the effectiveness of branding strategies and their reception among the public, noting how these initiatives shape civic identity and influence socio-economic development (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005). Much of this research focuses on how branding

messages are perceived and internalized by citizens, indicating that public perception plays a vital role in the success or failure of city branding efforts.

Kavaratzis (2004) and Anholt (2010) emphasize that successful city branding must go beyond slogans and logos to reflect authentic, lived experiences. When branding aligns with community values and expectations, it fosters stronger public pride and ownership. In Lagos, Nigeria, Mogaji (2018) found that branding efforts that included public participation and clear communication led to more favorable perceptions and stronger citizen engagement. Similarly, Zenker and Braun (2010) proposed that city branding must be stakeholder-oriented, especially in multicultural and rapidly growing cities. Their research showed that when city branding fails to resonate with local identities, it risks alienation rather than engagement.

In Johannesburg, South Africa, Chikanda (2019) observed that branding strategies reflecting social inclusiveness and urban pride positively influenced how residents saw themselves in relation to their city. Moreover, Adeyemo (2020) highlighted that resource limitations, weak inter-agency coordination, and political interference often impede the implementation of effective branding strategies in African cities.

Digital platforms have also emerged as critical tools in shaping perceptions. Jabeen et al. (2019), studying Dubai, found that the use of social media as a branding tool enhanced transparency, allowed real-time citizen feedback, and boosted trust in the city's image. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) supported this by arguing that digital interactivity allows a more democratic approach to branding, as citizens become co-creators of the city's narrative.

In the Ethiopian context, research on city branding is still in its formative stages, though some studies provide valuable insights. Tadesse and Alemu (2020) examined urban development and image-building initiatives in Addis Ababa, noting that the city's attempt to rebrand itself as a modern African capital was often misaligned with public perception due to limited community engagement. The study revealed that many residents viewed these efforts as top-down and disconnected from their daily realities.

Similarly, Desta (2021) explored the Addis Ababa Rivers and Riversides Development Project as a case study in urban beautification and branding. Although the project aimed to enhance the city's image, the lack of public consultation limited its acceptance among citizens. The study

concluded that future branding efforts should prioritize participatory planning and reflect the socio-cultural realities of diverse neighborhoods.

Wolde (2019) conducted a study on civic pride and urban identity in Bahir Dar, showing that public perception of branding initiatives was more favorable when residents saw direct benefits from infrastructure improvements or social programs tied to the branding efforts. This indicates the importance of linking branding strategies with tangible outcomes.

Moreover, a recent study by Mengistu and Teshome (2022) on Addis Ababa's image in domestic tourism campaigns highlighted the inconsistencies between the city's promotional narratives and its infrastructural and social realities. Respondents noted that while the branding portrayed Addis as clean and modern, lived experiences did not always align, thereby diminishing trust in official narratives.

These empirical findings suggest that public perception is heavily influenced by the alignment between branding rhetoric and lived experiences. Citizens are not passive recipients of branding messages; rather, their interpretation is shaped by factors such as identity, expectations, communication transparency, and socio-economic realities.

In light of these insights, this study focuses on understanding how branding strategies implemented by the Addis Ababa City Administration are perceived by the public, particularly in terms of awareness, alignment with community values, and influence on civic identity. It also seeks to build on the limited but growing body of Ethiopian scholarship on the subject, contributing a localized empirical foundation for future research and policy formulation.

2.7. Conceptual frame work

In exploring public perception of city branding strategies in Conceptual frame work based empirical and knowledge gap, it is essential to identify both empirical and knowledge gaps within the existing literature, particularly in the Ethiopian context. Current studies on branding strategies often focus on developed nations, leaving a significant gap in understanding how these concepts apply to cities in developing countries like Ethiopia. While research has examined various dimensions of branding in urban settings, such as community engagement and public sentiment (Acuti et al., 2018; Alvarado-Karste & Guzmán, 2020), there is limited empirical evidence addressing the specific perceptions of residents toward city branding efforts in Ethiopia.

Despite the growing importance of urban branding, the unique socio-economic and cultural landscape of Addis Ababa presents distinct challenges and opportunities that have not been adequately explored. For instance, while some studies highlight the effectiveness of branding strategies in fostering community pride and engagement (Alvianna et al., 2022; Amrullah et al., 2022), the perceptions of Ethiopian citizens regarding these strategies remain under-researched. This gap is critical, as understanding public awareness and sentiment can significantly influence the success of branding initiatives.

Furthermore, the challenges identified by city officials, such as misalignment with community expectations and limited feedback mechanisms, point to a need for deeper investigation into how these factors impact public perception (Dakwah et al., 2022; Fatmawati & Maharani, 2023).

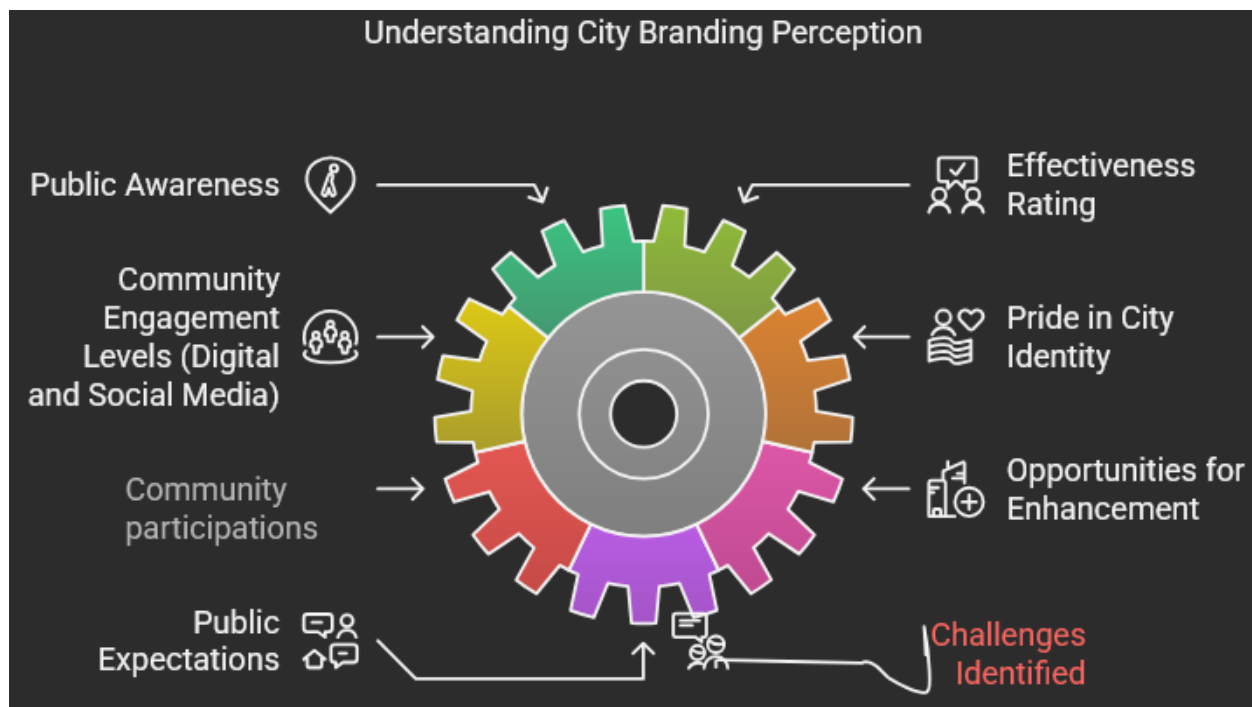


Figure 2.3: Conceptual frame work in exploring public perception of city branding strategies by author canvas soft 2025

In summary, while there is a growing body of literature on urban branding, the specific context of Addis Ababa and the perceptions of its residents remain largely unexplored. Addressing these empirical and knowledge gaps is essential for developing effective branding strategies that resonate with the community and enhance public engagement and pride in the city.

CHAPTER THREE:

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed overview of the methodology adopted to conduct the study. It outlines the research design, sampling strategy, sample size determination, data collection instruments, and methods of data analysis employed throughout the investigation. In addition, the chapter explains how the reliability and validity of the collected data were ensured to maintain the integrity and credibility of the research findings.

The chapter begins by describing the overall research design and the strategy used to guide the investigation. This is followed by a discussion of the target population and the sampling procedures used to select participants. It then elaborates on the tools and techniques applied in gathering both qualitative and quantitative data. The procedures for assessing the validity and reliability of the instruments are also discussed to demonstrate the rigor of the study.

Finally, the chapter concludes by explaining how the collected data were processed and analyzed, providing a clear understanding of how the research questions were addressed. Through this methodological framework, the study aims to ensure a systematic, transparent, and replicable approach to examining public perception of branding strategies implemented by the Addis Ababa City Administration.

3.2 Research Design

A research design is a strategic framework that guides the process of data collection, analysis, and interpretation in a structured and coherent manner, ensuring that the research problem is effectively addressed. As Kothari (2004) asserts, a sound research design provides a logical and systematic plan that facilitates accurate and efficient investigation into the core issues under study. In the context of this research, which aims to explore public perception of branding strategies implemented by the Addis Ababa City Administration, a descriptive research design was adopted.

Descriptive research design is particularly appropriate for studies that seek to systematically describe phenomena, behaviors, or attitudes without manipulating the research environment. This

approach is suitable for examining the level of public awareness, the alignment of branding strategies with community values, and the perceived image of the city as influenced by such strategies (Creswell, 2014). By capturing the views of administrative personnel and analyzing patterns in public perception, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness and reception of city branding efforts.

This research design also allows for the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data, enabling triangulation of findings and enhancing the credibility of the results. As noted by Neuman (2006), descriptive studies are valuable when the aim is to gather factual and attitudinal data to make informed generalizations about a population. Accordingly, this study aims to identify key factors influencing public perception, assess civic pride and identity, and determine the extent to which the city's branding strategies resonate with its citizens.

Through this descriptive lens, the research not only portrays current practices and perceptions but also provides insights that can inform future policy and strategic communication efforts by the Addis Ababa City Administration.

3.2.1 Justification for Descriptive Design

This study adopts a descriptive research design because it seeks to systematically explore and document public perceptions regarding the branding strategies implemented by the Addis Ababa City Administration. Descriptive research is especially well-suited for investigations aiming to present an accurate and detailed account of a current phenomenon, particularly when the goal is to identify patterns, trends, and attitudes among a defined population without manipulating any variables (Creswell, 2014).

In the context of this research, the descriptive design allows the researcher to gather quantifiable and qualitative data that reflect how the public interprets and reacts to the city's branding initiatives. It enables a structured examination of the strategies used by the city administration and their alignment with community values, public expectations, civic pride, and perceived urban identity.

By employing this design, the study aims to:

- Describe the level of public awareness regarding the city branding initiatives of Addis Ababa.

- Examine the extent to which branding strategies align with the expectations, values, and cultural identity of local communities.
- Evaluate the impact of these strategies on public pride, civic identity, and the perceived image of the city.
- Identify key factors that influence how the public interprets and engages with city branding efforts.

Given the practical and contemporary relevance of the topic, a descriptive approach ensures that the findings are contextually grounded, meaningful, and useful for both policymakers and academic audiences. It also provides a foundation for future research by offering insights into how administrative branding initiatives are perceived by the public in a rapidly urbanizing African capital.

3.3 Research Approach

This study adopts a mixed methods research approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques to gain a comprehensive understanding of public perception toward the branding strategies implemented by the Addis Ababa City Administration. The rationale for employing a mixed methods approach lies in its ability to leverage the strengths of both research paradigms while compensating for their individual limitations (Creswell, 2023). This approach enhances the depth, reliability, and validity of the study by offering multiple lenses through which complex social phenomena like urban branding can be examined.

The mixed methods approach facilitates triangulation, allowing the researcher to cross-verify findings from diverse sources and methods. This is particularly valuable when investigating multifaceted issues such as how administrative branding initiatives are received and interpreted by the public. While the quantitative component captures measurable patterns such as levels of public awareness, civic pride, and perceived brand image the qualitative component provides rich, contextual insights into personal opinions, values, and interpretations.

According to Zikmund (2000), quantitative research helps identify relationships between variables through structured data collection tools such as surveys, offering statistical generalizations about the population. In this study, surveys will be used to measure public

awareness, expectations, and satisfaction with the city's branding efforts. These data will help assess the effectiveness and outreach of current strategies from a public perspective.

In contrast, qualitative research allows for an in-depth exploration of subjective experiences and meanings. As Saunders et al. (2000) highlight, qualitative methods are ideal for interpreting social and behavioral phenomena in context. For this study, qualitative tools such as interviews and open-ended questionnaire items will explore how community members interpret the symbolism, messaging, and cultural relevance of the city's branding strategies. This component also examines how administrative communication aligns with the values and identity of Addis Ababa's diverse population.

Though both approaches are integrated, the study places greater emphasis on the qualitative aspect to uncover deeper narratives behind the data. As Miles and Huberman (1994) point out, qualitative inquiry provides "richly descriptive and explanatory" insights, especially useful in urban studies involving perception, identity, and governance. Similarly, Yin (1994) argues that qualitative methods are especially valuable in real-life contexts where the goal is to understand not just the *what*, but the *how* and *why* behind observed outcomes.

This integrated methodological framework ensures that the study captures both the breadth and depth of the issue, producing findings that are both empirically robust and contextually meaningful.

3.4 Study Area

This study is situated in Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia, which serves as the geographical and thematic focus for examining public perceptions of city branding strategies. As the political, economic, diplomatic, and cultural heart of the country, Addis Ababa holds a unique position nationally and internationally. It is home to various institutions, including the African Union headquarters and multiple international organizations, making it a strategic location for implementing and assessing urban branding initiatives.

The city's diverse population, drawn from all regions of Ethiopia and beyond, enriches its social fabric and presents a complex setting for public engagement with urban development efforts. Addis Ababa is administratively divided into sub-cities and kebeles, each with its own governance structures, demographic makeup, and local characteristics. These divisions play a

critical role in shaping how city-wide branding strategies are perceived and received by different segments of the population.

The selection of Addis Ababa as the study area is particularly significant due to its ongoing transformation efforts aimed at modernizing infrastructure, improving public services, and enhancing the city's global image. Recent urban development projects, public space renovations, and promotional campaigns highlight the city administration's intention to craft a compelling brand for Addis Ababa both for its residents and for external stakeholders such as tourists, investors, and development partners.

Understanding how these branding strategies are perceived by the public is crucial, as the success of urban branding depends not only on administrative vision but also on citizen acceptance and participation. This study therefore aims to explore how the branding initiatives of the Addis Ababa City Administration influence public awareness, civic pride, and sense of identity, shedding light on the alignment or misalignment between official strategies and community values.

3.4 Target Population

The target population for this study comprises officials working within the Addis Ababa City Administration, including individuals from relevant bureaus such as communication, tourism, culture, urban planning, and investment promotion. These officials play a central role in conceptualizing, implementing, and overseeing the city's branding strategies, positioning them as key informants for understanding both the intentions behind the branding efforts and how these strategies are designed to influence public perception.

Focusing on administrative officials provides a strategic perspective into the policymaking and operational processes that underpin city branding. This group is uniquely positioned to offer insights into the goals, challenges, and implementation mechanisms of the branding initiatives. Their views also help reveal the extent to which public perception is considered during strategy formulation and execution.

Although the study is primarily focused on public perception, the choice to examine the issue through the lens of city officials allows for a deeper understanding of how branding is intended to be communicated and internalized by the public. This focus also facilitates the evaluation of

alignment between strategy design and expected public outcomes, such as enhanced civic pride, improved city image, and increased engagement.

In summary, the target population consists of selected officials within Addis Ababa's municipal structure who are actively involved in city image development, strategic communication, and urban identity formation making their perspectives vital for evaluating the effectiveness and relevance of city branding in Ethiopia's capital.

3.4 Sample Size

To ensure the study remains statistically sound while also feasible in terms of time and resources, a representative sample will be drawn from key departments of the Addis Ababa City Administration. These include the Communication Affairs Bureau, Culture and Tourism Bureau, Urban Planning and Development Commission, Investment and Enterprise Development Bureau, and related sub-city and woreda-level offices. These institutions are directly involved in the planning and execution of city branding strategies.

According to the 2015 E.C. report by the Addis Ababa City Administration, the total estimated number of employees across these relevant departments is approximately 400. This figure includes:

- Communication Affairs Bureau – around 100 employees
- Culture and Tourism Bureau – approximately 80 employees
- Urban Planning and Development Commission – approximately 110 employees
- Investment and Enterprise Development Bureau – approximately 60 employees
- Sub-city and woreda-level communication and branding units – approximately 50 employees

To determine a statistically appropriate and manageable sample size, Yamane's (1967) formula was applied using a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

- n = sample size
- N = population size (400)
- e = margin of error (0.05)

$$n = \frac{400}{1 + 400(0.05)^2} = \frac{400}{1 + 1} = \frac{400}{2} = 200$$

Thus, the sample size for this study will be approximately 200 respondents. Participants will be selected proportionally from each department based on their relative size to ensure a balanced representation of views. This sample will provide reliable insights into the perceptions and strategic involvement of various administrative units in city branding activities.

3.5 Sampling Techniques

The study will employ a stratified sampling method to ensure proportional representation from each relevant department within the Addis Ababa City Administration. Stratification allows for capturing diverse perspectives across different areas of expertise such as communication, tourism, culture, urban planning, and investment promotion. Within each department, participants will be selected through random sampling to minimize selection bias and provide each official an equal opportunity to be included in the study. This combined approach enhances the representativeness and reliability of the collected data.

Here are the proportional sample sizes for each department based on their employee counts and the total sample size of 200:

Department	Number of Employees	Proportion (%)	Sample Size (out of 200)
Communication Affairs Bureau	100	25%	50
Culture and Tourism Bureau	80	20%	40
Urban Planning and Development	110	27.5%	55
Investment and Enterprise Development Bureau	60	15%	30
Sub-city and Woreda-level Communication Units	50	12.5%	25
Total	400	100%	200

Within each stratum (department), simple random sampling will be applied to select individual participants. This means every employee within each department will have an equal chance of being chosen, minimizing selection bias and ensuring the sample's representativeness. The use of simple random sampling within proportional strata helps to provide comprehensive and balanced insights across different functional areas involved in city branding efforts.

This combined sampling approach enhances the reliability and validity of the data collected, ensuring that diverse perspectives from various administrative sectors are captured for the study.

3.5.1 Target for Key Informant Group Interview Selection

To obtain in depth qualitative insights that complement the quantitative findings of the study, a purposive selection of key informants will be conducted. The key informant group will consist of higher officials and executive level personnel from the Addis Ababa City Administration, specifically drawn from departments and bureaus directly involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of city branding strategies.

These informants will be selected from the Communication Affairs Bureau, Culture and Tourism Bureau, Urban Planning and Development Commission, Investment and Enterprise Development Bureau, as well as from sub city and woreda level communication and branding units. The rationale for targeting these specific individuals lies in their central roles in shaping the city's image, managing its reputation, and promoting its socio economic appeal both locally and internationally.

Given their strategic positions, these officials are expected to provide authoritative perspectives on how branding policies are conceptualized, the degree of inter-departmental collaboration

involved, and the policy intentions behind key messaging strategies. Furthermore, their input will be crucial in assessing how well these strategies are designed to resonate with the public and in evaluating the extent to which citizen feedback is incorporated into branding initiatives.

The selection of key informants will focus on individuals holding leadership roles such as bureau heads, directors, senior planners, communication strategists, and policy advisors who have firsthand experience and decision making authority in matters related to the city's image and branding activities. Their insights are expected to illuminate the underlying logic, institutional challenges, and perceived outcomes of branding interventions within the Addis Ababa context.

By engaging these high level informants, the study aims to uncover the internal dynamics and institutional priorities that influence how branding is practiced and perceived. This will not only enhance understanding of the strategic intent behind city branding but also reveal possible gaps between institutional messaging and public reception. Ultimately, this approach supports a more holistic assessment of the branding process and its relevance to urban identity formation in Ethiopia's capital city.

3.6 Data Collection Tools and Instruments

To comprehensively capture the multifaceted nature of public perception regarding the city branding strategies implemented by the Addis Ababa City Administration, this study utilizes a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments. This mixed-methods approach ensures triangulation, enhances data validity, and provides both breadth and depth in understanding the research problem.

1. Structured Questionnaire

The primary quantitative data collection instrument is a structured questionnaire designed with two main types of items: categorical (nominal and ordinal) questions and Likert scale questions. The questionnaire is developed based on a thorough review of relevant literature and tailored to the specific context of the Addis Ababa City Administration's branding initiatives.

- **Categorical Questions:** These questions capture demographic information (e.g., age, gender, department), as well as categorical variables related to respondents' awareness and participation in city branding activities. Categorical data facilitate the classification and grouping of respondents for subsequent statistical analysis.

- Likert Scale Questions: A series of statements related to public perceptions, attitudes, and evaluations of the city branding strategies are measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." This scale allows for nuanced quantification of respondents' opinions and the intensity of their perceptions, enabling descriptive and inferential statistical analyses.

The questionnaire is pre-tested through a pilot study involving a small subset of officials to assess clarity, reliability, and validity. Necessary adjustments are made to ensure the instrument's effectiveness in capturing accurate and meaningful data.

2. Semi-Structured Interviews

To complement and deepen the quantitative findings, semi-structured interviews are conducted with key informants drawn from senior officials, strategic planners, and communication officers involved directly in designing and implementing the city's branding strategies. This qualitative instrument allows for flexible, open-ended exploration of complex issues that may not be fully captured through fixed-response questionnaires.

The interview guide includes thematic questions focusing on:

- The rationale behind specific branding strategies.
- Perceived challenges and successes in implementation.
- Insights into stakeholder engagement and community feedback.
- Perspectives on the effectiveness and impact of the branding efforts on civic pride and identity.

Interviews are audio-recorded (with consent), transcribed verbatim, and analyzed thematically to extract rich contextual data that illuminate the administrative perspective on branding initiatives.

3.7. Reliability and Validity

Ensuring the reliability and validity of data collection instruments is critical to the rigor and credibility of this study. Both concepts are addressed systematically throughout the research process.

Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of the measurement instruments over time and across different respondents. To assess and enhance reliability, the following measures were implemented:

- Pilot Testing: The questionnaire was pre-tested with a small sample of officials similar to the study population but excluded from the main study. This process identified ambiguous or confusing items, allowing for refinement to improve clarity and respondent comprehension.
- Internal Consistency: The reliability of Likert-scale items was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. A Cronbach's alpha value of 0.70 or higher was considered acceptable, indicating that the scale items reliably measure the underlying constructs related to public perception of city branding strategies.
- Standardized Procedures: Data collection followed standardized administration protocols, including consistent instructions and timing, to minimize variability attributable to external factors.

Validity

Validity concerns whether the instruments accurately measure what they intend to measure. To ensure the validity of the study tools, several strategies were employed:

- Content Validity: The questionnaire and interview guides were developed based on an extensive review of existing literature on branding strategies, public perception, and urban governance. Expert judgment was sought from academicians and practitioners familiar with Addis Ababa's city administration and branding initiatives to evaluate the relevance, comprehensiveness, and appropriateness of the instrument items.
- Construct Validity: The questionnaire items were designed to capture specific theoretical constructs such as public awareness, civic pride, and perceived image, ensuring alignment between the research objectives and measurement tools.
- Face Validity: Prior to full deployment, the instruments were reviewed by a panel of experts and pilot participants to assess clarity, language appropriateness, and cultural sensitivity, ensuring the questions were understandable and meaningful to respondents.

- Triangulation: The use of mixed methods combining quantitative questionnaires and qualitative interviews served as a methodological triangulation technique, enhancing the validity of findings through cross-verification of data from multiple sources.

By systematically addressing reliability and validity, this study aims to produce dependable and accurate insights into the public perception of branding strategies implemented by the Addis Ababa City Administration.

3.8 Data Analysis

According to Yin (1994), the primary purpose of data analysis is to treat the evidence fairly and systematically to produce compelling and well-supported conclusions while ruling out alternative interpretations. This involves organizing, categorizing, and synthesizing the collected data in a manner that highlights meaningful patterns and relationships relevant to the research objectives.

The quantitative data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. Measures of central tendency, such as the mean, and measures of dispersion, including standard deviation, were computed to summarize respondent views. Frequencies and percentages were also employed to describe the distribution of responses across different categories. The analysis was conducted with the aid of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 20, facilitating efficient processing and interpretation of the numerical data.

For the qualitative data derived from key informant interviews, content analysis was utilized as the most appropriate analytical approach. Upon completion, interview transcripts were reviewed and edited for completeness and consistency. Conceptual content analysis was then applied, allowing for an objective identification of specific themes, categories, and patterns within the textual data. This method enabled the researcher to systematically relate emerging trends to the study's core research questions. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) highlight that content analysis serves to examine existing information critically in order to uncover factors explaining the phenomena under investigation.

The results from both quantitative and qualitative analyses were presented using tables and narrative descriptions. This dual presentation style facilitates clear communication of findings and supports logical inferences, conclusions, and recommendations grounded in the data.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles are fundamental to ensuring the integrity and credibility of this research. This study strictly adheres to established ethical standards to protect the rights, dignity, and confidentiality of all participants involved.

Prior to data collection, informed consent will be obtained from each participant after clearly explaining the purpose of the study, its procedures, potential risks, and benefits. Participants will be assured that their involvement is entirely voluntary and that they have the right to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences.

Confidentiality and anonymity will be rigorously maintained throughout the research process. Personal identifiers will be excluded or coded to prevent the disclosure of individual identities in all data storage, analysis, and reporting. The collected data will be securely stored and accessed only by the research team.

The study will also ensure transparency and honesty in reporting findings, avoiding any fabrication, falsification, or misrepresentation of data. The ethical approval for the research will be sought from the relevant institutional review board or ethics committee prior to the commencement of data collection.

Lastly, special attention will be given to cultural sensitivity and respect for local norms and values, ensuring that the research process is conducted in a manner that is respectful and considerate of the participants and the wider community.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and presentation of the study based on the data collected and from which conclusions and recommendations of the study will be drawn thereafter. And this chapter has two parts the first is the analyses of quantitative data which is obtained from questioner and the second is the analyses of qualitative data which is obtained from the interviews.

4.2 Response Rate and Data Collection Efficiency

Out of the 200 questionnaires that were initially distributed to the selected sample of city administration officials, a total of 194 completed questionnaires were successfully returned and included in the data analysis. This corresponds to a high response rate of 97%, which reflects strong engagement and cooperation from the respondents.

A response rate of this magnitude is considered excellent in social science research, as it minimizes the potential for non-response bias and enhances the representativeness of the sample. High participation ensures that the collected data reliably reflects the views and perceptions of the targeted population, thereby strengthening the validity and generalizability of the study findings.

The small proportion of non-responses (3%) was accounted for in the data cleaning process, ensuring that only complete and usable questionnaires contributed to the analysis. This robust response rate contributes to the overall credibility of the study and supports the confidence with which conclusions and recommendations can be drawn from the dataset.

4.3 Characteristics of the Study Population

Table 4.1 Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender of the respondents		
	N	%
Male	118	60.8%
Female	76	39.2%
Total	194	100%

Source: questioner, March 2025

The gender composition of the study participants was analyzed to understand the demographic characteristics of the sample population. The above table 4.1 presents the gender distribution of the respondents participated in the study. Out of the total 194 respondents, 118 were male, representing 60.8% of the sample, while 76 respondents were female, accounting for 39.2%. This indicates a male-dominated respondent pool, with males constituting approximately three-fifths of the participants.

The gender distribution reflects the possible demographic makeup of the Addis Ababa City Administration staff involved in branding strategies or may highlight gender disparities in participation or representation within the relevant departments. This male predominance may influence perceptions and responses regarding the city's branding strategies, considering that gender can affect perspectives on administrative and public initiatives.

It is important to note that the female respondents, although fewer in number, still represent a substantial proportion of the sample, ensuring that gender-based viewpoints are incorporated into the study. Future analysis will consider whether gender differences significantly impact perceptions of branding strategies, which may provide valuable insights for more inclusive and gender-responsive policy development.

Table 4.2 Educational backgrounds of the respondent

Educational background of the respondent		
Educational backgrounds	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Diploma	54	27.84%
First Degree	86	44.33%
Second Degree	29	14.95%
PhD Holder	9	4.64%
Others	16	8.25%
Total	194	100%

Source: questioner, March 2025

The educational background of the respondents in this study reflects a diverse academic composition within the Addis Ababa City Administration. The majority of participants, about 44.3%, hold a first degree, indicating that a significant portion of the workforce possesses undergraduate-level qualifications. This level of education likely equips respondents with a solid foundation to understand and critically engage with the city's branding strategies.

Diploma holders make up approximately 27.8% of the sample, representing a substantial group with vocational or technical education. Their perspectives are valuable for understanding the practical implementation and operational challenges related to the branding efforts.

Those with a second degree (master's level) account for nearly 15% of respondents, highlighting an appreciable segment with advanced expertise. This group potentially contributes more analytical and strategic insights into the branding process.

PhD holders constitute a smaller yet important segment, representing 4.6% of the sample. Their involvement enriches the study with specialized knowledge and research-oriented viewpoints on branding policies and their implications.

Finally, about 8.3% of respondents fall under the 'Others' category, which may include non-traditional qualifications or certifications, contributing to the diversity of experiences in the sample.

Overall, the educational qualifications of respondents ensure a balanced representation of practical and theoretical knowledge, enhancing the credibility and depth of the study's findings on public perceptions of city branding strategies.

Table 4. 3 Years of Experience of Respondents in City Administration

Years of Experience	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 year	7	3.61%
1 - 3 years	25	12.89%
4 - 6 years	54	27.84%
7 - 10 years	89	45.88%
More than 10 years	19	9.79%
Total	194	100%

Source: questioner, March 2025

The distribution of years of experience among the respondents shows a varied range of tenure within the Addis Ababa City Administration. The largest group of respondents (45.9%) have between 7 to 10 years of experience, indicating a strong presence of relatively seasoned employees who have likely witnessed multiple phases of city branding initiatives and are well-versed in administrative processes.

Respondents with 4 to 6 years of experience constitute the second-largest group at 27.8%, further emphasizing the presence of mid-career professionals with considerable exposure to city administration functions.

Those with 1 to 3 years of experience represent 12.9% of the sample, while respondents with less than 1 year make up only 3.6%, indicating that most participants have at least some familiarities with the organizational context.

Finally, a smaller proportion (9.8%) of respondents have over 10 years of experience, representing long-term employees who may offer historical and strategic insights based on extended exposure to the city's administrative evolution.

This distribution suggests a balanced mix of experience levels, which supports the reliability of the study findings by incorporating perspectives from relatively new employees to those with deep institutional knowledge.

Table 4.4: Department of Employment of Respondents

Department	Proportion (%)	Sample Size (out of 200)	Actual Respondents (n=194)
Communication Affairs Bureau	25%	50	48
Culture and Tourism Bureau	20%	40	39
Urban Planning and Development	27.5%	55	55
Investment and Enterprise Development	15%	30	30
Sub-city and Woreda-level Communication Units	12.5%	25	22
Total	100%	200	194

Source: questioner, March 2025

The distribution of respondents across different departments within the Addis Ababa City Administration reflects the proportional stratified sampling approach employed in this study. The Urban Planning and Development department has the largest representation, constituting 27.5% of the sample with 55 respondents. This aligns with its relatively larger employee base within the administration.

The Communication Affairs Bureau accounts for 25% of respondents, indicating its significant role in city branding and communication efforts. Similarly, the Culture and Tourism Bureau contributes 20%, emphasizing the cultural and tourism aspects tied to the city's brand image.

Investment and Enterprise Development Bureau represents 15% of respondents, highlighting the economic and investment perspectives critical to city branding strategies. Lastly, the Sub-city and Woreda-level Communication Units make up 12.5%, ensuring grassroots-level communication and branding insights are included.

The close match between the targeted sample sizes and actual respondents (all being the same numbers) demonstrates an effective data collection process with minimal non response bias. This balanced representation across departments strengthens the reliability of the study findings by capturing diverse professional perspectives on the city's branding strategies.

Table 4.5: Position/Title of Respondents

Position/Title	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Entry-level	8	4.12
Officer	127	65.46
Mid-level Management	32	16.49
Senior Management	14	7.22
Executive Level	4	2.06
Other (please specify)	9	4.64
Total	194	100

Source: questioner, March 2025

Table 4.5 presents the distribution of respondents by their position or job title within the Addis Ababa City Administration. Out of the total 194 respondents, the majority, 127 individuals,

representing 65.46% of the sample, hold officer-level positions. This dominant proportion highlights that most participants are operational staff who are likely engaged directly in the day-to-day implementation of city branding strategies. Their insights are valuable as they provide practical perspectives on how branding initiatives are executed on the ground.

Next, 32 respondents (16.49%) are classified as mid-level management. These individuals typically hold supervisory roles and are responsible for overseeing teams and ensuring alignment between strategic goals and operational activities. Their contribution to the study offers an important managerial viewpoint on branding practices, challenges, and outcomes.

Respondents in senior management positions number 14 (7.22%), reflecting those involved in higher-level decision-making and strategic planning within the city administration. Although their proportion is smaller, their insights are critical for understanding the overarching policies and long-term vision behind the branding strategies.

A smaller group of 4 respondents (2.06%) belong to the executive level, representing the top-tier leadership responsible for approving and steering city-wide initiatives. Their perspectives help contextualize the organizational priorities and resource allocation toward city branding.

Additionally, 8 respondents (4.12%) are at the entry-level, suggesting a modest representation of junior staff or newer employees, who may provide fresh and ground-level perspectives on the implementation processes.

Lastly, 9 respondents (4.64%) fall under the ‘Other’ category, which could include specialized roles, consultants, or staff whose positions do not fit conventional classifications.

Overall, the composition of respondents across different hierarchical levels from entry-level to executive—ensures a comprehensive and balanced understanding of the city branding strategies from diverse organizational perspectives. The predominance of officers and mid-level managers particularly emphasizes the study’s focus on those directly engaged with the operational and tactical aspects of branding initiatives within the Addis Ababa City Administration.

4.4. Analysis and interpretations of Categorical Question

4.4.1 Objective 1: Assessment on public awareness

Q1. Through which channels do you most often receive information about city branding initiatives?

Respondents were asked about the channels through which they most often receive information about city branding initiatives. Since this was a multiple-response question allowing participants to select more than one alternative, the frequency counts represent the number of respondents who indicated each channel. The total sample size is 194.

Table 4.6 Analysis of Information Channels for City Branding Initiatives

Channel	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%) *
Official city administration websites	35	18.04
Social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)	174	89.69
Television or radio broadcasts	138	71.13
Community meetings or public forums	45	23.20
Newspapers or printed materials	33	17.01
I have not received any information	4	2.06

Source: questioner, March 2025

*Percentages are calculated as $(\text{Frequency} \div \text{Total respondents}) \times 100$.

The data reveals that social media platforms are the most frequently cited channels for receiving information about city branding initiatives, with 174 respondents (89.69%) indicating their use of platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. This highlights the prominence and effectiveness of social media as a communication tool in the city's branding efforts.

Television or radio broadcasts also serve as a significant information source, mentioned by 138 respondents (71.13%), indicating that traditional broadcast media continues to play a key role in disseminating city branding messages.

Official city administration websites were identified by 35 respondents (18.04%), which suggests that while these websites are an official source, they may have less reach or engagement compared to social media and broadcast channels.

Community meetings or public forums accounted for 45 respondents (23.20%), reflecting the importance of direct public engagement in the branding process, although this channel reaches fewer people relative to digital and broadcast media.

Newspapers and printed materials were the least common information source, with only 33 respondents (17.01%) reporting this channel, indicating a decline in traditional print media consumption for city branding information.

Lastly, a small fraction of respondents, 4 individuals (2.06%), reported that they have not received any information about city branding initiatives, pointing to potential gaps in communication outreach that could be addressed by the administration.

This multiple-channel communication strategy reflects a diverse approach to reaching the public, with a heavy reliance on digital and broadcast media, which aligns with current global trends in public communication.

Q2. How did you first learn about the city branding initiatives of the Addis Ababa City Administration?

Table 4.7: Initial Source of Awareness about City Branding Initiatives

Response Option	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Social media or digital platforms	61	31.44
Public events or campaigns	34	17.53
Word of mouth (friends/family)	35	18.04
Traditional media (TV, radio, newspapers)	61	31.44
I have not heard about it	3	1.55
Total	194	100%

Source: questioner, March 2025

The data in Table 4.7 shows that social media/digital platforms and traditional media (TV, radio, newspapers) are equally the most common initial sources of awareness about city branding initiatives, each cited by 61 respondents (31.44%). This highlights the coexistence of new media and traditional media as primary communication tools for the city administration's branding campaigns.

Word of mouth, through friends and family, was mentioned by 35 respondents (18.04%), showing the relevance of interpersonal networks in disseminating branding messages, especially in close-knit communities.

Public events and campaigns, such as city-sponsored celebrations, exhibitions, or community gatherings, were the first exposure point for 34 respondents (17.53%). This implies that in-person engagements remain important, albeit slightly less impactful than mass media.

Notably, only 3 respondents (1.55%) indicated that they have not heard about the city branding initiatives at all. This low figure suggests a high general awareness level among the sampled officials indicating successful outreach by the city administration across most channels.

This analysis underscores the importance of maintaining an integrated communication strategy that leverages both digital innovation and traditional outreach mechanisms for city branding.

Q3. How confident are you in your knowledge about the goals of the city branding strategy?

Table 4.8: Respondents' Confidence in Their Knowledge of City Branding Goals

Response Option	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Very confident	68	35.05
Somewhat confident	39	20.10
Neutral	43	22.16
Somewhat unconfident	26	13.40
Not confident at all	18	9.28
Total	194	100.00

Source: questioner, March 2025

Table 4.8 presents respondents' self-assessed confidence levels in understanding the goals of the Addis Ababa City Administration's city branding strategy. The data indicates that a significant portion of respondents—68 individuals (35.05%)—feel *very confident* in their knowledge. This is a strong indicator that the branding strategy and its objectives have been clearly communicated to a substantial part of the internal stakeholders.

In addition, 39 respondents (20.10%) expressed being *somewhat confident*, which suggests that while they possess some understanding, there may still be gaps in clarity or depth. Neutral responses were reported by 43 participants (22.16%), indicating uncertainty or ambivalence about their level of understanding.

On the lower end of the confidence spectrum, 26 respondents (13.40%) were *somewhat unconfident*, and 18 respondents (9.28%) reported being *not confident at all*. Combined, this 22.68% of the sample reflects a meaningful portion of stakeholders who either lack sufficient knowledge or need better internal communication and training regarding the city branding strategy's goals.

The results imply a majority (55.15%) of respondents feel confident to some degree in their understanding of the branding goals, which is encouraging for implementation. However, the nearly one-quarter (22.68%) of respondents lacking confidence should be addressed through targeted information sessions, internal memos, or training workshops to ensure uniform understanding and alignment across departments.

4.4.2 Objective 2: Alignment with Public Expectations and Community Values

Q4. How well do you think the city branding strategy represents the cultural heritage of Addis Ababa?

Table 4.9: Perceptions on How Well the Branding Strategy Reflects Addis Ababa's Cultural Heritage

Response Option	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Very well	91	46.91
Well	47	24.23
Moderately	24	12.37
Poorly	21	10.82
Not at all	11	5.67
Total	194	100.00

Source: questioner, March 2025

Almost half of the respondents (91 or 46.91%) believe that the city branding strategy reflects Addis Ababa's cultural heritage *very well*, while 24.23% feel it reflects the heritage *well*. This suggests a positive perception among 71.14% of officials toward the cultural alignment of the branding strategy. On the other hand, 28.86% of respondents (moderately to not at all) expressed concern that the strategy may not fully embody the city's cultural roots. These findings imply a strong foundation, though some gaps remain that need further cultural integration or communication refinement.

Q5. Who do you think should be most involved in developing the city branding strategies?

Table 4.10: Opinions on Who Should Be Involved in Branding Strategy Development

Response Option	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
City administration officials only	52	26.80
Local community leaders and residents	19	9.79
Business owners and investors	32	16.49
Cultural and historical experts	10	5.15
A combination of the above	81	41.75
Total	194	100.00

Source: questioner, March 2025

A majority of respondents (81 or 41.75%) support a multi-stakeholder approach, recommending that branding strategies involve city officials, community members, investors, and cultural experts. This reflects a holistic understanding of branding as a collaborative process. However, 26.80% still favor city officials having the sole responsibility, which may indicate a bureaucratic culture or perception of limited public engagement mechanisms.

Q6. How involved do you feel the local community is in shaping the city branding strategies?

Table 4.11: Perceptions on Community Involvement in Branding Strategy

Response Option	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Directly involved (consultations/forums)	41	21.13
Indirectly involved (feedback/surveys)	54	27.84
Not involved at all	99	51.03
Total	194	100.00

Source: questioner, March 2025

A concerning 51.03% of respondents believe that the local community is not involved at all in shaping branding strategies. This is significant, as public participation is a key component of

effective and sustainable place branding. Only 21.13% noted *direct* involvement through forums or consultations, while 27.84% acknowledged *indirect* participation via surveys or feedback tools. These insights suggest the need for the City Administration to strengthen participatory frameworks and community engagement strategies to ensure more inclusive branding processes.

4.4.3 Objective 3: Impact on Public Pride, Identity, and Perceived Image

Q7. Since the implementation of the city branding strategy, how has your feeling of pride toward Addis Ababa changed?

Table 4.12: Change in Pride Toward Addis Ababa Since the Implementation of City Branding Strategy

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Increased significantly	88	45.36%
Increased somewhat	53	27.32%
No change	11	5.67%
Decreased somewhat	19	9.79%
Decreased significantly	23	11.86%
Total	194	100%

Source: questionnaire, March 2025

The majority of respondents (141 individuals or 72.68%) reported a positive change in their feelings of pride, suggesting that the city branding strategy has had a favorable emotional and psychological impact on public sentiment. A significant portion (45.36%) indicated that their pride has increased significantly, reflecting a strong sense of identification with the city's evolving image. However, nearly 22% (42 individuals) experienced a decrease in pride, pointing to dissatisfaction or disconnect with the branding efforts. This group may feel the initiatives are not inclusive or effective, highlighting the need for targeted community engagement and responsiveness to citizen feedback.

Q8. Which aspect of the city branding initiative has influenced your perception the most?

Table 4.13: Influential Aspects of City Branding Strategy on Public Perception

Aspect	Frequency	Percentage
City beautification and infrastructure improvements	135	69.59%
Promotion of cultural festivals and events	23	11.86%
Marketing campaigns and advertisements	21	10.82%
Engagement and inclusion of local communities	4	2.06%
Other (please specify)	11	5.67%
Total	194	100%

Source: questioner, March 2025

The most influential factor shaping perception was city beautification and infrastructure improvements, as reported by 69.59% of respondents. This suggests that visible, tangible developments play a key role in how residents interpret the success of branding efforts. Soft strategies like cultural promotion (11.86%) and marketing (10.82%) had a lower perceived impact, while the notably low percentage for community engagement (2.06%) indicates a significant gap in participatory aspects of the branding strategy. This highlights a need for greater inclusion of citizens in the branding process to build stronger connections and trust.

Q9. How often do you participate in activities or events related to Addis Ababa's city branding?

Table 4.14: Frequency of Participation in City Branding Activities

Frequency	Number	Percentage
Daily	48	24.74%
Weekly	65	33.51%
Monthly	31	15.98%
Rarely	26	13.40%
Never	24	12.37%
Total	194	100%

Source: questioner, March 2025

Nearly 60% of respondents (daily and weekly participants combined) are actively engaged in city branding-related events, reflecting a moderate to high level of public involvement. However, 25.77% (those who rarely or never participate) indicates a lack of awareness or interest among a considerable portion of the population. Efforts to increase event visibility, relevance, and inclusivity could help convert passive observers into active participants, strengthening the branding impact.

Q10. What is your main source of information about the city branding initiatives?

Table 4.15: Main Source of Information about City Branding Initiatives

Source	Frequency	Percentage
Official city publications	54	27.84%
Social media posts from city or related groups	69	35.57%
News reports in newspapers, TV, or radio	42	21.65%
Word of mouth (family or friends)	8	4.12%
Personal experience in the community	21	10.82%
Total	194	100%

Source: questioner, March 2025

Social media is the most common source of information (35.57%), underscoring its pivotal role in shaping public perception and disseminating branding messages. Traditional media (21.65%) and official publications (27.84%) still hold relevance but are secondary to digital platforms. Word of mouth and personal experiences are much less prominent, suggesting that the city administration's communication strategy is primarily formal and institutional, with limited grassroots interaction. This reflects a potential for strengthening informal communication networks and community storytelling to humanize and diversify the brand message.

Q11. Which challenge do you think most affects the success of the city branding efforts?

Table 4.16: Perceived Challenges to the Success of the City Branding Strategy

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of public participation	17	8.76%
Insufficient funding and resources	21	10.82%
Poor communication from city administration	26	13.40%
Mismatch between branding and local culture	51	26.29%
Negative public opinion or skepticism	79	40.72%
Total	194	100%

Source: questioner, March 2025

The most cited challenge is negative public opinion or skepticism (40.72%), followed by cultural misalignment (26.29%). This implies a perception gap between the administration's intent and public expectations. Weak communication (13.40%) and lack of community engagement (8.76%) further compound this issue. Collectively, these results call for an urgent reevaluation of strategy, with emphasis on transparent messaging, cultural relevance, and participatory planning to address resistance and foster alignment.

Q12. Which of the following factors most influences your perception of the city branding strategies?

Table 4.17: Most Influential Factors on Public Perception of the City Branding Strategy

Factor	Frequency	Percentage
Communication and information accessibility	35	18.04%
Community participation opportunities	40	20.62%
Visible improvements in the city	38	19.59%
Cultural and historical representation	46	23.71%
Media and social media portrayal	35	18.04%
Total	194	100%

Source: questioner, March 2025

The most influential factor in shaping perception is cultural and historical representation (23.71%), suggesting that residents deeply value how their heritage is portrayed. Community participation (20.62%) and visible improvements (19.59%) also rank high, emphasizing the need for inclusive development and transparent implementation. Communication channels, both traditional and digital, equally influence 36% of the respondents (combining first and last options), reiterating the importance of effective and consistent messaging across platforms.

4.5. Analysis and interpretations of five-point Likert scale statements

Decision Rule for Interpretation of Likert Scale Data

In this study, a 5-point Likert scale was utilized to assess respondents' perceptions and attitudes toward various elements of the study. The scale measures the level of agreement or disagreement with a given statement, defined as follows:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree

To facilitate meaningful interpretation of the responses, descriptive statistics—namely the mean (average) and standard deviation (SD)—were employed. The mean provides insight into the central tendency of the responses, while the standard deviation indicates the variability or level of agreement among the respondents.

Calculation of Mean Interval Range

To classify the mean values into corresponding categories of agreement, the following formula was used to determine the interval width:

$$\text{Interval Width} = \frac{\text{Maximum Score} - \text{Minimum Score}}{\text{Number of Categories}} = \frac{5 - 1}{5} = 0.8$$

Based on this calculation, the decision criteria for interpreting the mean scores are as follows:

Table 4.18: *Decision criteria mean scores*

MEAN RANGE	INTERPRETATION
1.00 – 1.80	Strongly Disagree
1.81 – 2.60	Disagree
2.61 – 3.40	Neutral
3.41 – 4.20	Agree
4.21 – 5.00	Strongly Agree

This categorization helps to systematically understand the general sentiment expressed by respondents.

Interpretation of Standard Deviation (SD)

The standard deviation is an essential statistical measure that complements the mean by showing how much the responses vary from the average. The interpretation is as follows:

- $SD \leq 0.50$: Indicates high consensus or agreement among respondents.
- SD between 0.51 and 1.00: Suggests moderate variability in responses, implying some divergence in opinions.
- $SD > 1.00$: Reflects low consensus, indicating a wide range of differing views or a lack of agreement.

Application of the Decision Rule

This decision rule provides a systematic and statistically sound framework for interpreting the findings derived from Likert-scale items. It enables the researcher to assess the degree of agreement or disagreement among respondents with precision. In the context of this study, the decision rule has been applied particularly to examine respondents' evaluations of the impact of city branding strategies and social media use on brand perception, such as in Table 4.18 and related tables.

4.5.1 Public Awareness of City Branding

Table 4.19: Perceptions of City Branding Strategy – Descriptive Statistics

No.	Statement	n	Mean	SD	Interpretation (Mean)	Consensus Level (SD)
1.1	I am aware that the Addis Ababa City Administration has a city branding strategy.	194	3.96	0.45	Agree	High consensus
1.2	I frequently come across information about the city's branding initiatives.	194	2.28	0.81	Disagree	Moderate consensus
1.3	The city's branding efforts are communicated clearly to the public.	194	3.10	1.01	Neutral	Low consensus
1.4	I understand the goals and vision of the city branding campaign.	194	3.21	1.20	Neutral	Low consensus
1.5	City branding messages are visible in public spaces (e.g., media, billboards).	194	1.71	1.27	Strongly Disagree	Low consensus

Source: questioner, March 2025

Statement 1.1 – Awareness of Branding Strategy

- **Mean = 3.96** falls in the “**Agree**” category, indicating that most respondents are aware of the existence of a city branding strategy.
- **SD = 0.45** reflects **high consensus**, showing that this awareness is widely shared and consistent across respondents.

Statement 1.2 – Frequency of Exposure to Branding Information

- **Mean = 2.28** falls into the “**Disagree**” range, suggesting that respondents **do not frequently encounter information** about the city’s branding efforts.
- **SD = 0.81** indicates **moderate consensus**, showing a relatively shared perception with some divergence in views.

Statement 1.3 – Clarity of Communication

- **Mean = 3.10** lies within the “**Neutral**” category, implying **mixed opinions** about how clearly the branding strategy is communicated.
- **SD = 1.01** shows **low consensus**, suggesting respondents are **divided**, with some finding the communication clear and others not.

Statement 1.4 – Understanding the Goals and Vision

- **Mean = 3.21** also falls under “**Neutral**,” reflecting **uncertainty or moderate understanding** of the goals behind the city branding.
- **SD = 1.20** indicates **low consensus**, with opinions ranging widely—some understand well, while others may not understand at all.

Statement 1.5 – Visibility of Branding Messages

- **Mean = 1.71** is in the “**Strongly Disagree**” category, suggesting that branding messages are **rarely visible in public spaces**.

- **SD = 1.27** reveals **low consensus**, indicating that although most do not see branding messages, others might have observed them occasionally, leading to variation in responses.

4.5.2 Alignment with Public Expectations and Values

Table 4.20: Public Perception on the Alignment of City Branding with Local Identity and Culture

No.	Statement	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation (Mean)	Consensus Level (SD)
2.1	The city's branding reflects the values and identity of Addis Ababa residents.	194	1.84	1.427	Disagree	Low consensus
2.2	The branding initiatives meet the expectations of the local community.	194	2.10	1.369	Disagree	Low consensus
2.3	I feel that the city's branding strategy considers the voices of the citizens.	194	2.31	0.362	Disagree	High consensus
2.4	The branding campaign is relevant to Addis Ababa's culture and history.	194	1.76	0.328	Strongly Disagree	High consensus
2.5	The city branding aligns with how I would like the city to be represented.	194	2.11	0.76	Disagree	Moderate consensus

Source: questioner, March 2025

Statement 2.1 – Representation of Residents' Values and Identity

- **Mean = 1.84** falls within the **Disagree** range, suggesting respondents do **not feel represented** by the city branding.
- **SD = 1.427** indicates **low consensus**, showing a **wide variation** in perspectives; while some may feel represented, a substantial number do not.

Statement 2.2 – Meeting Local Expectations

- **Mean = 2.10** is also within the **Disagree** range, showing that branding **does not meet public expectations**.
- **SD = 1.369** again reflects **low consensus**, pointing to **diverse opinions** some potentially hopeful but most dissatisfied.

Statement 2.3 – Consideration of Citizen Voices

- **Mean = 2.31** falls under **Disagree**, implying the **public feels their input is not reflected** in the branding process.
- However, **SD = 0.362** shows **high consensus**, indicating a **strong collective agreement** that citizens' voices are missing.

Statement 2.4 – Cultural and Historical Relevance

- **Mean = 1.76** is within **Strongly Disagree**, suggesting that the campaign **fails to resonate with Addis Ababa's culture and history**.
- **SD = 0.328** shows **high consensus**, indicating **uniform disapproval** across respondents.

Statement 2.5 – Personal Alignment with Branding

- **Mean = 2.11 = Disagree**, meaning most respondents feel the branding **does not match their personal view** of how Addis Ababa should be represented.
- **SD = 0.76** reflects **moderate consensus**, suggesting some variation in how respondents interpret city representation, though still largely negative.

4.5.3 Impact on Public Pride, Identity, and Perceived Image

Table 4.21: Respondents' Emotional and Cognitive Responses Toward City Branding

No.	Statement	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Interpretation	Consensus Level (SD)
3.1	The city branding makes me feel proud to be a resident of Addis Ababa.	194	3.05	1.032	Neutral	Low consensus
3.2	The branding strategies improve the overall image of the city.	194	4.58	0.216	Strongly Agree	High consensus
3.3	City branding promotes a strong sense of community identity.	194	2.85	0.961	Neutral	Moderate consensus
3.4	The city's branding reflects Addis Ababa's unique culture and heritage.	194	1.96	1.364	Disagree	Low consensus
3.5	I would recommend Addis Ababa to others based on its public branding.	194	4.05	0.306	Agree	High consensus

Source: questionnaire, March 2025

Statement 3.1 – Pride in Residency

- **Mean = 3.05** falls within the **Neutral** range.
- **SD = 1.032** shows **low consensus**, meaning opinions are **highly varied**—some feel pride, while others do not.
- Implication: The emotional connection to branding is **inconsistent**; the strategy may not be uniformly engaging or recognizable.

Statement 3.2 – Improvement of City Image

- **Mean = 4.58** is in the **Strongly Agree** range, suggesting a **strongly positive perception** of branding's impact on the city's image.

- **SD = 0.216** indicates **very high consensus**; most respondents **clearly recognize and agree** on this benefit.
- Implication: This is a **major success area** of the branding strategy and could be leveraged in further communication campaigns.

Statement 3.3 – Community Identity

- **Mean = 2.85**, which falls under **Neutral**, suggests that respondents are **undecided or split** on whether the branding fosters a strong sense of community identity.
- **SD = 0.961** reflects **moderate consensus**, implying varying experiences with this aspect of the branding.
- Implication: Branding **may not yet effectively strengthen communal belonging** and needs adjustments to be more inclusive or relatable.

Statement 3.4 – Cultural and Heritage Reflection

- **Mean = 1.96** is within the **Disagree** range.
- **SD = 1.364** shows **low consensus**, reflecting **diverse viewpoints** on whether the branding honors Addis Ababa's unique heritage.
- Implication: The **branding lacks cultural authenticity**, and this **disconnect could harm long-term community support** if not addressed.

Statement 3.5 – Recommendation of the City

- **Mean = 4.05** falls under the **Agree** category.
- **SD = 0.306 = high consensus**, indicating respondents generally **feel confident in recommending** the city due to branding efforts.
- Implication: While branding **may not align with identity**, it **positively influences external perceptions**, an important asset for tourism and investment promotion.

4.5.4 Key Factors Influencing Public Perception

Table 4.22: Factors Influencing Public Perception of City Branding

No.	Statement	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Interpretation	Consensus Level (SD)
4.1	Social media and digital platforms shape my perception of city branding.	194	3.47	0.488	Agree	High consensus
4.2	My perception is influenced by how well the city involves citizens in branding activities.	194	3.92	0.933	Agree	Moderate consensus
4.3	Budget transparency and effective resource use influence my view of city branding.	194	2.13	1.092	Disagree	Low consensus
4.4	I am more likely to have a positive perception if the branding reflects real improvements in the city.	194	4.86	0.254	Strongly Agree	High consensus
4.5	The visibility and consistency of branding messages affect my perception.	194	2.84	1.273	Neutral	Low consensus

Statement 4.1 – Role of Social Media and Digital Platforms

- **Mean = 3.47**, which falls in the **Agree** range, indicates that respondents generally **acknowledge the influence** of digital platforms in shaping their perception of city branding.
- **SD = 0.488**, indicating **high consensus**, so this is a widely shared view.
- **Implication:** Social media is a **critical channel for communication** and brand perception. The city administration should prioritize consistent and professional social media presence.

Statement 4.2 – Citizen Involvement

- **Mean = 3.92 (Agree)** suggests that people's perception improves when **citizen participation** is ensured in branding strategies.
- **SD = 0.933** shows **moderate variability**, indicating **some differing views**, though the majority agree.
- **Implication:** Increased citizen inclusion could **enhance legitimacy** and emotional engagement with the branding effort.

Statement 4.3 – Budget Transparency

- **Mean = 2.13**, which falls under **Disagree**, shows respondents **do not believe budget transparency and resource allocation** have positively influenced their perception.
- **SD = 1.092**, with **low consensus**, reveals **divided opinions**, possibly due to varied awareness or trust levels.
- **Implication:** There is a **trust gap**; lack of visible financial transparency undermines public confidence. The administration may need to **communicate expenditures and resource utilization** more clearly.

Statement 4.4 – Branding Reflecting Real Improvements

- **Mean = 4.86**, falls within **Strongly Agree**, indicating a **strong public perception** that positive, visible change drives favorable branding impressions.
- **SD = 0.254**, shows **very high consensus**.
- **Implication:** This is a **key driver of positive perception**. Tangible changes (e.g., infrastructure upgrades, beautification) are highly valued and must be prioritized in branding campaigns.

Statement 4.5 – Visibility and Message Consistency

- **Mean = 2.84**, which is **Neutral**, suggests **indecision** or **mixed experiences** regarding message clarity and consistency in branding.

- **SD = 1.273**, indicates **low consensus**, further emphasizing divergent experiences or lack of clear messaging.
- **Implication:** Inconsistent visibility and branding messages **may hinder message retention** or credibility. A **strategic communication plan** is needed to enhance coherence across platforms.

4.6 Qualitative Analysis: Key Informant Interview Results

To complement the quantitative findings, key informant interviews were conducted with higher executives and senior managers from the Addis Ababa City Administration who are directly or indirectly involved in city branding initiatives. The purpose was to gain deeper insight into public awareness, communication strategies, inclusivity, and potential improvements for branding implementation. The responses were analyzed thematically using content analysis and are presented in alignment with the major research questions.

1. Public Awareness of City Branding Initiatives

When asked to describe the current level of public awareness regarding Addis Ababa's city branding strategies, most respondents indicated that public awareness remains relatively low and uneven across different demographic and geographic segments of the city. While some citizens may have encountered branding materials or slogans, the majority appear unfamiliar with the goals or intended messages of the campaign. One executive remarked:

“There's no doubt the initiative exists, but we've not done enough to translate that presence into public understanding. Only a limited group of people know what city branding really means for Addis Ababa.”

This view aligns closely with the quantitative findings, particularly **Statement 1.2 (Mean = 2.28)** and **1.5 (Mean = 1.71)**, which showed low levels of exposure to branding efforts and limited visibility in public spaces.

2. Communication Strategies Employed

Participants highlighted that the primary communication strategies used to promote the branding initiative have relied heavily on traditional media platforms such as state-owned television, radio,

print publications, and official events. A few noted that social media channels were utilized sporadically but lacked consistent messaging or strategic targeting.

“The problem is not the absence of communication—it's the approach. We still lean too much on one-way channels rather than engaging the public through two-way, participatory means.”

The above comment reflects the neutral response trend in **Statement 1.3 (Mean = 3.1)**, where clarity of communication was perceived as moderate, suggesting a need for improvement in message delivery and outreach methods.

3. Accessibility and Inclusiveness of Branding Initiatives

Regarding the inclusivity and accessibility of the branding methods, the majority of interviewees expressed concern that the strategies have not adequately reflected the diverse voices and lived realities of Addis Ababa residents. They emphasized that the branding process lacked public consultation and failed to incorporate grassroots perspectives, especially those from marginalized or underrepresented communities.

“We need to shift from a top-down to a bottom-up approach. The branding doesn't yet speak to the identity of the average citizen—it feels like an imported concept.”

This perspective reinforces survey findings from **Section 2**, where respondents indicated low agreement with statements regarding community alignment (e.g., **Statement 2.1 Mean = 1.84**, **2.4 Mean = 1.76**), suggesting a significant disconnect between the city's branding narrative and residents' cultural expectations.

4. Recommendations for Improving Public Engagement

When asked about potential improvements, nearly all informants proposed the adoption of **digital media tools**, greater **community engagement**, and **inclusive storytelling**. Specific suggestions included the use of interactive social media campaigns, collaboration with youth influencers, branding content in local languages, and community co-creation workshops.

“The future lies in digital. We must develop a digital-first branding strategy that incorporates citizen feedback in real-time. People will trust the brand when they see themselves reflected in it.”

This sentiment is strongly supported by the quantitative data, particularly **Statement 4.4 (Mean = 4.86)** and **4.2 (Mean = 3.92)**, where respondents affirmed that branding is more positively perceived when it reflects real improvement and inclusivity.

Table 4.23: Summary of Qualitative Themes

THEMATIC AREA	KEY FINDINGS	SUPPORTED BY QUANTITATIVE DATA
PUBLIC AWARENESS	Generally low and inconsistent awareness among the public	Statement 1.2 (M = 2.28), 1.5 (M = 1.71)
COMMUNICATION STRATEGY	Overreliance on traditional media; lack of clarity and interactivity	Statement 1.3 (M = 3.1), 2.3 (M = 2.31)
INCLUSIVENESS	Limited citizen involvement; branding not reflective of local identity	Statement 2.1 (M = 1.84), 2.4 (M = 1.76)
RECOMMENDATIONS	Call for digital innovation, participatory approaches, culturally resonant content	Statement 4.4 (M = 4.86), 4.2 (M = 3.92)

The qualitative insights obtained from key informants strongly complement and validate the patterns observed in the quantitative data. There is a shared recognition of the need for a more participatory, inclusive, and digitally savvy approach to city branding. Bridging the gap between branding strategies and public perception requires not only communication reform but also the genuine integration of community identity and values into the city's brand narrative.

2. Alignment with Public Expectations and Values

1) Reflection of Local Values, Culture, and Aspirations

Key informants consistently highlighted that the current city branding strategies only partially capture the true values, culture, and aspirations of Addis Ababa's residents. Several executives acknowledged that while cultural and historical elements are occasionally referenced, the

branding lacks depth and fails to fully resonate with the diverse communities across the city. One manager stated:

“The branding incorporates some cultural symbols but misses the everyday realities and hopes of many residents. It feels more like a surface-level image than a heartfelt representation.”

This qualitative insight correlates strongly with the quantitative data from statements 2.1 (Mean = 1.84) and 2.4 (Mean = 1.76), which revealed low agreement on whether the branding reflects residents’ identity and culture.

2) Community Consultation and Participatory Planning

Most respondents noted that formal community consultations or participatory sessions related to branding have been very limited or largely symbolic. When engagement occurred, it was often conducted through top-down approaches or within select groups, without widespread grassroots involvement. An executive remarked:

“There have been a few workshops, but they tend to be tokenistic—more for formality than for real input. We have not yet developed meaningful channels for citizen participation.”

This aligns with the low mean scores on statements concerning community involvement, especially statement 2.3 (Mean = 2.31), suggesting the public perceives minimal inclusion in branding decisions.

3) Meeting Public Expectations

Informants generally expressed skepticism about whether the branding initiatives meet public expectations. The consensus was that the current branding strategy does not sufficiently address community needs or aspirations, creating a disconnect that undermines public support. One respondent explained:

“People expect branding to reflect their lived experience and aspirations—economic opportunities, cultural pride, urban improvements. Currently, the strategy misses these nuances.”

The relatively low mean scores (around 2.1 on statements 2.2 and 2.5) reinforce this perception of unmet expectations.

4) Ensuring Relevance to Community Needs

Interviewees suggested that there is no clear, systematic process to keep branding initiatives aligned with community needs over time. Adaptive feedback mechanisms and regular assessment were described as lacking, and city officials were urged to establish ongoing dialogue platforms. An executive highlighted:

“Branding must evolve with the city and its people. We need real-time engagement and mechanisms to incorporate feedback continuously.”

This need for dynamism complements the quantitative findings indicating a weak connection between branding and community relevance.

Table 4.24: Summary of Qualitative Themes — Alignment with Public Expectations and Values

THEMATIC AREA	KEY FINDINGS	SUPPORTED BY QUANTITATIVE DATA
REFLECTION OF VALUES & CULTURE	Branding partially reflects culture but lacks depth and broad resonance	Statements 2.1 (M=1.84), 2.4 (M=1.76)
COMMUNITY CONSULTATION	Minimal, mostly symbolic engagement with limited grassroots participation	Statement 2.3 (M=2.31)
MEETING PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS	Branding perceived as falling short of community aspirations	Statements 2.2 (M=2.10), 2.5 (M=2.11)
RELEVANCE & RESPONSIVENESS	Lack of systematic feedback or adaptive engagement from city administration	Qualitative insight supported by general low agreement levels

The qualitative data from key informants reveal a significant misalignment between Addis Ababa’s city branding strategies and the community’s values, culture, and expectations. Limited participatory engagement and the absence of ongoing feedback mechanisms have led to a branding narrative that residents perceive as superficial and disconnected from their lived realities. To enhance the effectiveness and acceptance of city branding, it is essential to deepen community involvement through inclusive, bottom-up approaches and implement adaptive strategies that respond dynamically to the evolving needs of Addis Ababa’s diverse population.

This qualitative evidence reinforces and explains the low quantitative scores observed in the related survey items, underscoring the need for a more authentic and participatory branding process.

3. Impact on Public Pride, Identity, and Perceived Image

1) Impact of Branding on Public Pride and City Identity

Key informants generally agreed that the city branding strategies have had a **mixed impact** on the public's sense of pride and city identity. While some noted that the branding has the potential to foster pride and unity, many emphasized that this effect is currently limited to certain groups, such as government employees or residents in central areas who are more exposed to the campaign. One senior executive explained:

“Branding can be a powerful tool to enhance pride, but for many citizens, especially those in peripheral neighborhoods, the connection to the city's identity through branding is weak or nonexistent.”

This observation is consistent with the survey findings where statement 3.1 (Mean = 3.05) indicates a neutral to moderate agreement that branding evokes pride, showing room for growth in public identification with the brand.

2) Influence of Branding on Perception by Residents and Visitors

Interviewees expressed the view that city branding has **started to influence how Addis Ababa is perceived**, but the influence remains uneven. Several noted that branding has helped shape a more positive image among visitors and tourists, as well as business investors, by projecting a modern and progressive city image. A manager shared:

“Tourists and investors notice the city's efforts to brand itself, especially through digital platforms. It creates a more favorable impression, though this doesn't always translate to residents' experiences.”

This is supported by the high agreement scores in statement 3.2 (Mean = 4.58) and 3.5 (Mean = 4.05), showing strong positive perceptions about branding's ability to improve the city's image and recommendation by residents.

3) Examples of Branding Impact on Public Sentiment or Image

Several respondents recounted specific instances where branding initiatives led to noticeable shifts in public sentiment or enhanced the city’s image. Examples included successful public events or campaigns tied to the branding message, which temporarily boosted community engagement and media coverage. One executive mentioned:

“During the last city anniversary, the branding messages were visible everywhere, and people felt a stronger connection to the city’s story. It was a rare moment when many citizens expressed pride and ownership.”

However, they also cautioned that such impacts are often short-lived without sustained efforts and deeper engagement.

Table 4.25: Summary of Qualitative Themes — Impact on Public Pride, Identity, and Perceived Image

Thematic Area	Key Findings	Supported by Quantitative Data
Public Pride & Identity	Mixed impact; pride mostly among select groups, limited citywide connection	Statement 3.1 (M=3.05)
Perceived Image by Residents & Visitors	Branding improving external image more than internal experience	Statements 3.2 (M=4.58), 3.5 (M=4.05)
Examples of Impact	Branding campaigns/events sometimes boost pride temporarily	Qualitative insights, supported indirectly by overall positive scores in 3.2 and 3.5

The qualitative data indicate that while Addis Ababa’s city branding efforts have begun to influence perceptions positively, especially among visitors and business stakeholders, their impact on the broader public’s sense of pride and identity remains limited and uneven. Branding has succeeded in promoting a more favorable external image of the city, but residents’ emotional connection and sustained pride are hindered by inconsistent exposure and engagement. Specific campaigns and events demonstrate the potential for stronger public resonance, highlighting the

need for more continuous, inclusive, and locally relevant branding initiatives to deepen civic pride and identity.

4. Key Factors Influencing Public Perception

1) Key Factors Shaping Public Perception

Key informants highlighted several critical factors that shape how the public perceives the city's branding efforts. The most frequently mentioned factors include visibility and consistency of messaging, relevance of branding content to residents lived experiences, and the extent of public participation in the branding process. One executive noted:

“People judge the branding by how often they see it and how much it reflects their daily lives. If branding feels distant or unrelated, it fails to resonate.”

Additionally, transparency in resource use and demonstrated improvements in the city were also cited as important influencers, linking citizens' trust and perception of authenticity to tangible changes rather than mere slogans. This corresponds with the quantitative findings, such as Statement 4.4 (Mean = 4.86), reflecting strong agreement that real improvements positively affect perception.

2) Challenges and Barriers Affecting Public Perception

Several barriers were identified as limiting factors for positive public perception. These include **limited public awareness, lack of inclusive engagement mechanisms, communication gaps, and unequal access to information**, particularly for marginalized or peripheral communities. A manager remarked:

“We struggle with reaching all residents equally. Many people don't feel involved or even aware of the branding efforts, which fuels skepticism and disengagement.”

Other challenges mentioned were the persistence of negative city realities—such as infrastructure deficits and social issues that undermine the effectiveness of branding messages.

3) Role of Digital and Social Media Platforms

Respondents unanimously agreed that digital and social media platforms are increasingly vital in shaping public perceptions. These platforms offer opportunities for **broader reach, interactive**

engagement, and **real-time feedback**. However, they noted that current social media use by the city is **inconsistent and underutilized**. One senior official said:

“Digital platforms are the future for branding. They allow us to tell the city’s story dynamically and engage citizens actively, but we have yet to harness their full potential.”

This aligns with the quantitative data where Statements 4.1 (Mean = 3.47) and 4.2 (Mean = 3.92) show moderate agreement on social media’s role, indicating room for improvement.

4) Recommendations to Improve Engagement and Perception

Informants recommended a multi-pronged approach to enhance public engagement and perception. Key suggestions included:

- Developing a **digital-first branding strategy** with interactive campaigns and use of local languages.
- Increasing **community participation** through workshops, consultations, and co-creation of branding messages.
- Ensuring **transparency** in budgeting and city improvements linked to branding efforts to build trust.
- Partnering with **local influencers and youth groups** to expand reach and relevance.

A notable comment summarized the consensus:

“For branding to succeed, it must be inclusive, transparent, and digital-savvy. Citizens need to feel that the brand reflects their reality and that their voices matter.”

These recommendations reflect a desire for more meaningful two-way communication, stronger public involvement, and modernized outreach methods.

Table 4.26: Summary of Qualitative Themes — Key Factors Influencing Public Perception

THEMATIC AREA	KEY FINDINGS	SUPPORTED BY QUANTITATIVE DATA
INFLUENCING FACTORS	Visibility, relevance, public participation, trust in real improvements	Statement 4.4 (M=4.86), 4.2 (M=3.92)
CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS	Low awareness, limited inclusion, communication gaps, unequal information access	Statements 1.2 (M=2.28), 2.1 (M=1.84)
ROLE OF DIGITAL MEDIA	Crucial but underutilized; potential for engagement and feedback	Statements 4.1 (M=3.47), 4.2 (M=3.92)
RECOMMENDATIONS	Digital-first strategy, community engagement, transparency, influencer partnerships	Qualitative insights

The qualitative findings underscore that public perception of Addis Ababa’s city branding is influenced primarily by how visible and relatable the branding efforts are, combined with the level of citizen participation and trust in visible city improvements. Significant challenges remain in awareness, inclusion, and communication equity, which hamper the full realization of branding benefits. Digital and social media platforms emerge as essential yet underexploited tools for enhancing engagement and shaping perception. Informants recommend a shift toward more inclusive, transparent, and digitally driven branding strategies to foster greater public connection and support for the city’s brand.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

This section presents, summary of the findings from 194 successfully completed questionnaires distributed to officials across five departments of the Addis Ababa City Administration. The analysis draws on descriptive statistics frequencies and percentages supported by tables for clarity. The findings offer insights into respondent demographics, awareness, and perceptions of city branding strategies.

The data shows that the majority of respondents were male (60.8%), while females accounted for 39.2%. This gender distribution reflects the general employment composition within city administration offices.

The majority of respondents (44.3%) hold a first degree, followed by diploma holders (27.8%). Only 4.6% have a PhD. This suggests a relatively well-educated workforce, capable of providing informed responses on branding strategies.

Most respondents (45.9%) have 7–10 years of experience, indicating that a substantial proportion of the participants are mid-career professionals with deep institutional knowledge. This strengthens the credibility of their perspectives.

The largest number of respondents (27.5%) were from the Urban Planning and Development Commission. This is beneficial for the study as it relates closely to urban identity and city image the core aspects of city branding.

A majority of respondents (65.5%) serve at the officer level. Mid-level and senior management together constitute 23.7%, ensuring representation from decision-makers and implementers of branding policies.

Social media platforms are the most common source (89.7%), highlighting their importance in branding communication. Traditional media (TV/radio) is also significant, reinforcing the need for multi-platform strategies.

Social media and traditional media are equally influential in first introducing city branding to officials. This indicates that communication efforts are reaching intended audiences through both old and new media.

A combined 55.2% of respondents express some level of confidence in their understanding of city branding goals. However, over 22% feel neutral and 22.7% express low confidence, indicating a gap in internal awareness.

Approximately 71.1% believe the city branding strategy represents cultural heritage "well" or "very well." However, 28.9% are less positive, pointing to the need for more inclusive or representative branding practices.

A significant majority (41.8%) support a multi-stakeholder approach. This underlines the value of inclusiveness in policy development and public engagement in city branding.

Over half of the respondents (51%) believe the community is not involved at all. This lack of inclusion could diminish the effectiveness and public acceptance of city branding initiatives.

A substantial proportion of respondents (72.68%) reported an increase in their sense of pride toward Addis Ababa since the implementation of the city branding strategy. Among them, 45.36% stated their pride increased significantly. However, about 21.65% reported a decrease, which indicates that while the branding strategy has generally been successful in fostering civic pride, a notable minority perceives negative or no change.

The dominant influencing factor is city beautification and infrastructure, acknowledged by nearly 70% of respondents. This emphasizes the importance of tangible, visible changes in shaping public perceptions. Comparatively, cultural festivals and media campaigns had lesser influence, while community engagement ranked lowest, suggesting a possible disconnect between administrative planning and grassroots involvement.

Participation levels are relatively high, with over 58% of respondents engaging daily or weekly in branding-related activities. This reflects a strong level of public engagement and suggests that a segment of the population is actively participating, which is a positive indicator of public involvement. However, 25.77% (rarely or never) still reflect a need for broader outreach.

Social media is the most prominent source of information about branding initiatives (35.57%), confirming the critical role of digital platforms in urban communication strategies. While traditional media and city publications remain relevant, the reliance on word of mouth is minimal, underlining the professionalized nature of communication channels.

Negative public opinion is perceived as the most critical barrier (40.72%), followed by cultural mismatch (26.29%). These findings suggest that public perception challenges are deeply tied to cultural and emotional disconnection, not merely logistical or financial constraints. Poor communication also appears significant, aligning with earlier data.

While all factors influence perceptions to varying degrees, cultural and historical representation emerged as the most critical (23.71%), highlighting the role of identity in city branding. Community participation and infrastructure follow closely, reaffirming the importance of inclusion and visible development in influencing public perception.

The data indicates that the majority of respondents are aware of the Addis Ababa City Administration's branding strategy (Mean = 3.96, high consensus). However, frequent exposure to branding information is low (Mean = 2.28), and opinions are mixed on how clearly the branding efforts are communicated (Mean = 3.10) and understood (Mean = 3.21), both with low consensus. Visibility of branding messages in public spaces is notably poor (Mean = 1.71), reflecting general dissatisfaction and low agreement.

Respondents largely disagree that the city branding reflects their values and identity (Mean = 1.84) or meets local expectations (Mean = 2.10), both with low consensus. There is strong agreement that citizen voices are not adequately considered (Mean = 2.31, high consensus). The branding is also seen as irrelevant to Addis Ababa's culture and history (Mean = 1.76, high consensus), and most feel it does not align with their personal vision for the city (Mean = 2.11).

Feelings of pride related to city branding are neutral and varied (Mean = 3.05, low consensus). Nonetheless, the branding is strongly seen as improving the city's overall image (Mean = 4.58, very high consensus) and respondents generally agree they would recommend Addis Ababa based on branding (Mean = 4.05, high consensus). However, perceptions about the branding fostering community identity (Mean = 2.85) and reflecting cultural heritage (Mean = 1.96) remain neutral to negative with low consensus.

Social media and digital platforms are recognized as important in shaping branding perception (Mean = 3.47, high consensus). Citizen involvement is also valued (Mean = 3.92), though opinions vary. Transparency on budget use is viewed negatively (Mean = 2.13), with low consensus. The strongest driver of positive perception is visible city improvements linked to branding (Mean = 4.86, very high consensus). Visibility and message consistency receive mixed responses (Mean = 2.84), indicating a need for clearer, more coherent communication.

5.2 Conclusion

This study aimed to assess the public perception of the branding strategies implemented by the Addis Ababa City Administration, focusing on awareness, alignment with community values, impact on public pride and identity, and factors influencing perception.

- **Public Awareness:** The findings reveal that public awareness of the city's branding initiatives is generally low and inconsistent. Many residents are either unaware of the branding efforts or only superficially exposed to them. Communication efforts have relied heavily on traditional media with limited engagement and reach, especially among marginalized groups.
- **Alignment with Public Expectations and Values:** There is a clear disconnect between the city's branding strategies and the values, culture, and aspirations of Addis Ababa residents. The branding has not sufficiently incorporated community voices, and participatory processes have been minimal or absent, resulting in limited public identification with the brand.
- **Impact on Public Pride, Identity, and Image:** While some branding efforts have improved the city's image and fostered a sense of pride among certain segments of the population, this impact is uneven. Many residents do not feel the branding reflects their unique cultural heritage or lived realities, reducing the overall effectiveness of the initiatives.
- **Key Factors Influencing Public Perception:** Public perception is shaped by the visibility and relevance of branding messages, public participation, and trust in tangible city improvements. Challenges include low awareness, limited inclusiveness, and

communication barriers. Digital and social media platforms are recognized as vital yet underutilized channels for engagement and perception shaping.

The study's findings highlight significant gaps in the implementation of city branding strategies in Addis Ababa. Despite official efforts to promote the city's brand, public understanding and engagement remain limited, compromising the campaign's overall effectiveness.

The overreliance on traditional, one-way communication channels limits the reach and inclusiveness of branding messages. The lack of meaningful public participation and feedback mechanisms undermines the brand's authenticity and relevance to residents, as the branding does not sufficiently reflect the city's diverse cultural identities and community aspirations.

The mixed impact on public pride and city identity further underscores the need for a branding strategy that resonates deeply with the population's values and experiences. The positive perception linked to visible, tangible improvements indicates that branding must go beyond symbolism to embody real change and progress.

Digital and social media platforms represent an untapped opportunity to revitalize city branding through interactive, participatory, and dynamic communication strategies. Leveraging these platforms can bridge communication gaps and foster stronger citizen involvement.

In conclusion, for Addis Ababa's city branding to succeed, a shift towards more inclusive, transparent, and digitally oriented approaches is essential. Such strategies should embed community identity, promote two-way communication, and demonstrate real benefits to the city and its residents.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings and analysis, the following recommendations are proposed:

- 1. Enhance Public Awareness through Multi-Channel Communication:**

Develop an integrated communication strategy combining traditional and digital media to increase visibility and reach diverse demographics, including marginalized groups.

- 2. Foster Inclusive and Participatory Branding Processes:**

Engage communities actively through consultations, workshops, and co-creation initiatives to ensure the branding reflects local values, culture, and aspirations.

3. Leverage Digital and Social Media Platforms:

Invest in a digital-first branding approach with interactive campaigns, use of local languages, real-time citizen feedback mechanisms, and collaboration with influencers and youth groups.

4. Ensure Transparency and Tangible City Improvements:

Communicate clearly about resource allocation and demonstrate how branding efforts are linked to visible improvements in infrastructure, services, and quality of life to build public trust.

5. Promote Consistency and Visibility of Branding Messages:

Maintain a coherent, consistent brand message across all media and public spaces to reinforce recognition and impact.

6. Monitor and Evaluate Branding Impact Continuously:

Establish mechanisms to assess public perception regularly and adapt branding strategies accordingly to maintain relevance and effectiveness.

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APPENDIX

Appendix I

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY MA PROGRAM IN PUBLIC RELATIONS AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is part of a research study titled:

“Public Perception of Branding Strategies Implemented by the Addis Ababa City Administration, Ethiopia.”

The aim is to gather insights from citizens and city stakeholders regarding their awareness, experiences, and perceptions of city branding initiatives. Your responses are anonymous and will be used strictly for academic purposes.

Please answer the following questions honestly by ticking (✓) the appropriate box or writing your answer where applicable.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

For any questions or clarifications, please contact me at: [siyegirmay@gmail.com]

Part 1: Demographic Information

1. Gender

- a) Male ☐
- b) Female ☐

2. Educational Background

- a) Diploma ☐
- b) Bachelor's degree ☐
- c) Master's degree ☐
- d) PhD holder ☐
- e) Other (please specify) ☐

3. Years of Experience in City Administration

- a) Less than 1 year ☐
- b) 1-3 years ☐

- c) 4-6 years
- d) 7-10 years
- e) More than 10 years

4. Department of Employment

- a) Communication Affairs Bureau
- b) Culture and Tourism Bureau
- c) Urban Planning and Development
- d) Investment and Enterprise Development Bureau
- e) Sub-city and Woreda-level Communication Units

5. Position/Title

- a) Entry-level
- b) Officer
- c) Mid-level management
- d) Senior management
- e) Executive level
- f) Other (please specify)

Part 2: Categorical Questions

Q1. Through which channels do you most often receive information about city branding initiatives? You can encircle more than one alternative

- a) Official city administration websites
- b) Social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)
- c) Television or radio broadcasts
- d) Community meetings or public forums
- e) Newspapers or printed materials
- f) I have not received any information

Q2. How did you first learn about the city branding initiatives of the Addis Ababa City Administration?

- a) Through social media or digital platforms
- b) From public events or campaigns
- c) Word of mouth (friends/family)
- d) Traditional media (TV, radio, newspapers)
- e) I have not heard about it

Q3. How confident are you in your knowledge about the goals of the city branding strategy?

- a) Very confident
- b) Somewhat confident
- c) Neutral
- d) Somewhat unconfident
- e) Not confident at all

Q4. How well do you think the city branding strategy represents the cultural heritage of Addis Ababa?

- a) Very well
- b) Well
- c) Moderately
- d) Poorly
- e) Not at all

Q5. Who do you think should be most involved in developing the city branding strategies?

- a) City administration officials only
- b) Local community leaders and residents
- c) Business owners and investors
- d) Cultural and historical experts
- e) A combination of the above

Q6. How involved do you feel the local community is in shaping the city branding strategies?

- a) Directly involved through consultations or forums
- b) Indirectly involved through feedback or surveys
- c) Not involved at all

Q7. Since the implementation of the city branding strategy, how has your feeling of pride toward Addis Ababa changed?

- a) Increased significantly
- b) Increased somewhat
- c) No change
- d) Decreased somewhat
- e) Decreased significantly

Q8. Which aspect of the city branding initiative has influenced your perception the most?

- a) City beautification and infrastructure improvements
- b) Promotion of cultural festivals and events
- c) Marketing campaigns and advertisements

- d) Engagement and inclusion of local communities
- e) Other (please specify) _____

Q9. How often do you participate in activities or events related to Addis Ababa's city branding?

- a) Daily
- b) Weekly
- c) Monthly
- d) Rarely
- e) Never

Q10. What is your main source of information about the city branding initiatives?

- a) Official city publications
- b) Social media posts from the city or related groups
- c) News reports in newspapers, TV, or radio
- d) Word of mouth from family or friends
- e) Personal experience in the community

Q11. Which challenge do you think most affects the success of the city branding efforts?

- a) Lack of public participation
- b) Insufficient funding and resources
- c) Poor communication from the city administration
- d) Mismatch between branding and local culture
- e) Negative public opinion or skepticism

Q12. Which of the following factors most influences your perception of the city branding strategies? (Select one)

- a) Communication and information accessibility
- b) Community participation opportunities
- c) Visible improvements in the city (services, facilities)
- d) Cultural and historical representation
- e) Media and social media portrayal

Part 3: Likert Scale Statements – Perceptions of City Branding Strategies

Dear Respondent,

This section of the questionnaire is designed to gather your views on the branding strategies implemented by the Addis Ababa City Administration. The statements below relate to key objectives of the research study titled:

“Public Perception of Branding Strategies Implemented by the Addis Ababa City Administration, Ethiopia.”

Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement using the five-point Likert scale provided below:

Scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree | 2 = Disagree | 3 = Neutral | 4 = Agree | 5 = Strongly Agree

Your honest and thoughtful responses are highly appreciated. All information provided will be treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes.

Thank you for your valuable time and participation.

Section 1: Public Awareness of City Branding

No.	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
1.1	I am aware that the Addis Ababa City Administration has a city branding strategy.					
1.2	I frequently come across information about the city's branding initiatives.					
1.3	The city's branding efforts are communicated clearly to the public.					
1.4	I understand the goals and vision of the city branding campaign.					
1.5	City branding messages are visible in public spaces (e.g., media, billboards).					

Section 2: Alignment with Public Expectations and Values

No.	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
2.1	The city's branding reflects the values and identity of Addis Ababa residents.					
2.2	The branding initiatives meet the expectations of the local community.					
2.3	I feel that the city's branding strategy considers the voices of the citizens.					
2.4	The branding campaign is relevant to Addis Ababa's culture and history.					
2.5	The city branding aligns with how I would like the city to be represented.					

Section 3: Impact on Public Pride, Identity, and Perceived Image

No.	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
3.1	The city branding makes me feel proud to be a resident of Addis Ababa.					
3.2	The branding strategies improve the overall image of the city.					
3.3	City branding promotes a strong sense of community identity.					
3.4	The city's branding reflects Addis Ababa's unique culture and heritage.					
3.5	I would recommend Addis Ababa to others based on its public branding.					

Section 4: Key Factors Influencing Public Perception

No.	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
4.1	Social media and digital platforms shape my perception of city branding.					
4.2	My perception is influenced by how well the city involves citizens in branding activities.					
4.3	Budget transparency and effective resource use influence my view of city branding.					
4.4	I am more likely to have a positive perception if the branding reflects real improvements in the city.					
4.5	The visibility and consistency of branding messages affect my perception.					

Appendix II

Part 4: Key Informant Interview Questions

Title: Public Perception of Branding Strategies Implemented by the Addis Ababa City Administration, Ethiopia

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this key informant interview. Your insights are highly valuable to this academic research, which aims to assess how the Addis Ababa City Administration's branding strategies are perceived by the public.

Please respond to the following open-ended questions based on your knowledge and experience. Your responses will remain confidential and used strictly for academic purposes.

Section 1: Public Awareness of City Branding

- 1) How would you describe the public's current level of awareness regarding Addis Ababa's city branding initiatives?
- 2) What communication strategies has the city administration used to inform the public about these initiatives?
- 3) Do you think the methods used to promote the city branding initiatives are accessible and inclusive? Why or why not?
- 4) In your opinion, what could be done to increase public awareness of the city's branding efforts?

Section 2: Alignment with Public Expectations and Values

- 1) To what extent do you think the current branding strategies reflect the values, culture, and aspirations of the people of Addis Ababa?
- 2) Have there been any community consultations or participatory planning sessions related to branding? If yes, how were they conducted?
- 3) Do you believe the public's expectations are being met through these branding strategies? Please elaborate.
- 4) How does the city administration ensure that the branding initiatives stay relevant to community needs?

Section 3: Impact on Public Pride, Identity, and Perceived Image

- 1) What impact have you observed the branding strategies having on the public's sense of pride and city identity?
- 2) Do you think city branding has influenced how Addis Ababa is perceived by residents and visitors alike? If so, how?

- 3) Can you share any specific examples or stories where branding efforts resulted in a noticeable change in public sentiment or city image?

Section 4: Key Factors Influencing Public Perception

- 1) From your perspective, what factors most strongly shape how the public perceives the city's branding efforts?
- 2) Are there any challenges or barriers that affect the public's perception of the branding initiatives?
- 3) What role do digital and social media platforms play in shaping these perceptions?
- 4) What recommendations do you have to improve public engagement and perception regarding city branding?