

**The city brand at the tipping point: From city brand co-creation to city brand co-destruction?
The case of “München ist bunt” (Munich is colorful)**

The proverb “München ist bunt” (Munich is colorful) is an important part of the essence of the city, located in Bavaria (Germany). In June 2015, many Munich inhabitants saw their “identity” threatened by a right wing movement (PEGIDA) which had the message that the German population is not willing to co-exist with foreigners, having different skin color, cultures, or religious beliefs. As a reaction, more than 1 million people, organized through social media, gathered on different places in Munich to show what their meaning of the place they live is to them. The strong co-creation of the Munich brand meaning culminated very recently in the attempt to help more than 5,000 refugees that stranded all in one on a Saturday night at the main train station: Again, via social media the local public organized thousands of helpers that brought food or clothes to the train station. The public showed strong solidarity with the refugees, and at the same, reinforced the meaning of what Munich is said to be all about.

Currently, the media launches more critical views about the refugee situation in Munich and other places (e.g., Cologne) and some people become increasingly upset as crossing the border to Germany is very time-consuming as they are controlled since recently in the attempt to reduce the number of incoming refugees. In the ongoing development, also the tone in the political debate is getting tougher, due to a struggle about the handling of the refugees between the German chancellor and the leader of the federal state Bavaria. The fear is, that there soon will be a changing point in the favorable co-creation of Munich’s brand part “München ist bunt” – also on a local residential level.

This example shows that collective actions are central to the co-creation of place brands – they signify something about both the people and the place, and that signification renders a place with meaning. Brand meaning can include both, positive and negative connotations. The Munich case is a highly relevant example for places in crisis, where a potential change is challenging the co-created meaning of a place. The aim of this project is to explore, document and analyze the mechanisms of co-creation during the crisis and see if there is a tipping point for the co-creational process of a city’s local people – moving from a highly favorable co-construction of brand meaning to a potential negative co-destruction.

However, from a marketing and branding perspective, we want to focus on what kind of impact does this co-creation and co-deconstruction has on the internal place consumers (i.e., residents) and external target audiences (i.e., international talents and tourists). Like most of the larger European cities, Munich is focusing on the attraction of talents and tourists with their official city (brand) communication. The question remains, if “München ist bunt” is an effective way to communicate the place, since it triggers attractive city attributes (i.e., openness and tolerance) which are key to attract these target groups. At the same time, also negative association (i.e., lack of security) could be triggered, or – in case of co-deconstruction – the risk of a highly negative image could occur. Thus on the managerial side, this proposed project wants to answer the question, if the city of Munich should use the “München ist bunt” movement in their official place brand communication.

Project Part 1: Different stakeholders' role in the process from city brand co-creation to city brand co-destruction – an internal view

Goal: Case description from the perspective of different stakeholders over time (process construction and interrelationships between stakeholders). Potential stakeholders: Residents, NGOs, political parties, public administration. Identification, documentation and analyzing of relevant media messages/strategies that co-create/co-destruct the Munich city brand (German and international media).

Research question: Different stakeholders' contribution to the "identity" of the city brand (meaning and action; word of mouth) as co-construction and co-deconstruction of a place. How do media contribute to co-create/co-destruct the Munich brand and contribute (or not) to "München ist bunt".

Research method: Case study, netnography, interview research, investigation of stakeholders' media presence, retrospective and continuing real-time observation of selected core media (regional, national, international), media clippings from Munich city marketing, online and offline research (tv, written, online)

Time frame: January 2016 – December 2016

Action plan: min. 12 qualitative in-depth interviews in 1st quarter of 2016; Involving 1-2 master students

Project Part 2: The impact of the refugee crisis on the (touristic) image and (intended) behavior regarding the Munich city brand

Goal: Case description from the perspective of external target audiences over time. Impact on the touristic image of Munich. Measuring the changes of the tourist image/attractiveness/intention to visit/WOM, overnight stays 2015 vs. 2016 - international media development, link to core happenings.

Possible research questions: How does the refugee crisis influence the (touristic) image of potential tourists (and talents)? The case of Munich.

Research method: Scenario study, online survey, media analysis

Time frame: February 2016 – August 2016

Action plan scenario study: Testing three different scenarios (Munich without "München ist bunt"; best-case scenario co-construction; worst-case scenario co-deconstruction) with priming; Involving 1-2 master students; Pre-study A (test of priming stimuli in the Danish context (150 participants)); Pre-study B (test of cultural differences in perception of crisis; 200 participants (50 per country; Denmark, Germany, The Netherlands, Austria)); Representative online-study with 500 participants per country (Denmark, Germany, The Netherlands, Austria) during summer time (because of holiday / tourism focus) before "October fest" (due to media coverage that could interfere with priming stimulus).

Institutions

The leading institution for this project is the **Copenhagen Business School (CBS)**, Denmark. The CBS is a public Danish university focusing on all business related topics and is one of the largest business schools in Europe with close to 20,000 students. CBS main goal is to develop and shares knowledge in partnership with other universities, enterprises and organizations and contributes to the development of business and society in general.

The project is co-organized by the **University of Applied Science Salzburg** and the **Universität der Bundeswehr München**. Furthermore, does the City Marketing Munich (**Standortmarketing München, Referat für Arbeit und Wirtschaft**) support the project.

Time Planning

	01/2016	02/2016	03/2016	04/2016	05/2016	06/2016	07/2016	08/2016	09/2016	10/2016	11/2016	12/2016	01/2017
Part 1: Internal View Data Collection													
A: Case study	R + M												
B: German media analysis	R + M												
B: Qualitative interviews		R + M											
Part 2: External View Data Collection													
A: Danish media analysis	R + M												
B: Pre-study scenario stimuli		R + M											
C: Pre study cultural differences			R										
D: Representative online study					R + A								
General and Administrative Tasks													
> Preparation research group	R												
> Data analysis			R + A + M										
> Writing articles											R		

Note. Researcher = R; Student Assistant = A; Master Student = M

Estimation of Costs

Estimation Costs	Description	1st quarter	2nd quarter	3rd quarter	4th quarter	Sum
1. Labour costs	3 Senior Researcher (2,5 days/month)	3.750,00 €	3.750,00 €	3.750,00 €	3.750,00 €	15.000,00 €
2. Travel expenses	Meetings, Pre-Study (Cultural differences)	250,00 €	500,00 €	-	250,00 €	1.000,00 €
3. Student assistants	Student assistant 32 hours/month	-	550,00 €	550,00 €	-	1.100,00 €
4. Publication costs	Copy editing manuscripts	-	-	-	300,00 €	300,00 €
5. Other costs	Online research panel Study 2 (N=2.000)	-	-	4.200,00 €	-	4.200,00 €
	Licence Software (SPSS & Questback)	125,00 €	125,00 €	125,00 €	125,00 €	500,00 €
Sum project =		4.125,00 €	4.925,00 €	8.625,00 €	4.425,00 €	22.100,00 €