DESIGNING THE IMAGE AND THE PERCEPTION OF THE CITY AND ITS' BRAND: THE IMPORTANCE AND IMPACT OF QUALITATIVE URBANISTIC ELEMENTS

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Abstract

Quantitative and qualitative elements define urbanism. They have an important role in the process of designing the image and the perception of the city and its brand. Modern cities evolve rapidly and compete intensely to project an attractive visual image and then link it to cultural and economic activities. Qualitative urbanism elements define the quality of living in a city and directly affect human perception of space. They produce feelings and generate attitudes. They strongly influence on the image and the perception of a city and its brand. Feelings of comfort come from a total perception of our environment and are the result of a synthesis of objective and subjective feelings. The purpose of this paper was to evaluate some important indicators of qualitative urban elements and evaluate them according to city residents' and city visitors' responses in Slovenia: context, accessibility, variety*,* readability, flexibility, visual suitability and diversity. Results represent their recognition of indicators that have the biggest (and the weakest) impact on designing the city and building perception of its brand: values, living conditions and environmental balance.

Key Words

City; perception; urbanism; city brand; qualitative urbanistic elements (QUE).

INTRODUCTION

Designing an image of a city is a process of composing several compatible and incompatible elements, each of them importantly influencing the perception of a city. As David Lynch (1960) explains in his introduction in book Image of the City: "At every instant in a city, there is more than the eye can see, more than the ear can hear, a setting or a view that is waiting to be explored. Nothing is experienced by itself, but always in relation to its surroundings, the sequences of events leading up to it, the memory of experiences", city is a space that creates impressions and perception. Urbanism, the art of designing and organizing city space with its spatial solutions, has, besides architecture and nature itself, strong impact on city perception. Its solutions combine several elements that built the so-called genius loci.

Cities began to compete and therefore they began to create city brands. By using city branding, they want to build a better image and create a desired perception of the city by different stakeholders, especially residents and visitors. A city brand, similar to corporate brand, involves the arrangement and design of buildings, public spaces, transport systems, services, and amenities (Pompe, 2015). The role of urbanism is significant in the process of giving the city its unique form, shape, and character (Urban design, no date). This is where the spatial design is adding value to the city identity. They create perception and generates an attitude towards the city and its brand.

Quantitative and qualitative elements define urbanism. Qualitative elements/determinants define the quality of living in a city and directly affect human perception of space. They produce feelings and generate attitudes. That is why qualitative urbanism elements strongly influence on the image and the perception of a city and its brand. Several indicators define the qualitative urbanism elements but they do not have an equal impact on them.

THEORY

Urbanism and perception of a city
S. Reiter and A. De Herde (2005) explain: »In an increasingly urbanized society, the urban environment quality becomes one of the main targets of a sustainable development«, and proceed: »Cities' sustainable development mainly depends on the capacity of the town planners to offer outdoor urban spaces with high environmental qualities. These enrich life experience downtown. « Š. Hribar et al. define, that »The urban cultural landscape as a living space offers goods at various levels and for various groups of people« (2018), what includes also the majority of city society: residents and visitors, who have their own expectations in terms of city goods (Hribar et al., 2015).

According to Franklin Obeng-Odoom, there is a long lasting debate (2017)

whether it is space that generates social relations (Lefebvre) or social relations that are conditioned by space (Harvey). On basis of these two definitions, Stavros Stavrides, author of the book The city as commons, suggests the following: "Common space is both a concrete product of collectively developed institutions of sharing and one of the crucial means through which these institutions take shape and shape those who shape them" (2016). Common space is where residents and other city visitors live, meet, work, communicate, relax, move around, educate, heal, produce, sell and consume cultural, emotional, and sensorial goods. A city is a complex and multifaceted entity, and so people seek to reduce this complexity to an image that allows them to understand and relate to the city (Castillo-Villar, 2016).

Sensory urbanism and perception of a city

People's sensorial experiences and understandings of their local environments are a result of sensory urbanism. It has a strong influential role of the senses in developing and affecting experience of the urban environment (Adams, et al., 2008). Sensory urbanism deals with qualitative urbanistic elements – factors, which creates human comfort in relation to public spaces and places and take a large part in the definition of a life quality offered to all citizens and city visitors. Urban public spaces need to be both, comfortable and attractive. They are the places where collective values are established. The feeling of comfort is the expression of an individual's wellbeing in a certain surrounding. The human perception system utilizes filters to analyze a space. It perceives only a few elements and just some of them are memorized. Individuals feel an immediate attraction or repulsion when discovering a place. Therefore, it is important to know which of them are more relevant. Feelings of comfort come from a total perception of our environment and are a result of objective and subjective feelings (Reiter & De Herde, 2003).

City brand as an emotional representative of the city

Brand has no physical existence. It is a creation of the human mind as a set of feelings, experiences and perceived values. Perceived values (benefits) may range from functional to psychological associations (Maurya, 2012). The associations, universal to the brand, are the name and the logo. In connection with city brand, Castillo-Villar (2016) point out: "The direct and indirect experiences that people have with their urban environment produce a set of representations and perceptions of the city. Therefore, there is a physical city and also a symbolic city built in the mind of every person". The symbolic city is the city brand that is associated with the city name and logo. City brand image is the current stakeholders view about a city. It signifies what the city presently stands for. In addition, it is the overall impression in residents', visitors' and other stakeholders' minds, formed from all sources (Vanolo, 2008).

Urban icons

Elements of a physical city that are remarkable are urban icons, often defined as landmarks. They effectively contribute to the development of an authentic city brand as they link to local identity and express local uniqueness. Urban icons are elements of the urban space: buildings, monuments, natural elements, mobilization elements, parks and recreational areas. They are one of the main tools of city branding to promote a unique and distinctive image of the city (Castillo-Villar, 2016). Ethington and Schwartz (2006: cited in Castillo-Villar, 2016) explain that urban icons serve as visual symbols (single and repetitive) capable of transforming the complexity of the urban experience into knowledge and meaning through representational practice. Urban icons are important elements in the city branding strategies, especially in the transformation of the image of the city (Muratovski, 2012; Bouchon, 2014; Evans, 2015).

Urbanism's impact on perception of the city and its brand

In the twentieth Century, quantitative demands in urbanism got so far, that it was mostly agreed, that it is impossible to have too much open space (Spitthöver 1982, Ermer 1985, Selle 1999). The post-industrial society severely criticized this kind of quantitative thinking and implied new opinions of urban space and the importance of nature in cities (Schöbel, 2006). Open space has no absolute function and significance, but always merely relative qualities – relative to the coherence of the urban surroundings (Jacobs, 1961). "Speculative urban development«, as written by Križnik, »often ignores the social importance of localities« (2018) what comprises also the perception that residents build in time.

Public spaces are crucial when discussed life quality offered to all citizens. They create sensory effects that affects human perception of urban environment where individual and collective values are built (Reiter & De Herde, 2003). A very revealing description of sensory urban engagement was published by Pallasmaa (2005: 40); he says: »I confront the city with my body … I experience myself in the city, and the city exists through my embodied experience. The city and my body supplement and define each other. I dwell in the city and the city dwells in me«. Feelings of comfort come from a total perception of our environment and are the result of a synthesis of objective and subjective feelings.

Modern cities evolve rapidly and compete intensely to project an attractive visual image and then link it to cultural and economic activities. Rehan (2014) says: "To create a sustainable urban image it is necessary to link the physical character of the city with the environmental, social, economic, and cultural aspects of the city.", and continues: "Urban branding integrates social, cultural, economic, and environmental themes into the city".

The theory, explaining that recall of a particular brand, enhanced by clear and meaningful associations related to the particular brand name (because each association represents a possible retrieval cue) is in certain situations countered by other theory that associations may cue competing brands and so produce interference (Maurya, 2012). This facts concern also city brands and associations with them are strongly influenced by cities' physical

evidences provided by urbanistic and architectural solutions. The more they are unique and the more they are contributing to the soul of the city (genius loci) better and stronger are the associations to the city brand.

Urban (city) branding

As concept, urban branding is more or less new. It is the process by which unique physical features of the city are defined, giving the urban space its essence. It is more than just the promotion of a positive image of the city, but it is the endeavor to change it into an urban experience (Rehan, 2014). As Helmy quoted in her doctoral theses (2008), branding of places and cities consist of two main elements: (1) placemaking or city building, a process that makes the place specifically advantageous or attractive and (2) place or city marketing, an effort to promote the place/city specific advantage''. In addition Helmy (2008: 21) explain it even in more details: "Urban branding is more than a strategic and rationalized form of place promotion and marketing; It is about constructing and shaping an ''urban imaginary'', which is understood to be a historically based ensemble of representations drawn from architecture and street plans of the city …". The urban (city) branding aims mainly to: (1) communicate city image to the rest of the world as a whole (media-generated image), (2) achieve competitive advantages regionally and internationally, and (3) strengthen the image and reputation of the city and its city identity (Helmy, 2008). City branding communicates main things that should people know about certain place (Unsworth, 2008).

Qualitative aspect of urbanism

Perception and affinity of local residents are critical factors when developing a strong and competitive city brand (Braun et al., 2013; Hudak, 2015, Castillo-Villar, 2016); thus, it is necessary to understand their relationship with urban solutions in designing urban space and place. Hence, the ultimate objective of this research is to inspire urban planner and designers for shaping and designing urban space in the way that is consistent with residents and visitors' rational and emotional values that they expect from the city.

   The qualitative aspect of urbanism deals with the question of how a person perceives, perceives, and understands the complexity of space (Gosling & Mailand, 1984, cited in Nikšič, 2003). Gestalt (Gestalt, form, figure, image) are the first quality studies of urbanism where different authors treat qualitative categories as individual laws: proximity, similarity, form, contours, similar movements and experiences (Katz, 1951). Matej Nikšič (2003) describes the Bentley approach that defines the quality of space with determinants: permeability, diversity, readability, flexibility, visual appropriateness, wealth and personalization. According to Kaliopa Dimitrovska Andrews (2011), the qualitative urban elements are context, accessibility, diversity, readability, flexibility and visual suitability. The definition of Dimitrovska Andrews is the basis of the survey.

Qualitative urban elements (QUE)

Context in urban planning means the influence of historical development, the existing image of the city and its impact on space perception, planning status and the social and economic role of the site on the development of the image of the city. Context guides the design strategy and creates associations related to the town and the city brand what has fateful impact on the perception of the city and its brand. **Accessibility**, which in urbanism means access to urban physical structures (to facilities and services in them, to open spaces and activities in them), and products of the city. **Variety** creates different perceptions of the ambient on which spatial solutions affect strongly. The created atmosphere is the basis for residents' and visitors' well-being and feelings and creates the experience of the location. **Readability** of the urban space means the degree of recognition of the city and orientation in it. It depends on the physical forms and design of the city; those, based on the principles of diversity, accessibility and context, stand out. **Flexibility** illustrates the extent to which open urban structures meet the needs of residents, visitors and other stakeholders of the city. **Visual suitability** allows users to be aware of what is available for them within the city space, and the visible branding of the city makes them to perceive the city. The visual suitability in urbanism implies the need for colorfulness and diversity, the goals of which are recognition, the creation of the desired perception, quality associations, and numerous and high-quality points of contact (touch-points). Urbanism affects the creation of a visible interest, which increases the positive and desired perception of the city and its brand. **Diversity** helps to create unique points of contact for the city, their instant recall, and hip-hop, and the ability to remember. The result of urban diversity is the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the city, which significantly co-creates the city brand.

METHODS

The purpose of this paper is to research and evaluate important indicators of qualitative urban elements that have the impact on process of designing a city and building its perception. We evaluate their importance according to residents' and city visitors' responses. The results represent their recognition of indicators that have the strongest and the weakest impact on perception of the city and its brand: values, living conditions and environmental balance. We used a limited number of indicators, as the research is a test research to indicate deeper and more focused researches in the future.

Methodology - Conceptual Model

The research focus on the study of qualitative urban elements and their important indicators, relevant for the residents and visitors of a city. We research the following QUE: context, accessibility, diversity, readability, flexibility, visibility and diversity. The research is qualitative. We measure the variables by using an ordinal scale. The survey carried out electronically in the territory of Slovenia, with a focus on major Slovenian cities and their

surroundings. We obtain one-hundred and ninety-seven complete surveys (out of 271). Women in the structure of potential interviewees were dominant (62%), men were a good third (38%). Of those who answered the questionnaire, 40% were men and 60% were women. According to age, most responses (half) derived from the most active part of the population in the age group of 41 to 60 years. Forty percent of the responses were from the age group of 26 to 40 years. Out of the rest, approximately 10%, was given form the group of 18 to 25 years and 61 years or more. The smaller part of the respondents (17%) came from the countryside, with the majority being from the outskirts of towns (44%) or from the cities themselves (39%).

Within qualitative urbanistic elements, we designed indicators (claims) on basis of the residents and visitors expectations regarding life in the city. Their expectations, desires, experiences, observations and opinions are one of the essential foundations of profiling the personality of the city and thus the city brand. Respondents were: (a) residents of the largest Slovenian cities and (b) people living in the city's surroundings and in the countryside (visitors). Both clusters are equally important from the perspective of the perception of the city, since the comprehensive perception consists of different views of the questioned observers. In order to determine relevant resident and visitors' indicators, we selected a set of claims for each qualitative urban element (criterion). The questionnaires based on a five-point scale of responses and expressed their agreement or disagreement with the claims. Value 5 defined the answer "I totally agree", value 4 "I agree", value 3 "partially inferior", value 2 "I do not agree", and value 1 "I completely disagree".

RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

Context
We were mainly interested in what the respondents think of the past-presence-future coexistence, the coexistence with nature, the conformity of urban components in relation to the inhabitants, and the impact of urbanism on the character of the parts of the city.

Of all the claims within the context element, the claim "*the heritage of the past gives the city an impactful character*" proved to be the most important, as 60% of all respondents fully agree with it and 35% agree with it. The total agreement is thus 95%. None of the demographic data (gender, age, residence) affected the responses. Recommendation for urban planners and city brand managers: If a city does not have any heritage, it is an opportunity to create it for the next generations.

The claim: "*architecturally harmonious buildings express respect for the city aesthetic outfit*" also stand out as an important indicator, as 72% of respondents agree with it (totally agree and agree), which proves how strong urbanism influences the perception of the city by the inhabitants and visitors, and how important it is for their personal expectations. We explain the claim "*architecturally harmonious buildings*" as the matching of architectural styles, complementarity with nature, and the alignment of altitude and volume

gauges. <u>Recommendation for urban planners and city brand managers</u>: Aesthetic and harmonious urbanistic + architecture solutions are must for a city that wants to be perceived as a respectful.

The respondents unite in more than a half (60% answered) that abandoned urban areas are not time shift, as they do not contribute in building the desire image of the city. A fifth of the respondents see in abandoned urban areas a mark of a certain time and does think they represent a negative element of the city. One fifth were undefined. A more detailed analysis showed the differences between the respondents. Older generations are more tolerant and more respectful of the past even if it looks neglected and disordered. Respondents over 61 years of age agree in 50% of cases that they are time-reminders, while respondents aged between 18 and 25 only in 40% claim the same. Urban residents (38%) are less tolerant of abandoned areas than those who live in rural areas (45%). <u>Recommendation for urban planners and city brand managers</u>: Abandoned urban areas can be a cultural and historical attraction.

It is interesting to note that the responses to the claim are "*outstanding architectural solutions that make the city attractive*" and "*modern spatial solutions and old architecture do not go together*" are more or less in line. Eleven percent of respondents disagree or do not at all agree that irregularity creates an attractive place, and 18% argue that modern urban planning and architectural heritage do not belong together. It is noticeable that there are significant differences between the lowest and the highest age group, what confirms the fact that the increase in age decreases tolerance for change and thus increases the agreement with the statement "*modern spatial solutions and old architecture do not belong together*". The female part of the population agrees with this claim stronger than the male part. <u>Recommendation for urban planners and city brand managers</u>: It is an opportunity to create two centers: historical town center and modern town center.

Interesting is the attitude to the claim "*a city that blends with nature is life friendly*" (to blend with nature means that it does not degrade the natural resources) for 51% of respondents agree with it, but 32% cannot really define themselves. Only 17% disagree with the claim. There is again a divergence of opinion among young people and the elderly, as the difference between the age group 61 years and over and the age groups 18-25 years is almost 30%, what means that young people are much less concerned about the nature and preservation of its resources. <u>Recommendation for urban planners and city brand managers</u>: With solution that incorporate more nature in urban space, younger inhabitants can recognize it as a living benefit.

Accessibility

The goal of exploring accessibility was to find out what are the respondents opinions about moving around the city by car or on foot, how they approach purchases, about parking spaces in the city, and whether certain interventions in public areas would increase the security of spending time on them.

The respondents clearly confirm that modern trends are important in the field of the functionality of the city and of concern for health. They agree that it is not only sensible to implement them, but also need an upgrade. As much as 81% of them agree or very much agree with the statement "*a modern city should make possible mobility without a car*", and even 82% confirm claim "*if I access city-services on foot, I do something for my health*". Recommendation for urban planners and city brand managers: Pedestrian/bicycle/kick scooter zone are the future of healthy urban life, thus this kind of zones are the future of suburban centers.

The claim that the "*modern city should allow for mobility without a car*" (81% of the concurrence) can be reasonably linked to the fact that "*public transport is the key to accessing important city points*" (only 6% of disagreements with this claim). A modest agreement (only 14% of the concurrence) with the clam "*everywhere in the city must exist possibilities for parking*", confirms that these claims are important. Recommendation for urban planners and city brand managers: Tram is a good solution for public transport.

Eighty-four per cent of respondents agree with claim "*if I access city-services on foot, I do something for my health*", and only 5% oppose it. Sixty per cent of respondents also agree with the statement "*I want to make the most urgent purchases on foot*". A more detailed analysis also shows that the need for movement is more prominent among those living in the city or in the suburbs than those who have a home in the countryside. Recommendation for urban planners and city brand managers: City center is a pedestrian area; shopping and entertaining possibilities belong to city center. Therefore, urban planners should examine the best possibilities of goods delivery to stores and restaurants.

About the safety in parks ("*it is safer if the parks have safety fence")*, the respondents have a different opinion, as less than half of them agree, that the parks should remain unsettled, a quarter of them waver in deciding whether this is important or not, and a good quarter considers them to increase park safety, if they were fenced. By fencing the park, access to this public area are limited. Most respondents believe that this would not contribute to the safety of time spent in them. Again there is the biggest difference in opinion among the youngest age group (18-25 years) and the oldest (61 years and over). The difference amounts to a total 30%, with a lesser need to ensure the safety of parks among youngsters. However, more women (about 10 per cent of the difference) agree which fencing the park for safety reasons (60% of the concurrence). Recommendation for urban planners and city brand managers: Fencing parks is not a solution for assuring safety in them. Parks should remain an open public space.

Variety

Variety contributes to the creation of a typical perception of the atmosphere, which results in the excitement of certain well-being and feelings, in short, in the experience of the location (Pompe, 2015). Variety as one of the desirable results of modern urbanism has a great influence on the mood and mental state of the inhabitants and visitors.

As many as 87% of respondents agree or completely agree with the claim: "*unique spatial solutions (parks, bridges, underpasses ...) are exciting*". Nearly eighty per cent confirm the claim "*the spatial design of city districts is a source of different perceptions and inspirations*". <u>Recommendation for urban planners and city brand managers</u>: A combination of rational (quantitative) and emotional (qualitative) aspects have to be considered when planning urban space.

The fact that the city actually affects the mood and mental state of the inhabitants and visitors confirms the high percentage of concurrence with the claim "*a city without noticeable features is a city without soul*" (72% of concurrence and complete agreement) and 57% of cases of affirmation for the claim "*a modern city is socially diverse*". Observational characteristics relate to the visual perception of architectural and urbanistic solutions of the city regarded from different social levels of respondents. <u>Recommendation for urban planners and city brand managers</u>: Genius loci can be an overall feature of the whole city but for cities are growing rapidly and inhabitants are becoming more and more different according to their lifestyles it is recommendable to give certain parts of the city their own local genius loci.

That variety is important confirm response to claims: "*an outstanding (unusual) building gives a mark to the part of the city in which it is located*" (79% of the concurrence or complete agreement) and "*the urban incursion roads should have their own specific appearance*" (63% of concurrence and complete agreement). Besides, they also prove that urbanism designs the city identity and thus the perception of the city brand. Its unique architectural solution defines an unusual building and stands out amongst others what often attracts attention. Each urban incursion road has the potential to create a unique appearance and thus become an important recognisability element. <u>Recommendation for urban planners and city brand managers</u>: If a city does not yet have an outstanding spatial solution, it is recommendable to plan it in order making a city unique.

Readability

Krejčí and Hradilová (2014) explain that "Spatial orientation in itself reflects the ability of people to read complex urban space and identify with the place". The basis of orientation and readability is mental mapping. In psychology, the term names the information maintained in the mind of an organism by means of which it may plan activities, select routes over previously traveled territories and more (Wikipedia, 2018). The creation of a mental map relies on memory and is a rough picture or sketch of urban space. David Lynch claimed (1960) that "Most often our perception of the city is not sustained, but rather partial, fragmentary, mixed with other concerns. Nearly every sense is in operation, and the image is the composite of them all." Readability in our research covers possibility of orientation, memorization and security in the city.

Of all the claims relating to the readability of the city, the most important for respondents is "*I memorize areas of the city in connection to typical buildings, markets, parks, monuments, bridges ...*" This directly confirms the strong influence of typical spatial solutions on the orientation in the city. The

level of agreement is extremely high (91%). The impact of the demographic characteristics of the population is negligible in this assertion; there is only a little difference in percentage among the female and male population. Women prefer good orientation more than men do. Recommendation for urban planners and city brand managers: It is always smart to consider orientation when planning some spatial reconstructions or building new ones.

Sixty-one per cent of respondents agreed or completely agreed with the statement "*I feel safe in the city, if I know exactly where at any time*". The residential location of respondents also does not affect substantially their answers to this claim. The consensus was stronger in the female population, which confirms the fact that safety is one the most important values for them. Recommendation for urban planners and city brand managers: It is always smart to consider orientation when planning some spatial interventions for people feel safer when they have good orientation in a city.

Respondents agreed in 56% with the claim "*originally designed roundabouts are memorable city points*", in 46% of cases with the assertion "*without ecclesiastical bell-tower and memorable buildings, orientation would be difficult*", and in 39% of cases with the claim "*the colours of the facades are a great help in orientation*". The least unity is recorded in agreeing with the claim "*when I explain the path to a stranger, I prefer to route him to the crossroads*", which is confirmed by a different view of the crossroads as an orientation reference point. Recommendation for urban planners and city brand managers: Higher buildings, colorful solutions, roundabouts with unique decorations and originally designed crossings are something that inhabitants and visitors appreciate very much.

Flexibility - adaptability

Flexibility is the ability of a system to adapt or respond to changes in the environment. The flexible theory of urban planning suggests that planning should be dynamic and harmonious. The concept of flexibility in urban planning means the compatibility and adaptability of planning thought and planning system to the randomness market. It includes dynamics, coordination and diversity of the city (Xu & Zhang, 2013). Flexibility is the degree to which the shape and dimensions of the spaces around the buildings and the exterior of the buildings satisfy the needs of the inhabitants and other users of the space defined by their modes and frequency of operation (Dimitrovska Andrews, 2011). According to respondents' statements, there is a great influence of urbanism on the character of the city, its perception and comprehension, and thus on the city reputation and image of the city brand. Flexibility reflects the extent to which the city is able to adapt to the physical and spiritual needs of its inhabitants and visitors.

Claims that relate to the security and humanity offered by the city regulation were the most outstanding on flexibility. These claims are "*pedestrians provide safe access to shops, restaurants, cafes, museums ...*" (92% of concurrence); "*the city without slopes for the disabled is inhumane and obsolete*" (88% of concurrence) and "e*nlightened parks allow me safe relaxation even in the evenings*" (79% of concurrence). Recommendation for

urban planners and city brand managers: Safety is a basic value for contemporary city life. Safety means many car-free spaces, no dark spaces and solutions for people with special need.

Arguments related to the future of cycling in cities and the freedom that this kind of movement permits also encountered a very positive response. At least two-thirds of respondents agreed with: "*the cycling city is the city of the future*" (69%), and "*large squares and broad roads impart a sense of freedom*" (66%). The respondents also claim that underground garages should replace parking lots in urban areas. From this we can conclude that the city with fewer cars would look more beautiful, more spacious and safer, which is confirmed by 71% of the assertions with the statement "*the parking lots have to be replaced with underground garages*". Recommendation for urban planners and city brand managers: Cycling is the future in all its forms and cars have to disappear from open urban spaces.

On average, those who live in the city or in the outskirts are more likely to agree with all the flexibility claims, but the rural inhabitants do not lag behind them. This is evident from the comparison of the answers to the claim "*the city without slopes for the disabled is inhumane and outdated*", with which the city's residents agree about 90% and the rural population in just over 80%. There are no obvious differences in responses between male and female populations. There are also no special differences in answers between different ages. Recommendation for urban planners and city brand managers: Every human needs ease and comfort for nay activity in urban areas.

Visual suitability

Urban design in short is an art of designing places for people and is one of the important elements in urban planning. It concerns about the total visual effect of building masses, connections with people and places, creation of spaces for movements, urban amenities and public realm, and the process for improving the overall townscape (Urban Design Giudelines, 2015). Depending on what is important for the visual image of the city, what makes it aesthetic, nice and eye friendly, the questionnaires highlight the three areas where urbanism has a strong impact: maintenance of buildings, outdoor advertising and uninhabited spaces.

The respondents strongly agreed (91%) that "*outdoor advertising should not cover the city panoramas*". According to the outdoor advertising, we found the most significant differences in age of respondents. Generation over 61 years fully agree that outdoor advertising should not cover the city panoramas while "only" 60 per cent young, old from 18 to 25 years, agree with this claim. Women are slightly more inclined to avoid pollution by outdoor advertising. The location of residence does not affect the diversity of acceptance with this claim. Recommendation for urban planners and city brand managers: If advertising spaces are necessary than the advertising space solutions should be either, very unique and creative, or not dominating the city spatial solutions.

The respondents strongly agreed (92% of concurrence or complete agreement) that "*poorly maintained buildings pollute the image of the city*".

Younger generations do not see serious problems in the claim "*poorly maintained buildings "pollute" the image of the city*", as almost a quarter of them do not pay much attention to this issue. With an increasing age, the agreement with the claim grows and reaches 100% in the case of a generation older than 61 years. <u>Recommendation for urban planners and city brand managers</u>: Every urban space, built or open, need to obtain meaning. Even poorly maintained buildings can have meaning and purpose ("Metelkova" in Ljubljana).

The respondents agree or completely agree with the claim "*not built-up spaces create a bright and airy place*" in 80% cases. The highest differences in opinions are again among the age groups (for respondents aged over 61 years, more than 90%, and about 75% of respondents aged 18 to 25 years). <u>Recommendation for urban planners and city brand managers</u>: Every free urban space brings more "air to breath".

The importance of visual suitability is also demonstrated by the claim "*colour-balanced buildings create an aesthetic place*" (68% agree), while the statement "*the purpose of the building should be recognized by its facade*" has not proved to be important at all, and only 23% of respondents agreed with it while 40% opposed it. Half of respondents (42%) agree with the claim "*glazed front door gives the impression of openness*", but a fifth does not agree with it. Glazed entrances mean more to those who live in towns than to those who live in rural areas. This claim is the least important for the generations aged 41 to 60 years. <u>Recommendation for urban planners and city brand managers</u>: Using colors and versatile building materials makes a city aesthetics, enables ease of recognizing city particularities and creates feeling of openness.

Interestingly, only 4% of respondents agree with the statement "*the concrete jungle is again in trend*" while 88% disagrees with it, which reflects the need for a city to be harmonic with nature, airy and transparent, diversified and visibly suitable. <u>Recommendation for urban planners and city brand managers</u>: People hate concrete as a dominant material in urban area. Using other materials or making whatever combinations concrete with other materials are more inhabitants friendly.

Diversity
Already half a century ago, Jane Jacobs stressed diversity as an essential factor for liveability, economic growth, and attractiveness in cities (1961). Diversity of urban space means city places that are inclusive and offer a diverse range of experiences. Each locality can have its own unique character and qualities, can offer a rich range of experiences, facilities and services, meets different people's needs, including a diversity of housing types (Urbandesign, 2017). The concepts of diversity and variety are seemingly similar, but there is a significant difference between them. Variety means that one thing differs from another (leafy and coniferous forests), while diversity means a series of different things that can be find in distinctive dimensions of differentiation (leafy forests with various types of deciduous trees).

The convincing respondents' agreement with the claim "*urban environment is a source of thousands of inspirations*" indirectly reflects the importance of the city diversity. This is why the percentages of agreeing with claims are so high. Recommendation for urban planners and city brand managers: Smart urban planners and designers solutions are an ideal means for creating an inspiring city.

The respondents rejected the claim "*flowers on the windows belong to the countryside*" (72% disagree with it), thus emphasizing one of the opportunities that the inhabitants of the city can co-create and co-design urban environment. It was expected stronger opposition from the female population, which in disagreement surpassed the male part by about 20%, and the stronger disagreement among those living in rural areas (about 85%). Recommendation for urban planners and city brand managers: Combining urban solutions with nature makes the city alive and life friendly.

Extremely strong agreement (in both cases, 96%) was given to the claim "*street furniture (benches, bins, lamps ... co-create the image of the city*", and "*diverse city centre invites people to visit streets, squares, embankments and parks*". Almost equally strong (91%) are agrees with the statement "*discovering new urban details is always inspiring*". Recommendation for urban planners and city brand managers: People feel inspired and relaxed in attractively designed and with comfortable street furniture equipped city squares, streets, embankments, parks and other open spaces if they are.

A very positive attitude is also reflected to the claims that "*markets and parks come alive with the help of interesting events*" (85%), "*horticulturally arranged crossings and roundabouts are aesthetic*" (82%) and "*many different social places in the city allow for a good socializing*" (72%). Certain differences in agreement occur between men and women. In the claim that "*markets and parks come alive with the help of interesting events*", women are more convinced (90%) than men (80%). Similarly applies to all other claims. Men are slightly more reserved, although their percentage of concurrence is still very high. Recommendation for urban planners and city brand managers: Every urban place can be attractive for different types of socializing what brings new meaning to traditional parts of a city (example: "Prostorož – Ljubljana).

DISCUSSION

According to Lynch (1960), 'Structuring and identifying the environment is a vital ability among all mobile living beings. Many kinds of cues are used: the visual sensations of colour, shape, motion or polarization of light, as well as other senses such as smell, sound, touch, kinaesthesia, sense of gravity, and perhaps of electric or magnetic fields'. Perception (Rihtar & Zupančič-Strojan, 1996) is the foundation of the human psychophysical process of learning about the real environment. A place is recognisable is largely a matter of visual images: colours, architectural typology, natural elements

(Sepe, 2013). Urbanism plans, creates and maintains urban spatial environment.

The results of the research shows the most important QUE indicators and set out those that have the strongest influence on the perception of city. They researched claims significantly influence orientation in the city, the attractiveness of life, the performance of services, the possibility of spending spare time, the relaxed everyday living and the mobility in the city. They need to be in the spirit of the time and have to take into account trends. A meaningful mark in the perception of the city creates unique, fashionable and solutions in harmony with the preserved cultural heritage. Urbanism solutions creates recognizable landmarks of the city regarding it as a whole and/or as its parts, realizes its internal and external goals and co-shapes the city as a brand. Urbanism with its solutions has many possibilities to raise the perceptual level of the city, its brand and increase its reputation among the inhabitants and visitors.

Synthesis of the obtained results of the survey implies concrete directions for the urbanists. The most important findings are:

- Within the qualitative urbanistic element Context, the town's heritage is one of the key elements for the inhabitants and visitors. Most (80%) of the respondents see in the degraded city areas opportunity to arrange or rearrange them. Heritage and modern spirit are supposed to intertwine in cities, which gives freedom to urbanistic and architectural creativity.
- Within the element Accessibility, there are two exposed claims, one requires mobility without a car and the other, enable as many pedestrian movements as possible. They both conform to the modern and distinctive developmental trends of cities and reflect the advanced mentality of the inhabitants and visitors of the city. Linking pedestrian access to city services and shopping with health, also perfectly matches the trend that every individual wants to take care of their health, and that active movement (in our case walking on foot) allows this. Respondents expect a higher degree of safety in enclosed parks.
- Diversity is important for respondents and the fact that modern spatial solutions can also be warm and diversified (life-friendly) for different social types of residents and visitors, confirms the correct orientation of those urban planners who want to provide modern and advanced solutions in addition to functional solutions, which generate warmth, positive atmosphere and good mood. Most claims about the diversity of the city confirm the importance of: (a) urbanistic and architectural heritage, (b) attractive and outstanding modern buildings, and (c) typically arranged urban slopes. They significantly co-creates the character of the city.
- The city's Readability has proven to be one of the most important QUE, regardless of whether it is typical of buildings, bells, roundabouts, bridges, markets, parks ... The feeling, that the residents and visitors of the city always know where they are momentarily located, gives them a feeling security.

- Respondents are most closely linking Flexibility to security and eco-friendly mobility. Among other things, flexibility implies the future of city cycling and freedom, driven by easy and quick movement around the city by bicycle. It is also important that the parking lots move from urban areas into underground garages, which besides enabling more safety of cities provides friendly environment, cleaner air and releases more city space.
- Visible suitability is one of the most subjective urbanistic criteria. Nevertheless, it is necessary to highlight some of its elements that reflect the opinion of respondents on how these elements affect the city attractiveness, character and functionality. Outstanding issues are: maintenance of buildings, outdoor advertising and un-built spaces. In the latter, they see an opportunity for the city's maximum airiness. For the younger generation, the criterion of visible suitability is not as important as for the elderly, but it is important for everyone that the urban solutions are in harmony with nature what creates an airy, transparent and diverse city.
- The respondents' answers to the element Diversity explain how important it is for spatial planners to realize that every urbanistic move is not only a functional solution to certain spatial problems, but a step closer to the aesthetic and socially friendly city, which with its diversity, eliminates boredom, invites enjoying life in its places and inspires in thousands of ways.

MORE FINDINGS

An in-depth analysis of responses has further enabled the detection of both rational and emotional perceptions and among them those that have the strongest impact on the inhabitants and visitors' city perception. From the responses, it is possible to understand the perceptions that clearly reflect the attitude of the inhabitants and visitors to those elements of the city, which the urbanists are supposed to pay special attention. Unique, fashionable and in harmony solutions with the preserved cultural heritage have considerable weight on the perception of the city and have a key influence on the personality of the city's brand. They create a larger quantity of associations. Using the city brand in combination with urban solutions, the city is more consistently recognizable. Urbanism creates a city environment and gives it meaning, both for the city as a whole and for its individual parts. The more this environment is important and recognizable for its inhabitants and visitors, the more it is associative. From the point of view of the results of the research and in the context of the comparative treatment of the city brand and urbanism, this means that urbanism, with its solutions, encourages the memory and quick recall of the city brand, and creates the conditions for its perception and, consequently, its image. Table 1 shows the most outstanding rational and emotional perceptions.

Table 1: Significant rational and emotional perceptions derived from research

Rational perceptions	Emotional perceptions
Mobility ("A modern city should enable mobility without a car.")	**Health** ("If I access the services in the city on foot, I do something for my health.")
Memory ("I remember areas of the city because of its typical buildings, squares, parks, monuments, bridges ...")	**Inspiration** ("Urban environment is a source of thousands of inspirations.")
Equality ("A place without slumber for the disabled is inhumane and obsolete.")	**Safety** ("Walking zones provide safe access to shops, restaurants, bars, museums ...")
Image ("Outdoor advertising should not cover city panorama.")	**Motivation** ("Discovering new urban details always inspires.")
Furnishings (»Street furniture (benches, bins, lamps ...) co-create the city's image.«)	**Freedom** ("The urban center invites a man to the streets, markets, embankments and parks.")
Socializing ("Many local bars and restaurants in the city provide pleasant socializing.")	**Beauty, aesthetics** ("Unique spatial solutions - parks, bridges, underpasses, etc. – exciting.")

Source: Own survey.

CONCLUSION

Urbanism influences the creation of various aspects of interest. Its final solutions and creations influence the perception of the city (Pompe and Temeljotov Salaj, 2014). An analysis of the results of the survey explains which qualitative elements of urban planning have a significant impact on the perception of the city and thus on the perception of the city brand. The importance of individual indicators within individual qualitative urbanistic elements vary. Inside them, the opinions of the respondents unequivocally showed what gives the greatest contribution to the quality of the city from the urbanism point of view. The key exposed properties derive from important aspects of influencing the urban environment on the quality of life in the city: car-free mobility, non-poisoned air, characteristic spatial and architectural solutions (landmarks), carefree orientation, advertising harmonious with spatial solutions and socialization opportunities. The observable weight of the research also gives rational and emotional values, derived from the answers. They emanates from the emotional perception of the city, and since most human decisions derive from emotions, it is important for urban planners to take, in addition to functional solutions, into account the psychological impact on the inhabitants and visitors of the city.

Recommendation

The most exposed, desired and today most sought-after rational and emotional values are mobility, memory, equality, image, furnishings,

socializing health, inspiration, security, motivation, freedom, beauty and aesthetics. The exposed values provide an insight for urban planners and designers, so they can structure and shape their solutions aligned primarily with the researched users' expectations and a vision of the development of the city.

Inter-sector cooperation is a wide source for further researches in the field of urbanistic planning and designing as well as for marketing and branding a city.

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