



Case Study

Brand “Moscow” A Global Perspective

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Abstract

The study investigates the peculiarities of place branding for Moscow. Recently the numbers of foreign tourists visiting Moscow have increased but the majority of them are over 40 years old. Since the population of most Western countries is ageing, this seems to be a conducive trend for Russian inbound tourism. However, it is very important to attract a younger audience and offer them an opportunity to broaden their cultural awareness. Our study focuses mainly on a young audience, from 18 to 28 year olds, and intended to find out how they presently perceive Moscow and then offer a relevant positioning. For younger tourists, Moscow is still undiscovered. This is an opportunity for Moscow as the city is attractive regarding the cultural aspects and young tourists have an appetite for culture. The study allows us to single out the key elements of the Moscow brand for young people. The key elements are rooted in the rich history and cultural heritage of Moscow. Moscow is recommended to be positioned as a place where different epochs meet: Tsarism, Stalinism and post-Cold War period of Russian democracy.

Keywords: City branding; perception; associations; positioning

Introduction

It has become indisputable that branding is an important activity for cities of different countries in the world. This paper focuses specifically on the city branding for Moscow. Moscow was chosen as a subject for the study for a variety of reasons. Firstly, Moscow is renowned for its wide variety of cultural and historical attractions. Secondly, there is a lack of academic research about Moscow from a branding point of view. Although there are some researchers of place branding in Russia, their works are concentrated mainly on the country branding (Vasilenko, 2014) and general marketing tools for different places

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(Pankrukhin, 2006). As for publications about Moscow brand, usually they are practical and cover specific narrow field as for e.g. visual identity, installations in the city, different events. They are descriptive and stem from the real developments («Moscow branding», 2012, <http://citybranding.ru>).

Every year, the number of foreign visitors to Moscow and Saint Petersburg have been increasing since 2010 (Figure 1). The Moscow region is the leading tourism destination in Russia in terms of visitor numbers.

The largest number of visitors to Moscow are from China, followed by Germany, France, Turkey, USA, Italy and Britain (Figure 2).

As population sizes vary in these countries, it is necessary to see the proportionate number of visitors to the whole population in each country (Figure 3). Accordingly, the top country of origin is Germany.

As observations and reports from touristic agencies show, the average age for an inbound tourist is over 40 years old. Since the population of most Western countries is ageing, this seems to be a good trend for Russian inbound tourism. However, it is very important to attract a younger audience and give them an opportunity to broaden their cultural knowledge.

Our study is concentrated mainly on a young audience, from 18 to 28 year olds, and intended to find out how they presently perceive Moscow and then offer a relevant brand positioning. For younger tourists, Moscow is still largely undiscovered. This is an opportunity for Moscow to demonstrate its cultural heritage to young tourists who clearly have an appetite for culture.

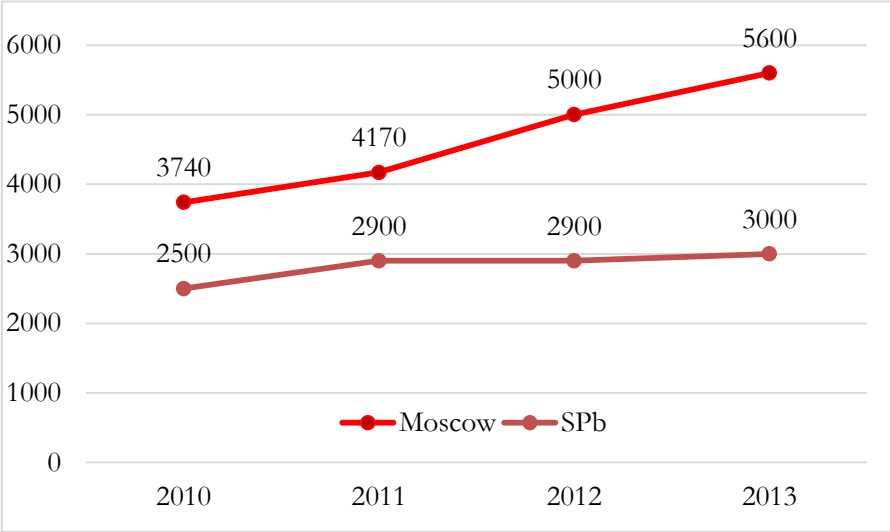
Theoretical background

In an epoch where global competition is intensive, branding has become an inevitable and indispensable part of city development strategy (Reem, Ayedrous & Hashim, 2012).

In our opinion, city brands have some similarities with “*classical*” brands of goods and services. First of all, brand is a set of associations, “name with the power to influence market” (Kapferer, 2012). Places also can cause strong specific associations. For example, Italy is about sweet life (“Dolce Vita”), France is about charm and luxury, Germany – order (“Ordnung”). Usually, brands are defined as a set of functional and emotional characteristics providing a unique and positive experience to consumers (Lambin, 2007). It is important to stress the positive experience that strong brands create for their consumers. In comparison, Chernobyl is a well known place in the world, but it has a negative reputation as a brand (Hildreth, 2010). Places as well as goods and services must bring value to their consumers. However, city branding involves complexities beyond product and service branding, which appear from the diversity of target groups (Chernatony & Virgo, 2006). Cities have to

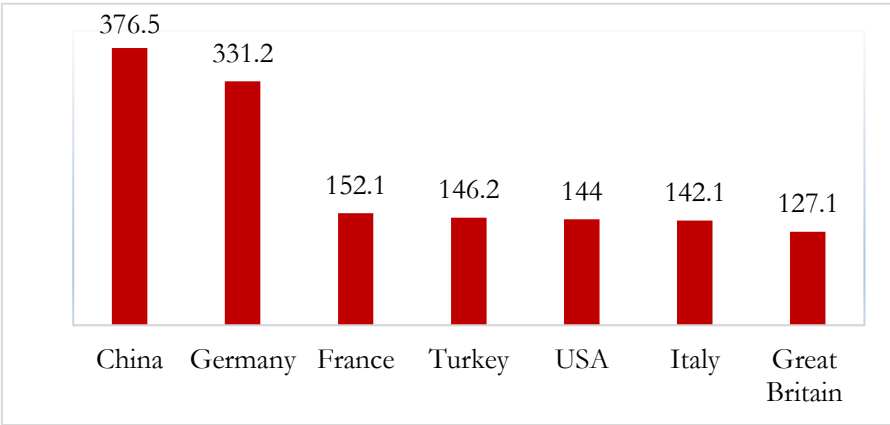
compete for tourists, investors, residents and other stakeholders, so the marketing tools are becoming important to maintain levels of competitiveness.

Figure 1: Foreign tourists visiting Moscow and Saint Petersburg (in thousands)



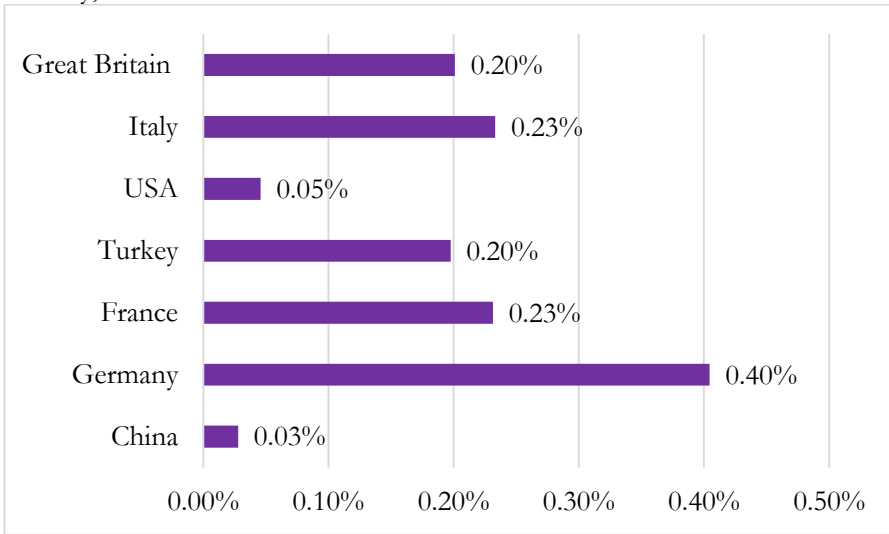
Source: Euromonitor, lenta.ru, spbvedomosti.ru

Figure 2: Foreign tourists visiting Moscow from different countries, 2013 (in thousands)



Source: <http://moscomtour.mos.ru>

Figure 3: Percentage of people visiting Russia to the whole population of the country, 2013



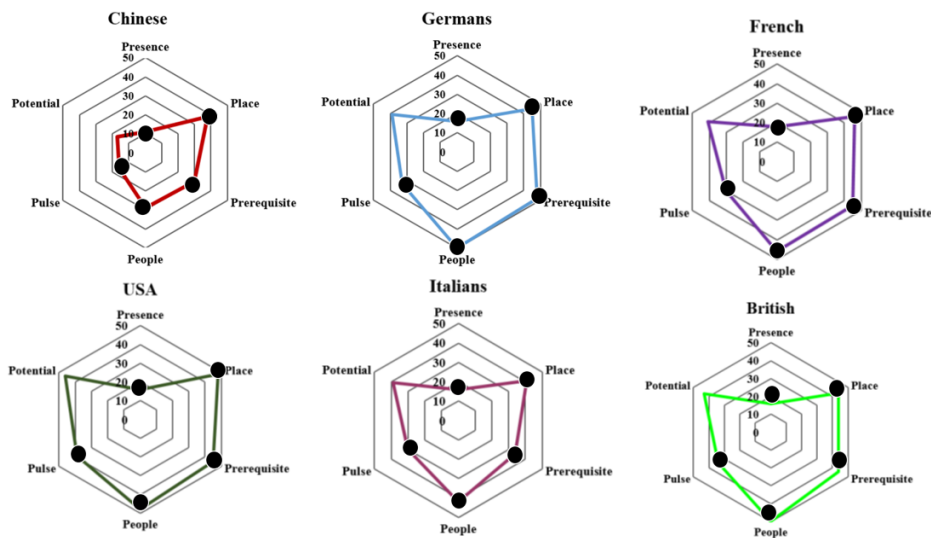
Anholt evaluated city brands using variables such as presence, place, pre-requisites, people, pulse and potential characteristics. His team conducted research estimating the above mentioned elements for Moscow. The research reflects what a panel of over 20 000 people in different countries think about the city (Anholt, 2013, <http://www.simonanholt.com>). The countries with the highest number of inbound tourists currently coming to Moscow were chosen for the analysis (figure 4).

Moscow scored highest for "*place*", reflecting its beauty and convenience and "*people*" in terms of openness, warmth and also safety aspects of the city. The highest Anholt's estimation is 50. "*Place*" and "*people*" scored higher than 40 in both categories (Table 1). "*Prerequisites*", was considered a gauge of basic qualities of the city (the standards and price of accommodation and public amenities) and scored well. The characteristic which was estimated as the lowest was "*presence*", which reflects a city's international status and standing. "*Pulse*", reflects the existence of vibrant urban lifestyle and how exciting people think the city is with satisfactory scores, and an average estimation of 30. The average estimations for Moscow are presented in the Table 1.

In addition to Anholt's theory, other researchers' approaches are necessary in order to evaluate city brands. Thus, Hildreth stressed the importance of tools related to branding such as graphic design, advertising and marketing communications, architecture and events, branded exports, coming innovations and refinements (Hildreth, 2010).

The literature on branding for products and services should be brought together with the place branding materials. Martin Lindstrom's brand sensogram (Figure 5) can be applied not only to "classical" brands but also to places (Lindstrom, 2005). To analyse the Moscow city brand, both Hildreth and Lindstrom's methodology of city brand analysis was presented.

Figure 4: Anholt's estimations for Moscow from the point of view of foreign visitors



Source: <http://www.simonanholt.com>

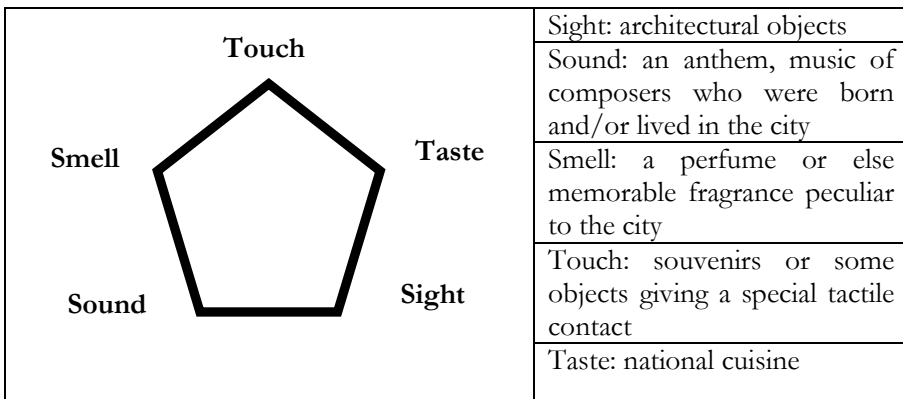
Table 1. Average Anholt's estimations for Moscow

Component	Description	Moscow's average value
Presence	City's international status and standing: how familiar people are with the city	16
Place	The physical aspects of the city: how beautiful and convenient the city is	44
Potential	The opportunities the city has to offer in terms of economic or educational activities	38
Pulse	The existence of a vibrant urban lifestyle: how exciting people think the city is	30
People	The local population in terms of openness and warmth and also safety aspects of the city	44
Prerequisites	The basic qualities of the city: the standards and price of accommodation and public amenities	41

Source: www.simonanholt.com; Kavaratzis, 2009; average estimations are done by the authors

Moscow scored highest for "place", reflecting its beauty and convenience and "people" in terms of openness, warmth and also safety aspects of the city. The highest Anholt's estimation is 50. "Place" and "people" scored higher than 40 in both categories (Table 1). "Prerequisites", was considered a gauge of basic qualities of the city (the standards and price of accommodation and public amenities) and scored well. The characteristic which was estimated as the lowest was "presence", which reflects a city's international status and standing. "Pulse", reflects the existence of vibrant urban lifestyle and how exciting people think the city is with satisfactory scores, and an average estimation of 30. The average estimations for Moscow are presented in the Table 1.

Figure 5: Lindstrom's brand sensogram



Methodology

To find out how young foreigners perceive Moscow, the following research questions were asked:

RQ1: Is Moscow considered an expensive city by young people?

RQ2: Do young people think that visiting Moscow can be dangerous?

RQ3: What is the main reason for visiting Moscow?

RQ4: Would tourists like to see the historical suburbs of Moscow?

RQ5: Is Moscow less preferable for tourism than Saint Petersburg?

RQ6: Do people who visit Moscow like to come back?

To answer these questions an online survey with a total of 210 respondents was conducted. The target audience was divided into two groups: 1) young people who have already visited Moscow (n=85) and 2) young people

who have not yet been to Moscow (n=125). The sample consisted of young from Germany, Austria, Finland, Poland, Italy, Georgia and Armenia.

A combination of fixed and open-ended questions were prepared for the online survey. The survey responses were used to answer research questions in relation to the Moscow city brand using Hillbert’s and Lindstrom’s approaches.

Findings

The research findings allowed us to single out the key elements of the Moscow brand for young people. These key elements are rooted in the rich history and cultural heritage of Moscow.

As for RQ1 about Moscow being an expensive city, the vast majority of the respondents found prices in Moscow rather reasonable and comparable with European cities. We compared prices for hostels, museums and metro in three capitals (Moscow, Paris, London) and Moscow’s prices do not exceed the European market (table 2).

Table 2. – Examples of prices in Moscow, Paris and London¹

	Moscow	Paris	London
Hostel (lowest price per night) Ref.: www.hostelbookers.com	15 €	20 €	22 €
Museum	10 €* *The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts	11 €* *Musee d’Orsay	Free* *Tate Brit- ain
Metro (1 single ticket)	0,9 €	1,70 €	5,88 €

RQ2 about Moscow being a dangerous city for foreigners was not supported. Although, there were some comments about pickpockets and a lack of English language usage, a substantial number of respondents do not have specific fears about Moscow and do not consider Moscow an unsafe city.

All respondents were in broad agreement on the strong cultural heritage of Moscow. So for RQ3 the answer was that cultural tourism is the main reason for visiting the city.

¹ Prices for June 2014 from the official sites

Moscow has famous historical suburbs, where Russian poets, writers and composers used to live, but a substantial number of the respondents do not consider visiting these places, especially for the first trip (RQ4). Only those who are specifically interested in Russian classical literature would like to visit, for example, Tolstoy's and Chekhov's country estates.

Despite being considered the cultural capital of Russia and a European city, St. Petersburg, according to our research, is not preferable to Moscow (RQ5). Both cities are equally attractive to young foreign tourists. Moscow has an advantage being the capital. Clearly, capitals always attracts tourists from every corner of the globe.

The vast majority of respondents who have been to Moscow would like to come again and continue to examine the city (RQ6). So, it means that the perception of Moscow is relatively positive and the city has its loyal tourists.

Furthermore, the respondents were asked to give examples about their associations with Moscow. The associations of those who visited Moscow were different from those who have not been to the city. The most frequently mentioned associations with Moscow are the following: "Cupolas and churches", "A mix of different eras", "City in red colors", "Ballet". These associations should be taken into account for the city's positioning.

As for the respondents who have not yet visited Moscow, their associations were: "Moscow never sleeps" which are lyrics from a popular song, "Caviar and vodka", "Luxury and Lenin" vary greatly from the associations of people who have been to Moscow, which are culturally based.

Utilizing different information about Moscow, we recommend to position the city as a place where different epochs meet: tsarism, stalinism and post-era of Russian democracy. Furthermore, it could be a slogan for the city.

Using Hildreth's components for a city brand, we examined the Moscow city (Table 3):

Table 3. Moscow city brand components

Graphic design	Moscow has no easily memorized logo. The official emblem for the city is Saint George Killing the Dragon.
Advertising & marketing communications	Moscow has the official site both in Russian and English http://www.mos.ru/en . The film "Moscow, I love you" was produced in 2010 and translated into English.
Architecture & events	Moscow represents a mix of different architecture styles. There are a lot of churches, palaces, historical houses from 15-19 centuries, neighboring with buildings of Soviet style and contemporary constructions.
Branded exports	Caviar, vodka, chocolates, furs are considered national

	Russian products.
Innovations and refinement	A few years ago the Bolshoi theater was reconstructed and opened its historical stage.

Source: Hildreth, 2010

Moscow does not have a memorable logo. The city has an emblem – St. George Killing a Dragon, but this emblem is not easily reproduced. Moscow needs something user-friendly and similar to “I love Amsterdam”. Recently the installations: “I LOVE Moscow” and “WOW Moscow” were created.

Figure 6.1. Examples of graphic design and installations

Moscow emblem



Installations in Amsterdam and in Moscow



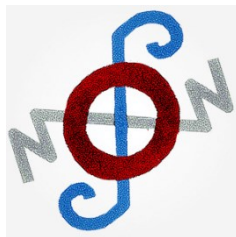
These installations were designed to attract people and invite them to make photos. As at the present time photos are usually posted on social media channels, these installations could be a good source for word of mouth communications.

Moreover, designers are currently working on creating an easily memorized logo for Moscow. We chose some potential logos presented below (Figure 7).

Figure 6.2: WOWMOSCOW installations



Figure 7: Potential Moscow logos



Reference: Logo of Moscow, <http://www.the-village.ru>

Marketing communications related to the Moscow brand could be seriously improved. More engaging communications in English about the city are required. In particular movies about Moscow, where both professional and amateur actors are desired. Short amateur movies about the city could be put on Youtube or similar social media channels. Apart from media coverage, more cultural events are desired, such as for example, ballet and opera festivals. Open air classical music concerts during the summer season would be appreciated by tourists. Moscow should ideally use its cultural potential to full capacity, in order to position the attractiveness of the brand.

As a final part of our research, we applied Martin Lidstrom’s sensogram to Moscow (Table 4). The sensogram allowed for estimates how people perceive the city through different senses. For this part of the research we surveyed only those who had visited Moscow. The highest grade for every sense perception is 10, (with scores ranging from 1-10).

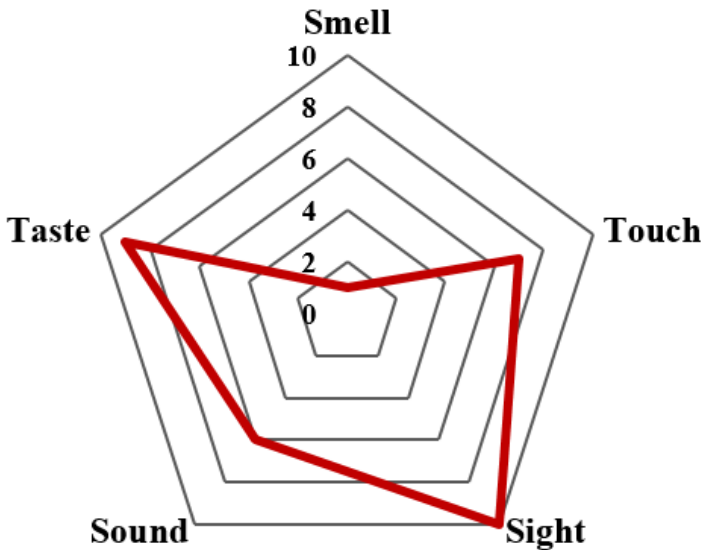
Table 4. Moscow city brand components

Sense	Characteristic and description	Estimation
Sight	Moscow has very strong visual image (Red Square, Kremlin, Saint Basil's Cathedral, Bolshoi, paintings from the Tretyakov Gallery, classical ballet and etc.)	10
Taste	National cuisine: e.g. pancakes with red caviar	9
Touch	Russian souvenirs: matreshkas and valenkis	7
Smell	Perfume “Red Moscow”	1
Sound	The music of great Russian and Soviet composers as Shostakovich, Tchaikovsky, Rakhmaninov, Musorgskiy and etc.	6

Source: Lidstrom, 2005

According to the sensogram method, factors such as sight, taste and touch scored high marks. The respondents could identify the architectural objects of the city, national cuisine and souvenirs. Smell and music, on the other hand, did not score highly, and should be taken into consideration for future marketing strategy, as a majority of respondents, were unable to identify them (Figure 8).

Even though there is a Russian perfume called “Red Moscow”, the respondents did not recognise it or connect it with the city. The smell of the city is a complicated characteristic to identify. As for music, there are a lot of Russian and Soviet composers whose music are recognised internationally. However, Moscow does not seem to be associated with this music and there is a lack of information on the topic for tourists.

Figure 8: Lindstrom's sensogram for Moscow

Conclusion

Even though the current study had limitations, such as a small sample size and paucity of statistics and methods to generalise findings, it increased our understanding of how people perceive Moscow, its distinctive features as well as its weak points. Other issues such as the absence of a memorable logo or slogan and a lack of English language in public places are important factors to consider when positioning the Moscow brand. Based on these findings, a course of action could be determined to augment what is positive and work on what is seen as negative or in need of re-evaluation.

It is recommended that a visual and verbal city brand identity is developed for Moscow, followed by an easily memorized logo and slogan. Utilizing all associations that were mentioned by the respondents, we suggested the slogan for Moscow as “*Moscow: the place where different epochs meet*”. It is important to further study European cultural events such as open air festivals that can also be held in Moscow. Moreover, events should be related not only to classical Russian culture but also to contemporary ones, e.g. festivals of contemporary art and music. More English language instructions in public places will make the city friendlier to foreigners. In addition, more online communications are desired.

The information in the paper could be useful for the city's administration and touristic agencies when dealing with foreign tourists.

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