

Bibliometric Analysis of Chinese Research on City Brand and Brand Building Strategies for Beijing

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Abstract: With the gradual improvement of urbanization in China, it is important to research city branding to promote high-quality urban development. This paper uses CSSCI journals (including the expanded edition) in CNKI as the data source to collect the papers related to city branding from 2001-2022, analyzes the research content of city branding based on the bibliometric method, and accordingly proposes strategies for city branding in Beijing. The analysis result shows that the research on city branding involves a wide range of content, mainly including city branding, place marketing, and multilayer brand strategy. Based on this, we propose strategic suggestions for city branding for Beijing: exploring the characteristics of city resources and enhancing the cultural connotation; building a multilayer brand strategy to promote regional development; expanding multi-channel marketing to highlight the differentiation of city brand.

1. Introduction

City branding, as an important part of city development policy, has become an important way for cities to promote high-quality development. City branding refers to the analysis, refinement, and integration of the unique resource endowment, history and culture, industrial advantages, and other elements possessed by a city according to its development strategic positioning, and is the core content that this city conveys to the society¹. It involves the development of local enterprises, the agglomeration of regional industries and government services, and provides a platform for the interaction between different subjects such as corporate branding and urban spatial functions². Therefore, city branding is a favorable tool to enhance the competitiveness of cities. Strengthening city branding plays an important role in various aspects of economic and social development, such as exploring internal resources, attracting external investment and talent, etc.

Through the available studies, it is found that the relevant studies on city branding in China mainly include the following aspects: first, regional branding, including regional branding of agricultural products, industrial cluster development, and enterprise participation; second, destination branding, including brand personality and brand equity; third, city brand enhancement, including city brand image, city marketing, city communication, etc.

Some scholars³ have analyzed the literature related to city branding from 1992 to 2011 and explored literature co-citation and keyword co-occurrence, which could not present the existing studies comprehensively due to the timeliness of the literature analysis. Therefore, based on the existing studies, this paper collates the relevant literature in the past 22 years to analyze the research on city branding, digs deeper into the research content and framework of city branding, and systematically proposes strategies for the construction of city brand for Beijing, to provide useful references for the high-quality building of city brand.

2. Data Collection

Data were collected from the CNKI database. We set the search terms to "city brand" or "destination brand" or "regional brand", and set them to exact mode, with literature spanning from 2001 to 2022. The journal category was selected as CSSCI (including the expanded edition). This was conducted on February 14, 2023. A total of 789 articles were retrieved. After artificial judgment and data preprocessing, articles that contained incomplete content features and unrelated research contents were deleted. The final number of valid documents obtained was 715. The excel statistics for each year were shown in **Figure 1**.

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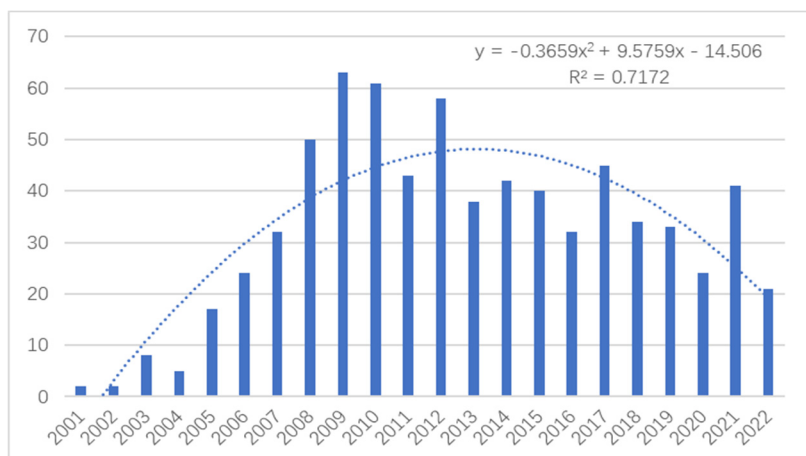


Figure 1: The amount of published papers

It can be seen that the number of articles published on city branding fluctuates greatly, but overall it is close to an inverted U-shape. Since 2005, the attention of Chinese scholars to city branding has increased significantly, and 2009 is the year with the highest number of publications in the past two decades; after 2009, the attention of Chinese scholars to city branding as a whole tends to decline, but it is still high overall.

3.1. Keyword co-occurrence analysis

Keywords are a summary of the topic of the literature. In this paper, the keywords of sample literature are extracted, screened and processed. The keywords with a frequency greater than or equal to 5 are selected as high-frequency keywords, some of which are shown in **Table 1**.

3. Research Content of City Brand

Table 1 Keywords frequency (partial)

No.	Keyword	Frequency	No.	Keyword	Frequency
1	Regional Brand	126	11	Agricultural Product	12
2	City Brand	119	12	Corporate Brand	12
3	Industry Cluster	70	13	Urban Culture	12
4	Tourism Destination	36	14	Urban	10
5	City Marketing	21	15	Positioning	10
6	Regional Economy	19	16	Regional Branding	10
7	City Image	17	17	Sports Management	9
8	Brand	16	18	City Development	9
9	Brand Equity	15	19	Cultural Industry	9
10	Agricultural Product	14	20	Brand personality	9
	Regional Brand				

It can be seen that among the studies related to city branding, the regional brand has the highest heat, followed by industry cluster, tourism destination, and city marketing. Cities can create a differentiated brand image that contains geographical features, resource advantages, and cultural connotations through city marketing activities such as brand building. The regional brand, as the embodiment of the advantages of industrial clusters or characteristic resources in the region⁴, is the core competitiveness of a city, and gradually becomes an important research content to promote the high-quality building of city brand.

The high-frequency keywords reflect the research hotspots, but not the relationship between them. So the inner connection between the keywords is further investigated by co-occurrence analysis. In this paper, keywords with higher co-occurrence frequency and larger co-occurrence coefficients with city brand are selected, and the formula for the co-occurrence coefficient is⁵:

$$O_{ij} = \frac{C_{ij}}{\sqrt{C_i \times C_j}} \quad (1)$$

C_{ij} denotes the number of simultaneous occurrences of keywords i and j . C_i and C_j denote the total number of occurrences of keywords i and j , respectively. The results are shown in **Table 2**. It can be seen that positioning and city branding have the highest co-occurrence coefficient, followed by city marketing, national culture, and big data. City branding refers to determining the positioning of a city according to its development strategy and resource advantages, shaping a unique city image, and conveying the core value of the city to the public through the process of promoting the city image⁶. In addition, with the development of big data and Internet technology, the channels of city marketing are becoming more and more abundant⁷, and how highlighting the differentiated advantages of city brand positioning has become the focus of research.

Table 2 Co-occurrence coefficients of high-frequency keywords and city brand

No.	Keyword	Frequency	co-occurrence coefficient	No.	Keyword	Frequency	co-occurrence coefficient
1	Positioning	10	0.174	11	City Competitiveness	8	0.097
2	City Marketing	21	0.160	12	Creative Industries	5	0.082
3	National Culture	5	0.123	13	Hangzhou	5	0.082
4	Big Data	5	0.123	14	Urbanization	5	0.082
5	City Development	9	0.122	15	Sports Management	9	0.061
6	City Branding	6	0.112	16	Urban Culture	12	0.053
7	Large-scale Sports Events	6	0.112	17	Regional Development	5	0.041
8	City Image	17	0.111	18	Strategy	5	0.041
9	Corporate Brand	12	0.106	19	Sports Industry	5	0.041
10	City Communication	8	0.097	20	Brand Economy	5	0.041

3.2. Keyword clustering analysis

CiteSpace software can realize the clustering of synonymous feature keywords as a way to further explore the main research content and framework of city branding. The clustering result is shown in **Figure2**, and a total of 6 classes are obtained with the Q value is 0.8432 and the

S value is 0.9693, indicating that the clustering results are reasonable.

Based on the analysis of keyword co-occurrence and combined with the specific contents of literature, this paper merges and integrates the similar contents of six clustering categories to summarize the main research contents of city branding, including City branding, Place marketing and Multilayer brand strategy in three aspects, as shown in **Table 3**.

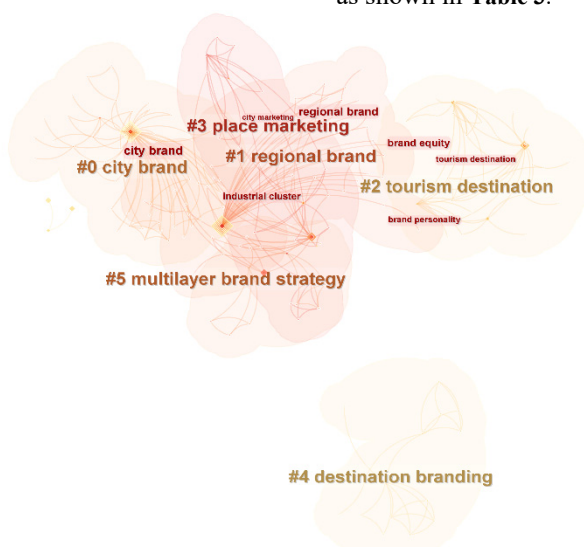


Figure 2: Keyword clustering map
Table 3 Keyword clustering table

No.	Main Research Content	Cluster Name (Cluster Label)	High-Frequency Keywords
1	City branding	City brand (#0)	City brand; City development; Asian games; Regional brand
		Regional brand (#1)	Regional brand; Industrial cluster; City brand; Brand marketing
		Tourism destination (#2)	Tourism destination; Brand personality; City brand; Brand equity; Regional brand
		Destination branding (#4)	Destination branding; Destination positioning; Destination image
2	Place marketing	Place marketing (#3)	Place marketing; City marketing; Place branding; Urban nucleus competitiveness

3	Multilayer brand strategy	Multilayer brand strategy (#5)	Enterprise brand; Brand diversity; Zhejiang private enterprise
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1. City branding

City branding is to give full play to the overall function of a city through the integration and allocation of resource elements so that people can form a certain cognition of the city, which plays an important role in promoting city development. The current research mainly focuses on how to realize city branding based on the city's characteristic resource endowment, mainly including three major areas of agricultural products, industrial products, and tourist destinations. The research on regional branding of agricultural products is richer, mainly focusing on specific agricultural products, emphasizing the natural advantages of the region and the government's regulatory power; the research in the field of industrial products mainly focuses on industrial clusters, analyzing the influencing factors of regional branding, including enterprise participation, government, and consumer behavior; while the research in the field of tourism destinations focuses on analyzing the brand image and brand personality of a destination based on the consumer's perspective, as an important basis for destination brand positioning.

2. Place marketing

Place marketing plays an important role in promoting the improvement of city functions by creating city value and shaping the city brand⁸. With the accelerating urbanization process, urban culture has become the key focus of place marketing, which is an important factor to promote the differentiation of city brand. Most studies show that the development of cultural industries can drive the upgrading of urban industrial structure and enhance urban nucleus competitiveness. Among them, creative industries, which have the dual attributes of culture and economy⁹, play an increasingly important role. Creating a regional creative industry brand can promote the integration of multiple cultures, enhance the core competitiveness of cities. In addition, sport, as an active element in the cultural life of city, is an important force in place marketing. Holding large-scale sports events can fully highlight the cultural characteristics of a city and build city brand while promoting cultural interaction between cities and people, thus enhancing urban nucleus competitiveness¹⁰.

3. Multilayer brand strategy

Multilayer brand strategy is a series of long-term master plans based on the city's development strategy. It is an important mark of the city's comprehensive competitive strength and influence. For example, in Zhejiang, the multi-level brand strategy framework of product brand - enterprise brand - regional brand is built, which can make full advantage of regional resource elements to achieve sustainable development¹¹. Therefore, taking the regional economic development as the support point of brand strategy, we can promote the mutual promotion and synergistic development between the industrial or corporate brands that match the resource elements of the region by deeply interpreting the city space, industry, function, and other elements, and build a multilayer brand strategy from developing corporate

brands to realizing industrial clusters and finally building city brand, which can promote the high-quality city development.

4. Strategies for City Branding in Beijing

According to the hot research content of city branding and combining with the characteristics of Beijing, this paper systematically proposes the following three suggestions for city branding in Beijing.

1. Exploring the characteristics of city resources and enhancing the cultural connotation.

The resource endowment of a city is the core driving factor of city branding, and the cultural connotation of a city is an important factor affecting the high-quality development of city brand. City brand carries multiple connotations of a city's history, culture, and natural resources, and is the driving force of city development. Based on historical and cultural heritage, enhancing the cultural connotation of a city and creating a differentiated city brand with cultural characteristics is the key to high-quality urban development.

Beijing has a profound historical and cultural heritage and rich natural resources, and it is also a major cultural and creative industry gathering area. It should give full play to the advantages of Beijing's natural resources, enhance the cultural connotation of the destination and optimize the development of the tourism industry; promote the integrated development of cultural and creative industries and tourism, and highlight the cultural characteristics of Beijing. In addition, with the success of the Olympic Winter Games Beijing 2022, we should continue to explore the influence of large-scale sports on the cultural heritage of Beijing, make good use of the cultural benefits of the Winter Olympics, and show the city brand image as "the charming capital of the rising great nation".

2. Building a multilayer brand strategy to promote regional development.

City brand is the external expression of a city to achieve sustainable development and has the function of integrating city resources. The shaping of a city brand requires the joint efforts of several subjects, taking the city brand strategy as the grip, combining it with the regional brand strategy, relying on the natural resources, industrial clusters, and other resources of the urban, building a multilayer brand strategy, giving full play to the competitive advantages of regional industries and driving the development of the city.

In the pursuit of high-quality development, it is necessary to fully gather and utilize high-end innovation resources, promote the development of industrial integration, and give full play to Beijing's industrial advantages, while also dealing with the relationship between the allocation of internal resources and external structures. Therefore, it is necessary to establish the city

brand and more importantly, to play the role of radiation and drive of Beijing city brand to the surrounding areas. Through government guidance, cooperation, and construction, we promote the synergistic development of transportation infrastructure, public services, and industries in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region to form a regional economic layout with complementary advantages and high-quality development.

3. Expanding multi-channel marketing to highlight the differentiation of city brand.

Marketing can strengthen the public's perception of the city brand and enhance the public's awareness of the city's development. With the rapid development of the Internet and related technologies in the digital era, the environment and mode of media communication are changing, and digital media, represented by smartphones and mobile media, have become increasingly important tools, providing rich channels for city marketing.

In the context of Beijing's international communication center, city managers need to start from the basic rules of city brand operation, clarify the process mechanism of city brand communication, make full use of digital technologies and platforms, broaden diversified marketing channels through scene experience/VR, etc., and strengthen the interaction between the public and the city¹², to enhance the recognition of the city brand and highlight the differentiation advantages of Beijing city brand.

5. Conclusion

In this study, 715 papers collected by CNKI from 2001 to 2022 are used as the research data, and the research on city branding is systematically sorted out from the bibliometric perspective. We summarize city branding research contents into three themes: city branding, place marketing, and multilayer brand strategy. We also propose strategies for city branding in Beijing from the following three aspects: exploring the characteristics of city resources and enhancing the cultural connotation; building a multilayer brand strategy to promote regional development; expanding multi-channel marketing to highlight the differentiation of city brand.

Acknowledgments

This research are supported by The Project of Cultivation for Young Top-motch Talents of Beijing Municipal Institutions (BPHR202203237) and Social Science Project of Beijing Municipal Education Commission (Grant No. SM201911232005).

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