

Impact of City Brand Recognition on Subjective Well-Being–Taking Beijing as an Example*

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Abstract. In recent years, with the development of city brand gradually, more and more people pay more attention to the construction of city brand. This study attempts to combine city brand recognition with subjective well-being (SWB) of residents to explore the impact of city brand recognition on residents SWB. The research finds that the city brand image has a positive influence on the city brand value and the city brand confidence; city brand image can indirectly improve the SWB of residents; and city brand value and city brand confidence are the mediating variables to improve SWB of residents.

Introduction

After the establishment of product brand and enterprise brand, city brand have sprung up in the lift wave. A variety of views and opinions have emerged, which prompts us to think carefully about whether the city can be operated and can be branded or not. This is a prerequisite for us to discuss city brand.

Geographical location can also be branded just like products and people. In this case, the brand is determined on the basis of particular geographic names and the function of the brand is to let people know and understand this place and generate some happy associations (Keller, 2002; Klijn, Eshuis and Braun, 2013)^{[1][2]}. And the associated that people have of the place derives from the destination image (Day and Cai et al, 2012)^[3]. City marketing should be considered with the city's social, historical, cultural, natural environment, and many other factors. From the point of view of the market economy, studying cities in the overall regional environmental position, role, and competitors, target audience, etc., using the multi-factor integration, has access to, maintain and increase customers by creating, transmitting and communicating with high quality of customer value (Kotler, 2010)^[4].

Some critics argue that the company, city marketing and branding have essential common characteristics in fact, and the correlation when comparing places to company brands is pointed out (Anholt, 2002)^[5]. The complexity of building city brand goes beyond building brands of products and services (Virgo and Chernatony, 2006)^[6]. On the basis of discussing models and tools of the establishment of a large number of corporate brands, two aspects are pointed out. On the one hand, cities can really learn a lot from the theory and practice of marketing at the enterprise level; on the other hand, generally speaking, indeed there is a need to adapt these models for special circumstances and characteristics of cities and places (Kavaratzis, 2009)^[7].

Consumer socialization is concerned with individual's learning of skills, knowledge and attitudes related to consumption (Nelson, McLeod, 2006)^[8]. City brand have positive impact on the recognition of residents, and as an integrated part of a place brand, residents are also recognized as important assets when delivering city brand's message (Braun, Kavaratzis and Zenker, 2013; Rehmet, 2013)^{[9][10]}, the importance of residents' inclusion at all stages of place branding is emphasized (Merrilees, Miller et al, 2014)^[11]. Presently, a major share of the discussions of brand and brand equity is focused on consumer markets (Lai, 2010)^[12]. It is worth noting that, however, with development of the city, *happiness paradox* phenomenon is emerging. Happiness paradox means urban development and well-being of residents in the reverse development trends. In China, even though the economy has experienced a rapid growth in GDP rising year by year, but the happiness consciousness of our residents has the downward trend. From the perspective of development of city brand, this study tests impact of the brand recognition of cities on SWB of residents in order to reveal the paradox between city development and happiness consciousness.

This research contributes to the literature in the following ways: firstly, prior research on city brand rarely discusses its impact on subjective well-being (SWB) of residents. This paper fills this gap by investigating the impact of city brand recognition on subjective well-being (SWB) of residents. Secondly, the empirical studies of city brand are still scarce, limiting understanding of the field of its impact. A few researches in the behaviors of recognition of residents, which are presently available, are largely exploratory and limited to some factors only. This paper has made a little attempt to develop a systematic framework to test the comprehensive model.

The rest of this article proceeds as under: the next section reviews the literature and discusses whether city brand image, city brand value and city brand confidence have impact on city brand recognition or not, and contains the hypotheses. The methodology section describes the measures, sample and data while the following section presents statistical results. Finally, the last section discusses the results and proposes managerial implications as well as directions for future research.

Research Perspectives and Hypotheses

Research Perspectives

SWB of residents is impacted by many factors. This study suggests that recognition of city which residents live in has an impact on SWB of residents, shown in Figure1. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), well known for predicting social (Ajzen, 2002) and consumer behaviors (Bansal and Taylor, 2002; Lim and Dubinsky, 2005), relies upon three factors: attitude towards a behavior, perceived control over performing the behavior, and subjective norm regarding the behavior^{[13][14][15]}. Residents accept the brand of the city they live in, the city brand image (CBI) and the city brand value (CBV), and then they will have confidence (CBC) in city brand. The corresponding SWB will be raised for residents who have confidence in city brand.

Based on the above cognition, we can have a framework of the forming mechanism of SWB with the perspectives of city brand recognition. The process can be described as that city brand image, city brand value and city brand confidence have impact on city brand recognition, and then city brand recognition have impact on SWB. This study investigates, firstly the effects of city brand image, city brand value and city brand confidence on city brand recognition, secondly, the effects of city brand recognition on SWB.

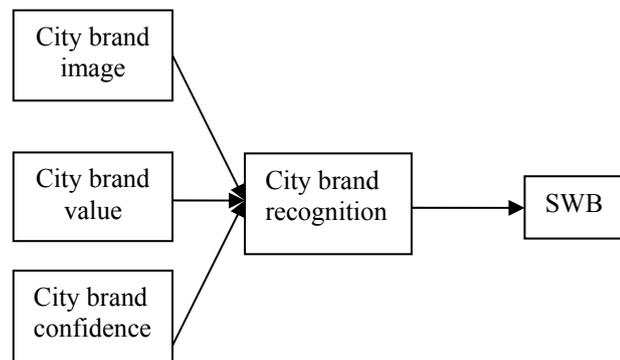


Figure 1. Research perspective.

Hypotheses

City brand can be operated in accordance with the product brand management. On the basis of Customer Satisfaction Index Model, brand image has a direct positive effect on brand value (Zhang et al, 2008)^[16]. And a positive image could increase consumer’s travelling desire (Cros and Ong, 2015)^[17]. From this we can infer that the better city brand image, the higher city brand value; the worse city brand image, the lower city brand value. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 that city brand image has a positive impact on city brand value is formed.

H1: City brand image has a positive impact on city brand value.

Brand equity consists of two categories, which includes the measurement of consumer perceptions of brand image and consumer behavior toward a brand (Samsi and Kashif et al, 2015)^[18]. High brand

equity will increase people's confidence of products' brand, thereby increasing the possibility of people to buy the product of this brand (Hao and Zhao, 2008)^[19]. The higher the value of the product, the more confidence people have in product performance. Therefore, the higher the judgment of the residents of city brand value, the more confidence residents have in city brand. As a result, the assumption is followed.

H2: City brand value has a positive impact on city brand confidence.

Subjective norms are significantly related to intentions of people, particularly with city community (Lee et al, 2009)^[20]. Good image of the products will impact the consumers' trust in the brand. Similarly, city brand image will impact city brand confidence. Residents accept city brand image firstly, and then have confidence in city brand. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H3: City brand image has a positive impact on city brand confidence.

There are many factors that impact SWB. This study tries to discuss whether recognition of residents on their own cities has an impact on SWB or not. Good city brand image and high city brand value make people choose to live in the city and improve people's SWB. People live in this city because people are confident of the city. This confidence in city brand will directly affect people's SWB. This study suggests that the better city brand image, the higher SWB; the higher brand value, the higher SWB; and the higher city brand confidence, the higher SWB.

H4: City brand image has a positive impact on SWB.

H5: City brand value has a positive impact on SWB.

H6: City brand confidence has a positive impact on SWB.

Thus a conceptual model of this study is drawn, as Figure 2 shown.

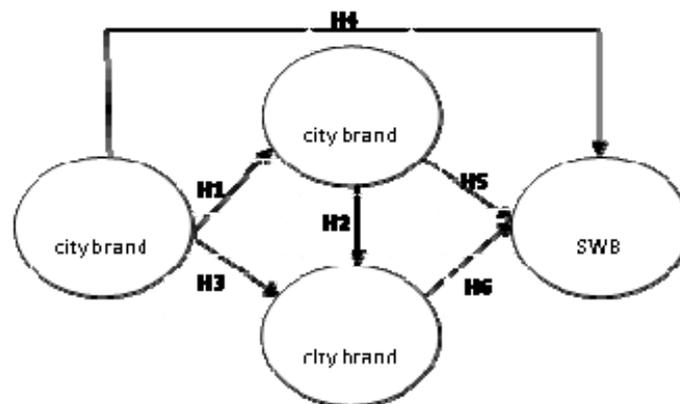


Figure 2. Conceptual model.

Research Design

Research Subjects

The research studies the impact of city brand recognition on residents' SWB. Beijing as the capital of China, is one of the best brand-building cities. Thus, this study uses the city of Beijing as the sample city and then Beijing residents are the subjects of this study. Residents are those who live in a fixed city, often with a consensus and the same kind of cultural edification. Study on the residents of a particular region is one way to help understand the macro and micro analysis and it also can be a reflection of people's thinking and behavior in a certain area. To obtain better study results, a variety of situations of the research subjects, like age, education level, income level and nature of the work unit and so on, should be involved and then the study can reflect city brand recognition and SWB of residents better. Taking all these factors into consideration, this study uses two ways -- study mode and network mode to send out and retrieve questionnaires to make this study more representative.

Questionnaire Design

In this study, the main research method is questionnaires in which all items are enclosed design. Furthermore, quantitative data getting from questionnaires are the basis for the analysis. In order to

ensure the reliability and validity of the results of the retrieved questionnaires to achieve a certain level and to check whether there are inappropriate wording, ambiguous expression in the questionnaire, this study had pre-survey firstly and the questionnaire of the initial design was issued through e-mail to friends and classmates, retrieving 62 copies of valid questionnaires at last.

This study tested reliability and validity of the initial questionnaires by SPSS18.0 software, using Cronbach's alpha coefficient and factor analysis. All indexes met the requirements and so the questionnaires went into a formal investigation.

Questionnaire about impact of city brand recognition on the residents' SWB is divided into four parts. The first part tests city brand recognition, a total of 12 questions mainly related to three variables -- city brand image, city brand value and city brand confidence. The second part measures SWB of residents about Beijing life, a total of three questions. The third part is about basic information of respondents, including gender, age, educational level, whether being a Pekingese or not, marital status, monthly income level and nature of the work unit.

1000 copies of questionnaires were sent to respondents. In this study, except basic information, the other items are measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale.

Variances Measurement

(1) City brand recognition

Related variances of brand were studied by Aaker (1991; 1996)^{[21][22]}, Keller(1993;2001)^{[23][24]}, Kapferer (2005)^[25], Laugt (1999)^[26], Hanna and Rowley (2011; 2013)^{[27][28]} and other scholars. In this study, city brand recognition is considered from three aspects, namely, city brand image, city brand value and city brand confidence. Hao and Zhao (2008) designed measurement of Chengdu City Brand, from the most representative four aspects - living, investment, employment, leisure and entertainment^[19]. This study also used the four aspects of Chengdu city brand. As follows:

City brand image:(1) Beijing is an eastern livable big city, (2) Beijing is a city suitable for entrepreneurship and work, (3) Beijing is a city suitable for investment, and (4) Beijing is a city suitable for leisure and entertainment, and items were modified to reflect Chinese culture and the personalities of Beijing residents.

City brand value:(1) Livable value of Beijing is very high, (2) Entrepreneurship and work value of Beijing is very high, (3) Investment value of Beijing is very high, and (4) Leisure and entertainment value of Beijing is very high, and items were modified to reflect Chinese culture and the personalities of Beijing residents.

City brand confidence: (1) I have confidence in living in Beijing in the future, (2) I have confidence in starting a business and working in Beijing in the future,(3) I have confidence in investment in Beijing in the future, and (4) I have confidence in leisure and entertainment in Beijing in the future, and items were modified to reflect Chinese culture and the personalities of Beijing residents.

(2) Subjective well-being

Self-report scales is mainly used on the measurement of SWB (Wang, 2015)^[29], this study used four-item SWB scale (Subjective Happiness, Scale, the SHS) (Lyubomirsky and Lepper, 1999)^[30]. In evaluation of happiness, self-subjective evaluation and external objective criteria exist differences and so a single overall SWB scale cannot fully reveal the true level of the individuals' SWB. This scale has been used in the United States and Russia of about 3,000 people. But in the process of pre-investigation, the majorities of survey respondents were not very clear of a problem and then deleted this item. In the end, the questionnaire included the following three items:(1) Overall, I consider myself as a happy person, (2) Comparing with most of my peers, I consider myself happier. and (3) I am usually very happy, optimistic and enjoy life no matter what happens, and items were modified to reflect Chinese culture and the personalities of Beijing residents, and their language habits in the use of items.

Statistical Analysis Method

Path analysis is also known as structural equation modeling and it can make all predictor variables into regression model. According to related theories and literature data, a study constructs an initial

testable mode and draws the path diagram without path coefficients. Then the study chooses appropriate regression model (Enter method is usually used), estimates the path coefficients and finally draws the path diagram with path coefficients.

Results

Basic Information of the Samples

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics.

Properties	Classification	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Sex	Male	110	57.9%	57.9%
	Female	80	42.1%	100.0%
Age	19 year sold and below	45	23.7%	23.7%
	20-29 years old	63	33.2%	56.8%
	30-39 years old	35	18.4%	75.3%
	40-49 years old	15	7.9%	83.2%
	50-59 years old	27	14.2%	97.4%
	60 years old and over	5	2.6%	100.0%
Education level	High middle school and below	40	21.1%	21.1%
	college	30	15.8%	36.8%
	Undergraduate	105	55.3%	92.1%
	Master and over	15	7.9%	100.0%
Pekingese or not	yes	104	54.7%	54.7%
	no	86	45.3%	100.0%
marital status	Not married	118	62.1%	62.1%
	married	72	37.9%	100.0%
	others	0	0	100.0%
Monthly income level	Student (naught)	91	47.9%	47.9%
	1500 yuan and below	5	2.6%	50.5%
	1501--3000 yuan	25	13.2%	63.7%
	3001—5000 yuan	45	23.7%	87.4%
	5001 yuan and over	24	12.6%	100.0%
nature of samples	student	91	47.9%	47.9%
	Administrative Organs	6	3.2%	51.1%
	Public service unit	22	11.6%	62.6%
	Company	50	26.3%	88.9%
	Individually-owned business	4	2.1%	91.1%
	Retired	10	5.3%	96.3%
	Unemployed	0	0	0
	Others	7	3.7%	100.0%

The empirical data for the study is collected by conducting a survey with distribution of a questionnaire among young people living in Beijing. This study selected college students and social residents when investigating impact of city brand recognition on SWB of residents. The pre-survey was made in late March 2012 and 65 copies of questionnaires were distributed to friends and teachers to test scale design, wording and reliability and validity of the questionnaire. 64 copies were retrieved, 2 invalid copies were deleted, 62 copies were valid questionnaires and valid response rate was 95.4%.

After the pre-survey, some items and wording of questionnaire was modified. Formal investigation was made in early April 2012 using the electronic and paper version of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was forwarded to 1000 people. The response rate was 19%, 196 copies were retrieved, 6 invalid copies were removed and 190 copies were valid. Descriptive statistics of the samples were shown in Table1.

As the above table shown, the above seven statistical variables were basically related to a variety of situations, making it more persuasive in general. In 190 copies of valid questionnaires, 91 copies were filled out by students and 99 copies were filled out by community

Descriptive statistics of all variables included mean and standard deviation of the variables. The statistical results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the variables

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
City brand image	5.0276	1.24704
City brand value	5.1079	1.18615
City brand confidence	4.8895	1.22459
SWB	5.1632	1.33234

Reliability and Validity

Before the formal investigation, the pre-survey was made. The following is the reliability and validity analysis of 62 valid questionnaires.

(1) Reliability analysis

The reliability analysis is to understand the reliability of the questionnaire, mainly used for testing consistency, stability and reproducibility of the results. Reliability includes internal reliability and external reliability. Internal reliability uses Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to investigate whether a set of questions measure the same concept and external reliability uses "re-test reliability" to measure the degree of consistency of findings at different times.

Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to test the reliability of the questionnaires. The bigger α , the better relevance among the items of each variable. That is to say, the degree of internal consistency is higher. Reliability is very high if Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is more than 0.7; reliability belongs to the range of low reliability if Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is less than 0.35; and 0.5 is the minimum acceptable level of reliability (Nunnally, 1978) ^[31]. This study used SPSS18.0 to analyze and the results are shown in Table 3.

Firstly, this study used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to remove items and compress dimensions. According to the method, this study modified the measurement items to fit the model more precise.

Secondly, this study tested the reliability of variances, and the results are shown in table 1. The Cronbach of each variable is between 0.731 and 0.861, above 0.70 recommended by Nunnally (1978) ^[31]. Furthermore, the composite reliability (CR) of each variable is between 0.612 and 0.710, above 0.6 recommended by Bagozzi and Yi(1988) and Fornell and Larcker(1981) ^{[32] [33]}. Therefore, the reliability of variances is in the accepted range of research.

Thirdly, this study tested the validity of variances and the results are shown in tables 3 & 4. According to the study of Anderson and Gerbing(1988) ^[34], this study tested convergent validity and discriminant validity. Table 4 shows that the factor loading is between 0.630 and 0.937, in the accepted range recommended by Gerbing and Anderson(1988) ^[35]. The AVE (Average Variance Extracted) of measurable variables is between 0.830 and 0.864, above 0.5 recommended by Fornell and Larcker(1981) ^[33]. The correlation coefficient between the correlation coefficient matrix and the square root of AVE and the difference between the correlation coefficient and the square root of AVE are all greater than the square root of AVE, so the discriminant validity is better. Therefore, the measurement model has good validity and conforms to the hypothesis analysis.

Table 3. Reliability analysis of the variables.

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
City brand image	0.704	4
City brand value	0.786	4
City brand confidence	0.806	4
SWB	0.900	3
Overall questionnaire	0.917	15

The above table shows Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of each variable and all items are greater than 0.7 and Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the overall questionnaire is greater than 0.9, representing excellent validity of this scale.

Validity analysis is used to evaluate the validity of the questionnaire and means the degree of results obtained by using scales or other assessment methods to achieve the desired goals. This study used factor analysis to measure whether all items can reflect most of the information of each variable or not. This study used SPSS18.0 to analyze and the results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Validity analysis of the variables.

Items	Component	AVE	CR
CBI 1	.700	0.5157	0.8088
CBI 2	.786		
CBI 3	.747		
CBI 4	.630		
CBV 1	.647	0.6104	0.8604
CBV 2	.905		
CBV 3	.834		
CBV 4	.713		
CBC 1	.728	0.6202	0.8635
CBC 2	.922		
CBC 3	.882		
CBC 4	.568		
SWB 1	.937	0.833	0.9373
SWB 2	.922		
SWB 3	.878		

It can be seen from Table 4 that the factor loadings of all items are greater than 0.5, respectively reflecting all variables well. The average variance extracted (AVE) of each variable are more than the usual threshold value of 0.50 and the composite reliability (CR) for each variable are above 0.80, more than the usual threshold value of 0.60. Therefore, the validity of the scale is good.

Path Tests

(1) Hypotheses tests

Firstly, this study used SWB as the dependent variable, city brand image, and city brand value and city brand confidence as independent variables for regression analysis. The multiple regression results are as follows in Table 5.

Table 5. Coefficient^a for model 1.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.102	.354		.289	.773
1 City brand image	.188	.116	.167	1.619	.107
City brand value	.282	.125	.238	2.260	.025
City brand confidence	.374	.095	.326	3.948	.000

The impact of city brand image on SWB is not significant because $P= 0.107 > 0.05$. The impact of city brand value on SWB is significant because $P= 0.025 < 0.05$. The impact of city brand confidence on SWB is significant because $P= 0.000 < 0.001$.

Therefore, H5 and H6 were supported, however, H4 was not supported.

Secondly, this study used city brand confidence as the dependent variable, city brand image and city brand value as independent variables for regression analysis. The multiple regression results are as follows in Table 6.

Table 6. Coefficient^a for model 2.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
2 (Constant)	.877	.266		3.301	.001
city brand image	.342	.086	.348	3.960	.000
city brand value	.449	.091	.435	4.955	.000

The impact of city brand image on SWB is significant because $P= 0.000 < 0.001$. The impact of city brand value on SWB is significant because $P= 0.000 < 0.001$.

According to the results, H2 and H3 were supported.

Finally, this study used city brand value as the dependent variable, city brand image as the independent variable for regression analysis. The multiple regression results are as follows in Table 7.

Table 7. Coefficient^a for model 3.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
3 (Constant)	1.115	.198		5.639	.000
city brand image	.794	.038	.835	20.806	.000

The impact of city brand image on city brand value is significant because $P= 0.000 < 0.001$. Therefore, H1 was supported.

Therefore, all the hypotheses in this study are supported by the samples, and the conclusions are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Conclusions of hypothese test

Hypotheses		Support or not
H1	City brand image has a positive impact on city brand value	Support
H2	City brand value has a positive impact on city brand confidence	Support
H3	City brand image has a positive impact on city brand confidence	Support
H4	City brand image has a positive impact on SWB	Support
H5	City brand value has a positive impact on SWB	Support
H6	City brand confidence has a positive impact on SWB	Support

(2) Path diagram analysis

According to Table 5, Table 6 and Table 7, this study drew the path diagram of the four variables. The results are shown in Figure 3.

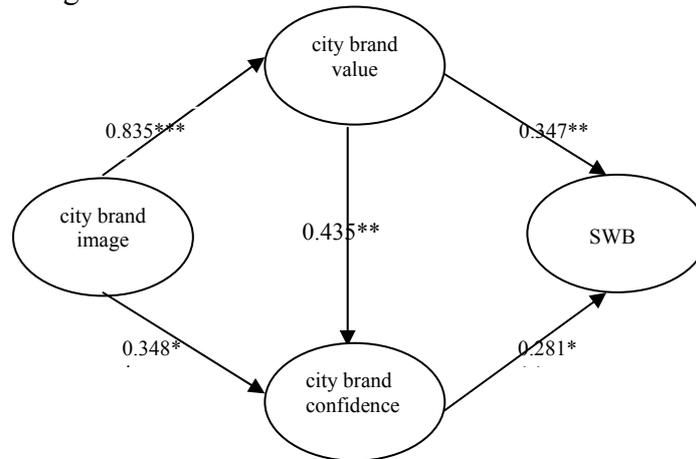


Figure 3. Path Diagram for variables

It can be seen from the above path diagram: (1) There are three significant paths impacting SWB: the first path is city brand image → city brand value → SWB, the second path is city brand image → city brand confidence → SWB, the third path is city brand image → city brand value → city brand confidence → SWB; (2) There are two significant paths impacting city brand confidence: one is city brand image → city brand confidence and the other is city brand image → city brand value → city brand confidence.

Conclusions and Future Research

Conclusions

City brand image impacts SWB by the variable of city brand value, or by the variable of city brand confidence, or by the two variables of city brand value and city brand confidence respectively. Therefore, City brand image impacts SWB indirectly. What’s more, city brand value impacts SWB directly and also city brand confidence impacts SWB directly.

What can be learned from above conclusions is that the variable of city brand image and the variable of city brand confidence may be mediating variables. Enhancing city brand image will enhance city brand value and city brand confidence and these two variables enhance SWB of residents respectively. Generally speaking, SWB of residents is affected by city brand recognition. Good city brand image is not enough to affect SWB of residents. Only when city brand image transforming into good city brand value and high city brand confidence by knowing and understanding, will SWB of residents enhance.

This study has implications to the big cities. To improve subjective well-being (SWB) of residents, the government should do many things in the establishment of city brand, including improving city brand image, making city brand value bigger, and building city brand confidence of residents living in this city.

Limitations and Future Research

There are still some shortcomings in this study for my ability is limited and direct related literature is lack, as well as restricted time. At the same time, because of limited framework and structure of this study, there are some problems not studied in this study and should be improved in the future.

However, this study choose Beijing as an example, though it is a special city. Beijing , also known as Peking , is the capital of the People's Republic of China. Few cities in the world have served as long as the political and cultural centre of an area as immense. Beijing is one of the Four Great Ancient Capitals of China. It has been the heart of China’s history for centuries, and there is scarcely a major building of any age in Beijing that does not have at least some national historical significance. The

city is renowned for its opulent palaces, temples, and huge stone walls and gates. Its art treasures and universities have long made it a centre of culture and art in China. Therefore, this study has implications to the big cities, and small and medium cities should be studied in the future.

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