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# Competitiveness of cities in the post-pandemic time: The perspectives of residents and tourists

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## Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has sparked an unprecedented crisis in the globalized, modern economy. Cities actively promoting their image faced the challenge of maintaining a positive perception of the place and modifying their offers due to massive coronavirus infections. As a time of gradual stabilization, the post-pandemic period requires cities to introduce or continue appropriate changes in their marketing strategy to ensure competitiveness to the effects of the pandemic. This paper aims to present selected changes in the city offers addressed to residents and tourists during the pandemic and to determine how these changes may affect the city's image as one of the factors of competitiveness. A review of literature and research published in the years 2021–2022 was used, presenting solutions implemented by cities to maintain a positive image, demand, and stakeholder satisfaction. Examples of changes applied by territorial units are described from the perspective of two primary target groups of the cities: residents and tourists. Based on the analyzed secondary data, the author notes an increase in the interest of local communities in nearby tourist destinations and the need to transform marketing messages that encourage residents to engage in local tourism. Among some of the city's recipients there was also more attention given to the use of coworking spaces. Also, a positive impact of temporary urban planning on community participation in urban marketing was observed. Referring to the literature related to the city image, these changes can directly affect the competitiveness of cities and support the gradual economic recovery after the crisis caused by the global pandemic.

## Introduction

The challenge of increasing competition concerns not only economic entities and representatives of business environment but also territorial units (cities, regions, countries). Cities compete for access to financial resources, the interest of desired groups of recipients, capital maintenance, and the choice of their place as the location of essential institutions and investments. A positive image, which is an intangible, critical resource of a city, significantly affects the territory's competitiveness, facilitating the achievement of the intended goals.

The image of a given city determines the choices of recipients. For tourists, preconceptions about the city can influence the course and feel of the actual stay, and then future decisions about re-using the place (Stylidis, Belhassen and Shani, 2017). For many cities, the tourism industry is a leading high-income generating function, securing the city's economic situation. How the inhabitants perceive the city indirectly influences the assessment of the quality of life (Glińska, 2010). If the inhabitant perceives the city as a safe, developmental place that allows for the implementation of desires, the probability of migration decreases. For cities, both attracting new and retaining permanent residents is a critical point. The economic and social situation of the city largely depends on the number and diversity of the community permanently residing there (Insch and Florek, 2008).

The coronavirus pandemic has led to the suspension or reformulation of cities' projects, strategies, and investments. However, not the planned expenses for investments but their character have changed, and many cities are planning investments projects related to building a positive image, which the pandemic has tarnished (Dębkowska et al., 2020). The competitiveness and resilience of the city's brand are considered the overarching characteristics during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the post-pandemic future (Setiadi, Rudwiarti, Priscilia and Wardhani, 2021). These features predominantly determine the city's profitability through efficient customer service and meeting the expectations of the city's offer recipients. City marketing specialists encountered several challenges requiring adjusting to the situation (Streimikiene and Korneeva, 2020).

The effects and intervention measures related to the coronavirus pandemic formed the basis of research papers published rapidly among scientists representing various fields, including management sciences (Karakose et al., 2021). Regarding territorial marketing and the city's image, researchers have been raising topics that require concentration since 2019, including the smart city concept, digital methods of promoting the city, and internal stakeholders participation in creating the city brand. The pandemic only emphasized the importance of a better understanding of these issues (Kavaratzis and Florek, 2021). As a theoretical work, this paper will present these topics in the context of the city's image and competitiveness.

The article aims to present selected changes in city offers during a pandemic and to determine how these changes may affect the city's image as one of the factors of competitiveness. The presented solutions are considered to generate interest and accomplish the requirements of two primary groups of stakeholders: residents and tourists. The final question is whether these solutions should be sustained in the post-pandemic period and how they will contribute to the attractiveness of cities, understood as the ability to attract specific customers. It is believed that in the face of a significant economic crisis caused by the pandemic, cities are obliged to implement modifications and search for methods to rebuild them.

## 1. Theoretical framework of the research

More than half of the world's population (55%) live in cities (WHO, 2020). Cities are now referred to as "pandemic platforms"; after the COVID-19 pandemic is over, cities will face the challenge of redefining the area's security policy in this respect by implementing specific tasks (Honey-Rosés et al., 2020). It is also worth bearing in mind that some of the activities carried out in this area may take the form of theater, which is only aimed at minimizing the fears of potential city customers to increase the demand for the services offered (Martínez and Short, 2021).

In the first year of the pandemic, as the SARS-CoV-2 virus dynamically evolved into an increasingly contagious form, it was difficult to estimate when the pandemic would end. At that time, the marketing activities of cities assumed short-term forms, departing from the medium and long-term actions typical for this area (Wen, Kozak and Yang, 2021). Nevertheless, some cities took extraordinary measures to increase the internal resilience of the economic system to the market crisis caused by mass infections and the prospect of their growth (Kowalczyk-Anioł and Pawlusiński, 2021). The behavior of society in the context of travel and movement has also changed, which had an impact on changes in preferences, including that of a tourist destination (Sztuk, 2021).

The literature emphasizes the need to imagine the reconstruction of the functioning of cities in the post-pandemic period, assuming that globalization will be a significant factor in prevailing against recurring pandemics (Antràs, Redding and Sossi-Hansberg, 2021). Due to the pandemic, the marketing strategies required an urgent reformulation and rethinking of how future campaigns promoting the city should be conducted (Dašić and Dašić, 2021). However, the authors point out that the direction in which countries and cities will go while establishing new aspects in creating the image of the territory after the pandemic, is unknown. Nevertheless, along with the gradual decline in infections, cities were looking for solutions allowing for economic reconstruction on the local market, by applying, for example, changes in their marketing offers.

## 2. Research methodology

This article aims to present selected changes in city offers during a pandemic, addressed to residents and tourists, and to determine how these changes may affect the city's image as one of the factors of competitiveness. The research goal was to identify the modifications described in the scientific studies in the offers of cities during the pandemic to maintain the competitiveness of the territorial unit. The focus was only on marketing aspects, such as modifying the offer, changing the target group, as well as the methods and content of communication with potential customers. These aspects are part of the city's image.

For this purpose, a scoping review was carried out, allowing for the organization of the current state of knowledge and integrating the conclusions from the collected research works. Therefore, texts containing quantitative and qualitative research and review articles were included. A formulated research question regarded the types of modifications in the marketing offers of cities addressed to residents and tourists during the pandemic. Two databases of peer-reviewed literature were used to collect the research material: Scopus and Web of Science, as well as the publicly available search engine for research papers — Google Scholar. The following keywords were used: city marketing, territorial marketing, city image, city offer, tourism destination, COVID-19 pandemic, post-pandemic period, residents, tourists. The inclusion criterion was applied, limiting the searched materials to reviewed articles, written in the English language, regarding the area of management, with free access, published in 2021–2022. This paper focuses on the issue of creating the image and competitiveness of the city. These concepts are primarily of interest to marketers, but they also should have a special place in the strategy and vision of the city created by local authorities, which is why this paper and the analyzed research have been embedded in the discipline of management sciences. In 2021, the specificity of the COVID-19 disease was considered better recognized, and the multiple, quite schematic waves of infections allowed specialists to predict the future to a greater extent in this respect. Therefore, corrective and intervention measures in territorial marketing could have been more closely related to the perspective of the post-pandemic period.

In the first stage of the search, 44 articles were collected, and 16 were selected after analyzing abstracts. At the stage of analyzing scientific articles, it was found that in terms of creating the image of the city and raising its position among others, specific topics turned out to be critical, especially in the crisis caused by the pandemic. These topics include: insufficient involvement and participation of internal stakeholders, creating value for residents, the smart city concept, and promoting the city with the use of digital technologies. Therefore, further literature analysis has been deepened by selecting and focusing only on the above topics, which is allowed in the scoping review methodology (Ćwiklicki, 2020). Based on territorial marketing literature, it was considered how the solutions implemented by cities could

affect the perception of the place, making it more competitive from the perspective of tourists and residents. Then, by synthesizing the collected information, it was subjectively determined whether the analyzed modifications should be sustained in the period after the pandemic in order to contribute to increasing the attractiveness of cities, understood as the ability to attract specific customers. The literature review ended with a narrative reporting of the collected results and conclusions.

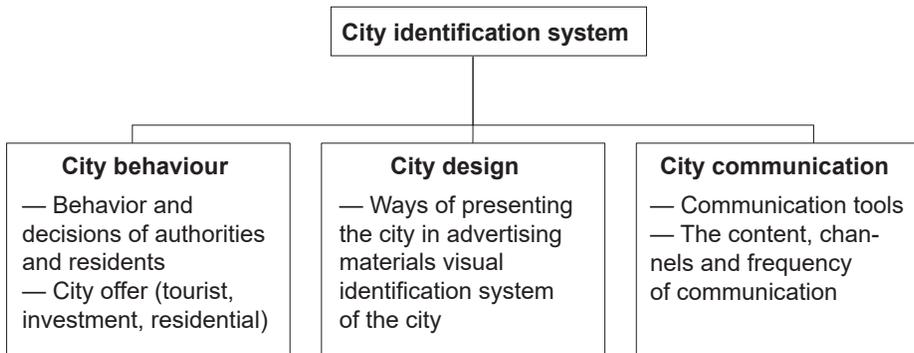
### 3. Study

#### 3.1. Image of the city as a factor of competitiveness

A city's competitiveness is the degree of a territorial unit's ability to attract or acquire various resources needed in a given situation, economic development, provide services, and acquire customers. At the same time, all these activities should be carried out reasonably quickly and effectively to make the city more prosperous and ensure the prosperity of its inhabitants (Ni and Kresl, 2014). The use of marketing instruments for the city serves to improve its attractiveness and emphasize its uniqueness against other cities. Therefore, it is believed that these promoting activities dynamize the city's competitiveness.

Territorial marketing is based on three basic premises: a place is a complex mega product; a city functions in a competitive environment; the marketing of a given unit increases its competitiveness (Kamiński, 2011). Thus, depending on the specificity or leading activity, a city has a defined group of recipients whom it tries to win and maintain while meeting their expectations. Other cities with similar characteristics or resources may propose an offer which constitutes an alternative to a potential consumer. Therefore, cities use available marketing tools that facilitate the fight for customers and interest in the offer. Cities build and strengthen their competitiveness using material and non-material resources — including the city's image (Gosik and Żelazna-Jochim, 2018). In the classical sense, the image of a place is defined as the sum of beliefs, feelings, and knowledge that a person has about a given place (Kotler, Haider and Rein, 1993). In the case of territories, their image is considered a critical resource because it influences the context in which the messages regarding the offer, changes, projects, and events taking place in the city are received (Anholt, 2007). This means that the actions taken by a city are perceived through the prism of its image, and on this basis are criticized or approved by the audience. Countries and cities constantly compete with one another to attract different audiences. Reputation and perception determine the opinions and choices of these recipients, determining the city's position against others.

The image should be built upon the identity of a given place. Based on the concept of corporate identity (Klage, 1991), three components make up the city identification system, which the authorities can modify: city behavior, city design, and the city's communication system (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Elements of the city identification system

Source: own elaboration based on Szromnik (2016).

The first dimension relates to behaviors and decisions made within the city, which can be observed or felt by its observers and users. The ones displaying the behavior are the authorities, residents, and economic entities operating there. An essential element of the city behavior area is also the atmosphere and the city's offer, as well as its modifications and development. The city design area includes marking streets, paths, facilities, promotional materials, graphic design, and the decor of municipal facilities. The specificity and legibility of city marking affect the comfort and ease of moving around the city. A crucial part of this area is the designed, unique visual identification system, which includes a logo, a promotional slogan, and colors presented on the city's promotional materials. The pillar of city communication refers to the ways, styles, frequencies, instruments, and communication channels of the authorities intending to transmit information as well as build relations between themselves and the city's consumers. This information most often concerns the city's economic and social situation, justification of decisions made and plans, as well as the presentation of the city's marketing resources.

The city's identity, which can be seen as competitive when compared to the others, draws customers' attention to a given place. Moreover, it makes it easier for the recipients to organize the incoming information about the city because these messages are given a positive context from the top (Anholt, 2007).

Researchers indicate that various audiences perceive the city differently (Beckmann and Zenker, 2013). Differences in the perception of a place by residents and tourists result mainly from the length of their stay in the city (Merriëls, Miller and Herington, 2009). The structure of the city's image from the tourists' perspective is referred to as the image of a tourist destination. The image of a destination has many essential functions (Łuczak, 2002). In the context of the development of the tourism industry in a given territory, the most important seems to be the decision-making function. The way a person perceives a place — shaped based on experience or even only second-hand information about the

city — influences the efforts made to improve this place (Stepchenkova and Li, 2014). The city's positive image encourages tourists to choose it as a destination and increases the likelihood of them visiting it again. Managing the city's good reputation is a process which requires constant strengthening through the use of positive messages based on a coherent strategy.

The city may use an appropriately created and communicated image to improve its competitiveness compared to other territorial units. The authorities may influence the city's image by introducing changes in three dimensions: the city's offer, the manner of presenting the city, and methods of communicating with the city's recipients.

### 3.2. Perspective of tourists

Tourism is one of the sectors most affected by the pandemic economic crisis and has suffered substantial financial losses (Panasiuk, 2020). A factor contributing to the tourism industry crisis was the fear of society and the fear of infection, which altered people's behavior and resulted in changes in the forms of moving and traveling (Zenker and Kock, 2020). It caused difficulties in formulating marketing messages in cities due to the uncertainty related to the future behavior of tourists (Li, Nguyen and Coca-Stefaniak, 2020).

In Slovakia, research among tourist and municipal organizations was conducted to determine the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on changes in the offers and marketing communication of these entities (Darázs and Šalgovičová, 2021). Slovakia's tourism potential has so far been underused for domestic tourists. The reason is the low regional identity of the local community and marketing efforts aimed mainly at external tourists. The study results provided valuable information on the significance of a quick response related to the change of marketing content provided by entities. In some of the examined cities, a positive change in interest regarding local tourism was noted. Two aspects were identified as the main factors of this success: publishing content which popularizes local culture and an increased frequency of published information. Entities that took steps to change published marketing messages directed messages to residents instead of tourists from distant cities or other countries. The content was intended to arouse the recipients' interest, presenting the identity of a given place attractively from a tourist's point of view. Among the organizations which experienced tremendous losses and a particular decrease in tourists interest, the majority of them (70%) did not take any remedial efforts in the area of marketing strategies (target, content, and frequency). Promoting the tourist offer among the local community affects the increase in demand for tourist attractions in the city. It also increases the local awareness and knowledge of the city's attributes. Consequently, the knowledge of these features allows for better identification of the resident with the place, which leads to a better image from their perspective (Lawton, 2005). However, in order

to effectively promote the tourist offers of cities among internal recipients in the long term, marketing messages are not the only thing which should be changed. The offer should be adjusted to local communities' preferences and economic situation, which requires a deeper diagnosis (Lück and Seeler, 2021).

The change of target audience and strategic goals related to marketing activities also took place in cities where revenues are generated mainly based on the activities of entertainment, cultural, and recreational facilities — entertainment-dependent destinations (EDD) (Dubois and Dimanche, 2021). The pandemic, the necessity to maintain social distance, the public fears, and an aversion to destinations besieged with tourists disrupted the current functioning and future strategies of promoting these places worldwide. In a group interview in which the participants were experts from entertainment industries located in cities, various scenarios of the functioning of the centers in the post-pandemic period were discussed. In order to rebuild and then gradually increase the interest of recipients in the city offer, EDDs during the pandemic changed the target groups to people living in nearby cities as well as their friends and relatives. This group will be sustained and gradually expanded to include regional tourists in the post-pandemic period. Increasing the financial outlays allocated to public relations activities will be inevitable. The main goal of these activities will be to create conviction among potential customers that cities will make every effort to protect the health of visitors and build trust. From the perspective of long-term image building, focusing on internal recipients and their relatives may bring a new, constantly expanding base of customers to the destination. Opinions of relatives and friends constitute the most reliable and influential source of information in the city's tourist offer (Thompson et al., 2017). Destinations can use the potential of internal customers in this regard, encouraging them to share their feelings and opinions on individual elements of the city's offer. Whisper marketing effectively promotes the city's image, but it requires appropriate stimulation (Siejak, 2010). From the perspective of the marketing policy of EDDs, focused on building trust and a sense of security, the opinions of friends may be one of the most critical determinants of image reconstruction.

A dedicated digital application designed to support navigating the city and obtaining information about it seems to be a particularly advanced form of promoting a given territorial unit. Using the application, people who intend to visit the city can plan their time more efficiently, receiving information on facilities, monuments, restaurants, and accommodation facilities and the possibility of booking them. Bantul, located in Indonesia, is the owner of the application designed for this purpose. The mobile application Jelajah Bantul supports the implementation of the "Bantul Smart City Master Plan," consisting of six "smart" dimensions: governance, branding, economy, living, society, and environment (*Dimensi Smart Branding*, n.d.). The Smart Branding dimension of the city is carried out in three areas: business, tourism, and the city's image. The application is intended to support competitiveness and attract visitors' interest. From a marketing point of view,

an important function offered by the application is the possibility of exchanging opinions on specific places in the city. People who do not have previous experience with the use of the city's offers can thus minimize the risk of making choices about the city, and people who share their opinions act as the ambassadors. This is also one of the marketing goals of tourist providers: cause positive emotions in the visitors and make them share voluntarily with as many people as possible, primarily through modern mass media channels (Kosieradzki, 2016). The application was implemented in 2017, intended for use by residents and tourists. In 2021, during the pandemic, but after most of the restrictions had been lifted, a quantitative study was carried out among city residents (Setiadi et al., 2021). It was aimed to determine what elements of the application should be modified so that its users can efficiently use the city's offer during the coronavirus pandemic. Some respondents called for implementing a "health protocol" in the application — a source of information on possible disease clusters and the degree of occupancy in facilities. Residents also expected information on alternative venues to be included (cafés, restaurants, cinemas, swimming pools, etc.) if one reaches the maximum or an excessively high number of users and bookings. Implementing the postulated elements will increase public trust as well as help get support for the local community in terms of resumption of tourist traffic. Surveying residents' opinions on tourist destinations are critical to the city's offer and image. Planned projects and investments targeting the tourist market will be made difficult or entirely withheld if the inhabitants have a negative stance on the development of the tourism industry and visiting tourists (Gursoy, Chi and Dyer, 2010). Residents as a community are part of the city's image — their behavior towards tourists affects the quality of their stay and their feelings towards the city, which in turn influences decisions about future visits and recommendations

During the pandemic, it turned out that many feints, functions, and tasks could be permanently performed in an effective manner remotely. Even after the restrictions were lifted, many business meetings are still held online due to the higher attendance and convenience. Managing a territorial unit is a favorable situation, as it enables a departure from city zoning and accumulation of road traffic connections in specific directions and moments of the day and week. As a result, coworking spaces offered by cities are becoming more and more popular. These offers are addressed both to residents who, for various reasons, cannot work in their apartment, and to people outside the city, thus promising the opportunity to explore a new place. The external user group of coworking spaces should be called digital nomads — people who use modern technologies and devices to carry out work and communicate with others, changing the place of accommodation or stay for tourist, recreational, or cognitive purposes (Fuchs and Sandoval, 2014). Coworking spaces have many advantages from the perspective of people working remotely — they increase the productivity of the work performed, foster building social bonds, do not require long-term obligations (Chevtaeva, 2021), and provide comfortable,

high-class equipment. The coronavirus pandemic has significantly accelerated the transition from stationary to remote work in many places through government orders to isolate and minimize movement. Some countries see the touristic potential in digital nomads to such an extent that, to recover from the pandemic crisis, they are introducing attractive visa policies facilitating short-term travel for remote workers (Bacchi, 6.08.2020). Also, the coronavirus pandemic has sparked interest in a digital nomad's work and lifestyle experience among people already working remotely from their own homes (De Almeida, Correia, Schneider and De Souza, 2021). The digitization of jobs and the emergence of new professions are expected to continue. Whether cities quickly react to the expansion of the offer in this area or not may directly affect their competitiveness and ability to attract valuable human capital.

### 3.3. Perspective of residents

In the first phase of the pandemic, the organization, coordination, and implementation of guidelines and solutions limiting people-to-people contacts were critical. As a result, new regimes for the functioning of these spaces in the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic emerged (Cheshmehzangi, 2020). The first reactions from national governments and city authorities were manifested in the closure and order to suspend the operation of the so-called public spaces (service places, catering establishments). In this phase, it was essential for city authorities to implement top-down guidelines imposing restrictions on places used for public purposes (Kowalczyk-Anioł and Pawlusiński, 2021).

Closing or reducing the activities of public places sparked a discussion on how the temporary use of vacant space could meet the needs of the local community limited by restrictions. The feature that characterizes temporary use is the short time frame during which various initiatives, meetings, and projects carried out on a wasteland can occur. These spaces may be, for example, former industrial buildings, warehouse halls, closed office spaces, shops, apartments, and other public buildings. In metropolitan cities, such as Berlin, Bremen, and Athens, wastelands have been reorganized, renovated, and adapted to the requirements of selected social groups. There are numerous examples of abandoned properties providing space for the development of community initiatives, e.g., artistic circles. Temporary use primarily facilitates grassroots initiative support, implementation, and promotion. Although the concept of temporary use of wasteland for real estate is not innovative, it has gained popularity in the last two years. From the point of view of the city authorities, the provision and reorganization of public spaces is such an important initiative that it is used as one of the main elements of city marketing campaigns which create the city's identity. A review article dealing with this issue showed that it had become part of image campaigns in places offering residents temporary use during pandemic (Karachalis, 2021). Cities more and more often

use social initiatives and various types of integrating events to improve their image and reputation, departing from commercial, traditional forms of advertising (Govers, 2018). Re-planning the use of urban wastelands to implement grassroots initiatives and provide additional space, gives the city such an opportunity. Residents involved in projects changing the specificity of the city become co-authors of its image, making it more authentic and faithful to the local identity. Reusing space during a pandemic not only affects the satisfaction of residents' needs and makes their identification with the city more robust, but it can also be an attractive aspect of the city as a tourist destination. Arts and crafts projects created in wastelands can be an alternative to mass attractions, one presenting the city's cultural heritage. They may make its image competitive in this respect.

Massive, long-term blockades and restrictions imposed on commercial activities and public institutions' provision of social services forced cities to transform in this area rapidly digitally. The digitization of services was noticeable in many countries and cities, mainly in citizen, patient, and petitioner services. Moreover, solutions have been introduced to make communication with the inhabitants of individual cities more efficient, informing them about potential infectious points. These solutions make a given city "smart," that is, one which uses technology to efficiently provide services and increase its efficiency in this area and efficient communication with the local community (Azkuna, 2012). Such solutions make it possible to quickly and efficiently solve emerging problems and minimize their effects. Considering the challenges and consequences caused by the coronavirus pandemic, each modern city should strive to implement the features and achieve the status of a smart city. This will make the functioning of the city much smoother, especially from the perspective of possible future blockades and economic crises caused by recurring pandemics. The implementation of such solutions by territorial units has become increasingly important during the coronavirus period due to the need to protect the life and health of citizens. The most visible improvements have been introduced in the form of e-medical visits, public e-services, e-education, and e-government (Brodowicz, 2021). Supporting public services with technology ensures speed and comfort while minimizing the risk of virus transmission. This significantly influences the citizens' sense of security and their well-being (Hassankhani, Alidadi, Sharifi and Azhdari, 2021), creating positive feelings towards the city they live in and affecting its perception. From a marketing standpoint, smart cities have more opportunities to engage in dialogue with residents, thus contributing to the strengthening of relationships. This creates more opportunities for the endogenous development of the city by adapting its offer to the needs of residents in collaboration with them. After all, it is them who should be the most important stakeholders among various recipients of the city's image (Kesgin, Murthy and Pohland, 2019).

## Conclusions

It is expected that modifications introduced by cities during the pandemic will become relatively permanent elements of the cities' offer and promotional activities. These changes may positively impact the city's image, determining its competitiveness, especially in the post-pandemic period. No city in the world exists in a vacuum, and the global pandemic has forced authorities to learn to react quickly.

Decision-makers and city managers are obliged to follow the trends in order to generate income. During the pandemic, one of them turned out to be coworking spaces, which have been the object of growing interest among people working remotely. These objects may in the future, due to the digitization of most workplaces, constitute a significant part of the city's offer. The creation of coworking spaces is a new, rapidly developing basis for intercity competition (Luo and Chan, 2020). Moreover, it makes it possible to attract to the city new groups of recipients who locate human and financial capital, which positively impacts the city's social and economic structure.

During the pandemic, the target group has changed in many cities heavily depending on tourism and entertainment due to international travel restrictions. In addition to the growing demand among residents for the city's tourist attractions, focusing on internal addressees brings multidimensional effects that impact the city's competitiveness. Promotion of local attractions among residents allows them to see and get to know the city's features better. In turn, it may affect the willingness to share this knowledge among other recipients, making residents the city's ambassadors (Palmer, Koenig-Lewis and Medi Jones, 2013). Residents belong to the leading group of city spokespeople who, through informal communication with potential customers, make the identity of the place more visible and influence its perception (Casais and Monteiro, 2019). Even though in the first two years of the pandemic, the public's willingness to take local trips increased and then decreased due to mass vaccination (European Travel Commission, 2021), from the perspective of the crucial role of residents in the marketing of places, it is recommended to continue promoting the city's local attributes among internal communities.

In cities with a tourist function, it is essential to research residents' opinions on changes and plans contributing to this industry's development as well as meet their needs. In the post-pandemic period, the inhabitants' opinion is of critical importance for the effectiveness of tourism. Promoting the city's image to external groups is easier when the local community understands and agrees with the city's goals in this regard. Therefore, surveys among residents, although often neglected, provide valuable information that appropriately directs the marketing strategy of a place (Florek, Glińska and Kowalewska, 2009). If the city uses advanced tools to promote its image, such as a dedicated application, then it creates a wide field for interaction between internal and external groups. In this way, it engages its

residents as city spokesmen, the most influential source of marketing messages, and tourists as opinion-makers of tourism services. For the image of the city to be presented in a positive context, making the city competitive from the perspective of tourists, the authorities should take care of the residents' needs. It is essential to reduce friction between these groups, especially in terms of security.

Including residents in decision-making processes regarding, for example, the use of public spaces temporarily, makes the local community more active and integrated citizens. The marketing literature emphasizes the need to involve residents in the city's image-building processes, which brings several benefits (Hankinson, 2004). Supporting grass-roots initiatives affects the authenticity of the image, which becomes more faithful to local identity, distinguishing the city from the others. Encouraging residents to cooperate creates an opportunity for the authorities to better meet their expectations and needs. Active participation of residents in the city's current affairs also positively impacts the assessment of the quality of life (Michalska-Żyła, 2015), which reduces the risk of migration, including valuable human capital for the city's competitiveness.

When it comes to servicing residents, smart solutions seem to be the critical issue streamlining this process. Most people have similar basic expectations of the city as a place of permanent settlement (Insch and Florek, 2008). These requirements relate mainly to the implementation of primary needs. The implementation of advanced solutions expands the city's offer, accelerates its development on many levels, increasing its position compared to others and making it competitive from the perspective of current and future residents. The technological transformation of territorial units not only affects comfort and convenience, but — in the situation of the rapid spread of infectious diseases — it also serves to protect the health and life of citizens.

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