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***“Ich bin ein Berliner”:***

**A consumer-based place brand equity from a social identity approach**

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***“Ich bin ein Berliner”:***

**A consumer-based place brand equity from a social identity approach**

Summary:

This research based on Social Identity Theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) studies consumer-based place brand equity (CBPBE), its antecedents and its role in predicting place-related behaviors. Quantitative studies 1 (N=134) and 2 (N=129) develop a measurement scale for CBPBE from the residential attractiveness perspective. A new CBPBE 15-item scale with 5 dimensions is proposed: brand awareness, brand uniqueness, social identity, brand loyalty and perceived value. Quantitative study 3 (N=240) empirically tests a conceptual model of antecedents and consequences of CBPBE. Results show that place memory, emotions associated to place experience and place brand actions influence CBPBE which strongly predicts place attachment and place satisfaction. Word of mouth is positively influenced by both place attachment and place satisfaction, whereas ambassador behaviors are affected by place attachment only. Leaving intention is negatively impacted by place attachment and place satisfaction. This research makes both theoretical and managerial contributions by offering a CBPBE scale, by clarifying its drivers and consequences, and by confirming the relevance of the social identity theory for place brand equity.

Keywords: consumer-based place brand equity, social identity, place attachment, place satisfaction, brand building behaviors, partial least square modeling.

## **1. Introduction**

In the last years, the branding of places and cities has gained popularity among city officials, as shown by the creation of city brand rankings such as the *Anholt-GMI City Brands Index* (Anholt, 2006). Because of increasing competition issues, cities try to establishing themselves as brands (Braun, 2008; Zenker & Martin, 2011) and city managers work on designing and managing cities as brands (Merrilees et al., 2012). Places and cities use branding as a tool to achieve attractive positions and positive perceptions in the minds of key audiences (Ashworth & Kavaratzis, 2009). The objective is to generate wealth, to enhance inward investment and tourism and also to develop community by strengthening local identity (Kavaratzis, 2007). More generally, place branding is a comprehensive concept including several geographical entities such as countries regions, cities and towns, and different types of place's customers. The main target groups are: visitors, residents and workers, and business and industry (Kotler et al., 1993). Thus place branding consists of using various marketing practices to promote place's attractiveness for business, tourists, residents and students (Andersson & Ekman, 2009). Its objective is not only to generate a 'buying decision' (economic function) but also to meet the expectations of the target groups, especially the citizens (social function), in other words, maximize both the economic and social functioning of an area (Ashworth & Voogd, 1990).

The application of branding concepts and dimensions of the consumer-based brand equity model seems to be especially relevant and useful for places. In the marketing literature, brand equity is a central issue that has attracted the attention of academics and practitioners for decades. It helps create strategic advantages by building, maintaining, and utilizing brands. Brand equity is defined as the different response to marketing effort that a product gains because of its brand identification compared with the response that same product would obtain if it did not have the brand identification (Keller, 1998). If brand equity is widely examined in branding literature, its use in place branding is relatively scarce and recent.

Keller underlines that *“Whether it is a city, region, country, specific locale or some other location, it is important to understand what types of brand meaning exists with the public and in the marketplace. For example, what are the levels of awareness, associations, attitudes, attachment and activity for the place? Only by understanding the full range of brand meaning that prevails can places be effectively managed and marketed.”* (Keller in Florek & Kavaratzis, 2014). Brand equity allows catching the complexity of place brands because it encompasses the multiple facets of place performance and value. It is also a useful and relevant concept helping managers to better understand the relevance of brands to consumers (Florek & Kavaratzis, 2014). However, there is a lack of measuring instrument for place branding effectiveness and subsequent place brand equity (Bose et al., 2016). Even if place brand equity is described as a strong performance indicator for a place, potentially able to give information on the efficiency and effectiveness of marketing spending, it is currently unused by place marketers because marketing literature has yet to devise a standard for brand equity measurement (Zenker & Martin, 2011).

This paper addresses these concerns to answer the following research questions: How can place brand equity be measured? What are its sources and its consequences? How does it relate to other place branding concepts? First, this research intends to contribute to the advancement of place branding theory and practice by developing a measurement instrument for customer-based brand equity for a place (a city more precisely), from the residential attractiveness perspective. The specificity of place marketing and place branding is to consider a variety of a place’s customers (or stakeholders). In practice, residents are often ignored in city branding practices even though studies show the importance of them (Oguztimur & Akturan, 2016). Literature provides a few scales to measure customer-based brand equity from a touristic or an investment perspective but to our knowledge, never from a residential perspective. Second, we propose and empirically test a conceptual model of antecedents and consequences of consumer-based place brand equity (CBPBE) based on

literature on brand equity, place branding and place marketing. This model encompasses marketing efforts (perceived place communication and place brand actions) and consumer experiences related to the place brand (place memory and emotions) as antecedents of CBPBE, as well as place attachment, place satisfaction and brand building behaviors as direct or indirect consequences of CBPBE. We draw on Social Identity Theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) to argue that consumers who have a strong people–place relationship develop identity-congruent behaviors in the form of positive word of mouth, negative leaving intentions (retention) and ambassador behaviors.

After presenting the literature review, this paper introduces a conceptual research model and suggests research hypotheses to test relationships between antecedents and consequences of CBPBE. To validate the structure of the CBPBE concept and test the research hypotheses, data were collected through three quantitative online surveys detailed in the methodology section. Results are presented, followed by discussion of implications, limits, and directions for future research.

## **2. Theoretical background and hypotheses**

### *2.1. Consumer-based place brand equity*

#### *2.1.1. From brand equity to place brand equity*

Two different perspectives exist to study brand equity: consumer-based brand equity (CBBE), based on what the consumer think about the brand, and sales-based brand equity (SBBE) based on share in the marketplace; links have been recently identified between CBBE and SBBE (Datta et al., 2017). CBBE can be viewed as a set of assets attached to a brand that gives additional value to the product or service. This added value results in price premium, customer loyalty towards the brand (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1993), consumer preferences and purchase intentions (Cobb-Walgren et al., 1995). Literature offers different conceptualizations and measures of CBBE. One of the most widely accepted definition of CBBE is Keller's

(1993) considering that customer-based brand equity occurs when the consumer is familiar with the brand and holds some favorable, strong, and unique brand associations in memory. Primary associations encompass the perceived benefits and quality of the given brand. This conceptualization is quite similar to Aaker's one (1996). If numerous scales were developed to evaluate perceptions of brands with different dimensions, these measurements rely mainly on similar dimensions. Four dimensions of CBBE are widely accepted by scholars: brand awareness, brand associations (image), perceived quality and brand loyalty (Keller, 1993; Netemeyer et al., 2004; Washburn & Plank, 2002; Yoo & Donthu, 2001).

According to Zenker & Braun (2010), a place brand is "*a network of associations in the consumers' mind based on the visual, verbal, and behavioral expression of a place, which is embodied through the aims, communication, values, and the general culture of the place's stakeholders and the overall place design*" (p. 3). A strong and positive perception of a place brand leads to brand effects such as the willingness to stay at a place (Zenker & Gollan, 2010) or resident satisfaction (Insch & Florek, 2008). Place brand equity is studied in a few papers through the concept of brand image (Brandt & de Mortanges, 2011). Zenker et al. (2009) examined the city image dimensions for talents and their willingness to sacrifice for their preferred choice place in terms of annual salary (willingness to sacrifice can be considered as a proxy of place brand equity). In addition, Zenker (2014) proposes a method to measure city brand image based on brand associations, as an important constituent of CBBE and a major driver of brand equity. Place brand equity is also explored via the concept of brand personality. Research on brand personality in place branding shows either six dimensions for places (Kaplan et al. 2010) or four dimensions (Ahmad et al., 2013). From an investor perspective, Papadopoulos and Heslop (2012) introduced the idea of country brand equity for investors (foreign direct investment) and Jacobsen (2009) proposed drivers for the Investor-based place brand equity. Little is known about place brand equity from a resident perspective, but Kemp et al. (2012) apply branding theories to place and city branding on

city's residents. They highlight that when city's residents trust and are committed to a unique brand (city), they may form such strong connections with the brand that it becomes reflective of their self-concept. According to signaling theory, Shafranskaya & Potapov (2014) show that city quality is a driver of CCBE. Gartner (2014) focuses on brand equity for tourism destination and argues the need to associate the concept to sustainability.

Finally, some research proposed conceptualizations and measurement scales. Based on Aaker (1996) and Keller (1993), Bose et al. (2016) developed a measurement instrument for customer-based place brand equity (CBPBE) from the investment attractiveness perspective, with four dimensions: brand awareness, brand image, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. Other scales evaluate customer-based brand equity for a tourism destination (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Konecnik, 2010; Yuwo et al., 2013); they all encompass four dimensions: awareness, image, quality and loyalty. Nevertheless, the existing literature on place branding and place brand equity shows the lack of an instrument that can measure place brand equity considering residential attractiveness. Thus, in this study, we develop a measurement instrument of CBBE of a place to evaluate a place's attractiveness from a residential perspective.

### *2.1.2. Drivers of CBPBE*

To identify drivers of CBPBE, this research relies on literature on brand equity and place marketing, and focuses on two categories of drivers: marketing efforts (marketing-mix elements and brand actions) and consumer experiences related to the place brand.

Researchers suggest that marketing decisions and market conditions affect brand equity. There are several antecedents of brand equity dimensions. Yoo et al. (2000) show that frequent price promotions (price deals), are linked to low brand equity, whereas high advertising spending, high price, good store image, and high distribution intensity are associated to high brand equity. Regarding advertising expenses, marketing research is



unanimous; the more the expenses are perceived as important and frequent, the more the consumer will perceive that the brand is making efforts and the more he will evaluate it positively. Villarejo-Ramos & Sánchez-Franco (2005) find that perceived advertising expenditure has a significant and positive influence on CBBE. Applied to place brand, communication could be one of the most relevant antecedent. In addition, Oguztimur and Akturan (2016) identify city communication as a relevant theme in city branding literature. Media influences perception and image of places (Freema & Nguyen, 2012). Perceived place branding actions/practices also impact place brand equity (Oguztimur & Akturan, 2016) and influence positively a city's image (Chamard, 2004). Thus, as for communication actions, we can advance that the more place brand's actions are perceived as favorable and numerous, the more consumers perceive place brand as making efforts and the more they evaluate it positively.

*Hypothesis 1:* Perceived communication actions of the place brand influence positively CBPBE.

*Hypothesis 2:* Perceived place brand actions influence positively CBPBE.

Consumer experiences related to place brand encompassing place memory (personal experience) and emotions related to place experience could also influence CBPBE.

Place memory reflects the attachment through personal experiences (Lewicka 2011). Chen et al. (2014a) defined it as how strong memories are associated to a place. They advance that individuals may have strong (past) attachment to a place where a life-changing event occurred, such as graduation or marriage; and that personal experiences can impact place's perception and attitude toward it (Walker & Chapman, 2003). As a consequence, place can be special or unique because it is associated with unique meanings depending on individual's past experiences with this place. Place memory strengthens the relationship between individuals and place, and could increase place brand equity. Chamard (2004) also demonstrates that personal experiences influence positively city image.

*Hypothesis 3: Place memory influences positively CBPBE.*

Emotions associated to personal experiences related to place could also impact place brand equity. Cohen & Areni (1991) defined emotions as affective states characterized by episodes of intense feelings associated with a specific referent (a person, an object, or an event). Recent studies highlight the need for researchers to incorporate emotions in modeling place marketing (Hosany et al., 2017). Measurement of emotions in tourism favored the valence-based approach (positive and negative emotions). Place–people relationship can encompass positive emotions such as love, pride, and contentment, but also negative emotions and unhappy experiences leading to place aversion (Scannell & Gifford 2010). In other words, positive and negative emotions associated to personal place experiences may influence perceived place’s attractiveness.

*Hypothesis 4: (a) Positive emotions related to place experience influence positively CBPBE; (b) negative emotions related to place experience influence negatively CBPBE.*

## *2.2. Place attachment and place satisfaction*

Place attachment and place satisfaction are two concepts used to analyze people–place relationship in social science. Several definitions of place attachment exist (Lewicka, 2011) and the number of research on place attachment is increasing. Our research considers place attachment as an affective bond to a specific geographical area as well as the meaning attributed to that bond. It draws on developmental theory (Morgan, 2010) which considers place attachment coming from both social interactions and environment evaluation. For Morgan (2010) place attachment is a developmental process where experiences in a place are internalized at an unconscious level and subjectively lead to place attachment. Attachment implicates a bond from the brand to the self. Two dimensions of place attachment were initially proposed and widely accepted: place identity and place dependence. Recent research suggests two other dimensions (social bonding and affective attachment) in order to take into

account social, purely emotional, or symbolic components in the human-place relationship (Kyle et al., 2005). Drivers of place attachment encompass place image (Chen & Phou, 2013; Fan & Qiu, 2014), service quality (Su et al., 2011), and place (destination) attractiveness (Cheng et al., 2013; Hou et al., 2005); all these antecedents can be viewed as dimensions or proxy of place brand equity. Thus, we propose that consumer-brand place brand equity may positively impact place attachment.

*Hypothesis 5: CBPBE influences positively place attachment*

Place attachment is often associated to place satisfaction in studies on residents (Chen & Dwyer, 2018; Hosany et al., 2017; Chen et al., 2014b). Place satisfaction refers to a subjective evaluation (from residents) across the bundle of services and goods (Chen et al., 2014b). Place satisfaction implies that people used public services (from which the evaluation is indicated as residential or physical satisfaction) and community services (from which the evaluation is indicated as social satisfaction) (Chen & Dwyer, 2018). Place satisfaction reflects evaluations and judgments associated to a place, and can be conceptually positioned as the same level of analyses as place attachment to predict behaviors (Park et al., 2010). Therefore place satisfaction is integrated in this research since both place attachment and place satisfaction can predict brand building behaviors. Moreover, little research explores the differential influences of these two drivers in relation to CBPBE.

*Hypothesis 6: CBPBE influences positively place satisfaction*

### *2.3. Brand building behaviors*

Three brand building behaviors in relation to place are selected as consequences of both place attachment and place satisfaction: word-of-mouth, leaving intention, and ambassador behaviors. Morhart et al. (2009) examine how managers can elicit brand-building behavior from frontline employees. They rely on Social Identity Theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) and

brand-building theory arguing that employee brand-building behavior is identity-congruent behavior that follows from a person's self-definition (self-concept) in terms of the corporate brand (link between social identity theory and brand building) (Morhart et al., 2009). In this service context, ambassador behaviors ("In-role brand-building behavior") correspond to frontline employees' meeting the standards prescribed by their organizational roles as brand representatives (either written in behavioral codices, manuals, display rules, and so forth, or unwritten). Based on this research, Chen & Dwyer (2018) analyze the influence of place attachment and place satisfaction on ambassador behaviors that refer to residents' behaviors consistent with the image and values of the place, such as dressing codes, manners, etc., as well as behaviors satisfying tourists' needs in the tourism-specific context (Choo et al., 2011). Ambassador behaviors are linked to social conformity. Results of Chen & Dwyer (2018) show that place satisfaction strongly influences residents' intention to stay or leave, and place attachment more strongly impacts residents' word of mouth and ambassador behaviors.

Social identity theory and brand-building behavior may also explain the psychological mechanism by which brand building behaviors arise in a context of place branding. As for employee branding process (Miles & Mangold 2004), consumers need to internalize the brand (here the place) to develop brand-supportive behaviors. Ashforth & Mael (1989) posit that individuals involve in behaviors that are consistent with salient aspects of their identities within their self-concepts and help the institutions embodying those identities, the place brand in our research. Through identity-consistent behaviors, individuals confirm their self-concept with behaviors meeting their needs for self-consistency and self-expression (Shamir et al., 1993). Therefore, we assume that consumers who have a strong people-place relationship (through place attachment and place satisfaction) should entail identity-congruent behaviors in the form of positive word of mouth, negative leaving intention (retention) and ambassador behaviors.

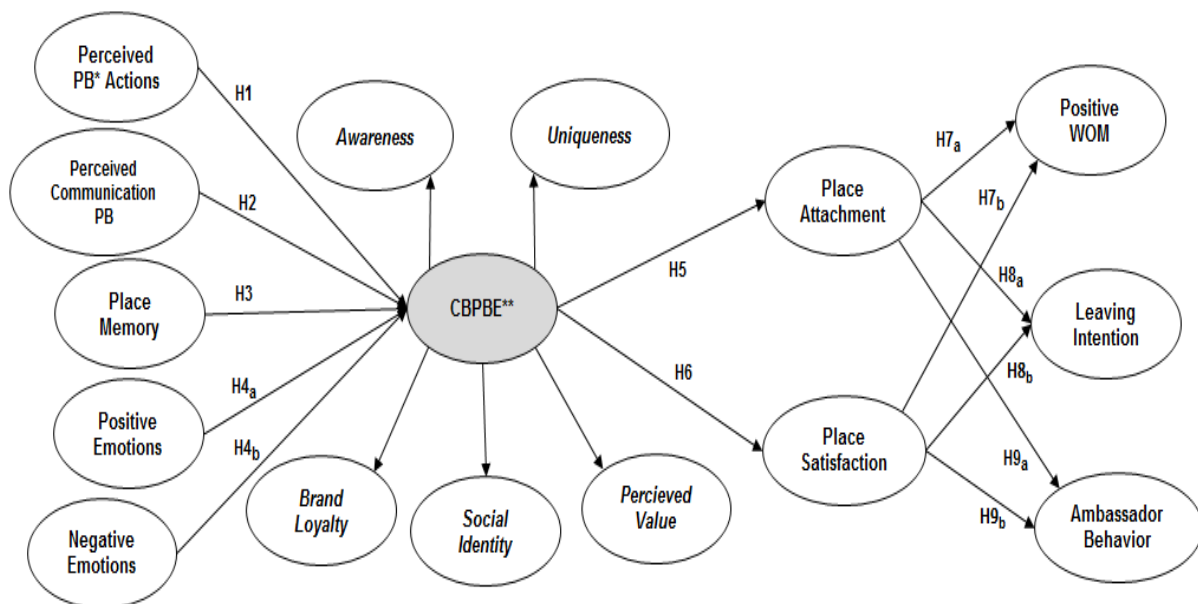
*Hypothesis 7:* Place attachment (a) and place satisfaction (b) influence positively word-of-mouth

*Hypothesis 8:* Place attachment (a) and place satisfaction (b) influence negatively leaving intention

*Hypothesis 9:* Place attachment (a) and place satisfaction (b) influence positively ambassador behavior

Model and hypotheses are presented in the figure 1 below.

**Figure 1. Model and hypotheses**



**Legend:** \* PB: Place Brand; \*\*CBPBE: Consumer-Based Place Brand Equity

### 3. Research methods

#### 3.1. Study 1 and study 2: Scale development to measure CBPBE

##### 3.1.1. Study 1: Identification of a pool of items that reflect the facets of CBPBE

Following standard procedures (Rossiter, 2002), we based item generation on a review of relevant consumer-based brand equity scales in branding and place marketing literature streams. This resulted in an initial pool of 47 items intended to capture various aspects of

consumer-based brand equity. Six scholars evaluated the content validity of each item with respect to our definition of CBPBE, which resulted in a modified set of 30 items. We administered these items to an alumni sample of a French graduated school of management located near the city of Aix-en-Provence (N = 134). An online survey using five-point Likert scale was used (strongly disagree to strongly agree). Aix-en-Provence was chosen as the place for the research due to its residential attractiveness issues and research was conducted in collaboration with the city. Aix-en-Provence is very attractive for students but faces difficulties to maintain students as residents once they graduated or to attract young workers. The objective of the city is to boost its economy through young residents, and to rejuvenate an ageing population. Respondents were asked about place brand equity relating to residential attractiveness considering the city of Aix-en-Provence as a brand. The sample consists of Aix-en-Provence alumni, males (47%) and (53%) females with a medium age of 29. A series of exploratory factor analyses was run using promax rotation. Item purification based on loadings greater than 0.5, resulted in a final CBPBE scale comprised of 15 items and 5 factors: brand awareness, brand uniqueness, social identity, brand loyalty and perceived value (see appendix 1). This model accounts for 77% of the total variance and the items show strong loadings with their representative factors (between .634 and .948).

### *3.1.2. Study 2: Validation of CBPBE structure*

Study 2 consists of a confirmatory factor analysis carried out on a new alumni sample (N=129) of the same school of management. The sample is composed of males (46%) and (54%) females with a medium age of 30. Confirmatory factor analysis was run with a partial least squares (PLS) approach. The quality of the model was examined with the Goodness of Fit indices and the SRMR index. Absolute GoF is 0.572, which is an excellent adjustment according to Wetzels et al. (2009) (GoF greater than 0.36). The SRMR is 0.057 below the recommended threshold of 0.08. The reliability and convergent validity of the scale were first

verified; the results were satisfactory (see appendix 2). The range of Jöreskog's rho coefficient is between 0.864 and 0.919 (greater than 0.7) which suggests good internal consistencies. The average variance extracted (AVE) for all the dimensions is greater than 0.5, indicating convergent validity. The AVEs for each of the factors are higher than the squared inter-factor correlations meaning that the discriminant validity in accordance with Fornell & Larcker (1981) was also established for the scale<sup>1</sup>. In addition, the new HTMT criterion was fulfilled with all values below 0.85. The latent dimensions are unique in measuring the place brand equity construct. Finally, predictive validity of the scale was tested on place attachment and place satisfaction as suggested in the conceptual model, through separate regression analyses. Scales of Chen & Dwyer (2018) were used to evaluate place attachment (affective attachment dimension) and place satisfaction. Results show that CBPBE dimensions have a significant influence on these two constructs (appendix 2), showing good predictive validity of the scale.

### *3.2. Study 3: Hypotheses testing*

#### *3.2.1. Sampling and measurement*

An additional online survey was administrated to a third alumni sample (N=240) of the same school of management. This sample consisted of males (58%) and (42%) females; the medium age is 38. The objective of the study 3 is to empirically test the research model. In addition to the CBPBE scale created in Studies 1 & 2, we chose different five-point Likert scales (strongly disagree to strongly agree) with established reliability and validity (see appendix 3). To evaluate perceived communication actions of the place brand, we adapted the three items from Yoo et al. (2000) related to perceived advertising of a brand. Perceived place brand actions were measured by two items from Chamard (2004) which capture how people perceive the actions of the municipality. Place memory was operationalized by Chen &

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<sup>1</sup> The table regarding discriminant validity is available upon request to the authors.

Dwyer's (2018) four-item scale, which reflects the attachment through personal experiences. Emotions related to place experience were measured by three items capturing positive emotions, and three items reflecting negative emotions proposed by Hosany et al. (2017). To evaluate place attachment, we used the one-dimensional scale of Chen & Dwyer (2018) which captures the affective aspects of place attachment. Place satisfaction was operationalized by Chen & Dwyer's (2018) one-dimensional scale, reflecting the subjective evaluation of the place. Finally, the three brand-building behaviors: word-of-mouth, leaving intention (retention) and ambassador behaviors were measured by three one-dimensional scales proposed by Chen & Dwyer's (2018) capturing place-related behaviors, based on the study of Morhart et al. (2009).

### *3.2.2. Methods and analyses*

Traditional regression analysis methods are not appropriate to measure relations that may exist between variables. Therefore a structural equation modeling approach to test the causal research model was chosen. When the analysis seeks to take account of the measurement errors in relation to the concepts examined, structural equations models have been shown to be more effective (Bagozzi & Yi, 1989; Russell et al., 1998). A partial least squares (PLS) approach was selected because of its minimal requirements in terms of sample size and because of its robustness in relation to violation of multivariate normality (Bagozzi & Yi, 1994). Reliability and convergent validity of the measurement instruments was first verified. Results were satisfactory<sup>2</sup>. Discriminant validity between all the constructs in accordance with Fornell & Larcker (1981) was also established<sup>3</sup>. In addition, the new HTMT criterion was also fulfilled with all values below 0.85. Adjustment quality of the model was examined with the

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<sup>2</sup> Results regarding reliability and convergent validity are available upon request to the authors.

<sup>3</sup> The table regarding discriminant validity is available upon request to the authors.



Goodness of Fit indices. Absolute GoF is 0.605, and SRMR equals 0.077, which again prove an excellent adjustment.

#### 4. Results

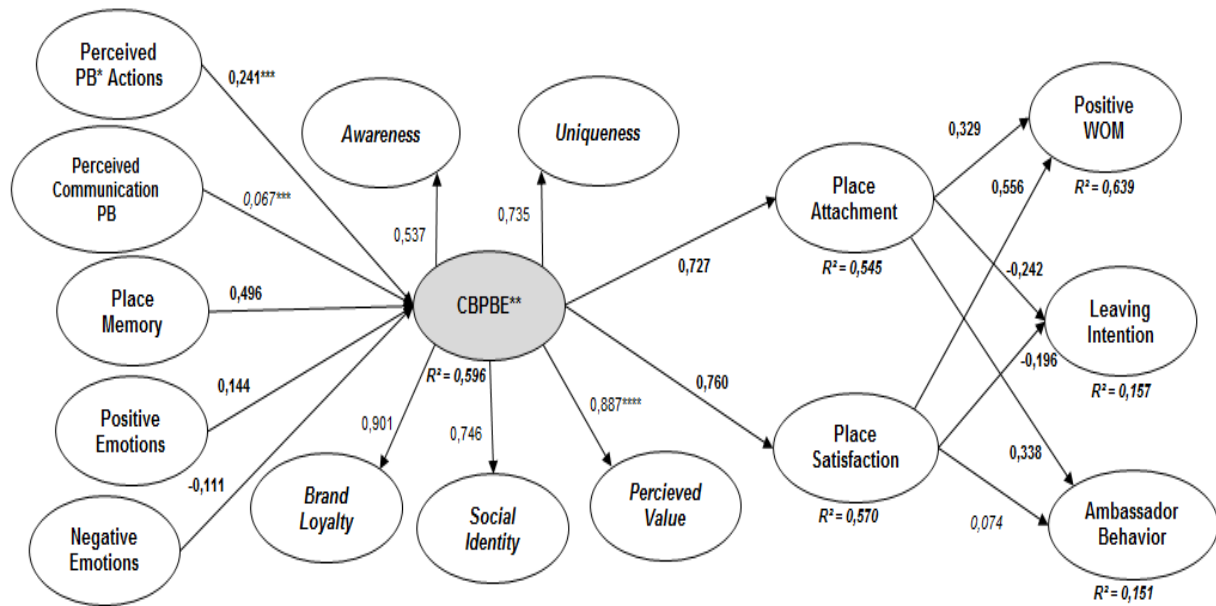
First, regarding the antecedents of CBPBE, perceived place brand actions positively influence CBPBE ( $\beta = 0.241$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) but perceived communication actions of the place brand have no influence on CBPBE ( $\beta = 0.067$ ;  $p = 0.124$ ). Past studies suggest that marketing efforts (marketing-mix elements and brand actions) should impact brand equity but it emerges that only place brand actions have a significant influence (H2 confirmed and H1 not confirmed). The more the actions of the city are perceived favorably, the more the CBPBE increases. In addition, consumer experiences related to the place brand have a significant influence on CBPBE. Place memory ( $\beta = 0.496$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) and positive emotions related to place experience ( $\beta = 0.144$ ;  $p = 0.032$ ) have a positive impact on CBPBE (H3 and H4a confirmed). The more the consumer has a positive city experience, the more the CBPBE improves. As expected, negative emotions negatively influence CBPBE ( $\beta = -0.111$ ;  $p = 0.015$ ): the stronger the negative emotions, the more CBPBE deteriorates (H4b confirmed).

Second, CBPBE has a strong and positive influence on place attachment ( $\beta = 0.727$ ;  $p = 0.032$ ) and place satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.760$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), thus confirming H5 and H6: the higher the CBPBE, the more place attachment and place satisfaction increase.

Finally, regarding brand building behaviors, place attachment ( $\beta = 0.329$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) and place satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.556$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) positively influence word-of-mouth (H7a and H7b confirmed). As expected, leaving intention is negatively influenced by both place attachment ( $\beta = -0.242$ ;  $p = 0.002$ ) and place satisfaction ( $\beta = -0.196$ ;  $p = 0.010$ ). H8a and H8b are confirmed: the stronger the place attachment, the more the leaving intention decreases, and the stronger the place satisfaction, the more the leaving intention decreases. Thus a strong place attachment and a strong place satisfaction induce consumer retention to the city. Place

attachment positively influences ambassador behaviors ( $\beta = 0.338$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), confirming H9a. However, H9b is not confirmed: place satisfaction has no impact on ambassador behaviors ( $\beta = 0.074$ ;  $p = 0.330$ ).

Results are illustrated in Figure 2.



**Figure 2. Bootstrapped 2<sup>nd</sup> order loadings, path coefficients and R<sup>2</sup>.**

**Legend:** \* PB: Place Brand;

\*\*CBPBE: Consumer-Based Place Brand Equity, capital letters refer to a second order construct

\*\*\*: Significant path coefficients (in **bold type**) & non significant path coefficient (in *italics*)

\*\*\*\*: 2<sup>nd</sup> order loadings in normal font

## 5. Discussion

This study addresses place brand equity of a particular place brand (a city) from the residential attractiveness perspective, and contributes to place branding and brand equity literature. Results regarding CBPBE antecedents and consequences are new to the academic literature and may help managers to define effective place branding actions. The CBPBE concept is valid, when applied to a city as place brand. Structured around five dimensions, this concept helps to evaluate a city's attractiveness and performance.

Our research proposes a CBPBE scale composed of five dimensions: brand awareness, brand uniqueness, social identity, brand loyalty and brand perceived quality/value. Three dimensions are commonly found in existing brand equity scales: brand awareness, brand loyalty and brand perceived quality/value (Keller, 1993; Netemeyer et al., 2004; Washburn & Plank, 2002; Yoo & Donthu, 2001). However, our research uncovers two new dimensions to measure place brand equity from a resident's perspective: brand uniqueness and social identity. A city is considered as a unique place that needs to remain unique to acquire value for its residents and that helps construct individuals' identity. This is consistent with Morgan's developmental theory (2010) which considers social interactions experienced in a place as important internalized factors leading to place attachment. It is also consistent with the work on social bonding that shows that social relationships built in a place may be the focus of individual's attachment (Kyle et al., 2005). Social identity reflects the notion of identification to a group, to people living in the same place, sharing of similar values and social recognition. This facet is close to the dimension 'social image' identified by Lassar et al. (1995) and confirms the relevance of the social identity theory used in this research: to be attractive and lead to place-supportive behaviors, a place (and its people) needs to be consistent with consumer identity.

Our research also confirmed the effect of CBPBE antecedents: place brand actions, place memory and emotions. This shows that residents not only choose their city according to rational elements (price, job opportunities etc.) but also to emotional cues such as experiences, values and social image. As defined by Lassar et al. (1995 p. 37) social image is "*consumer's perception of the esteem in which the consumer's social group holds the brand*". For places, this means that residents need to feel close to other residents of the same place. Social identity is strongly at stake for CBPBE. Consumer experiences related to the place are also crucial. The stronger and more positive consumer experiences related to the place brand are, the stronger the CBPBE will be. Thus, to attract residents, city managers should optimize

consumer experiences, inspired by practices in service and tourism contexts in which hedonic or experiential consumption is central. Those experiences should emphasize residents' sense of belonging. With globalization, this sense of belonging is less and less fulfilled by countries and nationalities. Therefore, cities could trigger this sense of belonging, just as U.S. President John F. Kennedy did in a speech given on June 26, 1963, in West Berlin: "*Ich bin ein Berliner*". In addition, marketing efforts should be done to communicate on place brand actions since favorable actions of the municipality contribute to CBPBE.

Results also prove that CBPBE is a set of assets attached to a place that gives additional value to a place and that results in strong place attachment and place satisfaction. When brand equity results in price premium for classic brands, it results in positive word of mouth, lower leaving intentions and ambassador behaviors for places. More precisely, we confirmed the influence of CBPBE on place attachment and place satisfaction, and showed that compared with place satisfaction, place attachment affects brand building behaviors differently. This result is in line with Chen & Dwyer (2018). Word of mouth is positively impacted by both place attachment and place satisfaction, whereas ambassador behaviors are affected by place attachment only. Leaving intention is negatively impacted by place attachment and place satisfaction. Thus, our research also highlights the central role of (place or brand) attachment and its superiority to predict behaviors consistent with previous studies (Park et al., 2010; Hosany et al., 2017). In line with the social identity theory, the more a consumer is attached to the city (strong consumer-place relationship), the more he or she will (1) spread a positive word of mouth, (2) intend to live in the city and (3) act as an ambassador. These findings contribute to help local governments to measure place attractiveness, to understand how to attract and retain residents, and to encourage them planning actions that increase consumer-place connections and internalization of the place in order to induce place-supportive behaviors.

Several limitations of this study present opportunities for further research. First, it was conducted in a single city, in only one country, making generalization to all places impossible. Replication of the present study in other cities and countries should allow us to confirm the validity of the CBPBE scale and test the model in other contexts. Second, data were collected on alumni samples of a single graduate school. Consequently, there is a need for a multi-sample study, based on alumni of different universities and potential residents who are not specifically alumni. This would allow validation of the scale, the model and the managerial recommendations regarding the factors for a city's attractiveness. In addition, our model is partly based on the fact that prior consumer experiences related to the place brand exist. Thus, others antecedents of CBPBE need to be investigated to understand how to attract residents who have no previous experience with the city. Moreover, other relatively new dimensions of place attachment should be added in the study such as social bonding for a better understanding of the social phenomenon raised by place branding issues. Finally, consumer-based brand equity has been recently conceptualized as a process (Chatzipanagiotou et al., 2016; Stocchi & Fuller, 2017). Building on the literature on brand equity creation process, future studies could extend these findings by analyzing if and how brand building, brand understanding and brand relationships blocks identified are relevant to understand CBPBE creation process using fuzzy-set/Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fs/QCA).

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Exploratory factor analysis

Dimension (factor)	Measurement items	Factor loadings
Brand awareness	Some characteristics of this city come to my mind quickly	0.744
	I can recognize this city among others	0.857
Brand uniqueness	This city really “stands out” from other cities	0.802
	This is very different from other cities	0.837
	This city is very “unique”	0.903
Social identity	I can identify with the people of this city	0.922
	I share the same values as the people of this city	0.894
Brand loyalty	This city is one of the cities where I most want to live	0.948
	I intend to recommend this city to people I know (to live there)	0.718
	This city is an ideal place to live	0.669
	It's a city where you want to live / continue to live	0.891
Brand perceived value	Compared to others, this city offers one of the best qualities of life	0.832
	We can rely on this city to have a good quality of life	0.852
	This city is a safe bet	0.634
	The quality of life in this city is high	0.912

### Appendix 2. Reliability, convergent validity and predictive validity (CBPBE scale)

#### Reliability and convergent validity

Latent variable (order 2)	Convergent validity $\rho_{CV} > 0.5$	Reliability (Rhô) > 0.7	Latent variable (order 1)	Number of items	Reliability (Rhô) > 0.7	Convergent validity $\rho_{CV} > 0.5$
Consumer-based place brand equity	0.548	0.856	Brand awareness	2	0.864	0.760
			Brand uniqueness	3	0.907	0.766
			Social identity	2	0.917	0.847
			Brand loyalty	4	0.919	0.740
			Brand perceived value	4	0.904	0.703

#### Predictive validity

	Place attachment			
	R2 adjusted	$\beta$	t	sig
Brand awareness	0.158	.409	4.366	.000
Brand uniqueness	0.219	.477	5.291	.000
Social identity	0.200	.457	5.004	.000
Brand loyalty	0.481	.697	9.482	.000
Brand perceived value	0.275	.531	6.112	.000
	Place satisfaction			
	R2 adjusted	$\beta$	t	sig
Brand awareness	0.048	.242	2.427	.017
Brand uniqueness	0.179	.434	4.690	.000
Social identity	0.168	.420	4.516	.000
Brand loyalty	0.294	.549	6.397	.000
Brand perceived value	0.300	.554	6.492	.000

### Appendix 3. Measurement scales used

Construct	Authors	Operationalization
Perceived communication actions of the place brand	Yoo et al. (2000)	Aix-en-Provence is a city that communicates a lot The communication campaigns of Aix-en-Provence are very frequent Compared to other cities, Aix-en-Provence spends a lot of money on its communication campaigns
Perceived place brand actions	Chamard (2004)	I agree with the current municipal policy I have a good general opinion about the action of the current municipality
Place memory	Chen and Dwyer (2018)	My experiences in Aix-en-Provence are unique My experiences in Aix-en-Provence are unforgettable My experiences in Aix-en-Provence make me love this city even more. I feel connected to Aix-en-Provence because of my experiences here
Emotions related to place experience	Hosany et al. (2017)	<b>Positive emotions</b> I feel a sense of delight I feel a sense of joy I feel a sense of pleasure <b>Negative emotions</b> I feel a sense of disappointment I feel a sense of displeasure I feel a sense of unhappiness
Place attachment	Chen and Dwyer (2018)	Aix-en-Provence means a lot to me I feel a strong sense of belonging to Aix-en-Provence and its facilities I am emotionally attached to Aix-en-Provence and its facilities I have a special connection to Aix-en-Provence and the people here
Place satisfaction	Chen and Dwyer (2018)	I am very satisfied with my life in Aix-en-Provence Aix-en-Provence does a good job to meet my needs The services provided by Aix-en-Provence are very satisfactory Living in Aix-en-Provence is a very satisfying experience
Positive word of mouth	Chen and Dwyer (2018)	I talk up Aix-en-Provence to people I know I bring up Aix-en-Provence in a positive way in conversations I have with my friends and acquaintances In social situations, I often speak favorably about Aix-en-Provence
Leaving intention (retention)	Chen and Dwyer (2018)	I have decided to leave Aix-en-Provence I intend to leave Aix-en-Provence within a short period of time and live elsewhere I am looking at other places to live now
Ambassador behavior	Chen and Dwyer (2018)	In tourist contacts situations, I ensure that my personal appearance corresponds to the appearance of the Aixois(e)s I adhere to my standards for Aixois(e)s behavior My actions in tourist contacts are not in contradiction with the behavior of an Aixois(e)