

# The brand of Bucharest – a generator of opportunities or competence needed in the urban competition?

Ruxandra-Irina Popescu<sup>1\*</sup>, Răzvan-Andrei Corboș<sup>2\*</sup>

**Abstract**—The starting premise of this study is that a strong urban brand ensures cities an increased competence transformed into a competitive advantage, as well as a dynamic source of important opportunities. Moreover, urban competitiveness strategic analysis reveals that the analysis of opportunities, threats, strengths and weaknesses for identifying city development strategic options is compulsory. At the moment, Bucharest is still searching for those vectors capable of generating competitive advantages, which are essential for urban development. In this context, our aim is to develop a realistic analysis of Romania's capital potential for overcoming the current economic crisis by building up a strong brand. The paper focuses on the main strong points Bucharest might exploit in the present concurrent context and proposes three main directions to follow for shaping a good brand: Bucharest- residential city, Bucharest- knowledge city, Bucharest- business city.

**Keywords**—brand, competitive advantage, strategic vision, tourism, urban competitiveness.

## I. INTRODUCTION

**T**HE people are those that build the city. It looks like a truism! It is a truism! Just like cities are essential for the successful realization of the national governments' ambitions. Within these one can find support for the key principles that outline more and more government policies for cities. These policies include granting important public resources through programs that have an impact upon cities; a better recognition and a bigger concentration on the economic potential of cities and on political action's means that would encourage this capacity; a bigger availability to address regional disequilibrium; recognizing the importance of

communities' sustainable development; an attention focusing on cities and regions and on the collaboration between them, as well as the desire to simplify and reduce the national requirements and constraints for the local and regional actors.

But no matter how we would interpret the notion of competitiveness, it is obvious that some cities have a better "performance" than others, to the extent that revenues and occupied workforce generated within their borders surpass those of other cities [14]. This fact suggests that a city's entire capability of competing is modeled by an interaction between a city's attributes for location and the strong and weak points of the enterprises and other active economic agents that exist within them.

In this context, it seems natural the use of branding as an option for the urban strategy. Even though the concept of urban brand is relatively new, the process itself has been used consciously or unconsciously even since the cities started competing for commerce, population, wealth, prestige or power in a global context [1].

Phillip Kotler [11] defines the brand as "a name, a term, a sign, a symbol or a design, or a combination of these that has the purpose of nominating a seller's or a group of sellers' goods and services and to differentiate them from those of the competition".

A city's brand represents the sum of all the perceptions and associations that people have regarding a certain city [5][26]. These can include past experiences, movies, news, commercials, access to information, weather, prices, and the opinions of friends or citizens from that city.

A strong brand can outline a city's personality and can give it quality [15]. A real brand takes into consideration not only the "tough" aspects, such as taxes, infrastructure, costs, the networks and logistics, but also the more "sensible" ones, such as mentality and tolerance, art and culture, nature and the population's health state. Such a brand proves not only the quality of the resources (such as land, workforce and assets), but also the quality of life (the city's ambient, the services and possibilities offered in terms of recreation).

City brand is, in our globalized world, a key tool and necessary instrument when it comes to creating distinctive images and competitive advantages. Everybody acknowledges the reality that cities compete against each other for very many reasons, such as [6]:

- attracting foreign investors;

<sup>1</sup> Ruxandra-Irina Popescu is from the Academy of Economic Studies from Bucharest, Faculty of Administration and Public Management, 22-24, Șerban Vodă Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Sector, Bucharest, ROMANIA, email: ruxandra.irina@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Răzvan-Andrei Corboș is from the Academy of Economic Studies from Bucharest, Faculty of Management, Department of Management, 6, Romană Square, 1<sup>st</sup> Sector, Bucharest, ROMANIA, e-mail: razvan.corbos@man.ase.ro.

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- attracting financial resources;
- attaining existing investors;
- attracting tourists;
- maintaining their existing tourists, etc.

Another vision towards the brands is that of Schmitt [23] who asserts that “the brand is an influx source of sensitive, affective and cognitive associations which result in memorable experiences linked to it”. This is one of the premises at the base of “searching” cities: all of them, whether they are megalopolises or simple urban settlements, endeavor to become the source of positive associations in the individuals’ minds, for as to generate an added-value from a symbolic and economic point of view, and the most suitable instrument for achieving this is the city branding.

Helbrecht [9] discusses about the relevance of the urban marketing’s philosophy and the methods used by the local administration of the cities, for development: „urban marketing permits the reach of a new quality level in the local development policy from the coverage, creativity and flexibility point of view. New resources, as ideas, capital and knowledge on local plan are mobilized, the urban marketing causing a strategically approach of the public planification, in collaboration with the private sector”.

Florian [7] fills the above statements, arguing that the urban centers „seem capable just to develop themselves according with a uniform and traditional way of thinking of the global market”. He adds that the cities are gradually becoming „impersonal, anonymous and, finally, uninhabitable (...) The cities need soul!” So, the cities need to develop and promote original, inimitable personalities and to provide that „unique experience” that beats this „superficial urban monoculture” which covers the world.

So, can the city’s brand operate as an umbrella covering many stakeholders and audiences? Can the city branding create, in the minds of the people that come into contact with the city, the feeling that they recognize an entity with which they can establish a relation? We are going to try and offer an answer to these questions by analyzing the possibilities of creating a brand for the city of Bucharest.

## II. SIGNIFICANT INFORMATION REGARDING ROMANIA’S CAPITAL

Romania’s Capital, **Bucharest**, and at the same time the country’s biggest city, industrial and commercial center, is positioned as the 6<sup>th</sup> city in the European Union by its population of 1.944.367 inhabitants (estimation at 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2009) [28]. But in fact, Bucharest gathers every day more than three million people and the forecasts made by specialists reveal that, in the next five years, the total will be of over four million.

From the perspective of its geographical and geopolitical position, an essential element in urban promoting, Bucharest can be analyzed in the following manner:

- At European level the city is included in the traditional capitals category, but with a rather eccentric position towards the economic and financial center of gravity of the European

dorsal. The city is placed on the adopted transcontinental road and railway corridors and also in the proximity of the Danube corridor and the link between the Black Sea area and the Baltic Sea area.

- At national level is has a relatively eccentric localization, but it polarizes most of the major circulation routes.

Reported in the characteristics’ of the major European cities [16], Romania’s capital:

- Is a metropolis by size because of its status as a capital, but not also by international influence because it does not have international institutions with decision power, and/or metropolitan functions, but only some company branches, banking bureaus etc;

- Is situated in the 3<sup>rd</sup> category by size between one and three million inhabitants, but with a declining dynamic because of the demographic fall in the 1990-2000 decade. A reverse action can be achieved based on demographic, social and economic policies with visible effects only after approximately two decades. Besides these measures, it is necessary a policy to attract young people with post college and graduate studies – needed by the change in the sector profile of the Capital;

- Fits in the category of the regional outskirts metropolis with limited international influence, that has few metropolitan level tertiary services and little developed international functions, similar to Athens and Lisbon, but with the possibility to prepare the crossing to the higher category of the “regional metropolis with a strong international influence, with a less specialized structure of activities and specialized or incomplete international functions” like Rome, Madrid or Bern [29].

Bucharest’s analysis from the perspective of creating a brand that would generate a rise in the city’s attractiveness for potential tourists reveals the following aspects:

- The lack of an institutional framework needed for coordinating the urban branding activity;

- A weak managerial culture;

- An underdeveloped cooperation and consensus culture;

- Big intra-regional differences within the capital, especially regarding the infrastructure and utilities, with big difficulties regarding the accessibility of some transport means such as the subway;

- A relatively marginal position in Europe;

- A reduced quality of the environment factors [30]:

- Annually, Bucharest’s traffic produces over 2 million tones of poisonous substances, with extremely serious effects on the inhabitant’s health;

- The specialists from Eco-EUROPA show that Bucharest is the only European city without a modern drinking water treatment plant, reason for which the tap water’s quality is far from the EU’s required standards;

- The capital does not have a public recycling system (for example, according to the latest estimates, every

week, in Bucharest, over a million plastic bottles become waste);

- Traffic problems: Bucharest is affected by serious traffic problems due to two reasons: an impressive rise in the number of cars<sup>3</sup> that move through the city (their number is estimated at 1.500.000 a day) that did not correspond with the street network development [29]; the inability of the ring road that circles the city indicates the fact that the traffic from north to south and/or from east to west crosses the center of the city. The situation is aggravated by the lack of parking spaces at the city's access points;

- A low rate of road modernization [13];
- The precarious situation of the educational infrastructure;
- A limited availability of space;
- Insufficient investment in research and technological development;
- Reduced green areas;
- The degradation of the capital's architectural and historical heritage;
- The absence of a marketing effort to promote Bucharest;
- Reduced civic involvement both as impact and echo;
- The capital's residents do not have a predominant feeling of civic pride.

The challenges managed by Bucharest's administration, in conditions of economic crisis, will be:

- Continuous wear of the infrastructure;
- A low awareness among the population regarding the environmental situation;
- Talents and workforce migration;
- Demographic aging;
- Rising costs for the population and users;
- The landscape's degradation and rise in pollution;
- The rise of the VAT from 19% to 24% (starting with July 2010) that will determine a triple cascading effect: a rise in prices, a rise in inflation and the drop in the standard of living;
- The 25% drop in public staff's wages;
- The 25% collective layoffs in the public administration.

This analysis' fundamental conclusion is that Bucharest is still looking for its identity [19]. Reported in the national brand – that is still in an incipient phase, it can play two roles: whether as an ingredient for the country brand, the capital becoming an element included on the list of values promoted at national level, or as a landmark, for defining and subsequently for improving the country brand. The unexploited potential must be capitalized in the future by using

<sup>3</sup> In 2003 there were 387 cars/1.000 inhabitants, three times the national mean of 136 cars/1.000 inhabitants and more than the rate of 326 cars/1.000 inhabitants in Budapest [29]. These figures highlight a major change in the citizens' behavior, with a massive shift from public transport to the use of personal cars. The pressure created by the rise in the number of cars needs to be addressed by two sets of measures: first, an increase in the capacity of the road network, and second, investments for extending the public transport system.

urban branding and marketing steps adapted to the local specificity.

### III. PROBLEM SOLUTION

First, the brand's objective should be the communication and build of a strong, consistent identity, which would incorporate with accuracy the attributes, values and the unique urban personality of Bucharest [17]. The target audience is varied:

- *The residents and the Romanians from outside Bucharest.* A successful brand will rise the cities attractiveness, will diversify and amplify the labor market and, as a result, will improve the chances to succeed in a career;

- *The business environment* will be favored by encouraging (during the branding campaign and also based on its positive results) local investments, by raising the number of visitors and international events that will lead to a development of the tertiary and quaternary sectors;

- *Tourists.* The first element that the capital could rely is tourism that will be upward encouraged, the brand shaping the urban experience of individuals and determining them to return to the city. Tourism could create an "umbrella" brand that would encompass the marketing efforts in the direction of economic development, investments and export [15]

"The governments' conscious attempts to model an identity of location specially designed and to promote it to the target groups both internally and externally, represents a practice almost as old as the act of civil governing itself" [10]. Indeed, the concepts of promoting places and identities do not represent a novelty. The existence of the civil governing act was, from its beginning, doubled by the cities' efforts of promoting, with the aim of achieving objectives such as the development of the entrepreneurial environment and the rise of the tourism sector, which Short [24] named them "the city at work" and "the city at play", elements that, moreover, are interrelated.

In the context, the opportunities' analysis for Romania's capital in the next period shows that these will be:

- Projects financed from the structural funds (European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund and Cohesion Fund) for the transport and tourism infrastructure, and from private investments [8];

- The Campus Project aimed at creating the biggest campus in Central and Southeastern Europe;

- Improving the services delivered to citizens;

- Changing the legislation regarding the protection and conservation of the historical heritage;

- Firming up the legislation regarding pollution and waste recycling;

- Developing public-private partnerships to carry out the urban marketing activity.

- A rise in the number of the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that would constitute a potential source of durability, development and jobs' creation.

The elements that Bucharest can capitalize for creating a strong urban brand are:

- Bucharest is a relatively new “product” on the European and international tourism market: the 20 years of democracy were not enough to establish the capital as a European renowned tourism destination. Yet, the foreigners’ curiosity for the city represents a major advantage that can be exploited on the long-term through a continuous urban reinvention;

- The city has high potential as a cultural destination: while other European cities are characterized by a certain style, the capital represents exactly the opposite; the city’s charm results from an overlap of different numerous architectural forms and lifestyles;

- The architectural richness is translated into a wide range of styles: from baroque to art nouveau, from Brâncoveanu to postmodern and oriental, everything being surrounded by the grand legacy of socialism;

- Bucharest represents the biggest consumption market at national level and of the biggest markets in Southeastern Europe, which ensures for the future a bigger international visibility;

- The capital has a diversified economy, with a well developed tertiary sector;

- The business infrastructure is well developed [22];

- The large number of internationally known firms with branches and offices in the capital;

- The big number of innovative firms, including foreign ones (the investments in innovation represents approximately 47,1% from the national overall investments, 21% of the innovative firms are located in the capital);

- The high density of higher education and research facilities, the number of specialized institutions representing 38% from the national overall;

- The existence of the biggest exposition in Romania – Romexpo;

- The highest quality conference center in the country (“Bucharest International Conference Centre” located in Parliament Palace) [2];

- The local administration’s experience in establishing public-private partnerships, in obtaining loans from abroad;

- The criminality rate which is lower than the national mean can represent the base for shaping the capital’s image as a safer city;

- Good aerial accessibility compared to other European capital cities; the aerial accessibility in Bucharest is 109 (EU 27 = 100)<sup>4</sup>;

- The large number of quality hotels: twenty 4 and 5 stars hotels, approximately 6.000 hotel rooms built in the last 10 years;

- A concentration of tourism agencies in Bucharest (approximately a quarter of the total number at national level);

- The vicinity of the Danube, the Carpathians and the rural areas that present a special tourism interest;

- The most important transport hub at national level;

- Hosting events with important potential for promoting (The George Enescu Festival, the International Auto Show (organized periodically), Book fest and other international book fairs, the SoNoRo Festival (the International Chamber Music Festival), but also political events (like the NATO Summit organized in 2008) [19].

Thus, **the values promoted by the Bucharest’s brand constitute its essence:**

- eclecticism, boldness;
- the decorative richness of the city;
- the multiple ages of the city;
- the interwar era symbols;
- the varied architectural styles;
- the romantic, bohemian atmosphere;
- the socialist inheritance combined with the capitalist offer;
- a city of contrasts;
- hospitality;
- low prices compared to other major cities and European capitals;
- accessibility;
- top events and international festivals;
- renowned academic center;
- advantageous business climate;
- the nightlife.

They can be chosen from a wide range of options, depending on the target groups and on their receptiveness, but also depending on the short, medium and long-term objectives of branding:

- The regeneration of the historical center – the main attraction point on the capital’s map and the growth engine for urban tourism;
- A greater visibility at international level by participating in fairs, workshops, conferences;
- The capital’s transformation into a favorite destination for the organizers of official reunions.

**Promoting Bucharest and the surrounding area can be achieved by:**

- Pointing out the historical monuments;
- Building a partnership between the hotel industry and the museums from Bucharest;
- Setting up a special tourist bus line;
- Making monographs of specific neighborhoods: brochures handed out tourist points and in schools;
- Expropriating those who do not wish or are not able to take care of properties that present historical importance.

Also, Bucharest can be promoted [20]:

<sup>4</sup> Prague is the most accessible Eastern European capital city, located on the 146 spot, while Sofia situates itself after Bucharest [29].

- As a “business city”, but for it to gain this status, the authorities must appeal, first of all, to tax and financial leverages;
- As a “city of knowledge”, that assumes the capital’s positioning on the informational society’s world map, through the encouragement of the IT sector, of utilizing ICT and expanding the wireless Internet connections;
- As a “residential city”. This is the biggest challenge for Bucharest, because it is confronted with space problems, but also because of the buildings’ communist architecture that do not ensure the psychic and physical comfort of the inhabitants and it cannot represent a stimulus for relocating in the city. But this situation will soon change because in 2009 was started a process of renovation and redecoration of the buildings’ facades, which is hoped will transform the city into a friendly environment to compensate, at least through image, the disadvantages of compact living quarters.

**The brand’s personality:** Bucharest will become an influential city in the fields of business, tourism, culture, event planning, but also in the field of ecology.

The brand’s values describe the building stones for the marketing activity and they can include: diversity, cosmopolitan and vibrant culture, the ambitious city, willing and capable of developing itself, the welcoming city etc. Besides these, the tone used in transmitting the audio-visual messages must be bold, authentic, determined, but also imaginative and playful (to allow to the audience to play with the given information so as to form a correct image regarding Bucharest). Figure 1 can successfully summarize the story of the Bucharest’s brand.

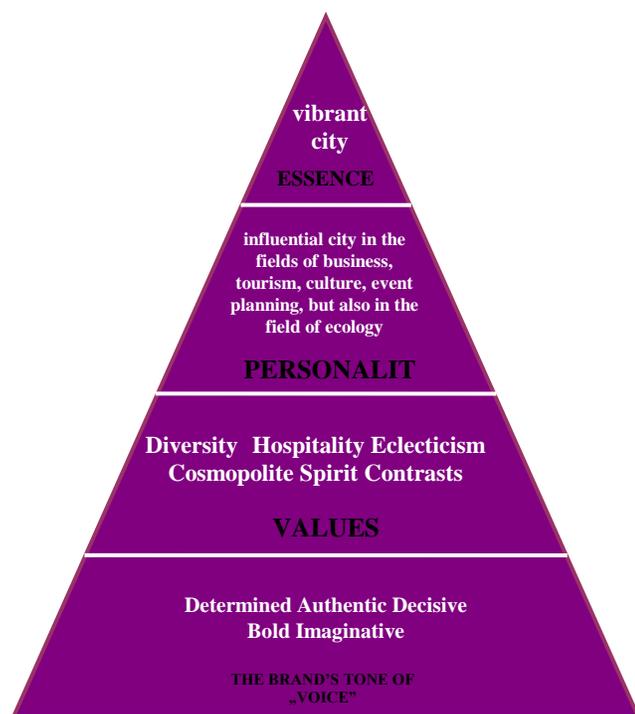


Fig. 1. The “story” of Bucharest’s brand  
Source: [17]

**The success factors for the branding** of Romania’s capital could be the following:

**1. The creation of a planning group**, consisting of decision-makers from the public and private sector, responsible for planning and executing the urban marketing, to which should be added, if necessary, external consultants.

Specifically, the partnership for branding Bucharest could be formed by:

- Departments within the City Hall (for example, the Department for International Relations, Public Relations and Information, Urban and Regional Planning, Assets Management, Investments and the Department for Tourism Development, but also others that can have relevant responsibilities in the field);
- The business sector (Romanian companies, foreign investors, multinational companies);
- NGOs that focus on civil society’s involvement and on consulting it throughout the marketing process (NGOs’ objectives must be diverse, so as to address efficiently the target groups: social, economic, environmental, tourism etc.);
- Organizations specialized on marketing and urban branding issues (consultancy firms, advertising agencies).

The responsibilities of this group could be based on the following activities:

- Defining and making a diagnose for the urban situation of Bucharest by using specific instruments;
- Developing a vision for Bucharest based on realistic evaluation and analysis;
- Elaborating a long-term action plan for investments urban regeneration (that will bring added value).

**2. The vision and branding strategy analysis**, that should have as a completion the development of specific recording systems for the information provided by the market, the activities planning and the marketing process’ control, taking into account the available resources and the planned objectives. Moreover, the rival cities must be constantly monitored, along with the opportunities and the threats posed by them. In this way, Bucharest will be able to offer a unique combination of qualities, based on the selection of attractions, which are capable of transmitting the brand’s message. The marketing activities and strategies will differ depending on the nature of the market segments that are focused; this could be obtained:

- Through a profound understanding of what is asked for, but also a thoroughgoing study of the short and medium-term objectives and of the vision’s operational consequences;
- By defining clients and the targeted markets segments;
- By adapting the „Bucharest product” to the consumers needs, alongside with pointing out the realistic benefits that branding will bring;
- Through an analysis of the competition;
- By discovering the differentiation mark (must answer to the question: „why Bucharest and not other city?”).

**3. Defining the „little Paris” brand’s identity**, as a result of the planned activities from the urban marketing project framework. The city does not need only the umbrella-brand, but also the sub-brands for each sub-market (the tourism, the residents, the business man, the patients, the students) and for the business fields in which Bucharest presents clear advantages (for example, the labor price, the localization price). Besides utilizing the various promoting instruments, one must not forget the importance of utilizing social responsibility, which must be signaled in accordance. So, if Bucharest will offer less of a product and more of a way of life, it will better meet the ever changing needs. After identifying the strategic opportunities, the decision-makers must establish the factors that identify Bucharest.

**4. Extending the cooperation between the public and the private sectors**, that will also bring the advantages of a low opportunity cost for learning from the collaborators’ experience and for using their resources, an element that presents maximum importance in Bucharest’s case, because it does not have a special budget for the marketing activity. The renowned universities from Bucharest, as well as the research institutes should be made part of this partnership, not only for the associated target-groups, but also for their attractiveness and credibility for the companies that are based on knowledge and research.

**5. Implementing a local development program**, doubled by a **favorable positioning at continental and international levels**. This objective can be realized by using a type of marketing at global level, one that can spread credibility, resources and can amplify the technological progress of the city. The strategic positioning of Bucharest must be able to cope with competition: thus, an analysis regarding the positions occupied in relevant hierarchies for branding is inevitable.

a. Thus, according to the study “*European Cities Monitor*” [27], made by Cushman&Wakefield, in 2008, Bucharest occupied the 31<sup>st</sup> position out of 34 regarding the best *European cities for business*, in front of cities like Athens, Oslo and Moscow. In the category for the most dynamic cities in the area of urban improvement, it occupies a remarkable 10<sup>th</sup> place out of 34 cities studied, showing a huge development potential and implicitly branding potential (it is situated in front of cities like Amsterdam, Lisbon, Athens or Stockholm).

In 2009, the study’s authors considered Bucharest as a representative city from the point of view regarding services offered to the business world. Representatives of Europe’s top companies ranked Bucharest according to the factors established for urban competition, as it follows:

Table 1. Bucharest’s position in the European Cities Monitor [27]

Factor	Ranking in 2008	Ranking in 2009
Easy access to markets, consumers and clients	24	25
Qualified staff availability	32	31

Communications’ quality	29	29
Transport links with other internal or external cities	34	27
<i>Labor costs</i>	2	1
The climate created by governments for the business environment through policies regarding taxes and financial incentives	11	5
The cost of office space	13	9
Availability of office spaces	28	17
Languages spoken	28	29
Domestic transportation	26	29
Quality of life of employees	31	30
Pollution level	30	30

From table 1, one can observe that Bucharest is considered by the European business world as the ideal place for relocating companies from the labor cost point of view. But regarding the quality and qualification of human capital, Romania’s capital is at the bottom of the ranking.

The city also looks good in terms of attracting investors. The C&W study says that 30 companies are planning in the next 5 years for relocating their activity in Bucharest. In front of Bucharest, on the first two places, are situated Warsaw and Moscow with 36 and, respectively 35 companies. Among the Western destinations focused by the big companies are included Paris, London and Brussels.

Bucharest also registers a significant rise of six positions in the ranking of best cities regarding the climate created by the government through the adopted tax policies. Here, still Dublin retains first place, closely followed by Geneva, London and Warsaw. In addition, Romania’s capital retains the 9<sup>th</sup> position in the ranking of best cities regarding the cost of office space, rising four positions since 2008.

On the other hand, Bucharest is at the bottom of the ranking if we look at the qualification of the workforce. The capital retains the 31<sup>st</sup> place out of 34, a rise of one position from last year. At this chapter, worse than Bucharest are Athens, Istanbul and Moscow, while leaders are London, Paris and Frankfurt.

The European Cities Monitor annual study shows that the Romanian metropolis records bad scores at many chapters of the ranking including the 34 capitals: quality of life for employees (30<sup>th</sup> position), linking infrastructure with other capitals (27), domestic transportation (29), the quality of the communication system (29), easy access to markets (25), spoken languages (29), anti-pollution measures (30). At the question “What cities made the biggest efforts to develop?”, only in 4% of the cases the companies answered Bucharest. In the ranking of the most known European cities, Romania’s capital is on the 30<sup>th</sup> position that emphasizes the need to promote the city abroad, especially in terms of the current economic crisis.

b. According to the [www.citymayors.com](http://www.citymayors.com) website [29], from the living costs point of view, Bucharest is placed on the 70<sup>th</sup> place in a hierarchy of the most expensive European urban

areas for foreign workers and the 187<sup>th</sup> place at global level, presenting a competitive advantage over cities like Budapest, Chisinau, Prague, Sofia or Bratislava (its main competitors). In 2010, the *Mercer ranking regarding the quality of life* [31] places the capital on the 107<sup>th</sup> spot, behind San Jose (Costa Rica) and in front of Asuncion (Paraguay). Sofia, Bulgaria's capital is on the 114<sup>th</sup> spot and Budapest on the 73<sup>rd</sup> one.

c. Another reference index is the “*European Barometer of Urban Brands*”, created by the British consultancy firm *Saffron*, in 2008 [32]. It is an instrument for comparing the European cities' strengths (72 cities, most of them with a population of over 450.000 inhabitants), while the competition between them has increased due to the expanded integration, favorable traveling conditions in the old continent, rediscovering of local identities and values. The barometer measures the urban brand's strength and evaluates the branding's efficiency in operating the assets owned by the city [18].

In regards to Bucharest's ranking in the European Barometer of Urban Brands, it occupies, in terms of the categories of criteria taken into consideration, the following positions:

- At chapter “urban assets' force” it gathered 61 points and ranks 36<sup>th</sup> out of 72 positions;
- At chapter “urban brand's strength” it gathered 44 points and ranks 42<sup>nd</sup> out of 72;
- In terms of use of the brand Bucharest utilizes it in a 73% measure, ranking 47<sup>th</sup>.

Thus, the capital is situated in the median part of the rankings, but what is remarkable is the under-utilization of the urban brand, due to the absence of a proper activity of urban marketing. By analyzing the rankings, one can see the presence of some cities that have lower scores for the first two categories, but that utilize much more efficiently their brand, surpassing Bucharest:

Table 2. Scores' comparison – Bucharest – other relevant European cities [21]

City	Bucharest	Belgrade	Marsailles	Newcastle	Rotterdam	Sarajevo
<i>The urban assets' force (points)</i>	61	47	56	43	52	49
<i>Ranking according to the urban assets' force</i>	36	64	47	69	55	59
<i>Urban brand's strength (points)</i>	44	38	44	43	43	43
<i>Ranking according to the strength of the brand</i>	42	55	42	46	46	46
<i>Use of the brand (%)</i>	73%	80%	79%	99%	83%	86%
<i>Ranking</i>	47	41	42	18	38	35

<i>according to the use of the brand</i>						
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d. In a ranking of the 98 most attractive destinations for real estate investments on the medium term, made by *LaSalle Investment Management Company* for 2009, Bucharest fell 36 positions to 84<sup>th</sup> place, compared with 2008. The study shows that, like other states in the region, Romania was confronted with a severe recession. The study identifies the cities from Europe where the demand for real estate properties could reach, on the medium term, the highest levels.

e. In a ranking of *Europe's greenest cities*, made by *Mio Technology Company* at the beginning of 2010, Bucharest is on the 41<sup>st</sup> position. The top ten ranked are Prague, Barcelona and Moscow, followed by Krakow, Budapest, Amsterdam, Rome, Bratislava, Copenhagen and London.

f. Bucharest's website ranked 129<sup>th</sup> out of 130 positions at the category European eCity Award [29], judging by the website's utility for citizens, business and tourists, by design and innovation.

The global positioning signals two types of actions that must be made in the branding activity: in the case of positive critics the authorities and the partner stakeholders must concentrate on maintaining and solidify this position, while for the disturbing situations, it must find durable solutions for improvement.

For sustaining the effectiveness of Bucharest's brand can be done the following:

- *Raising the level of trust between citizens and community, on one hand and, institutions and decision makers, on the other.* There is a tight link between public administration's institutions and the competitiveness of a certain territory, whether we are referring to a city, a region or the whole of a country. In a general context grinded by social and political instability, the citizen's trust for the decision makers and for the public administration in general, is falling. And this lack of trust can have dire consequences for any city in Romania and the more for Bucharest (for example, through the migration of qualified workforce to other urban areas in Europe). At the same time, foreign investors are influenced by the favorable conditions that the government offers to the business world, as well as by the negative social turbulence on the potential employees – the active workforce from the respective city. It is an uncontested fact that both competitiveness and economic growth are directly influenced by the institutional quality.

- *Developing a coherent program for sustaining the private sector.* The private sector is an important ally for a city in its attempt to obtain economic competitiveness, because investors can significantly influence the attractiveness of a settlement in terms of ongoing economic activities [12]. Studies show that Bucharest presents advantages for the business sector in terms of workforce costs and office space costs. This advantage must be capitalized through coherent public policies, regulatory acts that would help establish and

develop the business sector, through an improved tax system, through the development of the infrastructure and constructions.

- *Improving urban infrastructure (physical, technique, telecommunications)*. One of Bucharest's weak points is the urban infrastructure, especially the transport infrastructure. This problem must be addressed through an intense and concrete process of modernization and development of the city's physical infrastructure. A modern transport system can ensure a balanced development for all the areas in the capital. At the same time there must be:

- Promoted a balanced development of all the existent transport means;
- Improved both the quality and effectiveness of the services offered;
- Promoted a concern regarding the reduction of transports' impact on the environment.

Brands facilitate the choice process for people [4]. Because of this, it is preferably that Bucharest be conducted by a commercial "brand" with the purpose of strengthening its identity and its perceived value in a market characterized by fiercer and fiercer competition. Romania's capital, just like all the big urban areas, forms a unique mix of vitality and growth, modernism and innovation, infrastructure and technology, attractiveness and quality. Bucharest is an engine of cultural and economic growth, but also an important storage center for valuable resources and innovation. Within it, advanced technology and tourism can play an important role [15].

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The case study shows Bucharest's capacity to occupy a competitive position on the European market. Bucharest's potential is very high, but at the same time, undervalued and not enough exploited. Taking count of the more and more numerous challenges that the cities are faced with in the present, the capital needs a solution that ensures not only its subsistence on the urban market, but also a favorable and durable position. At first sight, Bucharest seems a city that needs to be „healed”, the local authorities concentrating momentarily on improving the urban situation and on finding more or less feasible solutions for solving especially the infrastructure problems. Although the objectives mentioned in the local and regional development plans are clear, these are not sufficient: priorities must be translated into a marketing vision, with precise strategies and objectives.

As a consequence, Bucharest must “produce” its own brand by which to realize and strengthen its competitive advantages in the European territorial conglomerate [25] with the purpose of:

- Improving the quality of life;
- Creating a pole of economic concentration and support in attracting new enterprises and investments (into objectives of economic and local infrastructure nature) that will:
  - Determine the creation of a big number of jobs;

- Halt the exodus of the population from the rural suburban areas;
- Promoting cultural values in the European multicultural landscape by using various expression means: music, language, architecture, painting, archeology etc.

All the ongoing projects „process” in depth the urban space, having as goal, besides the optimum use of infrastructure and rising the quality of life, the recovery of the urban image. Ultimately, this must be transformed into a branding strategy. The following question could be asked: „what interesting fact could be told about Bucharest?” The problem is much more complex, just because of all the varied answers. Although cities like Amsterdam and Budapest have encountered obstacles in defining a brand because of all the numerous positive aspects that could not be integrated into a brand, a city like Bucharest, with a polemical internal and external image has to confront with even more difficulties. How can reality be accurately illustrated without denying the disadvantages and without „shading” the urban qualities? The diversity of angles in which an answer can be looked at: city of culture, tourism city, city of architectural confrontation, city of political regimes, welcoming city, city of contrasts, „live” city.

Bucharest's brand will be unitary and diverse; a small city reported to the European competition, it will surprise by its ambition; the city „fallen” in communism will succeed to rebirth, sustained by a brand that will feed through the urban regeneration initiatives and projects. Bucharest is unique because it is itself; it does not try to copy and just the absence of a tendency to disillusion the target public will be an ingredient for the recipe of success.

It is good to mention the fact that there does not exist a universal recipe for urban branding, being a complex and personalized matter. It is appropriate that the capital's brand be oriented, primary towards people detrimental to the concentration on business itself, on tourism indicators or on the need of constructing a new museum just to demonstrate the status of “city of culture”. It must improve social involvement through citizens' active participation (whether they are tourists, residents or businessmen) to urban life, this phenomenon being translated into subsequently positive economic results. For example, researchers will agree to come and work in the city if they find strong motivations here: a high quality of life, an adequate educational system for their children, an effective health system, etc. Thus, the chemistry is complete only when the brand's impact is felt at all levels, when all the residents' needs are fulfilled, because **people are the ones that build the city**.

In conclusion, Bucharest's brand will be a success if it is capable of differentiating from others, if it makes a valuable undertaking and then fulfills it and if it succeeds in facilitating the choice process for the potential buyers [3]. The brand cannot worth more than a logo or a piece of paper if it is not adopted, supported and maintained by the city's stakeholders. This proves the fact that it is being built at every contact point between the clients and the city [15]. Each and every one of

these critical contact points have a vital role in building and transmitting the experience promised by the brand.

Creating a brand that would set apart from the competition, satisfy the citizen's needs and gain the local stakeholders' support involves patience, vision, collaboration and strategic perspective. A successful approach of the brand should combine the message's consistence and the community partners' collaboration through the marketing efforts. Today, a positive identity of the brand is no longer an option. A city that is not proactively involved into a branding process may be automatically positioned on the market at a disadvantage by competitors and the media. It requires the development of a comprehensive strategy that goes beyond the superficiality (or shallowness) of a logo or an advertisement.

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- Ruxandra-Irina Popescu** obtained her PhD title in management in 2005, within the Academy of Economic Studies, Romania. She has a bachelor degree in Management (1999) and a master degree in Strategic marketing (2009).
- She is a Lecturer within the Faculty of Administration and Public Management (Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies) and performs a postdoctoral stage within the program „Performance and excellence in postdoctoral research in Romanian economics science domain”, coordinated by Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies. Her current research interests are related to urban marketing, brand and competitive urban systems.
- Dr. Popescu is also member of the a Regional Science Association International.
- Răzvan-Andrei Corboș** obtained his PhD title in management in 2005, within the Academy of Economic Studies, Romania. He has a bachelor degree in Management (2000) and a master in Organization Management in the European Union integration context (2002).

He is a Teaching Assistant within the Faculty of Management (Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies) and performs a postdoctoral stage within the program „Performance and excellence in postdoctoral research in Romanian economics science domain”, coordinated by Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies. His current research interests are related to strategic diagnosis of organization and sales management.