

CITY BRANDING STRATEGY ON THE EXAMPLE OF BIELSKO-BIAŁA. SELECTED ASPECTS MANAGEMENT OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR DETERMINING THE DIRECTIONS OF DEVELOPMENT (YOUNG GENERATIONS)

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Purpose: The aim of the article is to present the direction of development of the brand of Bielsko-Biala in selected areas in the coming years, with particular emphasis on research conducted among high school students.

Design/methodology/approach: Own analysis of the strategy report of the city of Bielsko-Biala, analysis of literature on building the city's image and strategy, and local survey research in the city of Bielsko-Biala using a questionnaire available online.

Findings: Thanks to the conducted research, it is possible to identify the needs and expectations of students from Bielsko-Biala related to the development strategy of the city's cultural offer, as well as public transport.

Research limitations/implications: The research has been limited to data obtained from a single source and limited resources (selected group of respondents), hence future research can be extended to different levels and theoretical areas. It is important to conduct further research in this area to increase their universality.

Originality/value: research paper.

Keywords: city strategy, development management, industry, culture management, sustainability, brand strategy.

Introduction

The subject of consideration is the relationship between the processes of building the city's strategy and the offer addressed to young people (students). The starting point is the belief that a city is a brand that manages the processes taking place in various urban areas in the way it organizes and uses space (Żmijowska, 2021). Due to the limitations of the size of the publication and the selected area of consideration, the issues in the article have been presented in a synthetic way.

Cities in Poland are currently undergoing intensive changes in various areas, including demographic ones. This is the result of transformations taking place as part of the second demographic transition that began in Poland in the early 1990s (Kotowska, 1998, p. 3; Kotowska, 1999, p. 279). For the contemporary shape of the social space of cities, the processes shaping the economic and relational reality remain important. Some of the processes are related to the general changes that are taking place in the world, while others are the result of local factors that build a given region and its specific conditions. What is a city today and how can it be understood? Marc Gottdiener and Lesley Budd, in a dictionary of terms related to urban studies, define a city as "delineated by the boundaries a space that is densely populated by a relatively large, diverse area cultural population" (Gottdiener, Budd, 2005, p. 4). Another perspective, which emphasizes the importance of the relationship between the city's stakeholders and its urban processes, is presented by Wallis. He claims that "The city is composed of two organically linked, but autonomous subsystems - urban and social" (Wallis, 1990, p. 45). The scientist also claims that there are regulatory mechanisms that can affect the stabilization of both the urban and social systems: "These mechanisms are based on two processes - on learning and evaluating individual city spaces. They are the basis for making decisions about spatial behaviour, i.e. decisions determining the deliberately directed ways of using the city and the ways of shaping it. These processes take place at the level of an individual, a small group and a large community. Thanks to this, we are dealing with the rationalization of social spatial behavior in the city" (Wallis, 1990, p. 47). Analyzing the words of the scientist, it can be seen that he pays special attention to the functional evaluation of the city, and the individual (inhabitant or person staying in the city) becomes the main actor for whom and through whom these processes take place.

Another very important element for the functioning of cities is their metropolisation. Contemporary socio-economic changes transform cities in a special way in all dimensions: social, economic, cultural and spatial. What is important for metropolisation is the transformation of the functions of cities, and thus the departure from the production offer in favor of services, as well as the creation and distribution of cultural values (Jałowicki, 2005, p. 5). The process of metropolisation is associated with cognitive and cultural capitalism, which Allen J. Scott described as characteristic of developed urbanized areas. It is based on accumulating capital in such values as knowledge and culture, where human creativity is the core of development, and it is supported by the development of digital technologies (Ratajczak, 2015).

Shrinking of urban areas is also a frequently noticed phenomenon in agglomerations. Many studies have analyzed its causes and transitions, especially in the United States. This phenomenon is perceived as a natural process of the city, where social changes result from the life cycle (Lang, 2000) and the history of cities (Beauregard, 2003). The negative spiral of development is shown in Fig. 1.

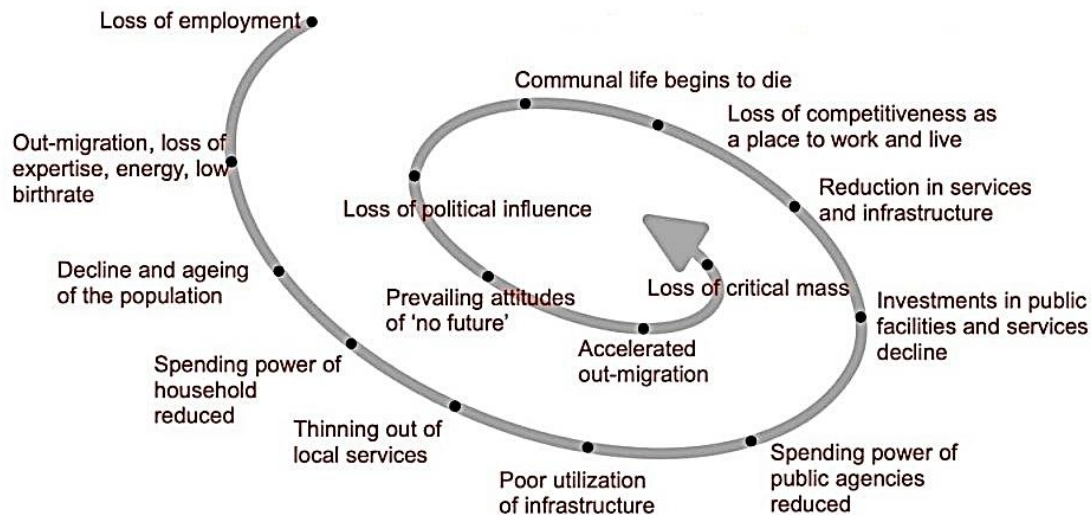


Figure 1. Negative development spiral.

Source: Weber, 2011.

The presented process is a sequence of multiple negative feedbacks. The spiral of negative development is a regression scenario as a result of a decrease in the number of inhabitants, which in relation to this article may also be associated with the departure of young inhabitants of the city (students who go to study or in search of work). With the increase in the "outflow of residents", the city loses the "critical mass" necessary for its functioning. In the further part of the article, especially in the methodological part, some needs and expectations of young residents of the city of Bielsko-Biała will be presented on the basis of the conducted research. However, as can be seen from the spiral of negative development, the problems of city dwellers often boil down to unsatisfactory conditions life, shortage of jobs, or inability to meet high life expectations. On the basis of research by G. Weber (2006, 2008, 2011a, 2011b, 2012), it is possible to distinguish individual phases related to the functioning of agglomerations:

- Phase 1 - population outflow (decrease in know-how and activity).
- Phase 2 - regression of the local economy (lack of development and investment).
- Phase 3 - collapse of social life (lack of investment, e.g. in culture).
- Phase 4 - final migration (intensive migration, especially of young residents).
- Phase 5 - fall of the "critical mass" (point of no return).

The potential of cities is related not only to the number of (active) inhabitants, but also to the strategy of its development, which should include important assumptions in order to meet the most important needs in terms of the quality of life, i.e.: obtaining education, professional development and work, and spending free time.

Brand of the city: for the young

Each city is an individual brand that should take into account building its own development strategy. The brand strategy defines, above all, long-term goals that are consistent with its activities and specifies the resources necessary to achieve specific goals and processes (Burnes, 2004, p. 2111). Strategy is also a concept of activity (Robert, 2006, p. 94) and the way in which a given brand builds value for its stakeholders (Kaplan, Norton, 2011, pp. 22-23).

The city's brand creates its own image, which can be described as place branding. The value of the city is built through its reputation, i.e. positive management of the image of the place. According to Anholt, the reputation of a place, thanks to an appropriate city branding strategy, relates primarily to its "competitiveness". The researcher distinguished the main directions in this area (Anholt, 2007):

- 1) Advanced economy.
- 2) Attractive environment.
- 3) Effective management.

The competitiveness mentioned in the previous sections is related to the rivalry of cities on local, national and international markets. It is crucial for the development and potential of cities not only to maintain and consolidate current relations with their stakeholders, but also to gain new influence (tourists, entrepreneurs, investors, visitors, new residents). For this reason, cities often decide to take proactive actions to build their image. A brand is primarily a relationship, which has a particular impact on the public sector, where the stakeholder's contact with the public administration of a given agglomeration remains important.

It is particularly important to look at the young generation, which is now the future of every city. New actors are entering the city scene, also in Bielsko-Biała. This is the Zalph generation (children born in 1999-2015), also known as the crisis microgeneration. According to research (Zalpa, 2023), Zalpha was created at the junction of two generations - the Z generation (1995-2012) and the Alpha generation (born after 2013). The shared experiences of this generation have shaped times of uncertainty, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. The Zalpha generation doesn't know the difference between the digital and the real world, but that doesn't mean they don't want to participate. The micro-crisis generation needs space in which it can be effective and experience. These needs are probably due to the fact that although Zalphs feel they are a lonely generation (a consequence of times of uncertainty, including lockdown), issues of the natural environment or social responsibility are important to them. „Research shows that 46% of teenagers say they are interested in climate issues: climate change or the state of the environment” (Zalpa, 2023). Taking into account the needs and expectations of the young generation, in 2020 the first *Program for young people* was created in Bielsko-Biała, containing proposals for actions in selected areas in the context of the city's depopulation trend. The program was a response to the diagnosed needs and problems of young people, which

were verified thanks to the research report on the needs and situation of young people in Bielsko-Biała in 2019. The trend of depopulation of cities is increasing. For example, in 2008, 38,663 young people in the 15-29 age group lived in Bielsko-Biała, and ten years later, in 2018, this number was 25,208 (GUS). The most important conclusions from the diagnosis of the study are primarily those concerning the location of the city. Young people positively assess the city of Bielsko-Biała in terms of its compactness and proximity to the mountains. However, issues related to education pathways, labor markets and housing opportunities are insufficient and make it difficult to plan for the future. The respondents also pointed to problems related to public transport and the lack of a program offer addressed to specific groups of residents. It is important, however, that despite highlighting the city's weaknesses, the research also brought suggestions for improving the current situation. One of them is a large percentage of people declaring their willingness to combine work and study already in secondary school, which is conducive to building their „base” (social sphere) here and creates a strong barrier against leaving for other urban centres (Program for young people, 2020).

Methods and Results¹

In 2022, another study was conducted in Bielsko-Biała, this time related to the experiences and expectations of high school students (not necessarily in relation to the depopulation trend). The survey was conducted using a questionnaire available online from December 19, 2022 to January 15, 2023. The online survey was developed by councilors of secondary schools in Bielsko-Biała, in cooperation with a team of sociology students of the University of Bielsko-Biała: Dawid Wawrzuta, Katarzyna Piela, Wiktoria Cebula, Gabriela Podgórska, Damian Kierczak, Dominika Ryłko, Kasjan Górski, Karol Soj, Julia Radoń, Paulina Wiewióra, Klaudia Tyran, Jakub Śliwka under the supervision of Dr. Joanna Wróblewska-Jachna (substantive research coordinator). Representatives of the Youth City Council of Bielsko-Biała (main lecturer: Filip Macuda) and Dr. Paulina Żmijowska (operational research coordinator) also participated in the development of the research. The aim of the research was to collect information from young people and high school students in Bielsko-Biała in several thematic areas: culture, public transport, experience of various forms of violence, expectations and perception of the activities of the Youth City Council in Bielsko-Biała. Thanks to the distribution of the questionnaire by the councilors of the Youth City Council of Bielsko-Biała, 801 responses were collected. The questionnaires were distributed via social media channels and with the support of the Department of Education and Sport of the Bielsko-Biała City Hall

¹ The materials presented in this section come from the students' report and the substantive coordinator.

(mobiDziennik). The survey used open-ended questions (giving respondents the freedom to answer) and closed questions. The collected quantitative and qualitative data enable:

- Identification of the needs and expectations of students from Bielsko-Biała towards municipal services, taking into account the city's cultural offer, as well as public transport.
- Recognize young people's experience of personal security as well as identify forms of violence and discrimination.
- Awareness of the scope of activities and activities of the Youth City Council of Bielsko-Biała among high school students.
- Identification of students' expectations in relation to the activities of the councilors of the Youth City Council (who are their representatives).

Among the respondents in the study group, women predominated 54.4%, men 39.2%, people choosing the answer "other" accounted for 4.2%. Among the answers, 0.6% of people identify themselves as Genderfluid, while non-binary people accounted for 1.5%. The largest group of respondents were people living in Bielsko-Biała. As many as 48.7%, 36.8% of students (671 answers) commute to school from the Bielsk powiat, 4.7% from the Żywiec powiat (37 answers), and 3.6% from the Cieszyn powiat (28 answers). A much smaller group lives in the country Oświęcim 1.9%. Students living in the counties of Pszczyna, Wadowice, Warsaw, Katowice and Gliwice also took part in the study (the sum of such indications is 4.3% of responses, 34 answers). The overall percentage distribution of responses is shown in Fig. 2.

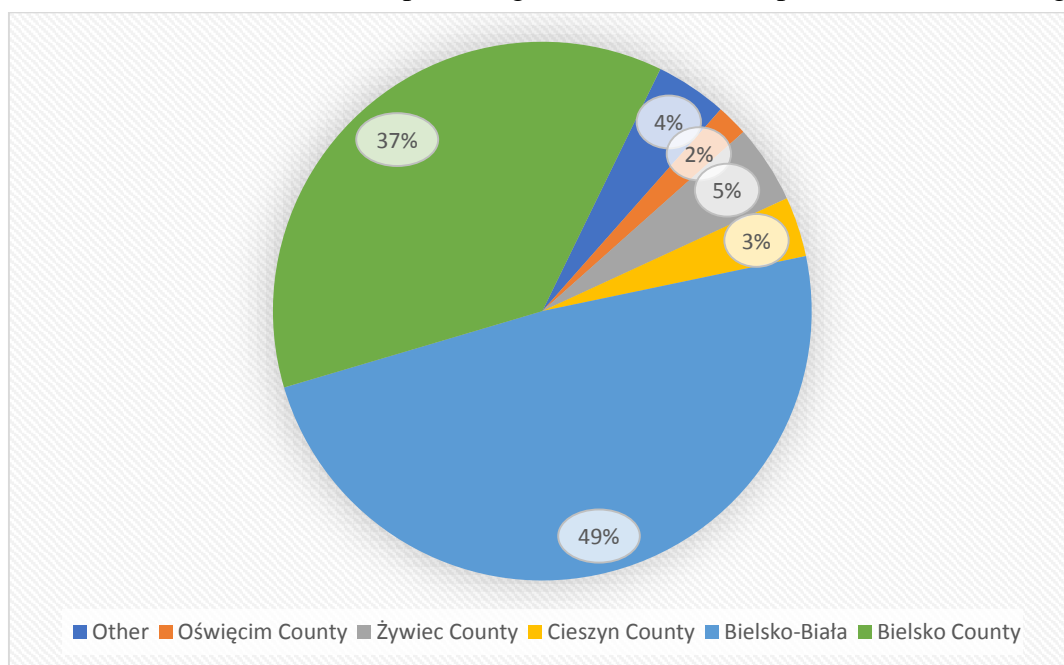


Figure 2. Place of residence of the surveyed students.

Source: Own based on an original research report.

The cultural sector is the area that strongly influences the experiences of young people and their involvement in the social life of the city, which is why it is worth briefly discussing these results. Respondents indicated their expectations regarding the cultural offer and sports events. Factors encouraging young people to participate in cultural events organized in Bielsko-Biała include:

- costs of participation in events: free admission (58.9%), low prices (34.3%),
- opportunity to spend time with family and/or friends (56%),
- famous artists (42.2%),
- attractive furnishings of the place (25.9%),
- convenient access (25%).

It is also worth emphasizing that the students assessed the city's cultural offer from their point of view using a 5-point scale, enabling identification of the degree of satisfaction. The overall rating is moderately positive.

Less than half of the respondents evaluate the offer as positive (definitely 4.1%, rather agree. agree 38.5%). A less numerous group gave a negative assessment (6.8% strongly disagree, 23.3% rather disagree). No opinion on the subject 27.4%. Most respondents believe that there is a lack of musical events in Bielsko-Biała, a much smaller number of indications concern sports, integration and cultural events.

Another interesting issue is the issue of obtaining information by students. According to the collected responses, these are:

- social networks 73.2%,
- posters, banners 40.6%,
- local press 4.7%,
- brochure leaflets 9.9%,
- radio 20.1%,
- family/friends 65.2%,
- school 0.5%.

In this part of the research on the participation of young people in cultural events, answers regarding participation in cultural events in Bielsko-Biała and in other places should also be provided. In Bielsko-Biała, the surveyed students participate in cultural events several times a year (46%) or once a year (25%). A small group uses it very intensively, i.e. at least once a month (5%). 21% of the surveyed students do not use it, 25% did not answer. In other places, respondents take part in cultural events several times a year (38%), once a year (26%), not at all (25%). 6% of respondents did not answer. The data are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.
Participation in cultural events

Frequency of participation	Bielsko-Biała	Other localities
several times a year	46%	38%
once a year	25%	26%
once a month	5%	-
not use	21%	25%
not answer	25%	6%

Source: Own based on the report.

As already mentioned, the report covered many issues, however, the main emphasis in the article was on participation in culture and the management of this sector in the city. This information is also important because the city of Bielsko-Biała is a candidate for the title of the European Capital of Culture², and the activities are carried out in many sectors. The conclusions of the extensive report prepared on the basis of the study also show that topics such as ecology, mental health, efficient public transport and broadly understood accessibility are important for young people. The new generation is more and more aware of the changes taking place in the city space and also puts emphasis on being able to be causative.

Conclusion

Cities go through certain development cycles, and in the long term, strong urban centers evolve: they transform from spatially separated cities, through extensive agglomerations, conurbations and metropolises, to multi-centre urban megaregions, which can be called megalopolises (Wróblewska-Jachna, 2012, 2021). An important resource for every city is cultural capital (which is a social element), which affects the experience of space and the ways of experiencing the world and reacting to social reality. Significant factors affecting the social condition of the city include the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, economic crises, the war in Ukraine and climate change. Many changes in the city's development are possible thanks to the use of exogenous factors that give direction to building the city's fabric and affect the intergenerational dialogue. An important sector of development, primarily aimed at the young generation, is culture. It is worth noting that since 2015, an increase in the number of entities classified as cultural and creative industries has been recorded annually. In 2021, the growth rate was higher than in previous years - the number of entities increased by 8.8% and amounted to 135.0 thousand. Entities classified as cultural and creative industries accounted for 5.7% of all non-financial enterprises, as shown in Fig. 3.

² More: www.bb2029.com.

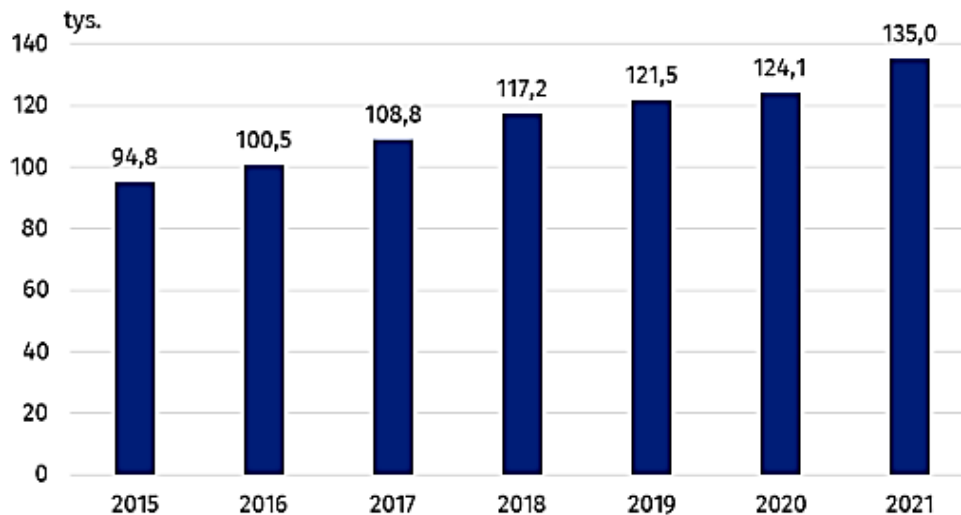


Figure 3. Number of entities classified as cultural and creative industries.

Source: GUS - Cultural and creative industries in 2021, 2023.

In the years 2015-2021, the share of entities in the field of visual arts in the total number of entities classified as cultural and creative industries almost doubled, while the share of entities operating in the field of books and press decreased by more than half (GUS - Cultural and creative industries in 2021, 2023). These data are important from the point of view of creating a city brand strategy and building new communication platforms with young recipients. They are identical to the responses of respondents who search for the most information about culture in social media, i.e. on visual and image platforms. In addition, the study showed that participation in culture is still a difficult topic due to budget constraints of young people, difficulties related to public transport and lack of activity in this area due to lack of participation. It should be noted, however, that in Bielsko-Biała, thanks to its own work on the preparation of a development strategy through culture and social consultations, there is a clear change in the perception of the role of culture and the opportunities resulting from it, which are used by beneficiaries, such as current residents, external guests or entrepreneurs. An important aspect is the intersectoral cooperation of the city's cognitive and cultural economy, thanks to which the processes that build the social capital of each urban agglomeration can develop.

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