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Fostering Creativity: Unveiling Kanazawa's Brand as a Creative City

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Abstract

The concept of creative cities has gained prominence as urban centers strive to harness cultural heritage and innovation for economic and social growth. This study critically analyzes the branding of Kanazawa as a creative city, exploring the intricate interplay between preserving its historical traditions and fostering a modern, innovative identity. Drawing on a multi-dimensional approach, this research qualitatively examines the challenges and opportunities inherent in branding Kanazawa as a dynamic hub of creativity. Through a comprehensive review of the literature and empirical insights, the study delves into the complexities of branding strategies, investigating how Kanazawa's rich cultural heritage, including traditional crafts and historical landmarks, contributes to its creative identity. The analysis explores the significance of positioning the city as an artistic nucleus while ensuring that embracing contemporary creative expressions remains central to its branding narrative. Furthermore, this research critically addresses the potential gentrification effect of heightened creative branding. The study examines strategies to mitigate displacement and ensure inclusive growth that benefits local communities. In conclusion, this research comprehensively explores branding Kanazawa as a creative city, highlighting the intricacies of balancing tradition and innovation. By addressing these complexities, Kanazawa can harness its unique attributes to establish a genuinely impactful and enduring creative city brand.

Keywords: Creative City, City Branding, Kanazawa

1. Introduction

The notion of creative cities has garnered substantial recognition and momentum in recent decades as metropolitan areas worldwide acknowledge the possibility of utilizing creativity and culture as catalysts for economic expansion and societal progress (Landry, 2012). Creative cities, commonly known as centers of innovation and cultural manifestation, have arisen as vibrant environments that promote cooperation, artistic pursuits, and entrepreneurial activities (Prayudi et al., 2022). This scholarly introduction explores the

development of creative cities, elucidating their role in enhancing the economic prosperity of creative industries within urban environments.

The emergence of creative cities can be attributed to the latter half of the 20th century, during which urban thinkers and politicians recognized the insufficiency of traditional economic sectors in sustaining metropolitan prosperity. The recognition of the importance of creativity, culture, and innovation in fostering economic resilience and competitiveness was motivated by a shift toward knowledge-based economies (Prayudi et al., 2023). Consequently, numerous urban areas established their identity as hubs of creativity, using their distinctive cultural heritage, vibrant arts community, and intellectual resources.

The fundamental premise underlying the notion of creative cities is the recognition that they function as fertile environments for cultivating and developing the creative economy. The creative economy covers various industries, including arts, design, media, technology, fashion, cuisine, and architecture (Prayudi et al., 2017). These businesses are interconnected to create a dynamic ecology where artistic expression and economic sustainability intersect. Creative cities serve as the foundational framework and catalyst for the growth and prosperity of creative individuals and enterprises, thereby engendering economic prosperity, cultural vibrancy, and social advancement.

The multifaceted nature of the economic prosperity generated by creative economy entities within creative urban centers is evident. From a financial perspective, these organizations play a significant role in fostering job creation, facilitating the expansion of small businesses, and infusing local economies with additional money. Tourist attractions can draw visitors who are interested in distinctive cultural encounters, thereby enhancing the city's prominence on an international scale. Additionally, including creative economy collectives enhances the overall well-being of individuals, cultivating a solid feeling of community, identity, and multiculturalism. This phenomenon creates a positive feedback loop in which creativity catalyzes economic expansion while economic prosperity fosters additional innovation (Moțcanu-Dumitrescu, 2017).

Therefore, it is imperative to critically examine the ramifications associated with branding and the cultivation of creative cities. The phenomenon of gentrification, coupled with the escalation of living expenses, frequently results in the displacement of indigenous people and the erosion of the distinctive cultural fabric that first drew creative individuals to an area. The task of reconciling economic expansion with social fairness and the preservation of identity poses a significant challenge for numerous creative cities.

The creative city concept has recently been proposed in Japan as a strategic urban planning tool that promises to address social and economic challenges associated with urban areas. This approach to urban planning innovation in Japan diverges from past methodologies by prioritizing culture, namely the creative arts, as opposed to science and technology. Cities facing challenges related to ongoing globalization, economic stagnation, and depopulation find this approach highly appealing (Kakiuchi, 2016).

Kanazawa in Japan joined UNESCO's creative city network in 2009. Kanazawa is widely acknowledged as a City of Crafts and Folk Arts due to the significant impact of the samurai and their way of life on the local culture, resulting in the proliferation of numerous artisan workshops. Crafts and the culture impacted by the samurai continue to hold significant relevance in the daily lives of the populace. Historically, the feudal lords of Japan extended invitations to proficient artisans hailing from Kyoto and Edo (presently known as Tokyo) to bring craft techniques that harmoniously blended the dynamic aspects of their culture with the refined elegance associated with the samurai. The unique nature of Kanazawa's crafts stems from the combination mentioned.

In contemporary society, numerous domains of artisanal craftsmanship persist, playing a pivotal role in enhancing the quality of individuals' everyday experiences. Several examples of traditional Japanese craftsmanship can be observed, such as the kaga-yuzen silk dyeing technique, which continues to be employed in producing kimonos. Using gold leaf and lacquer ware also exemplifies other notable Japanese artisanal practices. Local artisans seek to collaborate with other creative disciplines to integrate conventional craftsmanship with

novel ideas and emerging technologies. The creative economy in Kanazawa is propelled by a discerning consumer market, cultural investments, and the local population's affinity for artisanal craftsmanship.

In contemporary society, numerous domains of craftsmanship persist and have made substantial contributions toward enhancing the quality of individuals' everyday experiences. Several examples of traditional Japanese craftsmanship can be observed, such as the kaga-yuzen silk dyeing technique, which continues to be employed in producing kimonos. Using gold leaf and lacquer ware also exemplifies other notable Japanese artisanal practices. Cities play a pivotal role in the development strategy of a nation. A city facilitates the mobility, innovation, and creativity of its citizens. Evans and Shaw (2004) and Malcolm (2005) have asserted that cities have significantly invested in their infrastructure, culture, and creative economy throughout the preceding two decades. The arts have catalyzed the revival of metropolitan areas. Scott (2004) provides commentary on the economic growth of a city. However, according to Comunian and Gilmore (Comunian & Gilmore, 2018), allocating resources toward creative economies has created a novel form of urban rivalry among cities. The concept of the creative economy and its relationship with urban areas was initially introduced by Landry and Bianchini (1995).

Based on an analysis of scholarly literature, three primary perspectives on the definitions of creative cities may be identified.

- a. Creativity is the primary catalyst for urban development in creative cities. Creative cities are commonly seen as urban areas that effectively devise innovative approaches to address various challenges, such as transportation issues and environmental conservation. According to Landry (2006), the primary strategies for enhancing competitiveness in creative cities involve preserving a creative atmosphere and implementing effective city management practices.
- b. Creative cities encompass the utilization of creative industries and the implementation of creative activities. This notion exhibits a close correlation with the creative industries. Creativity is employed in this context to generate cultural goods and services. Strategies aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of creative cities encompass various measures, such as implementing targeted territorial modifications and undertaking political initiatives that prioritize the development of cultural and creative endeavors. These actions are crucial in shaping a city's overall quality of life, vitality, and competitiveness (Pratt, 2008).
- c. Creative cities are urban areas that strive to recruit and retain highly skilled individuals, often known as human capital. The notion of creative cities is founded on the premise that these places can attract persons with high qualifications and innovation, sometimes called the creative class. Hence, the creativity of a city that aspires to be recognized as creative is contingent upon its capacity to cultivate, retain, and allure a creative cohort, including individuals endowed with the requisite knowledge and abilities to engender supplementary value and enhance economic competitiveness (Florida, 2002).

Branding the city is considered a strategic endeavor to cultivate the city's competitive edge. Presently, it is the foremost focal point and a pressing necessity. The concept of branding may be understood as the representation of a city, which enhances the city's visual appeal, attractiveness, and lasting impression on individuals. Consequently, this branding strategy aims to attract city visitors, increasing tourism (Prayudi & Herastuti, 2018). The necessity of establishing a localized brand will lead to a solid regional positioning, particularly within the global tourism sector. Active participation of local governments and stakeholders is crucial in the process of city branding in order to successfully package cities and regions. This encompasses the various components, such as the physical infrastructure, the level of preparation among the populace, and the distinctive amenities or characteristics that delineate the city or region. Table 1 shows some creative cities that use their identity as the city brand.

Table 1: Creative Cities and City Branding

Creative City	Location	Identity Development
Barcelona, Spain	Europe	Barcelona is a hub for art, architecture, and design. The city's distinctive architectural landmarks, like Gaudi's Sagrada Familia and Park Güell, contribute to its unique identity. It leveraged its cultural heritage and modernist influences to establish itself as a global creative capital.
Melbourne, Australia	Oceania	Melbourne has cultivated a vibrant arts and music scene, positioning

		itself as the cultural capital of Australia. Its laneways are adorned with street art, and many galleries and festivals have contributed to a unique artistic identity that attracts residents and tourists.
Portland, USA	North America	Known for its eco-consciousness and independent creative spirit, Portland has branded itself as a hub for sustainable living, craft breweries, and artisanal food. The city's emphasis on local businesses, community engagement, and unique urban planning has solidified its distinct identity.
Seoul, South Korea	Asia	Seoul's blend of traditional heritage and cutting-edge technology has fostered an identity as a center of innovation and pop culture. It's recognized for its K-pop phenomenon, modern architecture, and thriving tech industry. The city has embraced both its historical roots and its futuristic aspirations.
Cape Town, South Africa	Africa	Cape Town showcases its identity through a fusion of rich history, stunning natural landscapes, and diverse cultures. The city's focus on promoting local artists, vibrant markets, and social initiatives contributes to its identity as an inclusive, creative, and socially conscious destination.

There is a lack of precise definitions for city brands and branding ideas. According to Kavaratzis (2004), cities can be likened to corporate brands due to their complex nature, including several identities, different stakeholders, and social responsibilities. As a result, urban areas have the potential to be promoted in a manner akin to corporate branding strategies. Like items advertised under a unified brand, cities can likewise showcase their unique qualities. For example, a city can be promoted as a desirable location for residence, employment, tourism, and investment (Kavaratzis & Asworth, 2006). In the context of urban policies, the concept of creative cities is frequently examined. The economic and social growth facilitated the implementation of various promotional strategies aimed at revitalizing declining cities (Brzozowska, 2016).

A substantial body of research has been conducted on the creative city. Several studies have examined the transformation of the creative city into a creative space for its residents (Michels et al., 2014; Moçanu-Dumitrescu, 2017), as well as the various actors involved in fostering creativity inside the city (Baum, 2018; Borén & Young, 2017; Konn & Itoh, 2016). Several scholars have directed their attention toward the concept of the creative city, as evidenced by the works of Das (2016), Prilenska (2012), and Vanolo (2015). However, limited research has been conducted on the creative city and its relationship with communication (Foth & Hearn, 2007). This paper examined how Kanazawa identifies and brands itself as a creative city.

2. Method

The present study employed a qualitative research methodology. Qualitative methodologies are employed to address inquiries regarding the encounter, significance, and viewpoint of an occurrence as perceived from the standpoint of the participants (Hammarberg et al., 2016). According to (Guba & Lincoln, 2005), qualitative research can be interpretive and naturalistic. This implies that researchers focus on observing and analyzing phenomena inside their authentic ecological setting (Prayudi et al., 2021).

This study utilizes a case study approach, as described by (Cavus & Juma'h, 2001), which is a research methodology that aims to comprehend the intricacies inside individual contexts. The study conducts a comprehensive scientific investigation of real-life phenomena, considering their environmental context (Ridder, 2017). Case studies can encompass singular or multiple cases and various levels of analysis. One primary objective of this study methodology is to provide a comprehensive depiction (Pinfield, 1986).

The present study employed various research methods, including in-depth interviews, literature reviews, focus group discussions, and participatory data-gathering techniques. The primary objective of the data collection process was to examine how Kanazawa had branded itself as a creative city. The study subsequently presented a communication paradigm for the creation of creative cities.

3. Result

3.1 Kanazawa as Creative City

Ishikawa Prefecture is home to the city of Kanazawa, which sits on the westernmost coast of Honshu, the largest island in Japan. Since the Edo period (1603-1868), when it was the capital of the Kaga Domain, it has had a long and illustrious history as a center of cultural and creative activity. This history dates back to the Edo period. A piece of writing published in the *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* states, "Kanazawa has a rich and diverse cultural heritage, which is reflected in its traditional crafts, architecture, and festivals." Gold leaf, manufactured in Kanazawa for over 400 years and used in traditional crafts such as Kaga Yuzen dyeing and Kutani porcelain, is one of the city's most well-known cultural assets. It is also one of the city's most valuable cultural assets.

Kanazawa is known for its traditional handicrafts but is also home to several notable cultural institutions, such as the Ishikawa Prefectural Museum of Art and the Kanazawa 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art. The city's position as a prominent hub for contemporary art and design is mainly due to the presence of various galleries, artist studios, and museums.

In 2009, UNESCO recognized Kanazawa as one of 180 Creative Cities in the Crafts and Fine Arts field. This recognition confirms Kanazawa's status as a city contributing to healing and developing traditional arts, crafts, and contemporary art with creative innovation. Kanazawa Creative City UNESCO: "Kanazawa maintains a rich and diverse cultural heritage through the vibrant culture of its people and the craft of arts. The city has also succeeded in embodying traditions with modern innovations through creative approaches in promoting the city as a tourism destination and arts culture."

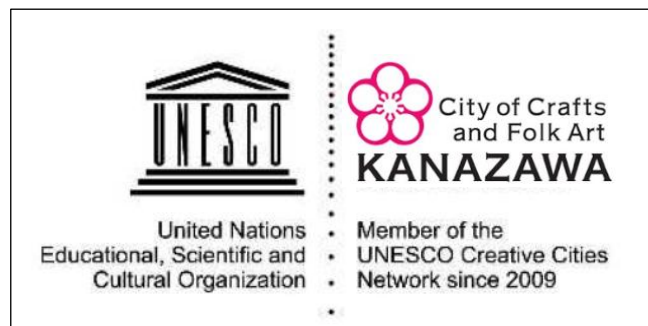


Figure 1: The brand identity of Kanazawa as the creative city of crafts and folk art

Kanazawa is a city rich in cultural heritage, traditional arts, and unique crafts. Recognition by UNESCO as a Creative City strengthens its position as a destination for art, culture, and creativity. Kanazawa's success in blending tradition with modern innovation is an inspiring example of how a city can stay relevant in promoting local wisdom and creativity in the modern era.

In its 2013-2016 report to Unesco (*Kanazawa Creative City of Crafts and Folk Arts, 2016*), the city states its vision: 1. Exploring the Interconnection between Culture and Business. The objective is to manufacture items of significant value by leveraging our traditional crafts and processes. The city seeks to foster manufacturing practices rooted in the artisan spirit and cultivate diverse creative industries capable of penetrating the global market; 2. The Development of Human Resources for Cultural Cultivation. The city aims to foster the growth, collaboration, competition, and exhibition of creativity among the upcoming cohort of manufacturers and young individuals engaged in culture and art. Additionally, the city strives to cultivate a city where inhabitants sincerely appreciate and take pride in their traditional crafts and performing arts. Residents can enhance their quality of life by participating in cultural events while supporting artisans and artists simultaneously; 3. Garnering Global Recognition, Our objective is to foster strong connections between artisans, artists, and individuals in the industry by utilizing the creative cities network as a central platform for international collaboration. We aim to facilitate international conferences that explore various themes, including the future

outlook of cities and local communities in the 21st century, global challenges, and the pursuit of world peace. These conferences will attract participants from both Japan and abroad.

3.2 Branding Kanazawa

Branding Kanazawa as a creative city entails using its abundant cultural legacy, traditional craftsmanship, and scenic splendor to build a distinctive character that resonates with the local populace and tourists. Branding Kanazawa as a creative city necessitates a nuanced approach encompassing preserving heritage, cultivating innovation, and actively involving diverse stakeholders. Through the deliberate emphasis on its distinctive characteristics and the nurturing of a dynamic creative environment, Kanazawa has the potential to establish itself as a renowned international hub that effectively integrates culture, creativity, and community.

The following is a comprehensive outline of the branding approach employed by Kanazawa:

1. **The utilization of cultural heritage:** The historical importance of Kanazawa as a hub for culture and arts serves as a fundamental element in its branding strategy. The city's rich cultural heritage is underscored by its longstanding customs, notable historical landmarks, and enduring craftsmanship, exemplified by the creation of gold leaf, Kaga Yuzen dyeing, and Kutani porcelain, which have been practiced for generations. Kanazawa can be aptly characterized as a location that harmoniously encompasses tradition and innovation. There are three visions of Kanazawa Creative City:
2. **Exhibiting Artistic Merit:** Emphasize the urban locale's modern artistic milieu, encompassing the esteemed Kanazawa 21st Century Museum of Modern Art. Advocate for promoting galleries, studios, and public art installations that exemplify the city's dedication to fostering creativity and facilitating an environment conducive to the flourishing of artists.
3. **Appreciating the Aesthetics of Nature:** Exploit the scenic landscapes of Kanazawa, which are enhanced by its geographical location near the Sea of Japan and the Northern Alps. This urban environment seamlessly integrates with the natural world, providing a distinctive setting conducive to fostering creativity and providing inspiration.
4. **Fostering craftsmanship:** Enhance the reputation of Kanazawa as a center for traditional craftsmanship and innovative practices. The organization aims to promote and sustain the work of skilled artisans by offering educational seminars and facilitating immersive experiences that enable tourists to actively participate in and interact with the local craft traditions of the city. Kanazawa can be positioned as a locale where traditional crafts are not alone conserved but also seamlessly incorporated into contemporary designs.
5. **Advocating for the Promotion of Festivals and Events:** Advocate for promoting cultural events, festivals, and exhibitions commemorating Kanazawa's rich legacy and fostering artistic expression. The Kanazawa Hana-matsuri Festival and Umami-matsuri Food Festival have the potential to draw a wide range of attendees and bolster the city's standing as a vibrant cultural center.
6. **Culinary Excellence:** Emphasize the city's gastronomic landscape, renowned for its abundance of high-quality fish, utilization of locally sourced products, and preservation of traditional Kaga cuisine. This exhibition highlights the amalgamation of gastronomy and artistic expression, further solidifying Kanazawa's distinctiveness as a metropolis where creativity permeates every facet of existence.
7. **Involvement of the Local Community:** Facilitate the participation of local inhabitants in the branding process, thereby cultivating a sense of pride and ownership. Promote synergistic partnerships among creative practitioners, enterprises, and local constituents to foster the conception and implementation of endeavors that authentically embody the distinctive essence of Kanazawa.
8. **Leveraging Digital and Social Media:** Employ digital platforms and social media channels to disseminate the narrative of Kanazawa to a worldwide audience. This presentation aims to showcase visually engaging content, narratives highlighting the work of local artists, and exclusive insights into the creative undertakings of the city.
9. **Sustainable Practices:** Emphasize Kanazawa's dedication to promoting sustainability and practicing responsible tourism. This study highlights several activities that effectively promote environmental stewardship, cultivating a corporate image that appeals to eco-conscious visitors.

10. Ensuring Brand Consistency: It is essential to uphold a unified brand identity throughout many touchpoints, encompassing marketing materials, websites, and signage. Implementing a cohesive visual identity and communications approach will augment recognition and fortify Kanazawa's unique creative city brand.

Many of Kanazawa's festivals and events, such as the Kanazawa Hana-matsuri Festival and the Kanazawa Umami-matsuri Food Festival, have helped to maintain and commemorate the city's rich cultural and artistic traditions. These events draw people from different parts of Japan, which helps the city's economy, which relies heavily on tourism.



Picture 1: The Kanazawa Craft Tourism Project

Source: Kanazawa Creative City of Crafts and Folk Arts. *Unesco Creative City of Crafts 2013-2016 Monitoring Report. (2016)*



Picture 2: Renewal of Kanazawa Utatsuyama Kogei Kobo

Source: Kanazawa Creative City of Crafts and Folk Arts. *Unesco Creative City of Crafts 2013-2016 Monitoring Report. (2016)*

One of the key factors contributing to Kanazawa's success as a creative city is its focus on preserving and promoting traditional culture. The city has long been known for its high-quality craftsmanship and has made efforts to support and revitalize traditional industries such as ceramics, textiles, and paper-making. At the same time, Kanazawa has also embraced innovation and encouraged the development of new creative industries, such as design and digital media.

Another strength of Kanazawa as a creative city is its high quality of life. The city has a relatively low cost of living compared to other major urban centers in Japan and is surrounded by natural beauty, including the Sea of Japan and the Northern Alps. This combination of cultural richness and livability has attracted a diverse and talented pool of artists, entrepreneurs, and creative professionals. Overall, Kanazawa's long history as a cultural and artistic hub and its rich legacy and contemporary creative environment make it a one-of-a-kind and desirable destination for tourists and inhabitants. Kanazawa has a long history as a cultural and artistic hub.

4. Discussion

Positioning Kanazawa as a creative city is unquestionably a deliberate and calculated initiative that promises to generate substantial economic, cultural, and social advantages. Nevertheless, a comprehensive examination demonstrates that this branding endeavor must effectively negotiate a multifaceted terrain of obstacles and factors to guarantee its triumph and long-term viability. One of the key obstacles in establishing Kanazawa as a creative city involves maintaining its abundant historical and cultural legacy while cultivating a contemporary and inventive image. The historical significance of Kanazawa as a hub for traditional craftsmanship, particularly in the realm of gold leaf manufacture and other time-honored skills, is a highly esteemed asset. However, a

potential risk occurs when an excessive focus on tradition limits the city's capacity to adapt and accept modern forms of creation. In order to address this issue, it is recommended that branding initiatives promote a dynamic interaction between tradition and innovation, wherein the emphasis is placed on honoring heritage while simultaneously cultivating an atmosphere that embraces experimentation and novel manifestations of creativity.

In addition, it is imperative to examine the potential impact of gentrification thoroughly. The increasing recognition of Kanazawa's creative standing has resulted in a rise in the number of tourists, artists, and entrepreneurs attracted to the city's creative environment. Consequently, this influx can contribute to an escalation in property prices and the overall cost of living. This poses a potential challenge to the fundamental honesty that contributes to the popularity of Kanazawa. It is imperative for branding strategies to place a high priority on inclusive development, thereby guaranteeing that local populations are not subjected to marginalization and that economic advantages are distributed fairly and equitably.

The effectiveness of establishing Kanazawa as a creative city is contingent upon fostering a bona fide sense of communal ownership. Although official branding campaigns are crucial, a creative city's authentic spirit originates from its inhabitants' grassroots initiatives. This necessitates the active participation, cooperation, and cultivation of indigenous artistic abilities. Creating a conducive atmosphere wherein artists, craftspeople, entrepreneurs, and citizens are empowered to actively contribute to shaping the city's creative narrative will likely result in a more genuine and enduring brand identity.

Furthermore, the intricate dilemma of reconciling consumerism and cultural integrity necessitates meticulous deliberation. In its pursuit of establishing itself as a creative center, Kanazawa faces the risk of commercialization, whereby cultural elements are transformed into commodities for financial gain. This process can potentially diminish the richness and genuineness of Kanazawa's creative identity. Achieving a harmonious equilibrium between fostering economic growth and safeguarding a city's intrinsic cultural identity is paramount to prevent the city's transformation into a superficial representation only driven by commercial interests.

Finally, it is essential to critically examine the impact of technology and digital platforms on the branding of Kanazawa. Although digital outreach has the potential to increase awareness and accessibility, there is a concern that an over-dependence on technology may diminish the tangible and experiential aspects of the creative offerings inside the city. It is crucial to ensure that the digital depiction accurately captures the actual sensations that Kanazawa provides.

In summary, branding Kanazawa as a creative city encompasses various aspects and holds significant potential in stimulating economic expansion, enriching cultural vibrancy, and cultivating a thriving creative community. Nevertheless, conducting a thorough examination that highlights the significance of effectively handling the conflict between tradition and innovation, advocating for diversity, encouraging community involvement, safeguarding against commercialization, and maintaining a balance between digital outreach and genuine experiences is crucial. By acknowledging and analyzing these intricate factors, Kanazawa may effectively manage the difficulties and utilize its distinctive characteristics to develop a highly influential and long-lasting reputation as a creative city.

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