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FOCUSING A CITY BRANDING STRATEGY ON A LUMINARY: A CASE STUDY OF TREBINJE AND JOVAN DUČIĆ

Abstract

Trebinje is a city with a rich cultural and historical heritage associated with influential historical figures who have played a role in its physical construction and contributed to its identity. Legends about these people are a part of the city's rich intangible cultural heritage and they can provide a solid basis for city branding.

This paper examines the possibilities of using a renowned person – more specifically, the poet, diplomat, art collector and patron Jovan Dučić – for branding Trebinje. The focus of the study is the tangible and intangible heritage associated with Jovan Dučić and covering all the crucial aspects of focusing the city branding strategy on a luminary.

Keywords: city branding, Jovan Dučić, Trebinje

КОРИШЋЕЊЕ ПОЗНАТИХ ЛИЧНОСТИ У СТРАТЕГИЈИ: БРЕНДИРАЊА ГРАДА – ПРИМЈЕР ЈОВАНА ДУЧИЋА У ТРЕБИЊУ

Сажетак

Требиње је град богатог културно историјског наслеђа који се повезује са значајним историјским личностима које су допринијеле како његовој физичкој изградњи, тако формирању његовог идентитета. Легенде о овим људима представљају дио богате нематеријалне културне баштине која може бити добра основа за брендирање града.

Овај рад се бави истраживањем могућности коришћења познате личности за брендирање града Требиња на примјеру пјесника Јована Дучића који је такође био дипломата, колекционар умјетничких дјела и добротвор. Истраживањем материјалног и нематеријалног наслеђа везаног за Дучићево име биће приказани сви битни аспекти коришћења познате личности у процесу брендирања мјеста.

Кључне ријечи: брендирање града, Јован Дучић, Требиње

1. INTRODUCTION

City branding has become popular over the last few decades, with increasingly more cities mobilising their resources to become more visible and recognisable in the stiff competition among cities. For that reason, many cities use various branding strategies for their development. Branding strategies may range from reputation-building advertising and promotion to policies aimed at attracting specific industries or target visitor/population groups to comprehensive urban governance strategies [1]. Cities compete in spatial and regional contexts because they can learn from one another and because of the similar tools of the target groups and similarities [1]. According to authors Lu and Ma, many studies focus on branding content, not on subtle city branding strategies. This is no simple task, as cities are complex phenomena that include geographic, economic, social, cultural, and many other elements [2]. As posited by Landry, city making is an art, not a formula.

Trebinje is a medium-sized city in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is located very close to the Adriatic coast, so it has been exposed to Mediterranean influences, which are noticeable in its appearance. At the same time, it has a very rich history and culture, with traces of the past clearly visible in its physical structure. This city has already been recognised as a tourist destination, and with the great number of cultural events it hosts, it is known as a “city of culture”.

Also, Trebinje is known as Jovan Dučić’s birthplace. Dučić was a famous poet, diplomat and art collector who maintained ties with his native town all his life, despite living an exciting and busy life and working in the diplomatic service most of his life. Dučić as a figure has been pivotal to forging Trebinje’s identity as it is. Besides an outstanding poetic oeuvre, he left a rich art collection behind him, which he bequeathed to Trebinje and is now kept at the Museum of Herzegovina.

This paper deals with building a city brand around a famous person and their work and with using their influence for city promotion. It focuses on the city of Trebinje and the Trebinje-born famous poet Jovan Dučić to explore the widest range of aspects of using renowned person in the city branding process.

2. METHODOLOGY

Cultural tourism can be analyzed from economic, tourism, educational, organizational, cultural and other points of view, but the bottom line is that, if we are committed to this concept, we should think about how to put the cultural resources we manage into the function of development [3]. The one of most effective strategies in highlighting of the recognized values of the place is branding. A brand in tourism represents the creation of a destination where something can be experienced [4].

This paper presents a case study which seeks to examine a specific place associated with a public figure in order to discover any consistency and regularities that could be used in place branding, and also to specify all the positive and negative aspects of using a person for place branding.

With regard to branding strategies, three principal categories of city branding have been identified – those revolving around the built environment, famous people and historic events [5]. This paper focuses principally on the famous people category, with the other two ancillary categories, addressed to the extent they can be associated with the renowned person central to the branding process.

3. FOCUSING THE CITY BRANDING STRATEGY ON A RENOWNED PERSON

The theme of city branding strategy has inspired many studies, which have examined branding from different perspectives, such as brand image, identity, and personality [6]. The very notion of brand personality has provoked a debate among experts. According to Aaker and Joachimsthaler, the structure of brand identity includes four elements: brand as a product, brand as an organisation, brand as a person, and brand as a symbol [7].

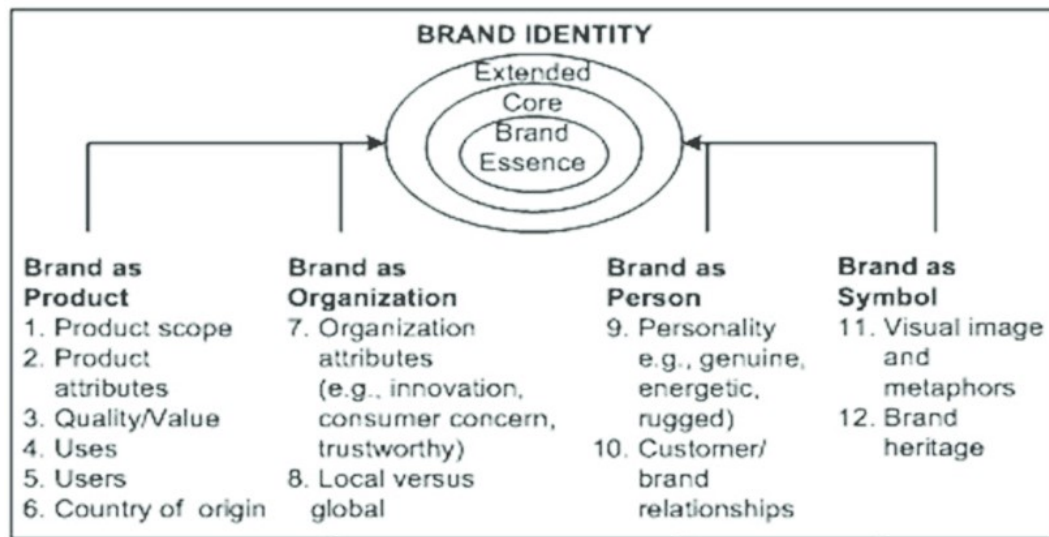


Figure 1. Brand identity [7]

A brand as a product adds value to a service, person or place; in contrast, Kapferer considers brands not to be products, but sources of products and meaning [8]. In today's literature, brand-related terminology that has general currency does not only refer to products that are goods or services. In that context, brands can be attributed personalities. Aaker specifies five brand dimensions, similar to the Big 5 model of human personality traits: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness [9]. They include honesty, integrity and trust; being up-to-date and inspiring; being reliable and responsible, as well as glamorous and charming; and lastly, being rugged and open. If these dimensions can be attributed to a well-known and accomplished person, that person can arguably become the brand of a place. This study examines the problem of cohering the biography of a person with place branding. Essentially, a biography can be retold in different ways in an effort to make a person appear unique [10]. According to author Stephen Brown, change is inherent to stories about a person's life and how their personality is understood. Hence, creative people and artists are said to express best the essence and character of the personality of a place [10]. The negative side of successful "city biographies" is when they become victims of their own success due to too many tourists, heavy traffic and congestion (Paris, London, Madrid, Rome, Jerusalem, Venice, etc.). The tourist industry is certainly quick to exploit culture. There are cities we associate with concrete artists or artworks; thus, we associate Dublin with Joyce, Verona with Romeo and Juliet, and Salzburg with Mozart. Also, artists can create visual biographies of places, such as in the films *Roman Holiday*, *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and *Notting Hill*.

3.2. TREBINJE AS A BRAND

As an old city where various influences and interests have intersected through its long and rich history, Trebinje's urban core changed in appearance and functions, and so did its importance for the greater surrounding area. Its urban structure, uniqueness, qualities and potential set Trebinje apart from other Herzegovinian towns and cities, giving it a competitive advantage for development [11].

The Trebinje Fort, as it looks today, was built in the early 18th century. During the 1683-1699 wars, the Turks were forced to construct a new town in Trebinje on the right bank of the River Trebišnjica. In Ottoman times, Trebinje was an important military stronghold and the seat of the local administration, and at that time, it got its distinct form, which has been preserved to this day. The modern city quarter developed under the influence of Austro-Hungarian and Mediterranean architectural traditions. In that matter, it is worthwhile to mention Trebinje's spiritual and cultural characteristics, i.e., the variety of cultural influences it has been under (Dubrovnik, Italy, Austro-Hungary, the Turks, etc.). After the First World War, Trebinje lost its strategic significance, and as a result, its urban development was retarded [12]. After the Second World War, it experienced fast urbanisation. All the changes in the city's long history have resulted in its establishing a multifaceted identity. Trebinje's long history has shaped its material and non-material culture, symbols and icons. In the last ten years, its growth has accelerated and it has become attractive for tourists, mostly because of its building heritage, its recognisable urban matrix, and its hedonic lifestyle.

The period between the two world wars is of particular importance for this research because it was at that time that the poet, diplomat and art collector Jovan Dučić, one of the greatest figures in Trebinje's recent history, lived and worked. Dučić's connection to his native city is similar to Irish novelist James Joyce [13]. He never broke the connection with his hometown and kept coming back to Trebinje. However, unlike Joyce, Dučić displaces his hometown from everyday life, giving it an ontological dimension.

A native of Trebinje, Dučić left permanent marks on the city's public space, cultural history and identity. He is an icon and symbol of Trebinje, a luminary built in the very identity of the city.

Strategija razvoja turizma grada Trebinja 2020-2030 [27] places culture as the primary development potential and recognizes Dučić's heritage as a tourist resource of the city. The strategy even proposes the construction of the Jovan Dučić interpretation center. But it did not recognize the possibility of using Dučić's personality and creativity to create a recognizable city brand.

4. POET JOVAN DUČIĆ AS A BRAND

Jovan Dučić's literary oeuvre makes him one of the greatest and most influential Serbian poets and writers of the 20th century, as well as one of the finest essayists and travel writers [14]. Also known as the most pro-Western Serbian poet, in his time his poetry enjoyed the reputation of an unattainable ideal [15]. He was the key figure of the Serbian circle of writers and intellectuals based in Mostar.

While studying in Geneva and Paris, he became familiar with French poetry, which influenced his own understanding of the art. His writing developed from Parnassianism at the beginning of the 20th century to symbolism to versions of post-symbolism as represented by such great European poets as Valéry, Rilke and Pasternak [16]. While primarily known as a poet to the general public, Dučić was more prolific as a prosaist, which is a lesser-known fact. As a prosaist, he wrote different types of nonfiction, including travel writing, philosophical essays and maxims, literary critiques and essays, history, art criticism and opinion journalism. As a traveller, Dučić was fascinated with high mountains and continental Europe's metropolises, such as Paris and Geneva, and even more by those along the sunny Mediterranean. He felt the strongest affinity with the world of Greece, followed by Italy, Spain and Egypt.

The prose work he is best known for is *Cities and Chimeras*, a collection of ten travel stories written over a timespan of forty years. The book contains his impressions of the places he visited and stayed or lived in [15].

At the peak of his diplomatic career, he was the first ever officer to be appointed an ambassador in the history of Yugoslav diplomacy. He was accredited as an ambassador to Istanbul, Sofia, Rome, Athens, Madrid, Lisbon, Cairo, Geneva, Budapest and Bukurest [17]. He was in the diplomatic service of the Kingdom of Serbia, the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia for over thirty years. It was as a diplomatic officer of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia that he became an accredited ambassador [17].

Having had such an exciting life and living at so many different places, it is no wonder Dučić started acquiring art. His role model was probably Count Sava Vladislavić Raguzinski, a great diplomat and art collector. Dučić claimed they were related and published a book about him while living in America.

Dučić's family was respected for being related to Archimandrite Nićifor Dučić, historian, member of the Serbian Royal Academy and president of the Serbian Learned Society.

Undisputably, all this inextricably tied Dučić to his birthplace. He tried to bring the spirit of modernity to Trebinje and sensitise it to European worldviews and values, thus shaping the city's material and non-material culture alike.



Figure 2. A portrait of the Serb luminary Jovan Dučić on a Post of Serbia stamp, 2021 [18]



Figure 3. Beta Vukanović's painting of Dučić's family house [14]

4.2. MATERIAL HERITAGE IN TREBINJE CONNECTED TO DUČIĆ

4.2.1. PUBLIC SPACE LEGACY

Since antiquity, architecture and art have enhanced cities' attractiveness and been the hallmarks of the culture associated with a specific period. The purpose of public art is to create material, virtual and imaginary space in which people can identify with a city [19]. In cities like Rome and Florence, art and architecture served the purpose of celebrating the cities themselves. Since the 19th century, the role of art has continuously been that of urban embellishment [20]. Casanovas holds the view that artworks in cities qualify the space and time in which they were created and define the relationship between people as individuals and their environment [20]. Art and architecture are a city's single most significant characteristics related to the historical period in which they originated as they indicate the level of cultural development of society. According to many authors, public art not only aestheticises urban space, but has an effect on several different levels and correlates with social policy. Any changes to social and cultural views considerably impact on architecture. That is why promoting culture through architecture and art is pivotal for establishing city identity.

Trebinje's urban development stagnated in the interbellum, with no major construction projects or changes to its urban fabric. Once a border city, its importance diminished in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, a country organised as a big and complex political entity comprising parts of the former Dual Monarchy and Ottoman Empire. While the city also stagnated economically, this period is linked to the work of Jovan Dučić and his contribution to Trebinje's development. This contribution included Dučić's donations to plan and develop public spaces and install monuments, statues, stone ornaments and a public fountain. Dučić realised that by developing the city, the culture of its inhabitants would also develop and the city would become competitive and recognisable among the many historical places and cities around, primarily Dubrovnik, which is located in its immediate proximity. He drew sketches for many public art objects and structures. Njegoš's monument was designed by architect Brašovan and erected in 1934. The design of the Liberation Heroes monument, unveiled in 1938, was originally sketched by the poet himself. He particularly focused on the city park and its landscaping, bringing plants and saplings from all over the world. Thanks to his donations the city got a fountain with a statue of Cupid and two statues of lions were installed at the gates leading to the city park. Some of the gifts and stone ornaments were destroyed by the Croatian Ustasha in the Second World War, including an eagle sculpture on the Dubrovnik Gate, the statues of Hercules and Atlas at the entrance to the Old Town, and four statues and a fountain in the park in the vicinity of today's city administration building. All these gifts by Dučić may be thought of as "urban reminders", a term used by Marta Lewicka to denote people's memories of places – of architecture originating in different periods, peculiar public structures, historical monuments [21]. Besides having a practical function, historical cities have intangible social content that can be represented through symbols. It is in this way, through these "urban reminders" and symbols, that Jovan Dučić conveys something non-material – an idea, a quality, a sense of place. By "monumentalising" the city – a term coined by Monnet to denote the construction of beautiful and impressive buildings, statues, monuments, fountains, parks, facade renovation, etc. [22, 23] – Dučić

gave it the sheen of a “city as an artwork”. By creating what Cullen terms “focal points” [24] – vertical gathering symbols, Dučić established genuine socialisation and visual experience hubs. Trebinje’s inhabitants have the privilege of enjoying city settings adorned with works of art, which, combined with the Mediterranean climate, easily leads to the creation of favourite places.

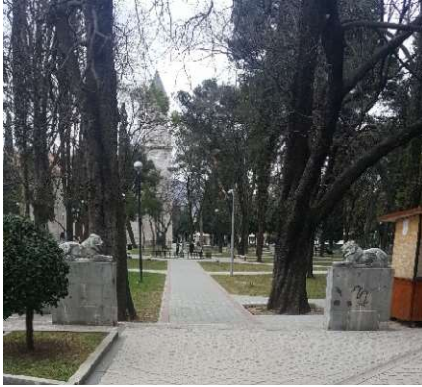


Figure 4. Lion statues at the entrance to the City Park [32]



Figure 5. A fountain with a sculpture in the City Park [32]



Figure 6. Liberation Heroes Memorial at Liberty Square [32]



Figure 7. A monument to Njegoš at the Plane-Tree Square (Flower Square) by sculptor Tomo Rosandić [32]



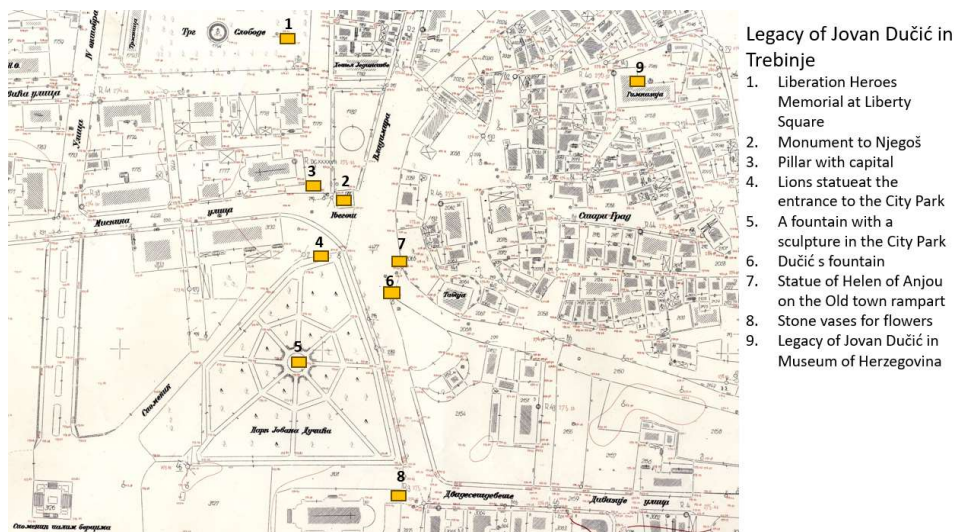


Figure 8. Material heritage legacy of Dučić in Trebinje [31]

4.2.2. DUČIĆ'S ART COLLECTION

Jovan Dučić's life in general and path as an artist unfolded steadily, surely and consistently from lows to highs, from his early modest days to his enthronement as the "king of all poets". Without many trials and tribulations, doubts or ordeals, it was the path of a man who was sure of himself and what the purpose of his public and private endeavours was – of both his diplomatic career and work as a poet [14]. This qualifies him as a person in several ways. He is known to the general public mainly as a poet and secondarily as a diplomat. It is little known, however, that Dučić was a great collector and patron of art. His patronage can best be seen at the Museum of Herzegovina in Trebinje. During his diplomatic mission in Italy, Dučić devotedly acquired artefacts and objects of art from the time of the Roman Empire. This valuable collection arrived in Trebinje in 15 iron-bound trunks in 1935. Some of the objects were used to decorate the city, and some were to have been used to start an archeological collection at the National Museum, as Dučić himself called it. However, the Second World War stopped him from implementing this idea. Unfortunately, the archaeological collection was placed in the Farming Collective Depot at the Čelović House after the war. It was first inventoried in 1958 through the efforts of Ljubinka Kojić. A part of Dučić's bequest – his personal belongings, art paintings and library – were transported to Trebinje in 1960 [25].

The permanent exhibition of Jovan Dučić's bequest opened on Dučić's Day, on 7 April 1996. It consists of around seventy artefacts from Roman times, the art paintings remaining from the original collection and the poet's personal belongings.

The archeological collection consists of sarcophaguses, fragments of sculptures, column capitals and fragments of stone ornaments. The majority date back to the Roman Empire, with the exception of several mediaeval objects. The art collection comprises paintings by 16th- and 17th-century Spanish painters, paintings of Kosta Pitides, Daniel Mihalik and anonymous artists, as well as portraits of the Dučić family added to the collection after Dučić's death. The collection also includes a mosaic and two tapestries. The personal belongings in the collection are mostly those Dučić used on his diplomatic missions. Visitors can see his diplomatic uniform, parade sabres and decorations: Order of the Star of Romania, Grand Cross, 1st Class (Romania); Order of the White Lion, Class Commander (Czechoslovakia); Order of the Redeemer, 2nd Class (Greece); Order of the Crown of Italy, Star of the Grand Cordon (Italy); Order of Merit of the Kingdom of Hungary, Grand Cross (Hungary); Order of the Nile, Grand Officer (Egypt); Order of St Sava, 1st Class (Yugoslavia); Order of the Yugoslav Crown, 1st class (Yugoslavia); Order of Christ, 1st Class (Portugal) [26].



Figure 9. Legacy of Jovan Dučić in Museum of Herzegovina [33]

4.3. IMPORTANT EVENTS COMMEMORATING DUČIĆ

As previously stated, urban symbols express a city's urban identity. Nevertheless, it is not only material symbols that are important; intangible values, i.e., events and people, are equally significant. Given how competitive our world is on a global level, cities use cultural events for branding to assist them with urban development and attracting investment and tourists. Cities organise regular events which put them on the map (Cannes Film Festival; Berlinale; Rio Carnival; Milan Fashion Week; Novi Sad Exit, etc.). Events with a long tradition, such as public celebrations, have now essentially become cultural happenings. It is important to understand in what sense cultural activities and content are used because this requires a kind of "flexibility". Cities that foster their culture and hold and participate in cultural events maintain their vitality, enrich the lives of their inhabitants and attract visitors. Trebinje has a long tradition of hosting cultural events, and in the last few decades it has also included religious feasts (city processions marking religious holidays). In that context, numerous events are held, which are important for the city and region and also draw artists from other countries. According to Trebinje's Cultural Strategy, the city currently hosts cultural events connected with religious and public holidays [27].

Many historical figures are associated with Trebinje's history and its urban development; they include Queen Helen of Anjou, the Resulbegović family, the Baron Đuro Babić, Luka Celović, and the poet and diplomat Jovan Dučić as the most famous one. Legends featuring these luminaries are part of the city's intangible cultural heritage. These people are some of the city's symbols, or as some authors call them, "urban icons" [23, 28]. Some events held in Trebinje commemorating Dučić as an "urban icon" are examples of behavioural symbolism [28]. When Trebinje is mentioned today, poet Jovan Dučić is the first association. "Trebinje – City of Culture", a project that belongs to the Euro-Mediterranean cultural tradition, is Jovan Dučić's legacy. This project rounds off the city's identity as a cultural and spiritual centre. These events are held under the title "Trebinje Summer Festivals" between April and October, and the city also stages "Dučić's Day" and "Dučić's Poetry Evenings". Trebinje's Cultural Strategy contains a proposal to build a venue to be called the Jovan Dučić Interpretation Centre, which would host thematic cultural events and present Dučić's rich legacy and life [27]. These festivals and events, understood as behavioural symbols and memory keepers, are spaces for interpreting and reinterpreting the city's past and future through art [28].

Dučić's personality together with his literary oeuvre, art collection, church complex in Crkvina and very interesting personal biography certainly represents an extremely inspiring model for creating a brand. Already existing manifestation certainly contribute to this, which must be coordinated with future activities.

5. CITY IDENTITY AND CITY BRAND AS A PERSON: THE RELATIONSHIP

A great deal of research shows people identify with others if they are similar or share certain traits. People love visiting cities that luminaries or celebrities – e.g., poets, singers, etc. – come from or where popular events are organised [29]. The literature dealing with city branding clearly differentiates between city marketing and identity-guided city branding, with the latter seeking to choose values and narratives likely to influence people's perception of the city and make them connect with it [20, 31]. The process as such inherently leads to the selection of that which is considered "privileged" – the characteristics and people who are included in the brand, as opposed to those "unprivileged", which/who are left out [50]. When selecting a person to brand a city around, like any brand, this person must possess qualities the city's population can identify with. How is a brand as a person built?

Research shows that a brand as a person can provoke emotions and increase trust and loyalty [7]. Also, a person's impact can be such that they reinforce the other values and symbols under their direct influence. In the case of Trebinje, the value the urban places and settings connected with Dučić hold for the local population and visitors raises because of this association with the luminary. The valuable building heritage and public spaces that developed under the influence of different cultures which now contain the ornaments donated by Dučić become recognisable through their connection with the poet and their value increases. The figure of Jovan Dučić remains strong and stable as a brand and can be used for different marketing combinations.

When it comes to Trebinje and Dučić, a consideration of the relationship between the city brand and the city identity is in order. Identities are created spontaneously and they are the sum of various influences over a long period of time, whereas brands are the result of planned strategic activities. As such, a brand cannot jeopardise identity, but merely reinforce it.

6. CONCLUSION

Concerning the selection of luminaries for city branding, this paper shows that complex, multi-dimensional persons with rich biographies have great potential for a successful branding strategy.

As a poet, public figure, art collector and patron, Jovan Dučić helped to create Trebinje's urban symbols, shape its urban identity and make its cityscape recognisable. The value of Dučić's work lies in his efforts to bring the spirit of the world to his hometown, which is an excellent starting point for building a brand using a famous person as a resource.

If Dučić is promoted more extensively, this brand as a person could become the focus of planning. One option would be to trace a cultural path based on Dučić's life, from his birth through his schooling to all the "focal points" he created by presenting Trebinje with sculptures and other artefacts. Such a cultural path would benefit the community's collective memory and strengthen intergenerational dialogue and social interaction. The message his name would thus relay to the next generation would be to use their knowledge, fame and finances to build and strengthen their own community. The greatest value of Dučić's achievements is the pride the people of Trebinje take in them.

The branding strategy of Trebinje using the famous personality Jovan Dučić can be successfully created by coordinating already existing contents and activities and connecting them.

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