

Article

City Brand Personality—Relations with Dimensions and Dimensions Inter-Relations

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Abstract: City brand strategies play an important part in building strong identities for cities and also for effective promotional campaigns. The purpose of this research is to analyze in more depth the dimensions of the City Brand Personality of Iași, as identified in previous research. The objectives of the present study are to: (1) understand the impact of each dimension upon the entire construct; (2) identify the possible connections between the perception of the city brand personality and the perceptions on particular city features; (3) identify the possible inter-connections between the resulting dimensions. An Independent Samples *t* test, Discriminant analysis, and Correlations and Regressions analysis were conducted. The dimension Peacefulness/Sincerity has the highest positive impact, while the dimension Malignancy has the lowest negative impact. Respondents who consider the city to be relatively young rate the personality features better for the dimensions of Peacefulness/Sincerity and Competence. Competence and Peacefulness/Sincerity are strongly related. Improving the perception of features composing the Competence dimension leads to an improvement of the entire City Brand Personality. Future research could specifically identify the types of sustainable activities that could be associated with the desired personality traits.

Keywords: city brand; city brand personality; dimensions; Iași; relations

1. Introduction

The present research is a continuation of previous research [1] that revealed the determinants of the City Brand Personality of the city of Iași, Romania, a very well-known University City in the country. The determinants of the City Brand Personality, as presented by Țugulea and Stoian [1], are: Peacefulness/Sincerity, Malignancy, and Competence. The research method presented in this paper is a combination of a documentary study on City Image, Destination Image, Destination Personality, and specifically City Brand Personality [2–16], and a quantitative research based on three dimensions of City Brand Personality of the city of Iași, as revealed by Țugulea and Stoian [1]. The results of this research are also interpreted through the sustainability prism.

Sustainability is a heavily studied concept, in all areas of research in economics. The first official effort to integrate the concept in the political area was the Brundtland Report of 1987 [17]. In the context of sustainable development, long term strategies applied in managerial activities become mandatory. Researchers [18] underline the necessity to deepen the studies on sustainability in the context of improved political and corporate agendas, especially on manners to implement the concept [19].

Derived from the general concept of sustainability, city sustainability became another major concern, in the context of environmental stress [20], as there is evidence of the improved quality of life in natural areas [21]. According to Mori and Yamashita [22] (p. 10), a sustainable city is “the spatial entity that maximizes the benefits in economic and social dimensions under relevant constraints on environmental limitations and socio-economic distributional equity”.

Future development of cities should consider both city brand features and dimensions, associated with cities' specificities and traditions, and city sustainability issues. In the context of globalization and tourism development all over the world, tourists have the opportunity to choose among many destinations and attractive offers. Due to the strong level of competition on the national and international tourism markets, city brand strategies play an important part in building strong identities for cities and also for effective promotional campaigns. Yet, the marketing strategies and environmental issues of cities both have to be considered in building development strategies for cities, as tourism development contributes to the economic growth of the countries, while sustainable strategies contribute to environmental protection in the economic growth context.

In order to measure brand personality, many researchers use Aaker's [23] scale that consists of five components of brand personality, with each resulting dimension being composed of specific facets: excitement, sincerity, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness [4,13]. The original brand personality scale [23] is reliable, valid, and generalizable.

Brand personality is a construct integrated in the analysis of brand image (consumers' perceived importance of the product) and brand identity (desirable brand perceived manner) [4]. Although brand image includes cognitive and emotional features of a brand [4], brand personality especially emphasizes the emotional side of the brand image [4,9].

Destination personality is an adaptation of brand personality in tourism [3,10,15]. Destination personality is defined as a "set of human characteristics associated with a destination" [3] (p. 127). In this context, City Brand Personality is a particular type of destination personality defined as "the set of human characteristics associated with the city brand" [9] (p. 1293).

Aaker's [23] scale of brand personality is frequently approached in tourism research in order to describe destination personality. Several studies have specifically focused on expanding the investigation of brand personality in the tourism industry in order to explore and measure the perception of tourists on various cities, from the personality perspective [2–4]. The construct of City Brand Personality depends on "more diverse factors than the brand personality of conventional products" [9], (p. 1298), leading to the expectation of identifying a larger number of dimensions compared to the construct of brand personality for products. However, there is not a consensus on the scale of City Brand Personality. The measurement scales presented in various City Brand Personality studies [1–3,9,10,15,24,25] are personalized to the certain analyzed context. Researchers especially concentrate on approaching "relationships with tourists' behavior, rather than on identifying a measurement scale of their behavior" [10] (p. 7).

Ekinci and Hosany [3] identified three main dimensions of destination brand personality, particularly for European cities: sincerity (the destination is trustworthy and dependable), excitement (the destination is exciting and original), and conviviality (the destination is friendly and charming). Researchers have used and refined Aaker's [23] brand personality scale. The research of Ekinci and Hosany [3] showed that perceived affective image, as a dimension of destination image construct, and conviviality, as a dimension of destination personality construct, are useful to estimate tourists' intentions to recommend the destination to other people. In order to create a scale to measure City Brand Personality, Kaplan et al. [9] organized their research into two stages: first, they collected a large list with personality traits of people; secondly, survey participants evaluated the extent to which each attribute matched the selected touristic destinations. The research of Kaplan et al. [9] configured the list of personality traits. Their results showed that City Brand Personality can be defined by six dimensions, out of which three are similar to the American Brand Personality Scale of Aaker [23]—excitement, competence, and ruggedness—and three attributes specific to Turkish cities—malignancy, peacefulness, and conservatism. Excitement is also a city brand dimension identified by Hosany et al. [7] among other dimensions (sincerity and conviviality). Sincerity and excitement are the two factors measuring City Brand Personality in the research of Papadimitriou et al. [24]. A sample of urban tourists was investigated in order to reveal their perception of the city of Patras, a metropolis in Western Greece. The study also validated a strong connection between city personality and city overall image based

on past experience. Regarding the relation between city personality and city image, the research of Kim and Lee [25] identified both positive and negative relations between these two constructs. Their research investigated a sample of respondents from South Korea and revealed that, the more the city personality is perceived as being exciting and sophisticated, the more that city image is dynamic [25]. The more sincere a city is, the less its image is perceived as dynamic. Usakli and Baloglu [15] conducted research on destination personality; their study approached aspects such as brand personality of a particular city (Las Vegas), indicating the influence of the specificity of the destination in shaping the brand personality construct, the effect of brand personality of a city on intention to return and to recommend the destination, and self-congruity for tourism destinations, such as a city. The results of Usakli and Baloglu's [15] study indicate that, for Las Vegas, the construct of brand personality consists of five dimensions: vibrancy, sophistication, competence, contemporary, and sincerity. Destination personality construct, through self-congruity, has a positive indirect influence on behavioral intentions (returning and recommending the destination). Ahmad et al.'s [2] study presents the dimensions of City Brand Personality applicable in Malaysia: peacefulness, malignancy, sophistication, and uniqueness, as a refined and adapted construct derived from Aaker's [23] brand personality scale. Glińska and Kilon's [4] study presents the dimensions of the City Brand Personality scale, considered to be desirable, adapted for medium and small cities of Poland: conservatism, peace, and neatness. Lee and Suh [10] adapted Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale and concluded that the City Brand Personality scale applicable for the South Korean context is composed of five dimensions: sincerity, excitement, technology, high-class, and femininity. Țugulea and Stoian [1] identified the dimensions of the City Brand Personality construct of a Romanian University city (Iași): Peacefulness/Sincerity, Malignancy, and Competence.

There are two dimensions often identified in City Brand Personality studies: excitement [3,9,10,24,25] and sincerity [1,3,10,15,24,25]. These two dimensions are also part of the construct of brand personality, as revealed by Aaker [23]. Two other dimensions of the construct of brand personality [23] identified by researchers in the City Brand Personality construct are competence [1,9,15] and sophistication [2,15,25]. Common dimensions identified by at least two specific City Brand Personality studies are: peacefulness [1,2,9], conservatism [4,9], and malignancy [1,2,9]. Also, the specific dimensions of the City Brand Personality construct were revealed, such as: conviviality [3], ruggedness [9] (as in Aaker's [23] Brand Personality construct), vibrancy [15], uniqueness [2], and neatness [4]. Most researches on city brand personality use Aaker's [23] adapted brand personality scale [2,4,10,15]. Some researchers have proposed a City Brand Personality scale including refined traits in previous tourism studies [24] or a reconfigured scale [9].

Although most City Brand Personality studies rely on Aaker's [23] brand personality scale, there are critiques attached to it, among which is that the construct is not stable across cultures [2,15,26]. As a result, Țugulea and Stoian's [1] research proposed a reconfigured City Brand Personality scale, without using Aaker's [23] scale.

Cultural and geographical variation has been detected for brand personality or tourist destination personality. For example, Aaker et al. [26] highlighted the differences of the construct of Brand Personality based on Japanese, Spanish, and USA culture: the specific dimension for the Japanese culture is Peacefulness and the specific dimension for the Spanish culture is Passion. Similar research was conducted by Toldos Romero [13] applied to the Mexican market and cultural specificity. The cultural specificity of various countries implies the possibility to determine constructs with similar and specific dimensions.

The possibility to adapt the construct in various contexts encourages researchers to study Brand Personality in the tourism area [2–16]. Specifically, these studies revealed useful results considering the construct of City Brand Personality, as notorious cities around the world have their own brand with specific features attached to it (for example, Paris is associated with romance while Rome is associated with history).

Aaker's [23] (p. 347) definition of brand personality ("set of human characteristics associated with a brand") is largely accepted and adopted in the literature [27]. The heavily practiced method of associating objects with human traits [4,28–30] has the purpose of easing understanding and interacting with the nonmaterial world [31,32]. This method involving brands' analyses is known as brand anthropomorphism, referring to the extent that brands are seen as human beings [30], with emotions, thoughts, and conscious behaviors [33].

Both qualitative and quantitative research is used to investigate brand personality. During focus groups or in-depth interviews, projective techniques are very useful for researchers to identify facets of brand personality [27]. Participants use analogy to associate a brand with a car, a flower, a color, or an animal. Further on, participants are asked to describe a brand as if it was a person; people tend to indicate the typical user/buyer of that brand [34] (p. 302). An advantage of personification projective techniques is that respondents tend to answer sincerely, without the need to justify their answers, intuitively mentioning the first feature they think about [35]. One example of using personification projective techniques in brand personality research is Hofstede et al.'s [34] study. Hofstede et al. [34] used job-sorting with the purpose of comparing brand personality for four brands. The researchers selected eight jobs and the subjects were asked to choose one single job that was more suitable for the brand and also three personality traits for that job, as a personification projective technique.

In order to understand the concept of City Brand Personality in association with the concept of a sustainable city, a better understanding of this concept is necessary. Strategies for supporting sustainable cities are implemented in many countries [36], investing in social equity, integrity, and ecological processes [37].

Pickett et al. [37] identified the rubrics of discussion for the features of city sustainability: integral urbanism, sustainable urbanism, humane metropolis, green urbanism, and ecological urbanism. Hamman et al.'s [38] review on city sustainability presents various types of expressions associated with the concept of sustainable city (participatory city, just city, green city, and city of short distances), constantly changing their contents and procedures, indicating that there is a lack of a model of a sustainable city. Tang and Lee [36] analyzed concepts associated with sustainable cities: Low-Carbon City or Low-Emission City (encouraging inhabitants to reduce resourced consumptions and pollutant emissions), Compact City (enhancing energy and space efficiency), greenness (or green/greening), and livability (or liveability/livable/liveable).

Sustainable cities support resilient ecological, economic, and social processes [37]. These strategies rely on the three pillars or dimensions of sustainability: environmental (natural environment protection), economic (using resources for long term benefits), and social (creating healthy environments for present and future generations) [39]. A realist goal would be to transform a city into a more sustainable one, as there is no pure sustainable city and sustainability is a continuous process [37].

In the context of a continuous focus on the topic of sustainable cities and the necessity to understand the manner in which individuals perceive a destination, the purpose of this research is to analyze in more depth the dimensions of the City Brand Personality of Iași, as identified in previous research [1]. The objectives of the present study are to: (1) understand the impact of each dimension upon the entire construct; (2) identify the possible connections between the perception of the City Brand Personality, represented by the resulting dimensions, and the perceptions of particular city features; (3) identify the possible inter-connections between the resulting dimensions. The conclusion of this research is that improving the perception of features composing the Competence feature leads to improvement of the entire City Brand Personality of Iași. Based on the results, examples of sustainable strategies for the analyzed city are highlighted in the Discussion section.

2. Materials and Methods

According to Pike's [40] generous review of 142 papers on destination image, the preferred quantitative method approached by most studies is factor analysis. The Principal Components Method with Varimax rotation is generally conducted in order to reveal the dimensions of the construct [9,10,13,15].

Each objective was approached with specific statistical analyses. In order to understand the impact of each factor upon the entire City Brand Personality construct, Fogg et al.'s [41] computation method was used. In order to identify possible connections between resulting dimension and other city features, as perceived by respondents, an Independent Samples *t* test and Discriminant analyses were conducted. In order to identify possible inter-connections between the resulting dimensions, Correlation and Regression analyses were conducted.

The research was approached using a five steps process as follows: (1) understanding the main descriptive statistics of particular investigated aspects (perceived age, sex, and occupation of the city of Iași, as if the city was a person); (2) computing the mean factors scores; (3) computing the impact of each factor upon the construct of the City Brand Personality of Iași; (4) conducting an Independent Samples *t* test in order to identify possible significant differences between each mean factor and perception on the age of the city; (5) conducting Discriminant analysis in order to understand if the three mean factors can predict the perceived age of the city (defined as young/old); (6) conducting Correlation in order to identify associations between the three mean factors; (7) conducting Regression analysis in order to reveal a possible manner to highlight the relation between mean factors as City Brand Personality determinants of the city of Iași.

The initial data base was built considering students' perception of the city of Iași, Romania. Students were particularly selected to be participants in the research because they are not inhabitants, meaning they do not know the city in the greatest detail, but they are more familiar with it compared to tourists, meaning that their opinion is more reliable than tourists' opinions. City break tourists are not familiar enough with the city in order to have a complete opinion on the city personality. Students at all education levels (bachelor, master, and doctoral studies) were selected from the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, University "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" of Iași, based on a convenience sampling method. Only students that did not live in the analyzed city were included in the research.

The sample consisted of students enrolled in most majors of the Faculty (Management, Economic Computer Sciences, Accounting, Finance, Marketing, Economics and International Business, Public Administration) and Master's Degree Programs (Acquisitions—Distribution—Logistics, Marketing Analysis and Strategy, Marketing and Business Communication, Hotel and Touristic Management, Negotiations and Public Relations), including all years of study (first, second, and third year of study). More than half of investigated respondents had a small income (less than 850 RON/month, which is equivalent to less than 200 Euro/month).

Students represent educated young individuals. Also, students' perceptions reveal important clues upon the future consumer in any field, including in the tourism field.

Previous researches on general destination image [40] and specifically on brand personality applied to cities [9] approached students as an investigated sample. Pike's [40] generous review of 142 papers on destination image identified 15 studies based on student samples. Specifically on the brand personality applied to cities topic, Kaplan et al. [9] also investigated students. The authors justify that, although using students might be a generalization limitation of the results, young individuals in general represent a target of interest for branding places.

Ethical aspects were considered in the entire data collection process. The questionnaire is based on rating the match of personality traits to the city of Iași, as perceived by each respondent. No personal information was required and no questionnaire item could possibly identify any respondent. The students were asked to complete the questionnaire. Their acceptance to be a respondent was confirmed.

Students completed the printed questionnaires during break times between classes. The verbal permission of the professors was asked. Completing the questionnaire was not related in any way to

an evaluation criterion or students' activity. The researcher explained all the details of the research (purpose of research and manner to complete the questionnaire). Verbal consent was obtained. The data was anonymous. The questionnaire items did not determine any uncomfortable situation for the respondents.

The present research relies on already identified dimensions from a previous study [1]: Peacefulness/Sincerity, Malignacy, and Competence. The previous study presented the two stages of research: two qualitative researches and quantitative research.

The qualitative researches had the purposes of identifying a large list of personality traits associated with Romanian cities (102 items), using the focus group method, and refining the items list, involving specialists in tourism, marketing, and psychology. The specialists in psychology eliminated all items that were not personality specific. The final scale consisted of 53 refined items.

Each personality trait was measured on a seven-points scale (1—the feature does not describe the city at all; 7—the feature describes the city very well). Dimensions were revealed in the quantitative research. Exploratory factor analysis was used, consisting of the Maximum Likelihood Method with an oblique rotation of Direct Oblimin in SPSS. Cross-loading items were removed after successive factor analyses. Dimensions were identified using the Scree Plot. The dimension Peacefulness/Sincerity consists of 10 items: tolerant, solidary, protector, sociable, opened, helpful, romantic, perceptive, attractive, and familiar. The dimension Malignacy consists of four items: envious, proud, ironic, and backbit. The dimension Competence consists of four items: hardworking, determined, independent, and entrepreneurial. All dimension scales have an acceptable reliability, with Cronbach-alpha values close to or over 0.7.

A total of 325 valid questionnaires were included in the analysis.

Factors/dimensions have a different impact on a construct. It is important to reveal the construct with the highest positive and/or negative impact. The dimension with the highest positive impact contains features that are associated with the city, while the factor with the highest negative impact gives important clues on features that are not strongly associated with the city. Thus, this piece of information could be very important for the public administration managers in order to modify the negative perceptions of the city with an effective and personalized strategic touristic approach. It is expected to identify a relation between the resulting dimensions computed as a means and the perception of the age of the city. This assumption is derived from the natural human tendency to associate different personality features with young people compared to old people. The previous research [1] identified the three determinants of the City Brand Personality of Iași based on Factor Analysis, consisting of the Maximum Likelihood Method with the oblique rotation Direct Oblimin. Compared to the traditional Principal Components Analysis with Varimax rotation, which statistically delivers uncorrelated factors, the Maximum Likelihood Method with the oblique rotation Direct Oblimin may deliver correlated factors. Thus, it is expected to identify relationships between the resulting dimensions.

3. Results

3.1. General Statistics

3.1.1. Perceived Age Interval of the City of Iași

The perceived age of the city of Iași was selected from the age intervals as provided in Table 1. Figure 1 indicates the frequencies of age intervals selected by participants.

The highest frequency of the age interval associated with Iași is 20–25 years old. One possible assumption for this choice is respondents' age (between 20 and 25 years old), who project their own specificities on the city.

Perceived age of the city was useful as the research further analysed associations between age and City Brand Personality dimensions of the city (as presented in the results section of Objective 2). Also, in order to shape a general portrait of the city of Iași, the personification technique was used

based on the association of human traits with the analyzed city. The city may be perceived both as young, due to students' populating the city, and mature, due to its historical perspective. The city of Iași is traditionally considered to be the cultural capital of the country. The first University in Romania was built in Iași.

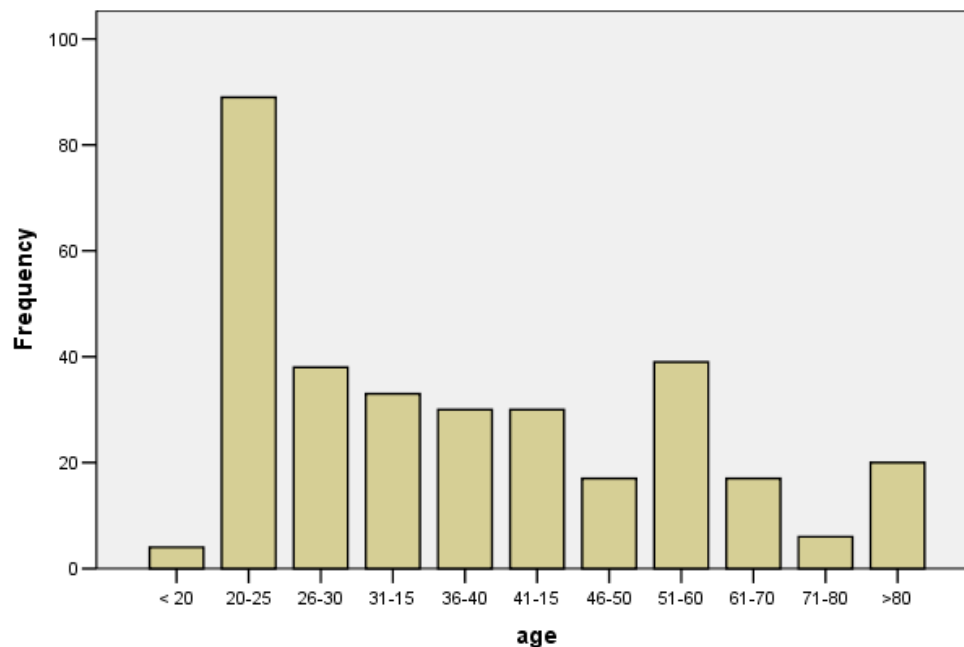


Figure 1. Perceived age of the city of Iași.

Table 1. Perceived age—Descriptive Statistics.

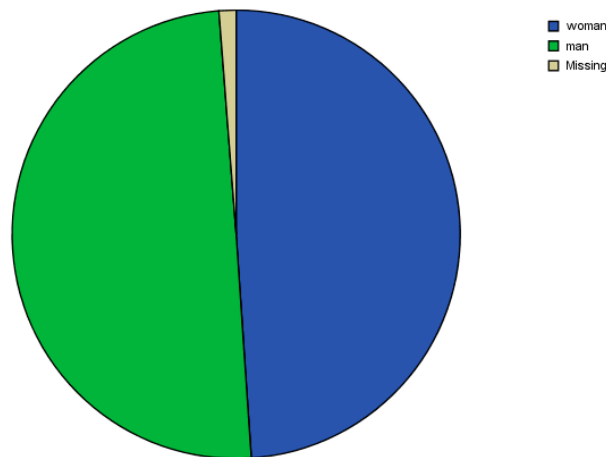
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<20	4	1.2	1.2	1.2
	20–25	89	27.4	27.6	28.8
	26–30	38	11.7	11.8	40.6
	31–15	33	10.2	10.2	50.8
	36–40	30	9.2	9.3	60.1
	41–15	30	9.2	9.3	69.3
	46–50	17	5.2	5.3	74.6
	51–60	39	12.0	12.1	86.7
	61–70	17	5.2	5.3	92.0
	71–80	6	1.8	1.9	93.8
	>80	20	6.2	6.2	100.0
	Total	323	99.4	100.0	
Missing	88	1	0.3		
	99	1	0.3		
	Total	2	0.6		
Total		325	100.0		

3.1.2. Perceived Sex of the City of Iași

Using a personification projective technique, the authors of the previous research [1] asked respondents to image the city of Iași as a person and to decide if, from this perspective, the city would be a woman or a man. The city of Iași is perceived both as a woman and a man, as indicated by results in Table 2 and by Figure 2.

Table 2. Perceived sex—Descriptive Statistics.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	woman	159	48.9	49.5	49.5
	man	162	49.8	50.5	100.0
Missing	88	1	0.3		
	99	3	0.9		
	Total	4	1.2		
Total		325	100.0		

**Figure 2.** Perceived sex of the city of Iași.

3.1.3. Perceived Job of the City of Iași

In order to shape a general portrait for the city of Iași, respondents were asked to select one job that matches the personality of the city. The list of possible jobs was previously generated in qualitative research based on focus groups, using the projective technique. The city of Iași, seen as a human being, is perceived to be involved in various types of jobs. This result is presented in Table 3 and Figure 3. For a better readability of the horizontal axis, each job is represented by a code, from 1 to 30. The job that was mostly selected was university student. The assumption for this result is given by the main occupation of the respondents (university students) and the most important label given to the city (the city with the oldest university in the country).

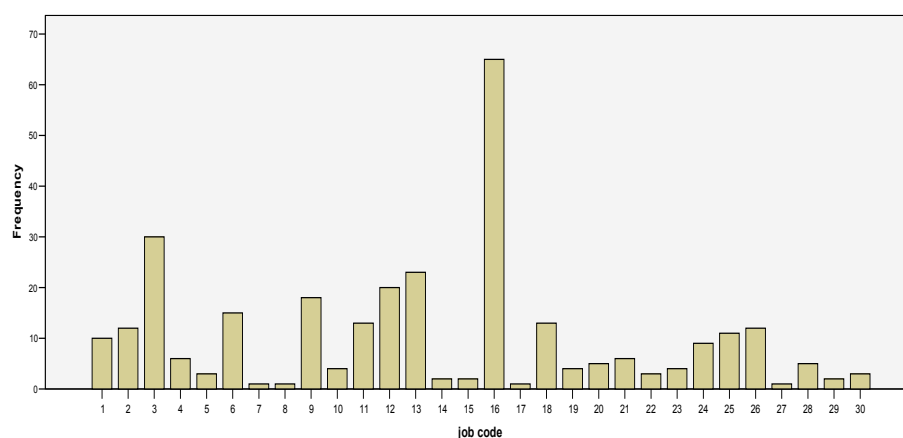
**Figure 3.** Perceived job of the city of Iași.

Table 3. Job—Descriptive Statistics.

	Job	Code	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	actor	1	10	3.1	3.3	3.3
	antiquarian	2	12	3.7	3.9	7.2
	professor	3	30	9.2	9.9	17.1
	pianist	4	6	1.8	2.0	19.1
	singer	5	3	0.9	1.0	20.1
	cafe patron	6	15	4.6	4.9	25.0
	specialist doctor	7	1	0.3	0.3	25.3
	spiritual doctor	8	1	0.3	0.3	25.7
	events' organiser	9	18	5.5	5.9	31.6
	housewife	10	4	1.2	1.3	32.9
	retired	11	13	4.0	4.3	37.2
	touristic guide	12	20	6.2	6.6	43.8
	writer	13	23	7.1	7.6	51.3
	sports instructor	14	2	0.6	0.7	52.0
	director	15	2	0.6	0.7	52.6
	university student	16	65	20.0	21.4	74.0
	alpinist	17	1	0.3	0.3	74.3
	entrepreneur	18	13	4.0	4.3	78.6
	DJ	19	4	1.2	1.3	79.9
	painter	20	5	1.5	1.6	81.6
	sales agent	21	6	1.8	2.0	83.6
	publicity agent	22	3	0.9	1.0	84.5
	important person in government	23	4	1.2	1.3	85.9
	movie director	24	9	2.8	3.0	88.8
	librarian	25	11	3.4	3.6	92.4
	unemployed	26	12	3.7	3.9	96.4
	practitioner	27	1	0.3	0.3	96.7
	photographer	28	5	1.5	1.6	98.4
	public finances employee	29	2	0.6	0.7	99.0
	other job	30	3	0.9	1.0	100.0
	Total		304	93.5	100.0	
Missing	88		18	5.5		
	99		3	0.9		
	Total		21	6.5		
Total			325	100.0		

3.2. Objective 1: Understand the Impact of Each Dimension upon the Entire Construct of City Brand Personality of Iași

In previous researches on City Brand Personality [1,14,16], research was conducted in order to identify items to describe personality traits of the city of Iași (documentary and qualitative research—[14,16]) and to reveal the dimension of the construct specifically for the city of Iași (quantitative research—[1]). The resulting dimensions were: (1) Peacefulness/Sincerity (with composing items: tolerant, solidary, protector, sociable, opened, helpful, romantic, perceptive, attractive, familiar); (2) Malignancy (with composing items: envious, proud, ironic, backbit); (3) Competence (with composing items: hardworking, determined, independent, entrepreneurial).

Based on the items composing the three dimensions, the means of the three factors were computed. Each mean factor was converted from 1 to 7 values into −3 to 3 values and then converted again into −100 to 100 values. The impact computation derived from Fogg et al.'s [41] model is meant to underline the positive or negative impact of each dimension and also to reveal the highest impact among the three dimensions.

Table 4 presents the values of means on the initial scale, converted means on a −3 to 3 scale, and converted means on a −100 to 100 scale. Based on Table 4, Figure 4 was created, representing the relative impact of each factor of City Brand Personality.

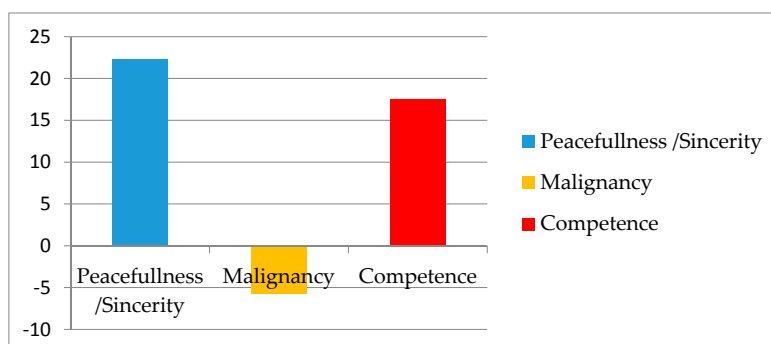


Figure 4. The relative impact of each factor on City Brand Personality.

Table 4. The relative impact of each factor on the credibility of online sales websites.

Dimension	Means on the Initial Scale	Means on Scale −3, +3	Impact (−100, +100)
Peacefulness/Sincerity	4.89	0.89	22.25
Malignancy	3.77	−0.23	−5.75
Competence	4.70	0.70	17.5

The dimension with the highest positive impact is Peacefulness/Sincerity and, as expected and desired, the dimension with the negative and least impact is Malignancy.

3.3. Objective 2: Identify the Possible Connections between the Perception of the City Brand Personality, Represented by the Resulted Dimensions, and the Perceptions on Particular City Features

The city of Iași was perceived from four main types of features:

- age
- sex
- job
- personality traits (18 items considered in this particular research)

In order to identify the possible connections between the three resulting dimensions and particular city features, Independent Samples *t* test analyses were conducted including the test variables as the three mean factors and the grouping variables as sex and age.

3.3.1. Identify the Possible Connections between the Resulted Dimensions and the Perceptions on Sex

An Independent Samples *t* test was conducted including the test variables as the three mean factors and the grouping variables as sex.

Table 5 illustrates statistics for perceived sex of the city, for each of the three dimensions. Table 6 illustrates that the perception of the sex of the city (associating the city either with a woman, or with a man) has no influence on the perception of personality traits of the city, as described by the factor means for each of the three dimensions.

Table 5. Independent Samples *t* test—Group Statistics.

Sex		N	Means	Std. Deviation	Standard Error Mean
factor1_peaceful_mean	woman	148	4.9797	0.88586	0.07282
	man	150	4.7920	0.94999	0.07757
factor2_malignacy_mean	woman	148	3.8514	1.24841	0.10262
	man	157	3.7022	1.11197	0.08875
factor3_competence_mean	woman	154	4.7305	1.10055	0.08869
	man	155	4.6435	1.07772	0.08656

Table 6. Independent Samples *t* test.

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		<i>t</i> -Test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig. (significance)	<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2-Tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
factor1_peaceful_mean	Equal variances assumed	0.148	0.701	1.764	296	0.079	0.18773	0.10644	−0.02175	0.39721
	Equal variances not assumed			1.765	295.063	0.079	0.18773	0.10639	−0.02165	0.39711
factor2_malignancy_mean	Equal variances assumed	3.047	0.082	1.103	303	0.271	0.14912	0.13521	−0.11694	0.41519
	Equal variances not assumed			1.099	294.094	0.273	0.14912	0.13567	−0.11789	0.41613
factor3_competence_mean	Equal variances assumed	0.027	0.871	0.702	307	0.483	0.08697	0.12392	−0.15687	0.33081
	Equal variances not assumed			0.702	306.769	0.483	0.08697	0.12393	−0.15689	0.33083

3.3.2. Identify the Possible Connections between the Resulted Dimensions and the Perceptions on Age

An Independent Samples *t* test was conducted including the test variables as the three mean factors and the grouping variables as age. In order to conduct the analysis, the variable age was recoded into a different variable (age_recode). The new variable recoded perceived age between 0 and 40 as 1 and age over 40 as 2.

Table 7 illustrates statistics for perceived age of the city (divided by the researcher as young person—under 40 years old—and old person—over 40 years old), for each of the three dimensions. Table 8 illustrates that the perception of the age of the city-person (young/old) influences the perception of the dimensions Peacefulness/Sincerity and Competence. There is a significant difference between the perception of Peacefulness/Sincerity and Competence (computed as means) based on the perception of age of the city-person. The younger the city-person is considered, the more peaceful and sincere it is perceived. Also, the younger the city-person is perceived, the more competent it is perceived.

Table 7. Independent Samples *t* test—Group Statistics.

	Age_Recode	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
factor1_peaceful_mean	1.00	178	5.0972	0.86065	0.06451
	2.00	124	4.5992	0.92924	0.08345
factor2_malignancy_mean	1.00	187	3.7206	1.23939	0.09063
	2.00	122	3.8525	1.10210	0.09978
factor3_competence_mean	1.00	188	4.9003	1.02884	0.07504
	2.00	125	4.4000	1.12029	0.10020

Table 8. Independent Samples *t* test.

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		<i>t</i> -Test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig. (significance)	<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2-Tailed)(significance)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
factor1_peaceful_mean	Equal variances assumed	0.228	0.633	4.787	300	0.000	0.49800	0.10404	0.29326	0.70273
	Equal variances not assumed			4.721	251.514	0.000	0.49800	0.10548	0.29027	0.70572
factor2_malignancy_mean	Equal variances assumed	0.889	0.346	−0.954	307	0.341	−0.13187	0.13816	−0.40374	0.14000
	Equal variances not assumed			−0.978	279.335	0.329	−0.13187	0.13480	−0.39722	0.13348
factor3_competence_mean	Equal variances assumed	1.432	0.232	4.065	311	0.000	0.50027	0.12305	0.25814	0.74239
	Equal variances not assumed			3.996	249.947	0.000	0.50027	0.12518	0.25372	0.74681

3.3.3. Identify Whether Resulted Dimensions Are Predictors of Perceived Age of the City of Iași

Given the results of the Independent Samples *t* test in Section 3.3.2, Discriminant analysis was conducted in SPSS in order to more deeply investigate the relationship between the recoded age (young and old), as the dependent variable, and the three dimensions of the City Brand Personality, as predictors (independent variables). This relationship was only investigated for the age variable because there no influence between sex and the three personality dimensions was identified.

Table 9. Wilks' Lambda.

Test of Function (s)	Wilks' Lambda	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
1	0.920	23.448	3	0.000

Table 9 illustrates that the Wilk's Lambda test has sig. < 0.05, indicating that the function significantly discriminates between the two groups—young and old.

Table 10. Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients.

	Function
	1
factor1_peaceful_mean	0.926
factor2_malignacy_mean	−0.102
factor3_competence_mean	0.230
(Constant)	−5.213

Based on Table 10, the discriminant equation is:

$$\text{age_recode} = 0.926 \times \text{factor1_peaceful_mean} - 0.102 \times \text{factor2_malignacy_mean} + 0.230 \times \text{factor3_competence_mean} - 5.213 \quad (1)$$

The Standardised canonical discriminant function coefficients offer clues on the relative contribution (importance) of each predictor upon the total discrimination [42]. According to Table 11, the most important predictor is Peacefulness/Sincerity followed by Competence. These results were expected as the Section 3.3.2 identified significant differences between the two perceived age categories for the two dimensions. Also, these two dimensions have the highest impact upon the City Brand Personality construct.

Table 11. Standardized Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients.

	Function
	1
factor1_peaceful_mean	0.824
factor2_malignacy_mean	−0.121
factor3_competence_mean	0.247

3.4. Objective 3: Identify the Possible Connections between the Resulted Dimensions

3.4.1. Identify the Relations between the Resulted Dimensions

In order to identify any associations between the resulting dimensions, correlation analysis was conducted in SPSS.

Table 12 illustrates the correlation analyses. Only one correlation was identified (sig. < 0.05) between dimension 1 (Peacefulness/Sincerity) and dimension 3 (Competence). The correlation is positive (>0) [42] and very high (>0.5).

Table 12. Correlation analyses.

		factor1_peaceful_mean	factor2_malignacy_mean	factor3_competence_mean
factor1_peaceful_mean	Pearson Correlation	1	0.000	0.638 **
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.997	0.000	
	N	302	293	295
factor2_malignacy_mean	Pearson Correlation	0.000	1	0.005
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.997	0.933	
	N	293	309	301
factor3_competence_mean	Pearson Correlation	0.638 **	0.005	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.933	
	N	295	301	313

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

3.4.2. Identify the Equation that Relates the Correlated Dimension

Regression analysis was conducted with the variable factor1_peaceful_mean (dimension Peacefulness/Sincerity) as the dependent variable and the variable factor3_competence_mean as the independent variable (dimension Competence).

According to Table 13, approximate 40% of the variation in the dimension Peacefulness/Sincerity is accounted for by the variation in the dimension Competence [42].

Table 13. Model Summary.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.638	0.407	0.405	0.71107

The Anova test presented in Table 14 indicates that the independent variable explains the variation of the dependent variable (sig. < 0.05 and F value > 4). This indicates that the regression analysis is suitable.

Table 14. ANOVA.

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	101.524	1	101.524	200.791	0.000
	Residual	148.146	293	0.506		
	Total	249.670	294			

According to Table 15, the significance corresponding to the independent variable is <0.05, indicating that this predictor is very important in the regression. Also, the *t* value is >2, indicating the importance of this predictor.

Table 15. Regression analysis Coefficients ^a.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	<i>t</i>	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.385	0.182		13.090	0.000
	factor3_competence_mean	0.537	0.038	0.638	14.170	0.000

^a Dependent Variable: factor1_peaceful_mean.

The relation between the two factors can be revealed by the following regression equation:

$$\text{factor1_peaceful_mean} = 2.387 + 0.537 \times \text{factor3_competence_mean} \quad (2)$$

The value of the mean factor for the dimension Peacefulness/Sincerity would be 2.387 if the mean factor for dimension Competence was 0. If the mean factor for the dimension Competence

would increase by 1 unit, the value of the mean factor for the dimension Peacefulness/Sincerity would increase by 0.537 units. Investing in strategic approaches to increase values associated with features included in the Competence dimension would also increase values associated with features included in the Peacefulness/Sincerity dimension.

4. Discussion

This research presents the results of the study analyzing the dimensions of the City Brand Personality of a particular city in Romania, from a different perspective, comparing it to the approach already pursued by previous studies [2–16]. The study redefines the dimensions of the City Brand Personality of Iași, as resulting from previous research [1], from the relational perspective with other features as perceived in association with the image of the city and also from the inter-relational point of view between the resulting dimensions. Based on empirical research applied to 325 students from Iași, the study analyses these relations in depth.

As already stated, the present research relies on already identified dimensions from a previous study [1]: Peacefulness/Sincerity, Malignancy, and Competence. These results are in line with previous research, as all dimensions are commonly identified in City Brand Personality studies all over the world: Peacefulness/Sincerity [1–3,9,10,15,24,25], Malignancy [1,2,9], and Competence [1,9,15].

From a theoretical perspective, this research is original at least from the following points of view:

- Most studies approaching City Brand Personality focus on revealing the dimensions of the construct in particular contexts (various well-known cities in the world or cities from a certain country or geographical area) [1,2,4,10,13,15,16].
- No previous research has approached the inter-relation between resulting dimensions. Previous studies identified the dimension of City Brand Personality using the Principal Components Method, with Varimax rotation [7,9,10,13,15]. The factors resulting from this method are not correlated. This study presents the resulting dimensions of previous research for the city of Iași. The resulting dimensions were revealed using Factor Analysis, consisting of the Maximum Likelihood Method with the oblique rotation Direct Oblimin. This type of analysis may reveal correlated factors. This particularity allowed the researcher to identify potential relations between the resulting dimensions. Yet, there is an interest in analyzing relationships between dimensions. For example, a paper [4] analyzed the relationship between desired brand personality dimensions, using correspondence maps. Previous studies in tourism have identified influences and effects between constructs, such as City Personality, City Image, Destination Image, and Destination Personality [3,25].
- No previous identified study has approached the relation between resulting dimensions and other perceived features of the analysed city. Particularly, this paper investigates the relationship between City Brand Personality dimensions and city portrait features, specifically age, sex, and job. This is in line with Hofstede et al.'s [34] research applied to brand study. The novelty of this approach is using the personification technique for destination personality.

The implications of this research are both methodological and practical, as explained further in this section.

The most important methodological implication of this study is the algorithm offered in order to analyze in depth the perceived features of City Brand Personality that help the image of the city or deteriorate it. This research is part of a larger body of research. The entire algorithm consists of the following stages:

1. Documentary research—in order to identify the already existing items;
2. Qualitative research—in order to enrich the items list with personalized items for the analysed city;
3. Qualitative research—involving specialists in order to refine the items list;

4. Quantitative research—Factor analysis—in order to identify the dimensions of the City Brand Personality construct;
5. Quantitative research—Computation of the factors' impact—in order to determine each dimension's impact;
6. Quantitative research—Independent Samples *t* test and Discriminant analysis—in order to identify the possible connections between the perception of the City Brand Personality and the perceptions on particular city features;
7. Quantitative research—Correlations and Regression analysis—in order to identify the possible inter-connections between the resulting dimensions.

The entire study combines various research methods: perception tests, in order to identify the items included in the City Brand Personality integrated in qualitative analyses; the Q sorting method in qualitative analyses in order to refine the items list; and specific quantitative analyses as presented above.

The city of Iași is a very well-known city in Romania. Although it is not the capital of the country, it is traditionally considered to be the cultural capital of the country due to the past high concentration of poets, writers of any kind, and historians. Also, the oldest university in the country was built in Iași. On the other hand, the city is very populated by students, due to its important University centers. From this point of view, the city also has an image associated with youth and freshness.

Due to this particularity, at a certain point, this research divided the results into two groups: those who perceive the city as young (<40 years old) and those who perceive the city as old (>40 years old). The results could be interpreted based on two facets of this city: the traditional facet, seen from the historical perspective; and the fresh facet, seen from the students' populating the city perspective.

The first objective analyzed the impact of each dimension upon the entire construct. As revealed in the results section, the highest positive impact corresponds to the Peacefulness/Sincerity dimension and the only negative impact (which is also represented by the lowest impact) corresponds to the Malignacy dimension.

The dimension Peacefulness/Sincerity has the highest positive impact. The high impact highlights the fact that from these traits' point of view, Iași is best perceived, compared to other dimensions. Although it has the highest impact, the absolute impact is quite small, as it only reaches 22.25 points out of 100 maximum. This could lead to the conclusion that, although the city is best perceived from the Peacefulness/Sincerity point of view, overall, the city is not very well perceived. The items included in this dimension have the following means: tolerant mean = 4.57, solidary mean = 4.64, protector mean = 4.75, sociable mean = 5.33, opened mean = 4.98, helpful mean = 4.43, romantic mean = 5.27, perceptive mean = 4.70, attractive mean = 5.13, and familiar mean = 5.19. The items contributing most to the overall mean of the dimension (with means over 5) are: sociable, romantic, attractive, and familiar. This confirms the assumption that the city is still associated with these features, as it was traditionally associated throughout its history. All the other item means are rated as approximately 4.5–5, indicating that these items are positive but not highly perceived by respondents. This is an important practical implication for administrative managers of the image of the city of Iași. Specific medium and long term strategies could be implemented in order to increase the positive perception for features such as tolerant, solidary, protector, and perceptive.

The dimension Competence is composed of the following items, representing personality traits associated with Iași: hardworking, determined, independent, and entrepreneurial. A descriptive statistical analysis computing means of the items included in this dimension reveals that all items have very similar mean scores (hardworking mean = 4.62; determined mean = 4.79; independent mean = 4.71; entrepreneur mean = 4.66). A Paired Samples Test between all possible paired items reveals significant differences only between determined and hardworking items (sig. < 0.05). The dimension Competence is best highlighted by the item determined.

The dimension Malignacy has a negative impact. This result was expected, as the items included in this dimension (envious, proud, ironic, backbit) have negative connotations. Although the impact

is negative, the absolute impact is very small (−5.75 out of maximum 100). A descriptive statistical analysis computing the means of the items included in this dimension reveals that items have scores concentrated around the value of 4, which is a neutral value (4 is the middle on the 1 to 7 measurement scale). The items means are: envious mean = 3.57, proud mean = 4.15, ironic mean = 3.76, and backbit mean = 3.66. Except for the item proud, all items have means below 4, meaning that these features are considered to not highly match the city of Iași. On the other hand, the item *proud* is interpreted as both positive and negative, depending on the context. In order to understand the nature of the interpretation, a future analysis would be useful. A Paired Samples Test between all possible paired items reveals significant differences between the following pairs of variables: backbit—proud, envious—ironic, envious—proud, and ironic—proud (sig. < 0.05). The dimension Malignancy is best highlighted by the item *envious*, which has the lowest mean value (3.57). This variable lowers the value of the mean dimension. The dimension Malignancy consists of items with negative meanings. It is a positive aspect that this dimension has a negative impact on the overall construct. Yet, the absolute impact is very small. This could be an indication that strategic actions should be taken in order to increase the negative impact of this dimension. A high negative impact in this context is associated with a dimension that does not match the City Brand Personality.

Although most studies in previous research identify positive or desired personality traits for brand personality [3,4,10,15,24,25], this paper presents and analyzes a dimension with negative meaning: Malignancy. This result is in line with few previous studies [2,9]. Kaplan et al. [9] specifically explained that negative traits may be a good match to brands as they may be to humans as well.

As an overall conclusion and practical implication based on the results of objective 1, administrators of the image of the city of Iași should improve the perception of the following features: tolerant, solidary, protector, perceptive (Peacefulness/Sincerity), hardworking, determined, independent, and entrepreneurial (Competence). Specific proposals to improve these features are medium and long term strategies, such as: creating social campaigns on various tolerance and solidarity topics, creating specific regional projects to protect the residents of the city, creating specific programs to improve the jobs market in the area, and creating specific regulations to encourage small and medium sized businesses. This conclusion supports the practical standpoint underlined by Usakli and Baloglu [15], that city marketing strategies are necessary in order to underline the distinctive traits of personality in order to facilitate consumers' brand choice [9].

The second objective identified the connections between the perception of the City Brand Personality, represented by the resulting dimensions, and the perceptions on the age of the city. As explained above, the results are presented based on two groups: those who perceive the city as young (<40 years old) and those who perceive the city as old (>40 years old). Respondents who consider the city as relatively young (<40 years old) have a better perception of the Peacefulness/Sincerity and Competence dimensions. As a result, these two dimensions are better predictors of the perceived age of the city (described as young or old).

The items composing the two dimensions (tolerant, solidary, protector, sociable, opened, helpful, romantic, perceptive, attractive, familiar, hardworking, determined, independent, entrepreneurial) are naturally differently perceived for young and old persons. For example, a young person is perceived to be more romantic, hardworking, determined, independent, and entrepreneurial than an old person.

These results are consistent with the results of objective 1. The two dimensions with the highest impact are the best predictors of the perceived age feature (young/old) of the city.

This leads to the conclusion and practical implication that image city managers should focus on strategies that emphasize the young side of the city, such as projects involving various categories of students, promoting various types of student activities, creating and promoting jobs for young individuals.

The dimension Malignancy has a small impact upon the construct. This leads to the hypothesis that any relation between Malignancy and other city personality features is not important.

The third objective identified the relations between the resulting dimensions. A regression equation estimates the dimension Peacefulness/Sincerity based on the independent variable Competence. The relation between the two dimensions is positive and very strong. The more competent the city will be perceived, the more peaceful/sincere it will also be perceived.

These results simplify the final conclusions. As Peacefulness/Sincerity and Competence are strongly positively correlated, city image managers could focus on improving the features of the Competence dimension: hardworking, determined, independent, and entrepreneurial. This is also in line with the practical standpoint underlined by Usakli and Baloglu [15]. It turns out that improving these four items also improves the overall dimension of Peacefulness/Sincerity (tolerant, solidary, protector, sociable, opened, helpful, romantic, perceptive, attractive, and familiar).

The usefulness of the equation is that it eases the data collection process. The dimension Peacefulness/Sincerity consists of 10 variables, while the dimension Competence consists of four variables. In a future data collection process, data could only be collected for the dimensions Competence and Malignancy (four variables each). The dimension Peacefulness/Sincerity can be estimated with the regression equation. Practical implications are suggested for city managers of the city of Iași, based on the results presented in this paper. There is an obvious competition between touristic places [9,15] in general and cities in particular. For example, gaining international competitions such as the European Capital of Cultural or European Youth Capital are substantial financial sources and important promotional bases for the city. Understanding the dimensions of the city brand is crucial in the process of positioning the city, based on its distinctive perceived personality traits. In the particular context presented in this paper, city managers of the city of Iași should focus on strategies to improve the personality traits of hardworking, determined, independent, and entrepreneurial, as part of the Competence dimension.

In the sustainability concerns context, the strategies to improve the four features included in the Competence dimension should also imply the protection of the city's environment. As derived from the discussions above, the municipality could manage projects such as: involving various categories of students in increasing the green space of the city, promoting various types of student activities that protect the city's environment or sustaining the creation of jobs for young people in sustainability fields. The accent on sustainability and brand personality image would increase the positive overall image of the city.

5. Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to analyze in more depth the dimensions of the City Brand Personality of Iași, as resulting from previous research [1]. The objectives of the present study were to: (1) understand the impact of each dimension upon the entire construct; (2) identify the possible connections between the perception of the City Brand Personality, represented by the resulting dimensions, and the perceptions of particular city features; (3) identify the possible inter-connections between the resulting dimensions.

As presented below, the dimension Peacefulness/Sincerity has the highest positive impact, while the dimension Malignancy has the lowest negative impact. Respondents who consider the city to be relatively young rate the personality features better for the dimensions of Peacefulness/Sincerity and Competence. Competence and Peacefulness/Sincerity are strongly related. As a final conclusion, improving the perception of features included in the Competence feature leads to an improvement of the entire City Brand Personality.

The research presented in this paper supports the literature on City Brand Personality. The resulting dimensions are in line with the dimensions identified by several previous studies [1–3,9,10,15,24,25], including the dimension Malignancy, which has a negative connotation [9]. The recommendation to emphasize the desired, positive traits of the personality of the city is also in line with Kaplan et al.'s [9] research. Moreover, as a novel approach, the paper presents the impact

of each dimension upon the entire construct, the relation between each dimension and particular perceived city features (sex and age), and the inter-relations between the three dimensions.

The limitation of this research is the inappropriateness of using the questionnaire to collect data for other types of respondents. The researchers particularly analyzed the specificity of students that are not permanent residents, nor tourists. If the analyzed target would be a different category of respondents, the item list in the instrument should be re-investigated using the specific target perceptions.

Another limitation is that this scale of City Brand Personality can only be used for the city of Iași. To use this scale for a different city, Confirmatory Factor Analysis should be conducted first, in order to validate the dimensions for another city. In case the dimensions are not validated, a new study composing the entire algorithm presented above should be conducted.

As future research, similar studies could investigate the two other main categories of targets: permanent residents of the city and tourists. Comparative analyses of the resulting dimensions and the relations established between factors and with other features could be conducted.

Other future research could conduct a Confirmatory Factor Analysis for a similar sample in Iași and on a similar sample in another city in Romania, similar to Iași (for example Cluj or Timișoara which are not metropolises but are university cities like Iași). This entire analysis (exploratory and confirmatory analysis) could also be conducted based on perceptions of young individuals from a different country, in order to test and identify potential cultural and social differences.

Also, future research could include qualitative research with the purpose of properly investigating what certain types of activities developed in the city of Iași would increase the positive association with the four personality traits identified to be the key personality traits constituting the Competence dimension. In order to place the results in the sustainable development context, the research could specifically identify the types of sustainable activities that could be associated with the desired personality traits. Using quantitative scales for measuring City Brand Personality in accordance with qualitative projective techniques improves the depth of information, especially because individuals' choice of a specific destination is mostly irrational, but also emotional and subjective [43]. These results would be of great interest for administrative managers of the city of Iași.

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