

Branding Alexandria As An International Tourist Destination: A العنوان:

Glimpse Of Potentials, Policies, And Techniques In Light Of Tourists'

Perceptions

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# BRANDING ALEXANDRIA AS AN INTERNATIONAL TOURIST DESTINATION (A Glimpse of Potentials, Policies, and Techniques in Light of Tourists' Perceptions)

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#### Abstract:

A destination can be anything from a nation to a region, a resort to a city, an attraction to an event - or even the tour operators that help them to sell. Branding, in turn, defines a unique set of beliefs about a destination and the sort of holidays or breaks it offers - beliefs that are equally emotional and rational, make it stand out from the competition and make it feel just right for each of its many target audiences. Many factors will go into the creation of these beliefs. Moreover, to keep moving forward a destination may well be obliged to continuously adapt not just its product but also its image and positioning. And if it does not, it will surely lose out - to other destinations more alert to new opportunities and new emotional buttons waiting to be pressed. That is called Dynamic Branding, which in action means, first of all, continuous revolution and readiness to keep up to date by steady adjustments to positioning and brand image. But the sad truth is that many countries do the right things at home, but still fail to get the credit abroad. Literatures said that tourism - the acceptable public face of a national brand- and its promotion in whatever form (advertising, PR, websites, etc) - will have the biggest impact on attitudes to a nation. It is the easiest option to counter prejudice and to build warm and positive feelings to nations. Problem of Study: in general, although the concept of branding has been applied extensively to products and services, tourism destination branding is a relatively recent phenomenon. In particular, destination branding remains narrowly defined to many practitioners in Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) and is not well represented in the tourism literature (Levy and Ritchie, 2005, pp. 328-338; Baker, 2007). Regarding Alexandria, moreover, DMO executives generally lack creativity and innovation in marketing the city as international tourist destination and, as well as, understand the concept of destination branding by implementing only selective aspects of this concept, particularly logo design and development (Mekawy, 2009). Objectives of study: This study has two goals. First, it attempts to review the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of branding as conveyed by leading authors in the marketing field. Second, evaluate and prioritize the destination branding potentials and policies of Alexandria according to the view of its foreign and domestic visitors.

Key words: Destination, Branding, DMOs, Creative Cities,

Cosmopolitan City

### FIRST: STUDY BACKGROUND

### 1-I Concise Historical Background of Branding

Dating to 2005, it has been over 50 years since the topic of branding first appeared in the marketing literature. However, research relating to destination branding has emerged only since the late 1990s, with the first journal article published in 1998 and the first book published in 2002. Further, Gnoth (1998) claimed that the special track he convened at the 1997 American Marketing Science Conference represented the first meeting of practitioners and academics on the topic of destination branding (www.elsevier.com).

Chon's (1990) review of 23 frequently cited destination image studies found that the most

popular themes were the role and influence of destination image on traveler buyer behavior and satisfaction. At 2002, a review of 142 papers in the destination image literature from the period 1973-2000 was undertaken and findings were as the following explanation (Pike, 2002)

- 1- Relatively few papers attempted to measure the destination image for any specific travel context (in 23 papers).
- 2- The most popular region for study was North America (in 58 papers).
- 3- Over half of the papers (75) measured the perceptions of only one destination, without a frame of reference to any competing destinations.
- 4- The most popular type of destination of interest was countries which were analyzed in 56 papers, and followed by states (27), cities (26), resort areas (23) and provinces (11).

- 5- The majority of papers (114) used structured techniques to operationalize the destination image construct.
- 6- Less than half of the papers (63) reported the use of qualitative methods, involving consumers, at any stage of the research.
- 7- The most popular data analysis technique was factor analysis, which was reported in 41 papers. This was followed by T-test (21), Perceptual Mapping (21), Analysis of Means (20), Cluster Analysis (14), Importance-Performance Analysis (9), Repertory Grid (8), Mapping Techniques (3), Constant Sum (2), and Conjoint Analysis (1).

### 1-2 Destinations' Perspectives of Branding

Destination branding (DB) is defined as "selecting a consistent element mix to identify and distinguish a destination through positive image-building"; and has been considered synonymous with repositioning, image-building, and image-reconstruction of a destinatior (Park and Petrick, 2005).

### 1-2-1 Places Branding

A place has a nature and a substance different from a corporation and for this reason a country cannot be branded as a product. Since organizations can manage all aspects with respect to what they offer, while places cannot. It is a fantasy to think that we can change stereotypes, so investing in branding is a waste of precious city resources. Stereotypes do not have a static nature but a dynamic one and a place image can be

managed and controlled at a product and communication level. The following figure shows details about a place

brand management

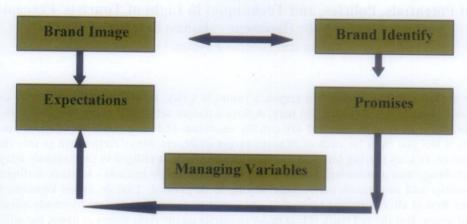


Figure 1: Brand Management Source: Freire, 2009, p: 9

Based on figure no.l, one can say that a successful destination brand articulates ambition, raises expectations, makes a promise of quality and keeps it. This by managing variables such as infrastructure, services, attractions and so on which are stated in figure 2 and are represented as the components of an entire destination.

### 1-2-2 The Integrated Management of Brand Dimensions

Integrated management of the destinations' brand is important to long term success. Planning, development, operations, and marketing must be managed for the whole destination (Young, Undated). More details are illustrated in the following figure.

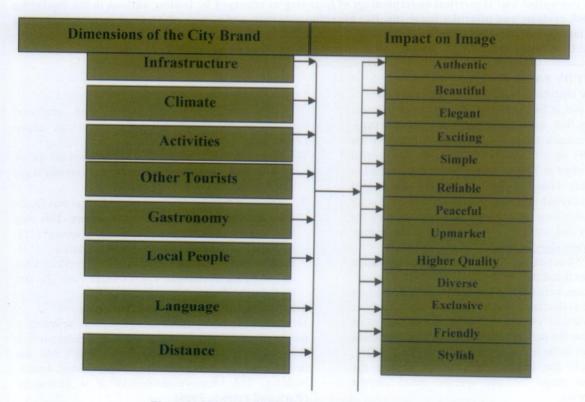


Figure 2: Conceptional Brand Dimensions & their Impact on Image Source: Freire, 2009.

The destination's brand captures all elements mentioned in figure 2, which make the destination experience and present it to its markets.

1-2-3 The7A Destination Branding System

The TDM 7A Destination Branding System addresses the special challenges of city branding. It follows a proven and systematic path to foster buy-in from the earliest stages by widely canvassing, engaging and energizing stakeholders. The 7A Destination Branding

System not only leads to highly effective marketing applications, but takes you beyond a logo and tagline to provide the catalyst for elevating all marketing efforts to levels of excellence and effectiveness that may not otherwise be possible (www.destinationbranding.com). A 7A Destination Branding System provides the strategic focus for destinations wanting to improve their tourism marketing and economic development performance. Moreover, central to formulating a successful brand

management strategy is the need to address four critical questions (www.destinationbranding.com):

- How can we be the preferred choice?
- · How can we be preferred over our competitors?
- What thoughts and feelings do we want to come to mind when people are exposed to our name?
- How can we gain maximum impact from our marketing resources?



Figure 3: The TDM 7A Destination Branding System Source: (www.destinationbranding.com ).

According to figure 3, there are seven steps to a community brand. These procedures are illustrated with explanation in the following table no.1.

Table 1: Steps of the 7A Destination Branding System We thoroughly review the world in which the brand must excel and establish the knowledge base and foundation for all that follows. We take an unbiased 360°view by thoroughly I. Assessment and Audit researching the issues relating to city strengths, weaknesses, internal and external customers, competitors, opportunities, community readiness, overall market trends and where the city's marketing performance and competitive advantage can be improved. We analyze and distill all of the research data and information we have gathered to set the foundation for claiming your razor-edge positioning, reveal the elements of the brand platform 2. Analysis and Advantage and define the Destination Promiseä to inform all aspects of the brand strategy. Importantly, we uncover opportunities, gaps and shortcomings. The brand alignment defines the relationship between the city's various visitor districts, organizations, and experiences. This addresses one of the greatest challenges for cities which is 3. Alignment to unite partners and optimize the messages and efforts across tourism, economic development, investment, relocation, etc. Armed with the brand platform and Destination PromiseTM, the focus moves to creatively 4. Articulate expressing the brand through the verbal and visual identity systems. These provide the designs, images, and words that will consistently project and dramatize the brand. It is now time to create the prototype applications and orchestrate the on-brand actions that will resonate with customers. Through clear usage guidelines, creative briefs and prototypes of 5. Activation brand applications, we set the directions for connecting with customers using one look, one voice and engaging common themes, images and words. True success will only come when your staff and partners are motivated, completely understand the brand, and know how to build it into a vital asset for the city or region. We will provide 6. Adoption and Attitudes you with the advice and strategies to ensure that the brand is effectively implemented and is well received, endorsed, and supported by opinion leaders, stakeholders, residents and partners. A brand management strategy which documents how the city's brand will be creatively communicated and delivered internally and externally will be completed. The manual outlines 7. Action and Afterwards how the brand will be launched, managed, and monitored to ensure the level of consistency, control and focus needed for long term vitality.

Source: www.destinationbranding.com

From reviewing figure 3 and table 1 mentioned previously, we can suggest some inquiries- in participating with Baker, (2007)- about the aims of each step in the way to brand a proposed tourist destination as follows:

- Step one: What our place in the world, and How to obtain the answers to this questions?.
- Step two: What will we be known for, and for brand positioning it takes an emotional edge to claim the most valuable real estate?
- Step three: What are the brand's relationships?
- Step four: How can the brand be expressed?.
- Step five: How will the brand come to life?
- Step six: How do we maximize the support of stakeholders?.

- Step seven: How do we keep the brand fresh and relevant?

### 1-2-4 The Role of Collaborative Decision Support Systems

Sustainability and collaboration in tourism planning highlight the impacts of tourism on ecology and community development; and allow for the involvement of stakeholders in the formulation, implementation, and adaptation of decisions as being mentioned in figure No.4. Additionally, information and communication technologies (ICTs) as GISs and Internet are utilized for tourism planning to benefit from their accuracy, visualization, analysis, data handling, and sharing capabilities ((Yigitcanlar, 2009).

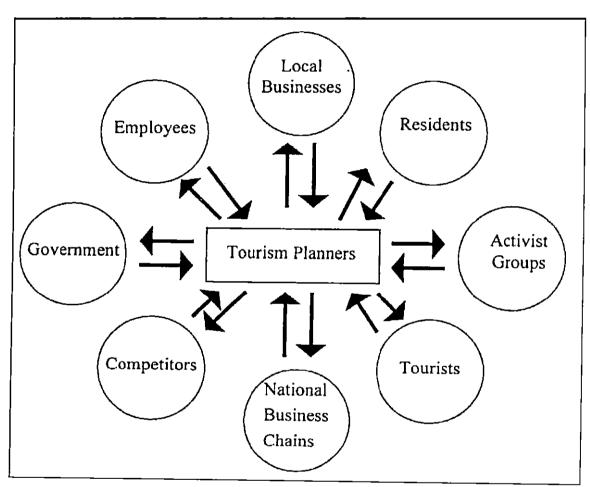


Figure 4: Stakeholders in Tourism Planning Process Source: (Sautter and Leisen 1999)

## 1-2-5 Lessons Learnt from Experiences of Branding Tourist Destinations

Glimpsing and going through some cases of real field studies connected with branding cities as international tourist destinations, the researchers implicited a group of issues, criteria and indicators that are beneficial to the branding business of destinations as follows:

## Experience (1): Augmenting Competitiveness of Cities through Tourism Planning.

It is crucial to integrate new concepts and technologies into the tourism planning process to increase the competitiveness of cities' cultural assets. Examples of

these concepts and technologies are: sustainable urban development, participatory decision-making (figure No.2), and information and communication technologies (ICTs) súch as the geographic information systems (GISs) and Internet; as primary tools of a planning decision support system through their accuracy, visualization, analysis, data handling, and sharing capabilities. Yigitcanlar, T. (2009)

Experience (2): Introducing the City in the Curriculum as a Creative Space to Enhance Cultural Tourism.

- In order to understand the cultural value of a city we should collect information about governance, the people, day life, cultural events ...etc.
- Inelmen, (2009): "Introducing the City in the Curriculum as a Creative Space to Enhance Cultural Tourism", Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, Turkey.
- Experience (3): Assessing the Competitive Profile of the City Using a Multidimensional Approach.
- It is important to take into account the evolution of diverse intersecting pertaining to tourism and non tourism mobilities. A spider plot was used in order to describe the competitive profile of Istanbul, London, Paris, Barcelona and Rome cities. *Minghetti, and Montaguti, (2009)*
- Experience (4): Creativity and Sustainable Urban Regeneration: Rethinking Cities for Cultural Tourism.
- The emblematic examples of clusters illustrated in place identify and sustainability of interventions and involvement of the population. The most mature experiences of creative cities show us two types of creative clusters: the cultural clusters and the cluster of events. Sepe, and Ditrapani, (2009)
- Experience (5): Strategic Planning, Place Marketing and City Branding.
- This study revealed the necessity to connect between strategic planning, place marketing, and branding of cities. Rizzi, and Dioli, (2009)
- Experience (6): Cultural Flagships and their Role in the Perception and Experience of Urban Areas for Tourism and Culture.
- It is important to take into consideration the visual components and the morphology of an area to understand its appeal to the tourist. As cities strive for globality, flagship developments play indispensable roles by signaling messages of economic development and cultural vibrancy. *Gutierrez, A. G.* (2009)
- Experience (7): Reimaging the City towards Globalization and Commodification.
- Places to visit are chosen through representations, those are sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices, such as films, choreographic movements, maps, painting, buildings, newspapers, TV's, magazines, records, and videos which construct the tourist gaze. Moreover, there is importance of the commodification of urban cultures and spaces through cultural promotion practices which takes shape at the intersection of culture industries and entrepreneurial capital. Dogan, E. (2009)
- Experience (8): Everyday Life as a Creative Experience in Cities.
- Some visitors deliberately seek out everyday life and the "real city". So, there is a value of the everyday and the presence of local people as marketers of authenticity. The distinctiveness of the everyday life provides a potential means for cities to compete through differentiation approach. *Maitland, R.* (2009)
- Experience (9): Examination of Festivals' Motivation and Perceived Benefits in Tourist Destinations.
- Festivals and events are usually considered as part of the cultural portfolio of destinations. They also present the cultural wealth of the places where these events and ceremonies are organized and shared with local and outside visitors.

- Yolal, M., çetinel, F., and Uysal, M. (2009) Experience (10): The Creative Role of Tourist Guiding to Brand Cities.
- Tourist guides are front-line professionals who, unlike any other tourism actors establish a close, intense and influencing contact with visitors and at the same time protect interests of sustainable cultural tourism. Intercultural communication, interpretation of local cultural heritage, living culture, values and cultural identity in general are key components of the contemporary guide's role.

Branislav, R. (2009)

- Experience (11): Cultural Institutions Facilitators for Foreign Tourists
- In order to create an appealing destination image it is compulsory to create an institutional system, to which all sorts of administrative and cultural organizations to be connected. All these should make the promises true, should present to tourists the symbols and motifs representing local culture as alive culture. Zbuchea, A. (2009)
- Experience (12): Heritage Hotels as a Tool of Stimulation for Branding Cities and Destinations.
- Heritage hotels "hip hotels" not only attract creative personalities as clients (design conscious tourists and professionals in creative sectors) but are themselves purveyors of indigenous creativity, helmed by creative managers, young emerging designers, artists and architects. Chang, T. C. (2009)
- Experience (13): Creativity, Culture, Tourism and Film Industries.
- The film industry has industry positively effect on tourism by increasing place recognition through the locations used in films and for cities that host film festivals. Durmaz, B., Platt, S. and Yigitcanlar (2009)
- Experience (14): The Role of Heritage in Shaping Perceptions about Locals and Consequently Branding Destinations.
- Cultural heritage is increasingly becoming a competitive resource of strengthening the local identity of a territory, to improve the visibility of a site and develop a cultural tourism of quality. Simeon, M. I. and Buonincontri (2009)
- Experience (15): Multiculturalism as a Competitive Advantage of the Creative City/Destination Space
- The creative city is a space where citizens can involve and engage themselves in creation of transformed place. This is very clear in the cosmopolitan cities. *Klicek, T. and Vuckovic, Z. (2009)*
- Experience (16): Relative Weight of the Attributes of a Destination's Attractiveness and a Plea for the Consideration of History in Branding Cities and Destinations
- When assessing a destination's competitiveness, it is important to be aware of the factors that influence it. In additions, all host communities own organic images which themselves have a history. So, the historical analysis can contribute to the depth of meaning in the imaging and branding process. Terziyska, I. (2009), Walker, M. (2009).

#### SECOND: METHODOLOGY

The researchers conducted on-site semi structured interviews with both international and domestic tourists whom are taken as research population. The study aimed

at revealing individual perceptions of visitors towards Alexandria's image and its tourist potentials. This study is expected to be an academic contribution to branding Alexandria globally. A hundred on-site interviews have been conducted. In order to ensure representation, a wide variety of visitors have been interviewed from different age groups and countries of origin (Alexandria) and in different locations from Egypt and other countries, resulting in understanding of their perception and experience of the area, their motivation to visit and the significance of the branding according to their view. The questionnaire consisted of two modules. The first one aimed at identifying the rational main aspects for travel to Alexandria. The second one was about respondents' assessment of the dimensions of branding affiliated with destination management organizations (DMOs) of Alexandria. Results of the study have been depended

#### THIRD: FINDINGS OF STUDY AND DISCUSSIONS

# 3-1: The Image of Alexandria and the Level of Knowledge about the City as the Capital of Arabian Culture 2010

The analysis has concerned: the behavior of visit of the residents and visitors and the items that they associate with cultural heritage in Alexandria. People encounter places through perceptions and images. This is matching up with Tayebi (2006, p: 11) who stated that there are

- Designing and distributing questionnaire forms on affiliated visitors of the city.
- Almost half of interviewed subjects are Egyptians, whatever they are residents of Alexandria or of other governorates, and the rest number is of foreigners.
- The Mean and Standard Deviation findings resulted from SPSS program. Moreover numeric values depending on Likert Scale are given for respondents' answers and choices as the following classification of alternatives:
  - Very agree = 5
  - Agree = 4
  - Neutral = 3
  - Disagree = 2
  - Very disagree = 1

three processes influence the building of a place mental construction, what they call "mental map"; which includes the planned intervention, the way in which people or others use specific places, and finally through various forms of place representations such as films, novels, painting, news, and so on.

Table 2: Results of SPSS Related to the Image of Alexandria

Iltem	Mean	Standard deviation
1- Alexandria is a historical city	4.06	0.70
2-Alexandria is a cosmopolitan city with different cultures atmospheres.	3.90	2.57
3-Alexandria is a city where one can do shopping.	3.85	2.70
4- Alexandria is a city with unique natural beauties and smooth climate.	3.80	0.74
5-Alexandria is a city where one can find local delicious cuisine	3.72	0.78
6-Alexandria is a city with cultural mega-events such as the Arabian Capital of Culture 2010.	3.70	0.82
7-Alexandria is a city where one can rest and has relaxation	3.67	0.88
8-Alexandria is a city where the entertainment and night life is good	3.63	2.03
9- Alexandria is a modern city	3.39	1.96

Based on the results derived from table 2, we can display the following facts and arguments:

- 1- The image of Alexandria and the level of knowledge about the city is investigated through the Likert-Type Scale, and the respondents' means accompanied with the standard deviation values about some criteria that are expected to shape and constitute the image of Alexandria. Also, we can depend upon them in the international branding of the city.
- 2- The results of visitors' perceptions of Alexandria' image show that the residents, Egyptian and foreign tourists relatively value tangible cultural heritage (e.g. architecture and historical buildings, museums, and bibliotheca of Alexandria) over intangible cultural heritage (local traditions and customs). Nevertheless, and based on respondents' points of view, cultural events and festivals are highly valued
- as physical aspects of heritage, and local traditions and lifestyle are rated as important by at least quarter of respondents.
- 3- Moreover, all aspects and indicators of image stated in the above mentioned table are important and significant for brand marketing of Alexandria as a destination of international cultural tourism.
- 4- Most of the interviewers consider the importance of the Alexandria's cultural heritage. In definite, All respondents stated that there is great importance that cultural heritage is representative of the local identity of Alexandria.
- 5- The main visitors and residents are people with a moderate socio-economic stratum and aged from 20 to 50.

- 6- Most of visitors and citizens of Alexandria see that the protection and enhancement of Alexandria heritage is a responsibility of all.
- 7- Two-Thirds respondents indicated that nature; culture; architecture, museums, and historic sites; traditions, art, crafts; and atmosphere are priorities of the visit to Alexandria. Safety, hospitality, accessibility, prices, accommodation, entertainment, service quality, local food and drinks, festivals, and daily life came in the second rationale to make sightseeing in Alexandria.
- 8-According to interviewees, it may be said that the major techniques of branding Alexandria are as shown as follows:

- Mega-Projects: examples include iconic buildings, culture-led urban regeneration projects, theme parks and flagship museums.
- Mega-Events: such as capitals of culture; fairs and exhibitions; international events of art, science and sports.
- 9- As being the Arabian capital of culture 2010, it is crucial for Alexandria that its visitors and residents learn about its cultural assets and form a common memory and consciousness about the city. This will make the event would be reaching its real aims.

# Second: Dimensions of Branding Affiliated with Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) of Alexandria. Table 3: Results of SPSS Related to the DMOs in Alexandria

Table 3: Results of SPSS Related to the D	Mean	Standard deviation
1 There is an assessment of the capacity of the regulatory, economic, and voluntary tourism framework to brand Alexandria as international destination.	2.72	0.96
2-There is a determination of proposed economic, social, cultural, and environmental implications, which may result from branding Alexandria as international tourist destination.	2.59	0.91
3- There is setting of Alexandria' branding mass media, training, and public meetings.	2.55	0.91
4- There is official master planning for branding tourism in Alexandria.	2.52	0.87
5- There are adopting and facilitating connected with exchange of branding information, skills, Knowledge and technology among all Stakeholders responsible for tourism in Alexandria.	2.48	0.78
6- There is providing for the participation of all sectors affiliated with branding tourism in Alexandria.	2.41	1.02
7- There are determination and prioritizing of Alexandria' potentials pertaining to tourism branding process, and measuring progress in achieving standards and indicators of benchmarking of destinations.	2.38	0.90

- 1- From table (No. 3), it is obvious that
- 1- most of answers are close to the alternative (Neutral), and it is certained with comprehensive agreement from respondents.
- 2- The less moderate value of all means that lays between the alternatives disagree (2) and neutral (3) indicates that destination management organizations of Alexandria have taken weak steps of the progress in the international branding formal procedures and techniques pertaining to Alexandria as a tourist destination. This result is assured with the overwhelming agreement of opinions represented by the deviation values which are less than number one in most responses.
- 3- Nearly, half of interviewers do not know organizations that are responsible for promotion, development, and enhancement of branding cultural heritage in Alexandria.
- 4- Respondents proposed some tasks and duties upon the Alexandria's DMOs in order to brand the city as an international destination. The most valuable suggestions are addressing the following points:
  - Making the significance of the heritage accessible to the host community and visitors.
  - Management of tourism in ways that respect and enhance the heritage and living cultures of host communities.
  - Formulating plans and policies to develop detailed, measurable goals and strategies relating to
    the presentation and interpretation of heritage places and cultural activities, in the context of
    their preservation and conservation.

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Appendix (1)

### **Questionnaire Form**

### Dear Our Interviewees of Alexandria's Residents and Visitors

It is our honor to present your Excellency this form, which is affiliated with the research paper titled;

"Branding Alexandria as an International Tourist Destination: a Glimpse of Potentials, Policies, and Techniques in Light of Tourists' Perceptions"

The main goal of the study pertains to evaluating the current situation in the Alexandria, according to criteria of branding tourism in destinations. Your answer and co-operation will highly be respected and will only be used for scientific purposes.

First: The Image of Alexandria and the Level of Knowledge about the City as the Capital of Arabian Culture 2010

<ul> <li>Alexandria deserves to be labeled as International branding tourism destination</li> <li>Fully agree ( ) agree ( ) neutral ( ) disagree ( )</li> </ul>
2- Alexandria is a historical city.  Fully agree ( ) agree ( ) neutral ( ) disagree ( ) Fully disagree ( )
3- Alexandria is a modern city.  Fully agree ( ) agree ( ) neutral ( ) disagree ( ) Fully disagree ( )
4- Alexandria is a city where the entertainment and night life is good.
Fully agree ( ) agree ( ) neutral ( ) disagree ( ) Fully disagree ( )  5- Alexandria is a city where one can do shopping.
Fully agree ( ) agree ( ) neutral ( ) disagree ( ) Fully disagree ( )
6- Alexandria is a city with cultural mega-events such as the Arabian Capital of Culture 2010.  Fully agree ( ) agree ( ) disagree ( ) Fully disagree ( )
7- Alexandria is a city with unique natural beauties and smooth climate.  Fully agree ( ) agree ( ) neutral ( ) disagree ( ) Fully disagree ( )
8- Alexandria is a city where one can find delicious cuisine Fully agree ( ) agree ( ) neutral ( ) disagree ( ) Fully disagree ( )
9- Alexandria is a cosmopolitan city with different cultures atmosphere.  Fully agree ( ) agree ( ) neutral ( ) disagree ( ) Fully disagree ( )
Second: Dimensions of Branding Affiliated with Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) of Alexandria.
10- There is an assessment of the capacity of the regulatory, economic, and voluntary tourism framework to brand Alexandria as international destination.
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