



ARTBAT FEST AS A CULTURAL BRAND OF ALMATY

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Olga Vesselova
director of Annual Contemporary
Art Festival ARTBAT FEST.
E-mail: pr@cultura.kz.

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Abstract

Having lost the function of industrial centers, modern cities increasingly bear the function of entertainment service for residents and tourists. In this connection, cultural events which are capable of attracting the attention of a broad audience supersede the role of city-forming enterprises. The culture comes up to the forefront as an urban brand. How does Almaty feel in this new environment of nowadays? Which way is better to choose for the city to confirm its status of a cultural capital? How to avoid the fate of being a simulacrum of the cultural center of the country?

Keywords: simulacrum, the image of the city, public art, street art, performance.

Olga Vesselova

Simulacrum; a copy without an original in real life; a semiotic image without the object it shall refer to. When choosing identities or development strategies every contemporary city is at risk of being an illustration to the notion determined by Georges Bataille. As the system enforces its ideas it might be challenged by its own elements. The most efficient way to promote any idea is to create a better inner environment for its development.

Being considered the cultural center of the country, the city of Almaty shall not only declare the present achievements but shall provide facilities for personal creative fulfillment of its citizens. Just then the cultural brand of the city will find its relevance and support from Almaty residents, as afterwards they will be visible beyond Kazakhstan.

In accordance with the established definition a brand is a set of images, associations, emotions, values and

features of some particular subject. Essentially a brand stands for the specific qualities of this subject. The notion of a brand burst into the city life from marketing and advertising, the spheres connected to the commodity-money relations. Does it mean that even the cities compete with each other for the residents, for the attention from the travelers, for their eagerness to spend cash there?

Indeed, the contemporary scientists concur that nowadays the cities are no longer acting as industrial centers but providing services for free time of citizens and tourists. Currently the cities of the world are in competition in quality, variety and wide range of leisure activities first of all for their residents and then for temporary visitors.

Therefore a brand of the city can be defined as something between city perception from within and city impression from without. These two meanings of the city affect each other, change each other mutually and define the brand itself [1].

Internal perception of the city is nothing but the identity of the city; and external impression is the image of the city. Consequently in order to have a better understanding of the brand of the city it is essential to look into these two notions. It seems easy to define an image of the city. According to Kotler, a place image is “a simplification of a large number of associations and partial information related to a place. It is a product of one’s mind trying to process and select the existing information...” [2]. The image of the city is a combination of representations of a city, which are strong in the public perception.

In turn the identity of the city is the way the city residents understand and perceive their city and identify themselves with it.

Therefore from the marketing point of

view the city turns into a huge corporation seeking proper positioning among its employees and clients. Such positioning would make employees more efficient and motivated to stay, as well as it would show the appeal of the services and goods produced by this machine to the clients.

What can the identity of Almaty rely on at the moment? After losing the status of the capital, Almaty is now identified as the cultural and economic center of the country.

There are more than 200 organizations rendering cultural and recreational services including 16 museums, 30 libraries, 13 theaters, more than 100 concert halls and entertainment organizations, clubs and cultural centers; 17 cinemas, 8 public parks, a circus and a zoo.

Meanwhile Almaty-2020 City Development Project by the city mayor’s office states that ‘the efforts of the city authorities shall seek to increase the number of city residents visiting entertainment events. There shall be regular tours of prominent world art ensembles and experience exchange with other cultural organizations overseas. Annually there shall be several events hosted to reflect cultural and historical identity of the city and to be a possible iconic event (based on case studies of the Carnival in Rio de Janeiro, Biennale in Venice, etc.) [3]. Besides, according to the Program one of the goals of Almaty Mayor’s office is to create a worldwide recognizable brand of the city by 2020.

This strategy is quite common in the contemporary world. According to Denis Vizgalov, a geographer, economist and head of the Living Cities Company, many cities position through artistic creativity. Consequently, the city strategy is aimed at recruiting more creative people as their residents. Special attention shall be given

to the experience of Berlin, Bilbao and Perm. Speaking of recent examples Tallinn should be noted for choosing a strategy aiming at enviable cultural scene. The logo of the Estonian capital consists of a city outline resembling a sound wave painted in cold tones. Another city following similar trend is Manchester. Its main proposal is the best dance clubs worldwide. They had started a big target program to move people from the city center to the outskirts in order to reach their goal. It required enormous amounts of compensation to the locals moving to new areas, but anyway they had done it. It attracted all the young people of England to rush there on Friday, have fun and leave back home after the weekend [4].

Annual Contemporary Art Festival ARTBAT FEST is one of the major cultural events in Almaty. The festival was initiated by Igor Sludskiy and Vladislav Sludskiy in 2010; since then the festival is well known among both local and foreign audiences.

Anna Tolstova, a famous Russian art critic, describes the festival in a Russian newspaper *Kommerstant* as follows: "Almaty hosted contemporary art festival ARTBAT FEST 6, which was organized by Eurasian Cultural Alliance Public Association. Public art and street art, exhibitions in museums, galleries and temporary venues, street performances, outdoor concerts and plays, lectures and art readings in cafes have turned the former capital of Kazakhstan into something like a biennale city... ARTBAT FEST is not a simple creative urban development, but a project giving significance to the city life" [5].

During six years more than 100 artists and curators from 15 countries of the world have joined the festival and presented more than 200 various pieces of contemporary art.

On the one hand ARTBAT FEST allows the city residents to have a world high quality cultural product inside Almaty, and on the other hand it is an opportunity of creative fulfillment for both prominent masters and young artists of contemporary art of Kazakhstan. Meanwhile the festival is a way to make a statement about Kazakhstan on the world arena declaring it a country with active culture and art scene. One of the most important elements of the festival is its educational platform available for anybody interested or participating in contemporary art projects in Almaty.

Referring to the cultural branding of Almaty and mentioning ARTBAT FEST it shall be noted that it is one of the many examples of the urban cultural components. The amount and cover of such events shall be bigger and broader in order to crown Almaty the cultural capital of Kazakhstan. It is essential to contribute to proper atmosphere and environment for cultural development of the city, so the city shall be more concerned about better conditions to maintain private initiatives in the sphere of culture. Sufficient opportunities shall be available to the citizens to develop their creative potential. In this particular case the identity and inner perception of the city will lead to the external linking of the city to art and culture. That's when Almaty will be able to escape the fate of being only a simulacrum of a cultural capital.

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Illustrations:

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2. Andrei Lyublinskiy. Red man. Public art installation. ARTBAT FEST 2011, Zhibek Zholy St., Almaty, Kazakhstan
3. Pierre Laurent. Ersatz. Public art installation. ARTBAT FEST 2014, Panfilov St., corner Tole Bi St., Almaty, Kazakhstan
4. Tatzu Nishi. On the top berch. Public art installation. ARTBAT FEST 2015, Almaty-2 Rail Station, Almaty, Kazakhstan
5. Timofey Radya. The more light there is the less you can see. Public art installation. ARTBAT FEST 2015, Dostyk Av. Corner Karasai Batyr St., Almaty, Kazakhstan

ARTBAT FEST АЛМАТЫ МӘДЕНИ БРЕНД РЕТІНДЕ**Ольга Веселова**

ARTBAT FEST Жыл сайынғы халықаралық заманауи өнер фестивалінің директоры (Алматы, Қазақстан).
E-mail: pr@cultura.kz.

Аңдатпа

Заманауи қалалар өндірістік орталықтардың қызметін жойып, көбіне өзіне тұрғындар мен туристердің бос уақытына қызмет етуді жүктеп алады. Осыған байланысты, кең аудиторияның назарын аударатын мәдени оқиғалар қала үлгісіндегі кәсіпорындардың ролін алмастырады. Мәдениет - қала бренді ретінде басты назарға ілігеді. Алматы заманның осы жаңа жағдайында өзін қалай сезінеді? Өзінің мәдени астана дәрежесін дәлелдеу үшін қала қандай жолды таңдау керек? Тек қана елдің мәдени орталығы ғана бейнесінен қалай құтылуға болады?

Тірек сөздер: симулякр, имидж, қалалар, қоғамдық-арт, стрит-арт, перформанс.

ARTBAT FEST КАК КУЛЬТУРНЫЙ БРЕНД АЛМАТЫ**Ольга Веселова**

Директор Ежегодного международного фестиваля современного искусства ARTBAT FEST (Алматы, Қазақстан).
E-mail: pr@cultura.kz.

Аннотация

Утратив функции промышленных центров, современные города все чаще несут на себе функции

обслуживания свободного времени горожан и туристов. В связи с этим культурные события, способные привлекать внимание обширной аудитории, заменяют собой роль градообразующих предприятий. На первый план выходит культура как городской бренд. Каким образом себя ощущает в Алматы в этих новых условиях современности? Какой путь городу лучше избрать для подтверждения своего статуса культурной столицы? Как избежать участи быть лишь симулякром культурного центра страны?

Ключевые слова: симулякр, имидж города, паблик-арт, стрит-арт, перформанс.