

## From Strategic Planning to City Branding: Some Empirical Evidence in Italy

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**Abstract:** In a globalized world where places compete with each other, the image of the city plays a crucial role to attract tourists and investors, and to make citizens stay with satisfaction and avoid their moving away. By exploring the connections and implications between theory and empirical outcomes of some Italian cities as to its attractiveness for tourists and investors, this paper intends to offer a useful overview both for academicians and practitioners. The purpose is not only to go through the extensive literature on strategic planning place marketing and city branding, but to focus specifically on some Italian cases (Turin, Genoa, Venice, Piacenza), where the application of the above mentioned instruments has provided interesting results to compare.

**Keywords:** Strategic planning; Place marketing; City branding; Events hosting; Tourism and foreign direct investment attraction.

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**Resumen:** En un mundo global en el que los sitios compiten entre ellos, la imagen de la ciudad juega un papel crucial para atraer turistas e inversores, y para conseguir que los ciudadanos se queden satisfechos y evitar su desplazamiento. A través de la exploración de conexiones e implicaciones entre la teoría y los resultados empíricos obtenidos en varias ciudades italianas en relación a su atractivo para turistas e inversores, este artículo pretende ofrecer una útil visión general para académicos y profesionales. El objetivo es no sólo el de revisar la extensa literatura de la planificación estratégica en marketing y el proceso de marca de las ciudades, sino también es el de concentrarse específicamente en algunos casos italianos (Turín, Génova, Venecia y Piacenza), donde la aplicación de los instrumentos mencionados ha proporcionado resultados interesantes para comparar.

**Palabras clave:** Planificación estratégica; Marketing de sitios; Marca de ciudades; Patrocinio de eventos; Atracción de los fondos extranjeros de inversión directos de turismo.

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## Introduction

In the contemporary globalized economy, cities are in great competition and try as best they can to attract investments, business, residents and tourists, and to improve citizens' satisfaction. In order to deal with this competition, which puts under pressure not only enterprises but also territorial areas, they use different tools: strategic plan adoption, place marketing strategies and city branding actions, as well as event hosting. Where all these elements are well managed and governed, the potentials to obtain good results are definitely higher.

Some Italian cases have been chosen to exemplify such practices, tools and techniques, outlining relevant topics for further research, critical reflections and discussions about the measurement of relevant results and outcomes. In the second part of this paper, devoted to empirical data, there is an attempt to evaluate what is described theoretically in the first part. The cities taken into consideration - Turin, Genoa, Venice and Piacenza - are different on dimensions, history and processes undertaken, but it is interesting to try to define among these case studies the ones which obtained the best results. That is why some findings have been provided in order to compare and evaluate the goals reached in terms of attraction of investments and tourists, and in relation to the level of residents' contentment.

From a methodology point of view, open interviews to each case's operators have been made, local administrators belonging to the economic and tourism sectors and development agencies have been contacted and met, and existing documents have been analysed (i.e. strategic plans, advertisement campaigns, etc). On a more quantitative level, each case has been studied through data comparisons in order to estimate some policies' effects, mainly through tourism and Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) attraction provided by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (the Istat) figures.

Another aspect that has been pondered on is the weight of creativity on re-thinking the design of the city. The immaterial and

intangible elements play a crucial role for a successful image renewal. According to a cross-fertilizations of themes, where many different fields of studies combine together, cities can change their former look, become vibrant hubs and thus attract the class Florida (2000) called "creative". Nowadays, more than ever, what is really important is no longer the purchase and consumption of goods, but rather the aesthetic consensus obtained through strategies to create and promote a new identity built on symbolic dimensions and shared emotions.

## Strategic Planning and Place Marketing: Triggering the Process

In the framework of such complex processes, urban planning plays an essential role through its local actors who define visions and lines to change and improve a city. Strategic planning has substituted the traditional government approach with governance, an instrument to improve competitiveness by building a shared perspective among the local stakeholders on economic and social levels (Lindblom, 1975; Friend & Jessop, 1977; Faludi, 1984). Aiming at stimulating and coordinating - according to a bottom-up framework - the city development processes, all actors of the local community are involved in order to reach a consensus (Bryson, 1988; Houghton & Counsell, 2004). Strategic plans, characterized by medium- and long-term visions and grounded on a voluntary basis, have taken various forms according to the different situations where they were produced (Perulli, 2004; Borelli, 2005). When it was first adopted - San Francisco was one of the very first American cities to carry it on between 1982 and 1984 -, strategic planning belonged almost exclusively to big metropolitan areas facing a need for international re-positioning and improving performances. In Italy, it has been applied a couple of decades after its application in other European cities (Barcelona, Lille, Bilbao, Lyon) and it has taken into consideration not only large but also middle-size cities.

In this paper, some interesting Italian cases have been chosen to illustrate the different kinds of planning they have un-

dergone and the instruments they have decided to use according to the overall vision of every single city.

**Turin** has been one of the first Italian cities to adopt a strategic plan (2000), triggering a virtuous process on different levels. Drawn up in collaboration with both public and private representatives, it outlines six strategic guidelines – with objectives and actions – and eighty-four projects, aiming especially at integrating the metropolitan area within the international system. Since then, Torino Internazionale is the association that has been implementing the process. It encompasses a lean structure with few officers, but with a large number of collaborators and many private and public partners. Its mission is to promote strategic planning methods, monitor its actions, organize specific workshops, communicate the plan's results and encourage the citizenship participation. The mission of the second strategic plan (2005-2010) is to transform Torino into a knowledge-based society.

Being a strategic plan's instrument, the more successful is place marketing, the better designed is the plan itself. Place marketing borrows some typical enterprise marketing actions (i.e. swot analysis, benchmarking, targeting and positioning techniques, etc) and applies them to the urban context. According to this idea, places, like products, are ideally "sold" to tourists and investors who become like "customers" and choose a place among different options and possibilities. Of course, places are much more complex than products, as they gather and intertwine complicated symbolic, intangible and historical elements that cannot be merely considered as mere objects (Ashworth & Voogd, 1995; Schmitt, 1999). It is not just about selling; cities deal with their past, their cultural identity and historical backgrounds, and at the same time with their present, while they are striving to gain a cosmopolitan character that nowadays they cannot do without (Kavaratzis, 2004; Anholt, 2007). Having an important heritage is not enough to ensure success; today it must be rationally contextualized and well planned through marketing strategies. Mastering place marketing requires knowledge not only of business or social sciences, but also

an understanding of the total complexity of the place product, such as its geography, history and local economic system. Place marketing tries to put the basis of this dialogue between the local and an essential international openness and to make supply and demand meet. Good place marketing contributes to create a favourable location to attract capitals, talents and investments, and to limit the risk of "commodification".

Unlike Turin, **Genoa** did not really have a strategic plan but started a programme shared and coordinated by public actors and private stakeholders, and carried on precise place marketing actions within the whole process. A specific Committee was chaired by the Mayor and included representatives of the Region and Province, the University, the Chamber of Commerce and the Port Authority. The management in all of its aspects was deferred first to a society called Porto Antico, then to an agency named Waterfront & Territorio, which became in 2008 the Urban Lab with the task of monitoring the urban activities and city promotion choices.

Along with the Piedmont city and Milan, Genoa has been for a long time one of the vertices of the Italian "industrial triangle". In spite of its important story (as a Medieval naval power that controlled routes from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Black Sea, and as an independent Republic) and ability to change and survive, the Genoese economy lost competitiveness and collapsed in the '80s; many companies closed down and the port became more and more obsolete. Local authorities and policy makers understood how crucial was the need to change and give to the city a new identity, assuring and reinforcing the citizens' self-reliance. They planned to re-establish the past importance of the port in the everyday life of people who weren't used to consider the port as part of the city because of its bad conditions and critical situation. That is when it was decided to re-discover Genoa's waterfront: the former location for maritime trade and production (shipyards, steel production, oil refinery) turned into a space for recreation and leisure. Being the most important space to be re-vitalized, the harbour was chosen as the place in which to build a big Aquarium. This was just the first step of a broader process of transfor-

mation that was taking place. Then, the massive grain silos were demolished leaving free space to culture and *loisir*: Such a demolition symbolized the end of the industrial era letting the pace to a new economy, and the necessity for aesthetic purposes. A wider policy of re-qualifying public spaces and restoring facades was adopted, according to the idea of connecting and integrating the old city centre with the harbour, which were previously set apart. Both places intended to become lively centres for people's life. The transformation of the old port intended to give to the city a new vibrant waterfront. One of the first persons who triggered the new Genoa vision was the internationally-known Genoese architect Renzo Piano, who made some proposals; some of them became real ("Bigo", "Bolla"); others did not ("Affresco" project), mainly because of monetary and environmental issues. Even without having been approved, Piano's "Affresco" vision had the positive effect to push forward the debate on the city's future (Gastaldi, 2003). Actually it became the starting point to trigger a real change; many of the actions that have been carried out in the last decades began from that idea.

The scope of strategic planning is usually very wide. **Venice's** plan, for example, includes the promotion of a city as an international and cross-over centre of culture, a hub of technology, a core of creativity. It aims at reinforcing the internal cohesion, assisting potential investors and enhancing export. Venice has drawn its strategic planning also focusing on former productive areas to turn them from abandoned conditions to aesthetic re-use, such as Marghera (Edensort, 2005; Trigilia, 2005). Venezia 2004-2014 strategic plan envisages the city as a metropolitan centre and dynamic crossover; it is articulated in line with structural conditions and strategic lines, combining environment, society and the economy.

Even smaller and minor cities have set off their development process. **Piacenza** has started its strategic process by introducing an institutional planning instrument: Patto per Piacenza. In 2000 the convocation of the General States produced results that were carried on by the Strategic Committee who divided such materials in four areas of

action. In 2003 the Patto was awarded with an official acknowledgment as a best practice in the Forum for the Public Administration, and in 2004 a similar appreciation was granted to the Territorial Marketing Plan. In 2005 a new phase started and led to the second edition of such agreement named Piacenza 2020. It focused mainly on the experience of "Learning by planning" and "Learning by evaluating" through the involvement of youth and schools in the participative process of decision-making (Ciciotti & Rizzi, 2005).

In all cases, strategic plans turn out to be a sort of a tool box where not only place marketing but also branding techniques find their essential and complementary place.

### **City Branding and Events Hosting: Building a New Identity**

Like place marketing, branding has also been used as a product marketing technique and not just a simple advertising tool. From the '90s place branding has been introduced in order to make cities (as well as nations and regions) memorable and recognizable (Twitchell, 2005). Thanks to its images and slogans, these places tend to stick in people's mind and create a direct link between expectations and reality. The etymology of the word "brand" comes indeed from the act of burning something in somebody's mind. The image and the logo of a city are the summary and simplification of beliefs, ideas and impressions that people have of it. Choosing an identifying representation and a coherent logo is not an easy task. Cities include so many different areas of interest that it is almost impossible to come up with a single identity (Kavaratzis, 2005). In order to make this operation successful, only a few of the existing social and cultural symbols of the city must be chosen. Deciding on the right brand can help increase the status of the city as a tourism destination to visit, as a residential place to live in or as a business space to invest in. At the same time the risk for a generalization and an excess of simplification is pretty high. There must be a few powerful and simple ideas that have been created, and on which the branding strategy has to be based in order to capture

the unique qualities of the place. It is not just about a logo; everything around the city must also remind of those inspirations, coordinating and modulating them so that they become appropriate for different kinds of audiences. Once a city decides which brand it wants to have, then it will try to make its appearance, services and all messages consistent and coherent with the chosen brand identity. The action of branding has two different steps: an inside-out one, which consists on defining how the city itself wants to be perceived by the world, and an outside-in one, which is related to the citizens' perception (Morgan, Pritchard & Pride, 2007). Of course these two aspects are strictly connected, as branding is not just a loose marketing activity, but something holistic that influences the whole place, its inhabitants and people who come across it. Especially inhabitants need to recognize and identify themselves with the image transferred. Just as images tend to re-create and re-shape a city, events can help engage the renewal process and they can play a functional role in creating an appealing and distinctive image for a city. There are different ways to make a place distinguished: through testimonials (famous people or characters from the past, such as Shakespeare for Stratford-upon-Avon, Dante for Florence or Gaudi for Barcelona) or through flagship constructions and iconic buildings (for example the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao or the Bury Tower in Dubai). Klingmann (2008) speaks of "brandscape" referring to the so-called archistars' structures as real "landmarks" able to promote and communicate a city and turn it into an attractive place to go and visit.

Event hosting is considered another opportunity for local, national and especially international promotion, mainly thanks to the attention paid by foreign TV, newspapers, etc. Even just bidding for the Olympic Games can provide prestige and promotion by the media. Once the event is over, what is sometimes underestimated is the aspect of legacy, which is extremely important. It is vital to plan the effective post-event use of the newly-built facilities, in order to help translate physical changes into wider regenerative benefits (Bobbio & Guala, 2002; Dall'Ara, 2009). The Barcelona Olympic

Games in 1992 are an example of tourism boosting and regeneration activation. They were just the starting point of a long process that literally has been changing the city and its image since then. Other important events have been staged on the Catalan city in the following years, such as the Cultural Forum in 2004, supporting the aim to maintain an international status once the Games were over.

Thanks to a consistent strategic plan and an efficient place marketing view, **Turin** succeeded in hosting the 2006 Winter Olympic Games (Guala, 2007). A well defined communication program was also started for that event, and this helped to change the image of the whole city. Turin paid a great attention to designing the promotional strategies and to promoting its new look both on a national and international level; its advertisement campaign has been conceived both in Italian and in English, under a few simple and precise ideas and pay-offs, dealing with the concepts of passion ("Passion lives here"), movement ("Always on the move") and discovery spread all over the city. These kinds of advertising campaigns are not just traditional or conventional promotional vehicles, but they also focus on feelings, becoming sorts of "emotion-providers".

Recently communication resorts to narrative and rhetorical techniques in order to facilitate the construction of local identities; advertisement makes use of stories emphasising not only origins, continuity, tradition and timelessness, but also originality, suspense and surprise effects. Such symbolism helps to convey certain images able to stick in people's mind, because of their richness and density of meanings. Narrative strategies insist on discovery and revelation aspects (Baker, 2007; Galucci & Poponessi, 2008). The use of such ideas is both inward and outward-directed, as it helps to build and strengthen local identities and to create positive reputations and expectations in tourists, visitors and potential investors.

Marketing techniques, along with city branding actions, are often used to transform a city, especially the ones which have undergone industrial crisis (Amin & Thrift, 2002). Because of its economic specialisation on production of cars, Turin has been

for a long time one of the main and the oldest Italian industrial cities and considered a one-company-town. Fiat deeply affected the economic, social, cultural and political development both on a local and national level. The industrial crisis that occurred in the '80s induced a process of re-orientation of the city's profile by adopting policies based on services and new activities. The old specialization on the industrial sector changed into more and more differentiated offers. In order to consolidate its new profile, the city decided to adopt policies and investments aiming at the promotion of the cultural dimension. This change caused also a social transformation; from being a city where the working-class experienced activism, strikes and political movements, Turin has now become able to attract the class that Florida called creative, and it has seen in the last decades a number of foreign high-tech companies coming to locate and invest. Such a turn deeply influenced also the perception of the city itself, not only through having hosted the Olympic Games in 2006, but also through having won the title of Capital of Design in 2008. Turin has demonstrated remarkable achievements in the field of design. With a good grasp of the economic impact of its design industry, Turin has shown its abilities in many different design sectors, not only in cars, but also in innovative furniture, architecture, photography and visual arts. In such a post-fordist context, knowledge and innovation are recognized as basic growth motors able to give new chances even to cities that experienced the industrial crisis; that is why all these aspects have helped in spreading worldwide a new image of Turin, influencing tourists and the investors' gaze. Besides the Olympic Games and the Capital of Design nomination, the city has been obtaining other international opportunities, such as the World Convention of Architects in 2008, and it has become the steady location for important events such as the International "Salone del Gusto" (for high quality food and wine), the Torino Film Festival, the International Book Fair and the Biennial of Emerging Artists. All these elements, along with a rich cultural offer made of different museums and art galleries, have attracted people from Italy and abroad, just

as innovative and technological sectors have caught the attention of foreign enterprises.

Another example of an industrial city that has changed after the economic downturn is **Genoa**, which re-shaped its image thanks to some events staged in the last decades. Some of them have been able to foster an overall development already started and to enhance the social and cultural dimensions. International initiatives are especially expected to produce and trigger the urban renovation, at the same time strengthening the local identity. With the waterfront renovation process, hosting big events seemed to be the right way to promote a new image of the city and collect the extra funds that were needed. In 1992 "Colombiadi" - the celebration of 500 years since Columbus' arrival on the American continent in 1492 - represented the first opportunity to start modifying its industrial image. A few years later, in 2003, the G8 political forum for the governments of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, UK and USA has been another source of funds to go on renewing the city. But the most important move forward was the 2004 European Culture Capital nomination, which was a vital opportunity to make the city more coherent with its new profile of activities and to promote further strategic actions for tourism and culture. The European Culture Capitals programme started in 1985 as an official program of the European Community. The now called European Cities of Culture programme results in the nomination of a couple of cities every year to become the centre of many different activities and initiatives (theatre, music, dance, arts, expositions, etc), drawing the international attention. In 2004 Genoa also won the "Grand Prix Pubblicità Italia" as the best public communications campaign of the year and the Globe Award for the Best New Tourism project Worldwide, a prize yearly awarded by the British Guild of Travel Writers.

In spite of its strong image, **Venice** also felt the need to update its image; re-thinking the Carnival has meant modernizing a tradition, with the double result of keeping traditions' lovers and attracting young people. Experience theories have pointed out the importance of the personal

involvement, just as if the visitor is an actor on stage, playing an active role (Florida, 2002; Mikunda, 2004; Fabris, 2008). People need to experience uniqueness but in updated ways; sometimes popular stereotypes can become a limit for succeeding in changing an image of the city that does not fit the tradition anymore. As a paradox, a vast heritage turns out to be a burden to carry. Such a difficulty to overcome traditional labels finds its solution in new branding proposals focused on keywords such as dynamism, multiculturalism, sensation and emotional appeal, cosmopolitanism and variety of choice. That is indeed how Venice acts by choosing to modernize the Carnival which was already a strong brand of the city. Yet, "Sensation" – that is how the revisited Carnival was named by the agency Venezia Marketing & Eventi – divides the Serenissima in six districts, each of them referring to a sense (smell, touch, sight, hearing, mind and imagination). This is a way to read the tradition in a modern way. New forms of planning are adopted to start a multi-faceted regeneration process, focused on both physical renovation and social spaces re-qualification (Currid, 2007; Codeluppi, 2007). The agency understood the power of sensations and emotions experienced through senses; "Love" – the collective kiss in piazza San Marco every New Year's eve – is another example of such meaningful concept put on stage. Events have to be unique, authentic and memorable as the direct involvement of the audience makes the difference; the spectator becomes actually the actor (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Pike, 2008).

Without having a real brand and a big event to refer to, **Piacenza** has carried out its advertising campaign using different elements that have been chosen to communicate Piacenza's identity focused on different aspects of its attractiveness: food and wine taste (*Piacenza bella da gustare*), high quality of life (*Piacenza bella da vivere*), arts and culture discovery (*Piacenza bella da scoprire*). These elements have also become a point of strength for a minor and more marginal city such as Piacenza (Baker, 2007). As far as events are concerned, Piacenza hosted many important festivals (*Carovane*, *GeoFest*, *Le fabbriche della Felicità*, *Festival della Teologia*, *Fes-*

*tival del Diritto*) without really obtaining any real international outcomes. For a few years Piacenza has had a development agency too (Agenzia di Marketing Territoriale) but with scarce results. Now, because of its geographical position, many efforts are directed to obtain some benefits from the Milan Expo 2015.

In all cases, promoting a new image and its values brings in potential investors and tourists because of the city's distinctive advantages.

### Evidence in Measuring the Effects of Place Marketing and City Branding Actions

Being an attractive city in terms of tourism is different to being attractive in terms of investments. The characteristics are substantially different, as the concepts of quality of life and relax do not easily go along with the idea of accessibility and pervasiveness of infrastructures. Yet, there are cities showing good ability in attracting both tourists and investors, especially those which worked hard on re-building their image and identity. Some cities have benefited from the value of the image's change more than others.

In order to analyse the effects of place marketing and city branding's policies, some elements are taken into consideration, such as population growth and attraction of new residents, tourists and visitors, and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

As far as attraction of investments, the first important cases in Europe were Wales and Ireland in the '70-'80s and some New Industrialized Countries, which either tried to increase their critical situations or improve their economic systems; in these areas transnational corporations found market advantages, such as in terms of labour costs. In Italy, policies to attract foreign businesses started about a decade ago through specific agencies on a national (Sviluppo Italia), regional (Ervet in Emilia-Romagna) or local (Agenzia Nord Milan, later named Milano Metropoli) level with different kinds of result for each pilot action. Turin has an important structure called CEIP (Centro Estero per l'Internazionalizzazione), formerly ITP (Invest Turin Piedmont), established by the Region, The Chamber of Commerce, Uni-

versities and local associations, operating to enhance the competitiveness and attraction of foreign enterprises. In spite of Turin's marginal geographic position within Italy, the city is actually strategically located at the international level, being at the crossroads of important European axes of development and traffic corridors (i.e. Lyon), and it has a good-quality natural environment (the Alps). These elements help both tourism and investments' attrac-

tion.

The attraction of tourist flows acts differently; in spite of the general crisis, some Italian destinations keep on having good results, such as some regions (Trentino Alto-Adige, Sardegna) and some cities of art (Rome, Florence, Venice).

Here follows a comparison among the four Italian cases taken into consideration according to tourism arrival and overnight stays in the last five years:

<b>Arrivals</b>	<b>Genoa</b>	<b>Turin</b>	<b>Piacenza</b>	<b>Venice</b>
2000	1,097,689	1,011,486	112,571	6,070,356
2001	1,064,169	1,037,740	163,473	6,225,752
2002	1,112,710	1,050,047	176,868	6,015,634
2003	1,122,861	1,161,924	178,238	6,022,374
2004	1,238,740	1,209,786	192,495	6,281,113
2005	1,173,277	1,584,614	210,072	6,626,108
2006	1,233,289	1,436,657	232,990	7,081,495
Average	1,148,962	1,213,179	180,958	6,331,833
Var.% 2000-2006	12.4	42.0	107.0	16.7
<b>Overnight stays</b>	<b>Genoa</b>	<b>Turin</b>	<b>Piacenza</b>	<b>Venice</b>
2000	3,157,134	3,071,864	324,367	28,988,801
2001	3,204,825	3,346,680	404,053	30,394,654
2002	3,212,551	3,320,722	454,347	29,326,115
2003	3,168,784	3,561,319	531,933	29,038,119
2004	3,306,076	3,938,875	578,127	28,945,641
2005	3,147,043	4,784,399	596,722	30,275,185
2006	3,321,438	5,070,179	574,514	32,025,961
Average	3,216,836	3,870,577	494,866	29,856,354
Var.% 2000-2006	5.2	65.1	77.1	10.5

Source: Istat, 2008

Table 1. Tourism arrivals and overnight stays

Each city shows a different ability of attraction, from Venice with its 6 million of arrivals every year (30 million overnight stays) to Piacenza with its 181 thousand of arrivals (494 overnight stays). Turin and Genoa are placed in the middle; the first with 1 million 200 thousand arrivals and the latter with 1 million 100 thousands arrivals on average in the period 2000-2006.

As a matter of fact, the characteristics of the four cities are extremely different from the historic, artistic, natural and cultural

points of view, as well as from the perspective of their fame. Yet, it is interesting to notice Piacenza and Turin's extremely positive flow trends; Piacenza has just started its tourism promotion policies and Turin has taken advantage of its good campaigns planned during the Olympic Games.

Another way to analyse the policies' effects concerns the attraction of foreign investments. Turin turns out to be the most attractive city out of the four, whereas Piacenza and Venice result pretty weak.



2006	Population	Arrivals per inhabitant	Foreign Direct Investments (thousands €)	FDI per 100 inhabitants (thousands €)
<b>Genova</b>	875,732	141	1,028,244	117
<b>Piacenza</b>	273,689	85	22,873	8
<b>Turin</b>	2,236,941	64	13,892,644	621
<b>Venice</b>	829,418	854	117,220	14

Source: Istat, 2008

Table 2. Foreign direct investments

By comparing the data about tourists and FDI attraction with the other Italian provinces (103 on the whole), some “specializations” refer namely to Turin and Venice. On the one hand, Turin, following Milan – the main Italian economic attractor at the international level – is able to attract foreign firms and capitals. On the

other hand, Venice attracts many tourists because of its history and famous charm; its position comes just after two cities well-known for being winter seaside destinations (Bolzano and Rimini). Piacenza is near the average of the other provinces, whereas Genoa shows good tourism and investments performances:

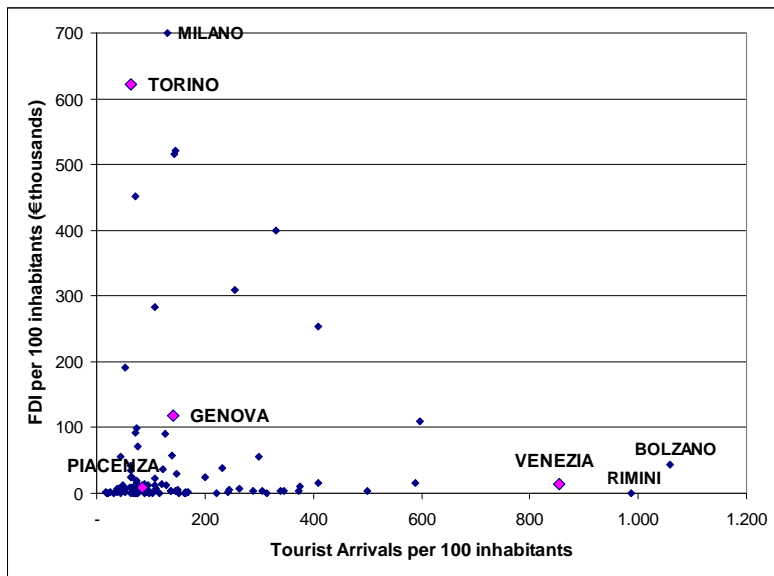


Figure 1. FDI and tourists arrivals (2006 values weighted by population)

**Conclusions**

The multiple and fragmented aspects of the contemporary cities need to be well coordinated and clearly communicated; that is why urban and territorial areas that succeed in differentiating themselves are the ones able to manage different complementary planning tools. Place marketing and city branding turn out to be more successful when they are carried on within the

framework of strategic planning; all procedures concern a multidimensional combination of activities, negotiations, decisions and efforts that take place under the wider umbrella of the strategic planning process. With the idea of strategic planning comes along the concept of governance, which encompasses horizontal cooperation, bottom-up management and coordination of all local powers, energies and actors and goes against the hierarchical, top-down govern-

ing styles. Similarly, events seem to leave a more positive legacy when they are used to accelerate or facilitate the accomplishment of existing plans. When they are included within wider strategies, well planned processes have high possibility to ensure and provide the basis for cities' economic and social development.

Even though strategic planning, place marketing and city branding are the common tools used to develop and enhance a city, it is important to apply them in the appropriate way as each situation is unique and what works in a place may not work elsewhere. In order to be successful, strategic plans and marketing actions should be based on the local distinctive characteristics and provide a long-term systematic involvement. In spite of all the differences among the four cases taken into consideration in this paper, the empirical evidence shows how cities which have been undergoing the industrial crisis, such as Turin and Genoa, have improved their appeal and changed their look by taking advantage of events hosting and by conceiving a new image to communicate. That is where the best results in terms both of tourism and investments' attraction are obtained and that is also where creativity and culture are mostly employed to build an innovative image. The city is the scene where good changes and exchanges are possible, according to the nowadays need to reconfigure and reinvent itself, by keeping the best from the past but looking at the future.

These considerations and findings, which are still to be widened and investigated, could represent interesting and useful implications for academicians, but especially for city managers and policy-makers both at national and international levels. Yet, measuring the effects of place marketing techniques and city branding actions is still an open question essential to evaluate urban policies.

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