

CityBloggers as Cities Branding builders

CityBloggers como generadores de Marca de Ciudad

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Resumen

Un City Blogger o Influencer es un embajador de marca de una ciudad. Propone una imagen de ciudad creativa y sugerente. En el contexto mundial de competencia por atraer talento, las ciudades intentan generar el branding más potente. Esto es fundamental para pasar el primer filtro sobre la decisión de moverse a una ciudad (el emocional, basado en la percepción o imagen exterior). Posteriormente se evaluará la rentabilidad en prestaciones y económica (filtro racional). Ver Modelo de Ciudad Atractiva para el talento en www.attractivecities.com. Los citybloggers son fundamentales a la hora de atraer visitantes temporales (turismo) o permanentes. Además, los citybloggers aportan una visión externa creíble de la ciudad, aportan consejos y trucos para descubrirla, generan contenido sobre ella y pueden servir como proveedores de feedback constructivo o para ayudar a gestionar un periodo de crisis, por su capacidad de influir. En la investigación se evalúa la presencia real en redes sociales de las top 175 ciudades del mundo y se obtiene una correlación consistente con su branding estudiado en el modelo anterior. Invertir en la generación de branding virtual es una forma asequible y constante de generar imagen de ciudad, ganar notoriedad y atraer talento.

Abstract

A City Blogger or Influencer is a city brand ambassador. It proposes a creative and suggestive city image. In the global context of competition to attract talent, cities try to generate the most powerful branding. This is essential to pass the first filter in the decision to move to a city (the emotional one, based on perception or external image). Subsequently, the profitability in benefits and economics (rational filter) will be evaluated. See the Attractive City Model for talent at www.attractivecities.com. City bloggers are essential when it comes to attracting temporary (tourism) or permanent visitors. In addition, citybloggers provide a credible external vision of the city, provide tips and tricks to discover it, generate content about it, and can serve as constructive feedback providers or help manage a crisis period, due to their ability to influence. In the research, the real presence in social networks of the top 175 cities in the world is

evaluated and a consistent correlation is obtained with their branding studied in the previous model. Investing in the generation of virtual branding is an affordable and constant way to generate city image, gain notoriety and attract talent.

Palabras Claves

City blogger, Ciudades inteligentes; Ciudades Atractivas; Identidad, Branding

Keywords

City blogger, SmartCities; Attractive Cities; Cities Identity; Branding

Statements and Declarations. Compliance with Ethical Standards

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1. Why CityBloggers

Cities are fiercely competing to attract talent (Ondiviela, 2021). Choosing a city to live in is a complex human decision. It means a compromise between two forces: one emotional component which is mainly driven by the City Awareness / Branding, and a rational component (quality of life, cost of living). The emotional component always goes first in the decision process (First, let's choose the world cities I like, or I have that perception!). New generations put well-being first, then economic conditions. It seems crucial to invest on City Branding to make it more appealing for all kind of visitors (temporary = tourists) and permanent or new inhabitants (mainly talented millennials). The Gross Domestic Product of many cities is highly reliant on tourism. In many circumstances, it typically ranges between 10 and 20 percent, with leading position by Paris (with 36%) (Statista, 2023). The weight of GDP is even heavier in territories such as Macau or The Maldives. The archipelagic state accounted for 66.1% of its GDP to the economic flux brought in by foreign visitors. (Knoema, 2019)

An increase in the tourism of a city can stimulate its economic growth through the generation of employment and an increase in the revenues generated. However, tourism is beneficial from more than a financial standpoint. A substantial touristic influx can be optimal for infrastructure development and cultural preservation, allowing governments to protect their heritage and sources of public attraction.

So, what can a city do to market itself to the wider public?

The traditional lens of marketing in the tourism industry includes advertising campaigns, partnerships, and collaborations with travel agencies around the world. A newer and less standard approach to promoting a city consists in leveraging an individual's influence on social media to captivate a wider, particularly younger audience.

City bloggers play a significant role in city branding for various reasons. Here are some of the ways they contribute:

- **Local Insights:** City bloggers often provide localized insights into a city's culture, food, architecture, events, and lifestyle. These authentic insights can shape a city's brand identity and provide a more human and relatable perspective on what the city has to offer. (Promoty, 2023)
- **Content Creation:** They are content creators who consistently produce articles, photos, videos, podcasts, etc., related to the city. This content feeds into the digital presence of a city and can be shared widely, thereby boosting the city's visibility and brand awareness. (Haycock, 2020)
- **Influencers:** Bloggers, especially those with a large following, act as influencers. Their opinions and experiences can significantly influence their followers' perceptions about the city, hence shaping the city's brand image. See (Hootsuite, 2023) for main influencers list.
- **Community Engagement:** Bloggers often engage with their readers through comments, social media interactions, and even meetups. This community engagement can foster a sense of belonging among the audience and

strengthen the city's brand. (What Works Cities 2023) has a blog on how to use social media for community engagement.

- **Tourism Promotion:** As mentioned before, City bloggers often highlight the best spots for tourists, including hidden gems that may not be well-known. This not only boosts tourism but also shapes the city's brand as a tourist destination. (Break the Ice, 2021) has a blog on how to promote local tourism.
- **Feedback Channel:** City bloggers can also act as a feedback channel for the city's administration. They can bring out the issues that locals face and suggest improvements, hence contributing to the city's development and in turn its brand. (Urbantravelblog, 2023) provides feedback on 75+ cities plus all info you need to explore them.
- **Crisis Management:** During times of crisis or negative publicity, city bloggers can play a role in managing the city's image by providing accurate information, countering misinformation, and highlighting the city's response efforts. (Chan, 2012)
- **Brand Advocates:** This is the most important. Over time, city bloggers become brand advocates, presenting the city in a favorable light, and helping to counter any negative narratives. (Kavaratzis, 2004). This is possible because they build a level of trust with their audience, which can be critical in shaping perceptions about the city. This perception is crucial to gaining emotional awareness about the city, first step to gain attention from talented citizens, who will then explore that city as potential destination for living. Improving City Branding is fundamental in the current globalization era. Cities rely on anything they own that drives uniqueness and utilize all kind of methods to improve their reputation and sustainability (social, economic and environmental) to attract capital and human resources (investors and talented citizens) (Shirvani Dastgerdi & De Luca, 2019)

1.1. What is a CityBlogger?

A City Blogger or City Influencer is a brand ambassador for a city. Just like certain brands use recognized faces on social media to promote their new Spring-Summer collections or newest perfume release, City Bloggers cover top events or new restaurant openings in a particular city. The interesting twist is that most city bloggers do not live in the city they talk about, but it's clear they love it!

A clear example of a City Influencer is the Instagram account titled *@nybucketlist*. With almost two million followers, this social media platform offers a variety of activities in the metropolitan area of New York. These cover a wide range of budgets and interests, from kayaking the Hudson River to indulging in a 12-course Omakase meal at the best Japanese restaurant in the city.

1.2. Which Cities have already implemented this strategy?

Some main cities and city bloggers are:

New York City, USA: Scott Lynch, a contributor to "Gothamist", covers local news and events around New York City. Tracy Kaler is a well-known blogger who runs "Tracy's New York Life", a lifestyle and travel blog focused on New York City.

London, United Kingdom: Julie Falconer runs "A Lady in London", a travel and lifestyle blog covering different facets of life in London and travel stories around the world. Selena, the blogger behind "Selena The Places", shares her experiences and adventures in London and beyond.

Paris, France: Lindsey Tramuta is the author of "Lost in Cheeseland", where she writes about food and life in Paris. Carin Olsson, a Swedish blogger and photographer, runs "Paris in Four Months", where she documents her life and experiences in Paris.

Berlin, Germany: Adam Groffman runs "Travels of Adam" and frequently covers Berlin's unique culture and travel experiences. Mary Scherpe, the founder of "Stil in Berlin", covers lifestyle, food, and fashion in Berlin.

Melbourne, Australia: Lucy and Mick run "Hunting for George", a lifestyle blog based in Melbourne, featuring design, travel, and more. David Hagger, who runs "The World Loves Melbourne", shares his experiences about food, travel, lifestyle, and events in Melbourne.

Tokyo, Japan: Rei Shito is a Tokyo-based street style blogger and photographer known for her blog "Style From Tokyo". Maki, the author behind "Just Hungry", often shares her culinary experiences in Tokyo.

Cape Town, South Africa: Natalie Roos runs "Tails of a Mermaid", a travel blog that frequently features Cape Town and South Africa. Dawn Jorgensen, who runs "The Incidental Tourist", often blogs about her travel experiences, with Cape Town being a significant part of her narratives.

Los Angeles, USA: Jessica Doll, the blogger behind "Hej Doll", provides insight into the lifestyle, travel, and design scenes of Los Angeles and beyond.

Sydney, Australia: Alex Adams from "Eating Sydney" offers a thorough look at the food scene in Sydney.

Rome, Italy: Natalie Kennedy runs "An American in Rome", where she shares her experiences of living in Rome and travel tips for Italy.

Barcelona, Spain: Justine Ancheta is an experienced blogger who provides travel tips, cultural insights, and unique experiences in her blog "Latitude 41" about Barcelona.

Amsterdam, Netherlands: "Amsterdam Foodie", run by Vicky Hampton, is a well-known blog covering the food scene in Amsterdam.

Chicago, USA: Jessica Murnane is the creator of "One Part Plant", a Chicago-based blog focusing on plant-based recipes and lifestyle.

Bangkok, Thailand: Mark Wiens is a well-known food blogger who explores the culinary scene of Bangkok on his blog "Migrationology".

Mumbai, India: Roxanne Bamboat shares her travel and food experiences in Mumbai and beyond on "The Tiny Taster".

Lisbon, Portugal: Lucy Pepper co-authors "Eat Portugal", a food blog giving insights into Lisbon's food scene.

Istanbul, Turkey: Katie Parla, a Rome-based food and beverage writer, often explores and writes about Istanbul's food culture on her blog.

Buenos Aires, Argentina: Laura Bronner's "Eternal Expat" often covers Buenos Aires, including culture, food, and expat life.

Moscow, Russia: Julia Shinkareva's "Moscow Places" gives a look at Moscow from a local's perspective, covering lifestyle, food, and events.

Dubai, UAE: Debbie Rogers' "Coffee Cakes and Running" is a Dubai-based blog covering food, fitness, and lifestyle.

Toronto, Canada: Yashy Murphy's "Baby and Life!" covers family-friendly attractions, restaurants, and events in Toronto.

And as part of the HashtagtheWorld report (Statista, 2018), the top 10 most hashtagged cities in 2017 in Instagram were (in this order): London, NYC, Paris, Dubai, Istanbul, Miami, Los Angeles, Barcelona, Moscow, Chicago.



Figure 1. Photo by Andrea Piacquadio: Pexels. Free-use.

2. What will be studied? Hypothesis.

2.1. City Bloggers can help promote the city's reputation by sharing their experiences and opinions about the city on social media platforms.

Social media is a boom with 48% of the population actively participating in. These users do not only follow friends or family, but 54% of them also follow other brands or bloggers to influence their style, and opinion or just out of curiosity (Dopson, 2022).

The impact that social media may have on city branding is notorious. Globalization is a phenomenon that enriches people and cities. However, it also boosts competitiveness to attract human resources. In this competitiveness, the city's image gains importance to maintain and attract people by creating a unique image and identity that can be globally recognized (Shirvani & De Luca, 2019).

The good reputation of any city impacts brands that might be associated with that specific city's culture, which brings more economic growth to it (Simeon, 2016). It is a bidirectional trade. And not only this but also this improved reputation can help create a positive image of the city and attract more visitors and businesses. Insights from data state that consumers trust influencers' recommendations as 61% of consumers relate the purchase to content previously seen in social media (Dopson, 2022).

After understanding the need to focus on social media to boost the branding of a city, like any marketing campaign, identifying the audience to approach is also fundamental. What might be something difficult to analyze is the target group to approach, and accordingly, what kind of influencers could help accomplish the stated goal. The language and other cultural aspects of the city blogger may impact the public that they can access. It is important to understand if you want to attract national people (locals) or if you would like to target people worldwide. Some videos have the option to be translated. Most people now speak English, so perhaps English speakers are best suited (Fritz, 2023).

Not only the audience, but also Mayors should understand in which group of cities they are (by affinity) in their global search for talent, and then, what cities they are competing with. Regarding the target audience, an investigation was carried out to group the 175 cities under study in this article by similarity, through an unsupervised model without any human bias or subjective opinion (Meneses, 2022). These results could be helpful to understand the cluster in which to focus, what is the main spoken language, and what segment could be considered the target group. As an example, the United States is competing against the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Therefore, they should consider ways to be more attractive and generate content to retain Americans mainly from the United States. On the other hand, the UAE generates content in English to target Americans. Also, If Madrid is not competing against China, then there is no need to translate videos or add subtitles in Chinese. These are some ideas about how to identify who could be a good blogger or influencer in your city.

The research mainly focuses on how to attract and retain talent to the cities and become the place where they would like to develop their full potential, and talent, and its definition describes the target group for this research. Talent is defined as a person

who might contribute to the development of the city, by applying their skills and knowledge at the same time they can develop their potential and take advantage of the opportunities and services the city offers. In this case, the focus is on young talent, from 20 to 38 years old, since they are constantly influenced by social media and bloggers. Also, they constitute most of the talent they openly consider options regarding the city in which to develop their lives. This segment has few family ties. At the same time, the sense of belonging to a place, or roots, is decreasing in influence due to globalization. With this in mind, it would be easier to start defining the social media strategy to follow, the next steps, and decide on who would be the most suitable bloggers to enhance our city branding.

2.2. What social media to use.

Any city must have an icon, a symbol, something that represents it and makes an important element of its identity. In this way, just as the right symbol or image can evoke a powerful magnetism, the city could also have a virtual presence that produces the same effect on the people who live there (sense of belonging) or who visit it. (Draper, 2022). The impact of social media, nowadays, is outstanding. One video can be viral in a few hours as the song Butter by the South Korean band BTS which reached 100 million visualizations in approximately 20 hours (Cox, 2023). The reach that can be achieved with social media is immense. Arguably the main sources today are Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, all used by brands as marketing tools and as the main workspace for bloggers and influencers. It is said that YouTube is even more profitable than the other two for creators, but in the context of cities, each case would have to be explored, since there are very different opinions. However, most social media creators are prioritizing Instagram, so it might be more beneficial for a city to reach out to a creator on this platform. Furthermore, the chosen platform depends on the audience related to the campaign purpose, since, as an example, TikTok's target group is the younger generations (Ben, 2023). These strategic decisions are very important.

There is a demographic study on social networks, so that every time you determine where your target group is, you know the best way to reach out to them. Facebook is by far the most used, with around 2,963 million monthly active users. Furthermore, the age range is greater since 29.99% of the users are between 25 and 34 years old, which falls within the age range estimated by the research at hand (Barnhart, 2023). However, at the same time, Facebook's target group is older than Instagram's or TikTok's. Instagram is the largest group of users between 18 and 24 years old. This indicates that TikTok might not be the most suitable for the purpose we are looking for, since the average age is lower than our target, but the opposite situation could also produce a negative effect since the percentage of people active on social networks decreases with age (Dopson, 2022). Finally, people tend to spend more time on Instagram than on Facebook, so the probability of bumping with your product, in this case, the content of your city, might also increase (Barnhart, 2023).



Figure 2.- Social Media Mix 3D Icons.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Social_Media_Mix_3D_Icons_-_Mix_-_2_%2828188286432%29.jpg . Free-use.

Also, it is important to analyze and understand the purpose pursued. Each campaign might be different depending on the goal to achieve. On Instagram, the travel industry shows the largest affinity with an engagement rate of 1.41% (largest) (Truyols, 2022).

Finally, it is also worth mentioning the fact that there are countries where these platforms are banned. As an example, Instagram is banned in China, and in this research, there are some cities in this country (Neal Schaffer, 2023). This is something to take into account. If your target group is in China, you would like to consider other social media networks for this purpose.

2.3.City bloggers can also help create a sense of community among residents by sharing information about local events, businesses, and attractions.

Promoting our cities as if they were brands should be now the order of the day (Muinonen & Kumar, 2019). But, even more, city bloggers might also influence the way residents feel towards their cities. City bloggers can help residents feel more connected to their city and more interested in its success. Residents might be delighted to discover new things about their cities. Sometimes we tend to only take tours whenever we travel to other cities, but we do not know as much about our cities because we never thought about it or took the time to explore it. We think that it is something most likely tourists would do. It is true that some time ago, it was by our parents or histories told by our grandparents that we got to know better where we lived, but nowadays with the ever-changing world, globalization and because people now move easily between cities, we might miss the history of the place where we were raised. Whenever you know more about the history of something, the more you like it.

Therefore, it might create among citizens a greater sense of belonging and a greater interest in making their city the most attractive one in the world.

It is important to hold happy citizens to retain talent. Given the free movement of capital, it is easier for people to move from their cities to seek new opportunities.

It is a fact that we will never stop learning and at the same time, we will never stop learning new things even from our cities. There are lots of places or attractions people have not visited in their cities that might be interesting for them. There might be old pubs where elderly people used to go for entertainment, but we do not know. Or maybe the new attractions we have missed are now advertised. Therefore, even for the residents of a city, the investment in city bloggers might be beneficial.

Social media is a marketing strategy that interacts closer to the viewer or customer, which makes their opinion more reliable. As stated by a Professor in Public Relations, “social media accounts can ‘humanize’ cities. By interacting with individuals or by using a language that reflects the local characteristics, cities can establish unique identities for themselves” (Sevin, 2016).

Also, with a good city blogger with whom the citizens feel identify, they may get closer and contribute to the image of the city by giving their own opinions on social media. City branding should be taken into account by politicians as the basis for pursuing not only economic development but also as a conduit for city residents to identify with their city (Kavaratzis, 2004).

Policymakers might be afraid of investing money in marketing in a different way, but it has been proposed by experts like Hubbard and Hall in 1998 to run the cities in a more business-like manner with distinctive characteristics of risk-taking, inventiveness, promotion, and profit motivation (Muinonen & Kumar, 2019).

2.4. Finally, city bloggers can help shape the city’s identity by highlighting its unique features and characteristics.

Nowadays, more than ever people consume social media content to influence their everyday decisions. Where to go during the summer, what presents to buy for Mother’s Day, a day trip with your friends, or even what to have for lunch today. For all these decisions, people consume social media to investigate all available choices.

The traditional form of marketing, in which companies make cool ads to sell themselves, has become unreliable. Consumers prefer to hear other people's opinions and get to know the product firsthand. For this reason, so many firms turn to this new way of doing marketing. The average ROI that a firm receives when using influencer marketing was 2016, 11 times higher than without it, as experts like Bill Carmody said (Carmody, 2016).

That’s the reason why city bloggers may help shape the city’s identity. City brand contributes to differentiating the city from other cities and makes it more attractive to visitors and businesses (Shirvani & De Luca, 2019). As some people call it, Instagram is a new source of inspiration (Flaminjoy, 2023). When a blogger posts a photo in a very fancy restaurant then it raises the curiosity of other people to go to that restaurant. This restaurant would have more visibility. But not only restaurants but also indoor or outdoor plans, touristic visits to emblematic monuments, hiking in the mountains, sea activities, or interesting. People like knowing in this way more about cities. It is very

beneficial for any city to invest in a city blogger who highlights those interesting city facts and raises curiosity.

2.5. Can cities design a social media strategy to create new tourism?

Social Media can be seen as a very cost-effective tool to engage with potential tourists (Molloy, 2023). The costs of social media may vary depending on the scope proposed which involves how many people they intend to reach out to and the reputation of the blogger to perform the campaign. However, it is a profitable media as it could be an opportunity to shape and build brand awareness as a city as influencers or bloggers share new openings of restaurants, concerts, festivals held in the city, interesting facts about a city, or just a blog about the history of the city.

The leading tourism destinations in 2022 were Paris, Beijing, Orlando, Shanghai and Las Vegas (Statista 2023a). Paris is a city with a strong identity. People travel to Paris to experience Parisian life for a few days. Parisian food, clothing stylism, and its amazing buildings are what people love about Paris. Sometimes we might wonder how they build that unique image. Why not spread a new and unique branding of our city?

Tourism usually occupies a great percentage of the city/country's GDP. This is an important factor that policymakers more often consider in their strategies to improve the city's economic situation. As stated by Statista, the travel and tourism contribution to GDP worldwide in 2022 was 7.7 trillion US dollars, and it is forecasted to increase in 2023 to 9.5 trillion US dollars (Statista, 2022b). This is usually related to the attractiveness of a city, as visitors might be attracted by an interesting city, that offers a wide variety of options and that has a certain reputation. For this last one, people look for the opinions of other contributors who have tried certain dishes, travelled to certain cities, and enjoyed different experiences.

Social media might be a beneficial tool to boost tourism. As stated by Mize, a travel-related agency, social media has changed the way people both plan their trips and spend their time while traveling (Truyols, 2020). There are some examples of successful campaigns that attract tourism to a city (DCI, 2022). However, some experts believe that if the purpose is to achieve good results in the short term, it might be not the unique or only ideal tool. As stated in deep research about the effects of social media, for short-term outcomes, a direct marketing campaign might be better as social media is mainly used in terms of branding and reputation which expects results more in the long term and the short one (Sevin, 2016).

2.6. How cities excel in social media strategies?

It is not only interesting to have bloggers posting content about a city, but to involve more and more users (mainly citizens) to use the city's corporate communication program hashtags and its associated links to its proposals and content. Compensation could be given to those who get the most views or likes, in a collective effort to promote the city. There are cities like Cascais (Portugal) that give "city points" as a reward for civic actions. These "city points" can be exchanged for offers or discounts from the private sector. Promoting the city and using its hashtags could be considered a positive civic action.

The influence of the use of hashtags is outstanding. In 2017, the results of a study conducted by Statista on the popularity of cities around the world were based on hashtag posts on Instagram. The most popular cities worldwide on Instagram as of December 2017, sorted by the number of hashtagged posts, were London, New York, Paris, Dubai, and Istanbul. London was the most popular city on Instagram with over 88.8 million mentions in hashtags, followed by New York with 88.5 million and Paris with 75 million. (STATISTA, 2023c). These cities maintain the top in the ranking of cities with better branding (Kiprop, 2018). These cities also occupy the top positions in the Branding section of the latest World Observatory for Attractive Cities (Ondiviela, 2022). This KPI is made up of the branding generated by music (reference songs of the city), Movies (set or referenced in the city), Sports (teams and main international sporting events based in the city), and major cultural and sporting events developed in the city, such as Universal Exhibitions, Olympics, etc.

Cities with low budgets for their communication plan find social networks an affordable way to promote themselves. A basic error is that they do not speak with their citizens, but to their citizens, in a one-way mechanism. Few take advantage of social networks as an element of listening to the feelings of their citizens (except in pre-electoral periods) and very few have established interaction mechanisms with citizens such as chatbots and others. That is, there is hardly any interaction with the audience. It should be noted that the emergence of new generative artificial intelligence technologies (GenAI, like OpenAI, ChatGPT, etc.) is a fundamental tool in streamlining this process of communication and social understanding, by extraordinarily developing semantic analysis with large language models (LLM).

Social networks are just a tool and, as we have mentioned previously, we must choose the best one for our needs, city, audience, and moment, and through the appropriate city bloggers, apart from using advanced automatic virtual tools.

Unfortunately, cities continue to measure the results of their social media campaigns by the number of impacts and not by influencing perception. The main problem is that we all want to measure in the short term (impacts), and we forget about the long term (branding change, perception).

We must, therefore, propose a two-way, local, and human communication plan (adapted to the local language and unique identity).

Creating a brand and improving branding is a long-term process and requires continuous action and patience (many city bureaucrats only look for the next quick and effective press conference). Good action on Instagram will give us many immediate impacts, but perhaps many smaller but more continuous actions over time will give us a more powerful branding improvement in the medium and long term. And we must not forget that social networks are just one more element, not the only one, in improving the city's brand. (Sevin, 2016)

The communication plan must be permanently reviewed since the impact of the different platforms also varies with the circumstances.

And let us always keep in mind that the important thing is citizen engagement, and listening, rather than strong one-way pressure.

A different topic is to achieve a quick short-term effect on a specific issue such as tourism. Here techniques inherited from retail can be used. Branding or perception of reputation is different and requires a long-term strategy.



Figure 3. Photo by Andrea Piacquadio. Pexels. Free-use

3. RESEARCH & FINDINGS

3.1. Research methodology

Search criteria: 175 Cities included at WW Observatory for Attractive Cities, to enable us to compare the correlation between results and City branding from that Observatory (Ondiviela, 2022)

Period: the regular period used to report impacts is monthly. In our case, February 2023.

We will use a social media impact analysis tool to measure how many references posts our cities get in that period of time. We have chosen for quality and simplicity, the tool Brand24 (<https://brand24.com/>). Brand24 is a social listening tool that helps track mentions of any brand, product / service, or any keyword across various sources, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Twitch, Reddit, Quora, TikTok, Google Reviews, podcasts, blogs, forums, etc.

3.2. Findings

The top cities in the top of the ranking are New York, Dubai, London and Paris. It is interesting to notice that 4 of the top 6 cities are also included in the top cities Social Media reach (Kiprop, 2016). This means that the new research is consequent with previous analysis and gives us extended information (from 10 to 175 cities studied).

Moreover, 4 of the top 7 cities are shared as well with the Branding KPI from WW Observatory for Attractive Cities (NYC, London, Paris, Barcelona). (See Figure 4).

We have also detected a tremendous impact on intermediate cities that are very cultural/touristic and therefore, very attractive for online communication, photos, suggestions (Florence, Rome, Guadalajara, Auckland, Sofia, Porto,...)

The user volume effect generates positive branding for large and unattractive cities, as it is the case in Quito, Chongqing and Lima. These are cities with little branding, but because of their significant population, they also enjoy relevance in networks. We could talk about self-generation of branding by its own citizens.

Other effects such as news or presence on International media (even if it is not positive) also increase the posts (Kyiv is placed in 32nd place out of the 175 studied).

Cities with different hashtags because they have different local/international names and languages disperse their impacts too. Also, those with special characters from a single special language (Malmö, Århus,...) or with several official languages, which split the volume of posts or make them very difficult for English keyboards.

There are cities with significant investments in technology to be attractive to talent that have not invested in this concept (Nordic, Australian, New Zealand cities).

See full list at APPENDIX I.

There is a lack of data due to the use of other platforms, language difficulties or state control in the impact of Chinese cities.

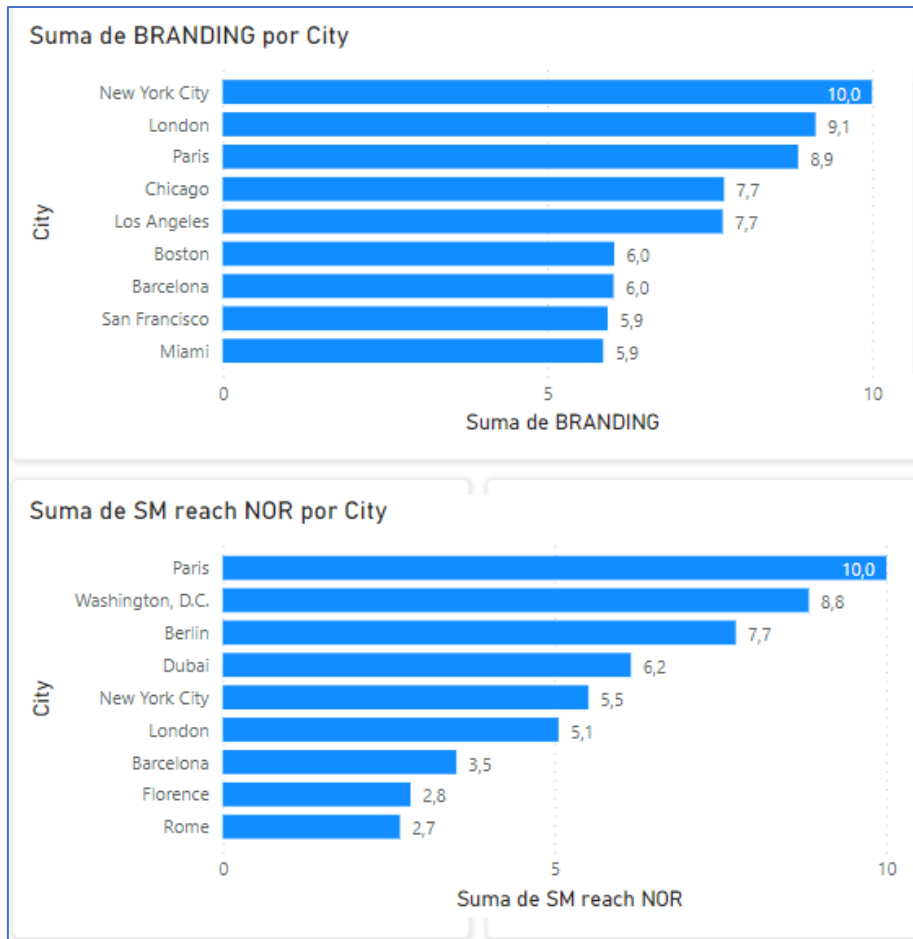


Figure 4.- Top 9 Cities from Social media reach vs WW Observatory Branding (Own work).

3.3. City bloggers impact on social media is correlated to Cities Branding

Policymakers should keep in mind the consequences of their policies, strategies and measures. This could be tested by the results of the research.

We have observed a Correlation of $R^2 = 0,48$ (See Figure 5) between normalized 175 cities results (Social Media reach vs Branding from WW Observatory for Attractive Cities).

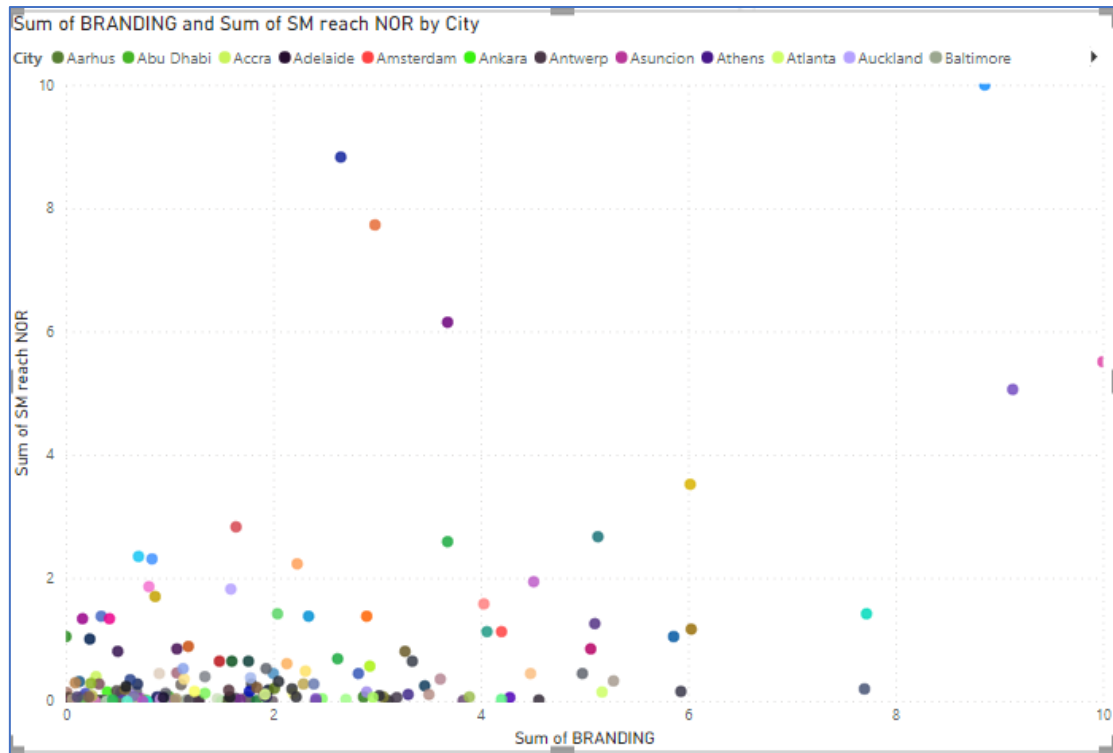


Figure 5.- Correlation SM reach vs WW Observatory (Own work).

We may also check that, even though the data of SM reach is concentrated in Europe, New York represents one of the largest bubbles on the map. Dubai also seems to be a key target regarding social media (See Figure 6).

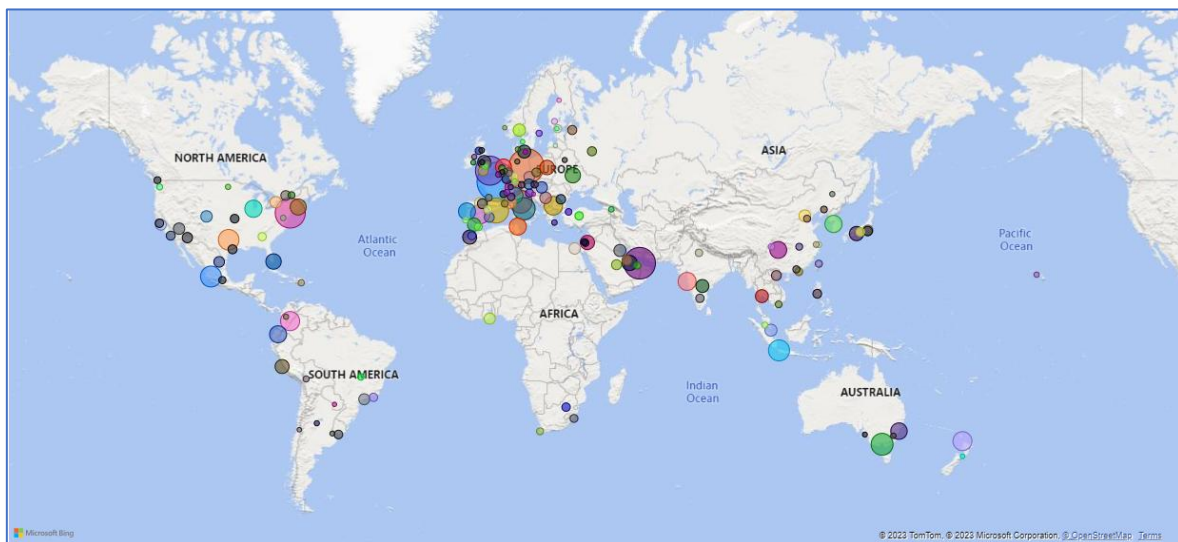


Figure 6.- Concentration of SM Reach WorldWide (Own work).

It can be seen in the image below that New York is the leader in terms of social media reach. However, there are other very relevant spots in the American continent such as Mexico and Dallas (See Figure 7).

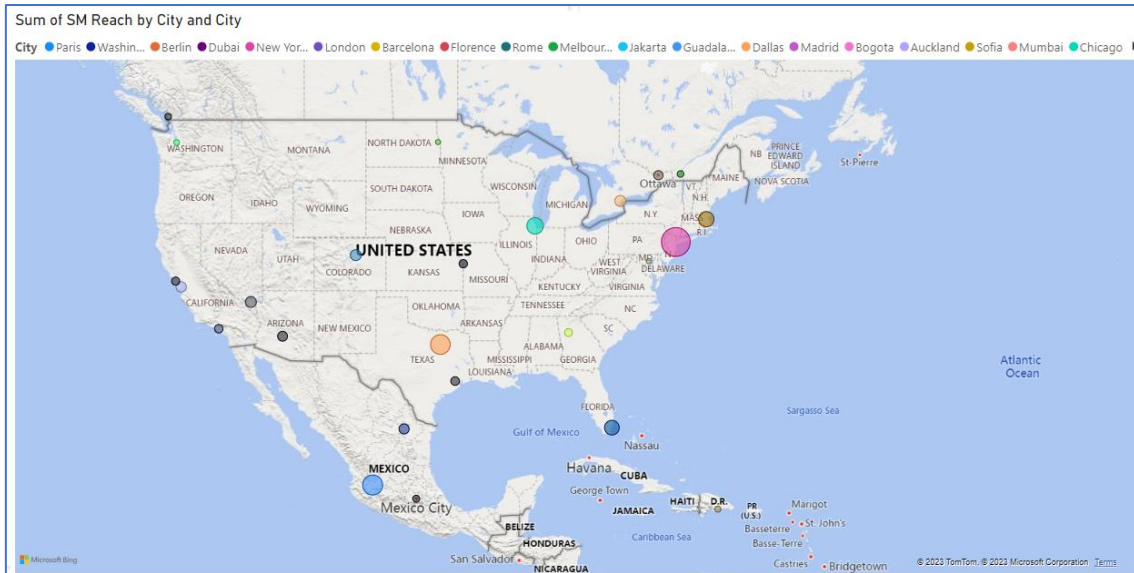


Figure 7.- Concentration of SM Reach in America (Own work).

Furthermore, it has been proved that the big capital cities in Europe already have a very good reputation regarding the branding of the city. As was stated in previous sections, those fall into the same cluster, so they compete to attract talent between them. As an example, Berlin, London, and Paris represent the largest bubbles in Europe while the main cities in Spain and Italy represent the medium-sized bubbles in the worldwide map. This provides a clear idea about what cities should compete with each other to attract talent through social media (See Figure 8).

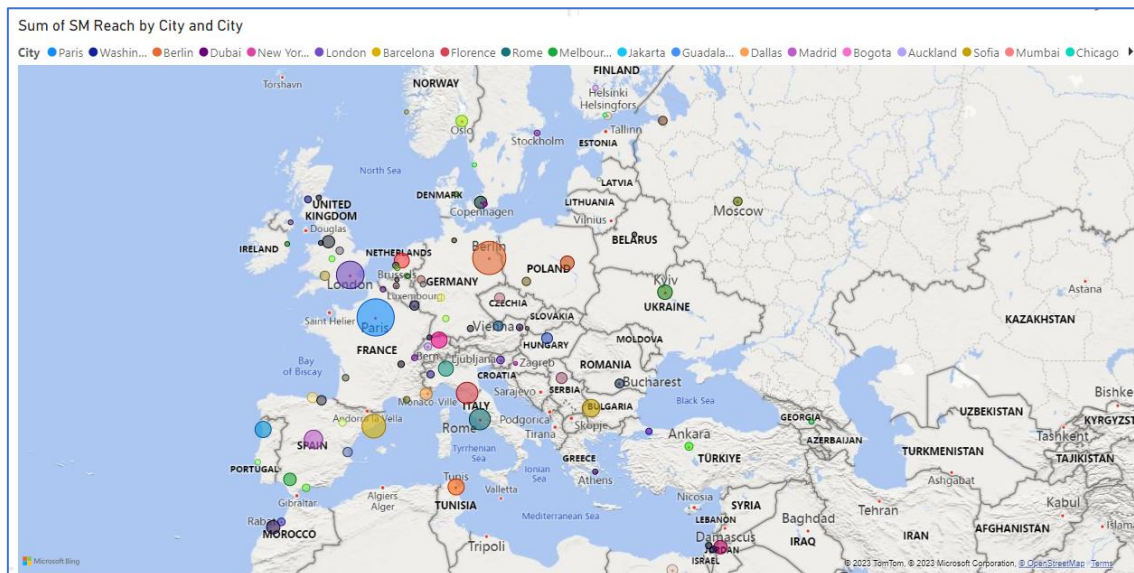


Figure 8.- Concentration of SM reach in Europe (Own work).

If we look at the underlying data that makes up the KPI (BRANDING) of the WW Observatory for Attractive Cities:

- 25% Music (reference songs of the city), Essential to understand a city.
- 25% Movies (set or referenced in the city), Strong image generators.

- 30% Sports (current teams and main international sporting events based in the city) and
- 20% Major cultural and sporting events developed in the past in the city, such as Universal Exhibitions, Olympics, etc.

We see that they are all constituent elements of Branding, and therefore, we can assure that the impacts on social media are also.

3.4. Known Biases

Size bias: the larger a city, the population, the more social media users and the bigger impact. This means that large cities benefit from their size. We should try to differentiate and use only posts from NON-residents, but that data is not available. Furthermore, in terms of generating Branding, the gross total is what influences, since we use a quantity of posts, without being able to use information related to their quality, origin, type of user, etc. If we divide the number of Social Media posts by / the number of inh, we will have Posts/inh measuring the feeling of belonging that makes them communicate about their city. Here we observe that the correlation is lower, with $R^2=0.15$, indicating that it is not uniform support, but that there are a few citybloggers who generate enormous amounts of posts, while the general population does not usually talk about their city in social networks. This may be because they do not use social networks, or they are not very active, much less talking about their city and adding their hashtag.

Gaining notoriety because of bad news. This is a clear unwanted bias. Bad news also attracts popularity and impacts social networks. After a natural disaster or a terrorist or war action, the impacts associated with a city skyrocket. This is what happened with the 9/11 attacks in New York, the Grenfell Tower fire in London, and the days of street protests in Paris were all widely covered on Instagram, with the corresponding impact. We should consider that having a presence, even if due to a negative event, also generates the city's image. The question is whether this negative event generates a bad image (social conflicts, violence or insecurity, poverty) or is it the consequence of something unforeseeable, where it can even generate positive feelings of compassion, solidarity, etc. (recent earthquake in Marrakesh or the bombings on Lviv).

4. CONCLUSIONS. Discussion

Role of a strong Communication Plan. After this study on social networks, city bloggers, and influencers, we can conclude by saying that it is highly recommended that cities design their comprehensive communication plan, including citybloggers, choosing the appropriate media and moments. Not only this, but good prior research would also be necessary to select the ideal hashtags, which must be few and clear, to create real and simple engagement with the audience. This way, they will be easy to recognize and associate with the city, maximizing the impact.

Citizen participation is key. According to several studied examples, there are already many cities that invest in citybloggers. Some cities have been doing this for a long time and find it beneficial, so we conclude that no city should be left behind. But it is not

just a matter of specialist bloggers, in addition, we must encourage citizen participation. The cogeneration of content is always a powerful, fresh, and credible proposal, in addition to being a viable, more economical, and efficient solution in many cases, helping the cities themselves to generate engagement among their communities and attract new talent. This strengthens the sense of community and belonging. Therefore, citybloggers are very important, but we must also add our citizens and their spontaneity in talking about the benefits of the city.

Great contributors to Branding. As different media, studies, and research carried out by Brand24 have shown, Citybloggers contribute significantly to generating City Branding. We can conclude that citybloggers are a significant driver in the construction of the city's virtual identity.

Important in the tourism rebirth. We are observing the recovery of tourism to pre-pandemic levels and an acceleration in destinations that involve life experiences, in reaction to the drama that our lives suffered during the pandemic. TripAdvisor is a mandatory source of influence in our tourist and gastronomic decisions. Citybloggers also generate a strong influence on destination decisions, becoming the best tourist sales agents and virtual travel advisors. Tourism and branding feed off each other positively in a virtuous circle.

Affordable. There are many advantages of using Social Networks to contribute to city branding. They are relatively inexpensive mechanisms. In addition, they allow you to generate enormous traffic/impact with just a few dedicated people. If we add the for-free contributions from our citizens, we find ourselves with a very valuable, cost-effective, and easy-to-test and implement tool.

Size Matters. Megacities need less attention. According to the results obtained, it is observed that large cities need them less, due to the massive use of social networks generated by their large number of citizens, without additional effort. That is to say, Social Networks are a means to attract not only talent but also tourists. And large cities do not see the need to invest large amounts of money in citybloggers. They already enjoy a strong notoriety with the posts of their citizens. However, citybloggers are essential for intermediate cities. It is a key component of their communication plan since they can make it very profitable. We see how neighboring or competing cities immerse themselves in the enormous world of social networks with campaigns and strategies to generate curiosity and as a branding style.

No city should be left behind in the leverage of city bloggers to improve their branding.

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6. APPENDIX I. Cities sorted by Social Media Impacts

POS	City	SM Reach	SM Reach NOR	BRANDING
1	Paris	247.000.000	10	8,86
2	Washington, D.C.	218.000.000	8,83	2,65
3	Berlin	191.000.000	7,73	2,98
4	Dubai	152.000.000	6,15	3,68
5	New York City	136.000.000	5,51	10
6	London	125.000.000	5,06	9,13
7	Barcelona	87.000.000	3,52	6,02
8	Florence	70.000.000	2,83	1,64
9	Rome	66.000.000	2,67	5,13
10	Melbourne	64.000.000	2,59	3,68
11	Jakarta	58.000.000	2,35	0,7
12	Guadalajara	57.000.000	2,31	0,83
13	Dallas	55.000.000	2,23	2,23
14	Los Angeles	49.000.000	1,98	7,7
15	Madrid	48.000.000	1,94	4,51
16	Bogota	46.000.000	1,86	0,8
17	Auckland	45.000.000	1,82	1,59
18	Sofia	42.000.000	1,7	0,86
19	Mumbai	39.000.000	1,58	4,03
20	Chicago	35.000.000	1,42	7,72
21	Seoul	35.000.000	1,42	2,04
22	Tunis	34.000.000	1,38	2,9
23	Porto	34.000.000	1,38	2,34
24	Quito	34.000.000	1,38	0,34
25	Zurich	33.000.000	1,34	0,42
26	Chongqing	33.000.000	1,34	0,16
27	Sydney	31.000.000	1,25	5,1
28	Boston	29.000.000	1,17	6,03
29	Amsterdam	28.000.000	1,13	4,2
30	Milan	28.000.000	1,13	4,06
31	Miami	26.000.000	1,05	5,86
32	Kiev	26.000.000	1,05	0
33	Doha	25.000.000	1,01	0,23
34	Warsaw	22.000.000	0,89	1,18
35	Philadelphia	21.000.000	0,85	5,06
36	Osaka	21.000.000	0,85	1,07
37	Lima	20.000.000	0,81	3,27
38	Casablanca	20.000.000	0,81	0,5
39	Seville	17.000.000	0,69	2,62
40	Manchester	16.000.000	0,65	3,34
41	Copenhagen	16.000.000	0,65	1,76
42	Hyderabad	16.000.000	0,65	1,6
43	Bangkok	16.000.000	0,65	1,48
44	Nice	15.000.000	0,61	2,13
45	Oslo	14.000.000	0,57	2,93
46	Kuwait City	13.000.000	0,53	1,93
47	Singapore	13.000.000	0,53	1,13
48	Beijing	12.000.000	0,49	2,31
49	Belgrade	11.400.000	0,46	1,07
50	Las Vegas	11.000.000	0,44	4,98
51	Toronto	11.000.000	0,44	4,48
52	Budapest	11.000.000	0,44	2,82
53	Denver	11.000.000	0,44	2
54	Cairo	11.000.000	0,44	0,9
55	Accra	10.000.000	0,4	0,29
56	Sao Paulo	9.800.000	0,4	1,34
57	San José	9.400.000	0,38	1,78
58	Santander	9.000.000	0,36	1,14
59	Prague	8.800.000	0,36	3,61
60	Monterrey	8.700.000	0,35	0,62
61	Tokyo	8.100.000	0,33	5,28
62	Linz	8.000.000	0,32	0,13
63	Phoenix	7.900.000	0,32	2,05
64	Manama	7.400.000	0,3	0,09
65	Riyadh	7.100.000	0,29	0,24
66	Valencia	7.000.000	0,28	2,39
67	Bilbao	7.000.000	0,28	1,79
68	Bristol	6.900.000	0,28	2,29
69	Hanoi	6.900.000	0,28	0,32
70	Luxembourg	6.800.000	0,27	0,69
71	Ottawa	6.600.000	0,27	1,11
72	Bucharest	6.100.000	0,25	3,46
73	Yokohama	6.000.000	0,24	0,58
74	St Petersburg	5.328.000	0,21	1,84
75	Moscow	5.200.000	0,21	2,01

76	Houston	5.000.000	0,2	2,18
77	Wroclaw	4.700.000	0,19	0,57
78	Manila	4.500.000	0,18	1,57
79	Kansas City	4.400.000	0,18	1,95
80	Montevideo	4.300.000	0,17	0,49
81	San Francisco	4.000.000	0,16	5,93
82	Johannesburg	4.000.000	0,16	1,77
83	Nagoya	3.988.000	0,16	1,24
84	Rio de Janeiro	3.800.000	0,15	2,9
85	Bangalore	3.800.000	0,15	0,68
86	Ankara	3.800.000	0,15	0,4
87	Atlanta	3.600.000	0,14	5,17
88	Dusseldorf	3.500.000	0,14	0,01
89	Ljubljana	3.400.000	0,14	0,53
90	Helsinki	3.300.000	0,13	1,94
91	Rabat	3.300.000	0,13	0,19
92	Frankfurt	3.100.000	0,12	2,19
93	Nottingham	3.100.000	0,12	1,91
94	Málaga	3.100.000	0,12	1,34
95	Durban	3.100.000	0,12	0,96
96	Bern	3.000.000	0,12	0,61
97	Zaragoza	2.800.000	0,11	1,92
98	Hong Kong	2.700.000	0,11	3,5
99	Torino	2.700.000	0,11	3,3
100	New Delhi	2.500.000	0,1	1,91
101	Glasgow	2.200.000	0,09	1,93
102	Mexico City	2.100.000	0,08	3,02
103	Shenzhen	2.100.000	0,08	0,25
104	Abu Dhabi	2.000.000	0,08	0,99
105	Taipei	2.000.000	0,08	0,65
106	Guangzhou	2.000.000	0,08	0,17
107	Cape Town	1.800.000	0,07	3,89
108	Vienna	1.800.000	0,07	1,93
109	Tianjin	1.800.000	0,07	0,22
110	Marseille	1.700.000	0,07	3,06
111	Montreal	1.700.000	0,07	2,87
112	Vancouver	1.700.000	0,07	2,22
113	Bordeaux	1.700.000	0,07	1,75
114	Lyon	1.700.000	0,07	1,58
115	Jerusalem	1.700.000	0,07	0,88
116	Wuhan	1.700.000	0,07	0,11
117	Ho Chi Minh City	1.500.000	0,06	1,92
118	Tel Aviv	1.500.000	0,06	0,94
119	Shenyang	1.500.000	0,06	0,02
120	Istanbul	1.400.000	0,06	4,28
121	Munich	1.400.000	0,06	3,19
122	Stuttgart	1.400.000	0,06	2,96
123	Den Haag	1.400.000	0,06	0,52
124	Brussels	1.200.000	0,05	1,63
125	Chengdu	1.200.000	0,05	0,13
126	Brasilia	1.200.000	0,05	0,04
127	Birmingham	1.100.000	0,04	2,47
128	Santo Domingo	1.100.000	0,04	1,06
129	Geneva	1.000.000	0,04	0,72
130	Shanghai	931.000	0,04	1,46
131	Stockholm	928.000	0,04	2,41
132	La Paz	920.000	0,04	1,63
133	Kuala Lumpur	880.000	0,03	0,66
134	Seattle	823.000	0,03	4,2
135	Cologne	787.000	0,03	1,64
136	Tampere	757.000	0,03	0,91
137	Lisbon	755.000	0,03	2,7
138	Suzhou	684.000	0,03	0,06
139	Lille	654.000	0,03	1,68
140	Baltimore	510.000	0,02	1,16
141	Athens	488.000	0,02	1,77
142	Edinburgh	486.000	0,02	4,56
143	Rotterdam	435.000	0,02	0,77
144	Tbilisi	434.000	0,02	0,45
145	Canberra	420.000	0,02	1,19
146	Honolulu	322.000	0,01	1,04
147	Stavanger	321.000	0,01	0,15
148	Medellin	305.000	0,01	0,21
149	Basel	291.000	0,01	0,37
150	Harbin	284.000	0,01	0,07
151	Córdoba	278.000	0,01	0,1
152	Liverpool	273.000	0,01	3,11
153	Aarhus	248.000	0,01	0,26
154	Dublin	235.000	0,01	1,84
155	Minsk	235.000	0,01	0,33
156	Belfast	232.000	0,01	3,83
157	Eindhoven	221.000	0,01	0,31
158	Hamburg	217.000	0,01	1,56
159	Adelaide	183.000	0,01	1,28
160	Buenos Aires	164.000	0,01	2,41
161	Malmö	130.000	0,00	0,03
162	Antwerp	77.000	0,00	1,28
163	Gothenburg	66.000	0,00	1,5
164	Wellington	66.000	0,00	0,78
165	Santiago	64.000	0,00	1,99
166	Oulu	51.000	0,00	0,28
167	Zagreb	29.900	0,00	0,74
168	Espoo	25.000	0,00	0,44
169	Bratislava	24.000	0,00	0,84
170	Bergen	23.000	0,00	0,63
171	Asuncion	22.000	0,00	0,08
172	Panama City	20.000	0,00	1,94
173	Vilnius	20.000	0,00	0,76
174	Tallinn	20.000	0,00	0,59
175	Riga	20.000	0,00	0,39