
Branding the Creative City through Music: Stakeholder Engagement on Social Media

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Abstract:

Purpose: This study examines the role of social media in the strategic communication of place brands within the framework of a UNESCO City of Music. It investigates how digital platforms are utilized to promote a city's cultural identity, communicate place-brand values, and foster stakeholder engagement through music-related content.

Design/methodology/approach: Using a digital ethnography approach, this research analyzes 868 Instagram posts published on the official Katowice Music City account. Content analysis was employed to classify posts according to thematic categories, communication strategies, and engagement indicators. Audience responses, including likes, comments, and interaction patterns, were examined to identify the types of content that generate the highest levels of stakeholder engagement and contribute most effectively to place-brand communication.

Findings: The findings indicate that several social media communication strategies are particularly effective in enhancing audience engagement and increasing the visibility of place-brand messages. Content emphasizing live music events, artist participation, cultural experiences, and community involvement generated significantly higher engagement rates than posts focusing on institutional communication or the city's UNESCO designation. The results suggest that stakeholder engagement is influenced more strongly by tangible cultural and musical experiences than by abstract place-brand attributes and official recognitions. Furthermore, interactive and visually rich content was found to strengthen emotional connections between audiences and the city brand. These findings demonstrate the importance of aligning social media communication with audience interests and experiential dimensions of place identity.

Practical implications: The study provides practical guidance for place-brand managers, cultural policymakers, and destination marketing organizations seeking to improve the effectiveness of their digital communication strategies. The results highlight the need to prioritize stakeholder-centered content, emphasize authentic cultural experiences, and leverage social media platforms as tools for co-creating place-brand value and strengthening relationships with local and international audiences. The findings may also support UNESCO Creative Cities and other culturally oriented destinations in designing more effective online engagement strategies.

Originality/value: This study contributes to the growing literature on place branding, social media, and stakeholder engagement by examining the digital communication practices of a UNESCO Creative City of Music. It advances understanding of how creative cities use social

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media to construct and communicate place identities and demonstrates the relative effectiveness of different content strategies in generating public engagement. By integrating perspectives from place branding, cultural policy, and digital communication, the study offers a novel empirical contribution to research on creative-city branding in the social media era.

Keywords: *Place branding, stakeholder engagement, creative city, social media, UNESCO creative cities, Instagram, cultural communication.*

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1. Introduction

Culture plays an important role in brand branding and brand management (Liu and Zhang, 2026; Scarpaci *et al.*, 2018). Cities have chosen to employ such tools for urban branding as a strategy to enhance their economic competitiveness on a global scale (El Messeidy, 2019). When brands reach iconic status, they cultivate stronger consumer-brand relationships that enhance their resilience against competitive threats (Torelli, 2013). Icons can also function as myth makers, generating new narratives that position the brand as a symbol at regional, national, or even global levels (Fuschillo *et al.*, 2025).

Skivko (2022) in her study indicates that cultural and creative industries significantly influence the development of place branding by enhancing a destination's cultural capital and fostering innovation. To foster the development of cultural and creative sectors internationally, the UNESCO Creative Cities Network was created in 2004 (UNESCO, 2026). This network covers seven disciplines, including crafts and gastronomy, film, folk art, design, literature, media arts, and music (Cheraghi, 2026).

Within the cultural and creative industries, music constitutes one of the most sought-after art forms globally (Diplomacy, 2018). In addition, governments and various stakeholders increasingly recognize that a vibrant music economy adds value to cities in several important ways, including job creation, economic growth, tourism development, and the enhancement of place branding (Baicocchi *et al.*, 2025).

One of the cities in the UNESCO Creative Cities of music network is Katowice in Poland, which received this designation in 2015 (UNESCO, 2025). Music and associated events of superregional, national, and international significance contribute substantially to the urban landscape of this city (Zuzańska-Żyśko, 2018).

Katowice also exemplifies a post-industrial city that has successfully leveraged its cultural potential, thus emerging as a significant asset in its development following the decline of heavy industry (Smołka-Franke, 2021). In this context, music serves not only as a form of entertainment, but also as a cultural icon, embedding symbolic significance within the identity of cities and influencing their perception by global audiences (van der Hoeven and Hitters, 2019).

A critical component in the success of place branding is regulated communication among the diverse array of stakeholders, which is essential to ensure that messages align with the core vision (Marsden *et al.*, 2024). Since 2010, social media has increasingly emerged as a strategic marketing tool capable of efficiently disseminating marketing information and facilitating effective interactions with users (Culnan *et al.*, 2010). These platforms enable and enhance dynamic interactions within on-line communities, allowing individuals to share brand narratives with one another (Ranjbaran *et al.*, 2022).

Collaboration and cooperation facilitated through networks on digital platforms serve as instruments of engagement (Björk and Virtanen, 2005; Mariani and Baggio, 2020), which includes cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of engagement (Hollebeek, 2011). Therefore, social media has become a beneficial and efficient strategy for both profit and nonprofit organizations to achieve their marketing and branding objectives (Fan and Gordon, 2014).

In today's digital world, the way place brand managers interact with their audiences really matters. It is important to figure out if their messages are actually reaching people. At the same time, the online space gives unofficial voices a chance to shape the brand message, too, which can make it tricky for managers to maintain control over how that message is created and shared.

Due to the limitations of previous research in elucidating the impact of social media engagement on place branding, this study seeks to address this research context. This study examines the role of social media in the strategic communication of place brands within the framework of a UNESCO City of Music.

Using digital ethnography methodologies, this research analyzes 868 Instagram posts from the official Katowice Music City to investigate the diverse types of content generated and distributed for the promotion of place brands, as well as the specific content types that generate the highest levels of audience engagement.

Based on the stated objectives, the research questions are articulated as follows:

RQ1. How do stakeholders interact with music cities on social media?

RQ2. What are the categories and themes of social media content and how do they contribute to place branding within the stakeholders engagement?

From a practical perspective, the findings offer substantial information for city managers, focal points, policymakers, and community leaders in Katowice and other creative cities. Through the development of an iconic cultural branding model, this research aims to enhance the branding of creative cities and to promote the city's musical heritage as a dynamic and inclusive resource for urban development.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Understanding Place Branding and the Significance of Stakeholder Engagement

As local and regional governments are increasingly engaging in public branding initiatives to facilitate place development, place branding has emerged as a significant area of interest for researchers (Ripoll González *et al.*, 2025; Zavattaro *et al.*, 2021). This approach encompasses the perceptions of opportunities inherent within a place, as well as its identity, economic development, and spatial dynamics (Eshuis and Edwards, 2013).

This phenomenon has evolved from place promotion (O'Leary and Iredale, 1976) to place marketing (Kotler *et al.*, 1999), and subsequently to place branding (Gertner, 2011; Lucarelli and Brorström, 2013; Zenker and Erfgen, 2014). Due to the diverse disciplinary approaches and research backgrounds involved, numerous definitions of place branding have emerged (Hankinson, 2004; Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005).

However, some scholars have posited that the fundamental characteristic of a brand is 'nothing more and nothing less than the highly respected reputation of a product or service available to the public' (Simon Anholt and Hildreth, 2005). A brand is not the product itself; it is what gives meaning and value to the product and defines its identity (Kapferer, 2008).

Zenker and Braun (2010) concentrate on a place brand as a network of associations within consumers' cognitive frameworks, shaped by the visual, verbal, and behavioral expressions of a location. This brand is manifested through the objectives, communication strategies, core values, behaviors, and the overarching cultural context of the stakeholders associated with the place, as well as the comprehensive design of the environment (Braun *et al.*, 2013).

Furthermore, place branding has been compared to a community-building initiative, with the primary objective of identifying common ideas and directions for the future

of the community and producing collectively generated narratives and visions (Ashworth *et al.*, 2015).

An effective place brand is dependent on its capacity to integrate the various elements of the location, including the cultural attributes and values of the region, into a distinctly recognizable brand identity (Zenker and Braun, 2015). The objective of branding extends beyond the mere projection and communication of a specific image and reputation to external audiences; rather, its distinguishing characteristic is its focus on internal stakeholders, including local communities (Anholt, 2010; Eugenio-Vela *et al.*, 2020).

Branding aims to foster their cohesion and, importantly, generate narratives that resonate within the contemporary mediatized landscape (Ripoll González *et al.*, 2025). In addition to that, place branding is a complex social relations and communication that requires the collaboration of multiple stakeholders to shape the positioning and perception of places (Bisani *et al.*, 2021; Hanna *et al.*, 2021; Kavartzis and Kalandides, 2015).

The participation of all stakeholders positions them as ambassadors in the place branding process (Golestaneh *et al.*, 2021). Effective communication plays a vital role in fostering connections among diverse stakeholder groups, including residents, visitors, and tourists, through the exchange of compelling narratives and engaging visuals (Hanna *et al.*, 2021). Such communication can encompass a combination of auditory and visual elements to articulate the history, culture, and narratives of a location, thus improving its image among diverse audiences (Marsden *et al.*, 2024).

However, location branding presents different challenges. Firstly, brand managers possess limited control over the branding process due to the involvement of a diverse array of public and private organizations that collectively influence its trajectory (Acuti *et al.*, 2018).

Furthermore, public expectations regarding place branding can differ significantly, as geographic and administrative boundaries are determined by legal frameworks rather than consumer preferences (Konecnik Ruzzier and de Chernatony, 2013). Consequently, one of the most significant obstacles in place branding is navigating the myriad of influential stakeholders (Konecnik and Go, 2008).

2.2 Music as a Cultural and Creative Industry and Its Impact on Place Branding

Currently, the concept of the creative city, which underscores the strategic importance of cultural sectors and industries such as music for the development and enhancement of the brand, has garnered substantial attention (Ciuculescu and Luca, 2025; Kasemsarn *et al.*, 2025). Cultural and creative industries encompass the creation and production of a diverse array of products and services, including arts

and crafts, fashion, design, architecture, audio and video production, visual and performing arts, sociocultural activities, and other creative services (Naylor *et al.*, 2021).

Consequently, these industries contribute to local economic development and foster the creative and cultural growth of cities, thereby transforming them into creative hubs and improving the development of creative tourism (Moore and Sciences, 2014). Cities with vibrant music scenes or notable musical heritage leverage music as a means of attracting tourism and are recognized as music cities (Krüger, 2013).

Creative expressions, such as music and festivals, enable communities to construct meaningful identities that are grounded in local heritage and to leverage distinctive cultural assets (Bakas *et al.*, 2024; Kavaratzis, 2024), while promoting inclusivity and overseeing the support and management of a place brand that integrates diverse stakeholder groups (Slocum, 2023).

On the other hand, effective branding of these places, especially when aiming to leverage their musical identity, is a complex process (Golestaneh *et al.*, 2022). In this context, the participatory branding of creative cities requires the engagement of diverse stakeholders (Limani *et al.*, 2024). Music serves as a cultural icon that can significantly connect stakeholders to branding initiatives, thereby influencing their commitment to these efforts (Kemp *et al.*, 2012).

2.3 The Role of Social Media in Place Branding

Social networks serve as a platform where initiated brand propositions engage with user-generated content, facilitating meaning-making and contributing to the formation of place brands (Pasquinelli *et al.*, 2022; Taecharungroj, 2019). This mode of communication serves as a significant factor in the establishment of trust and credibility with the target audience (Pasquinelli *et al.*, 2022; Rojíková *et al.*, 2023).

Enhances the efficiency of information sharing and dissemination among various stakeholders (Li *et al.*, 2024). For place brand managers, social media serves as a critical and indispensable tool to optimize and enhancing communication strategies. This platform facilitates a broader reach and increased participation in communications, providing greater immediacy compared to traditional channels (Marsden *et al.*, 2024).

In the marketing literature, the engagement of social media is conceptualized through three dimensions: cognitive engagement, which pertains to mental activities focused on attention and absorption (Dessart *et al.*, 2016); emotional engagement, which involves affective responses and attachment (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014); and behavioral engagement, which refers to voluntary participation of residents in activities related to the city (Schivinski, 2021).

This framework provides a strategic approach to city promotion by shaping consumers' attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors toward the brand (Schivinski, 2021). City-focused social media platforms enhance their credibility and popularity among residents, encouraging increased participation in activities such as liking, commenting, sharing, tweeting, retweeting, and generating user-generated content, including posts, photographs, and videos. These activities serve as significant mechanisms for brand co-creation (Pedeliento and Kavaratzis, 2019; Schivinski *et al.*, 2019).

3. Methodology

3.1 Study Context

Katowice is the capital of the Upper Silesian region in Southwestern Poland. Katowice became a UNESCO Creative City of Music in 2015 (UNESCO, 2026). Katowice is a dynamic city (over 300,000 inhabitants), which, having undergone a revitalization from a heavy industrial to cultural center, became the Leader of 1,5 M Silesian metropolis in this field (Katowice, 2026). This city has been actively investing in cultural and creative initiatives to facilitate urban revitalization and regeneration, encapsulating its vision with the motto from heavy industry to creative industries (Smółka-Franke, 2021).

Katowice boasts a dense and diverse music ecosystem; among its cultural infrastructure are the following institutions: the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra (NOSPR), the Culture Zone, the Silesian Philharmonic, the Symphony Hall at the Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music, and the Youth Palace (Katowice, 2026). Additionally, this city hosts several large music festivals annually, including the OFF Festival, Rawa Blues, Tauron Nowa Muzyka, and various jazz festivals, among others.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

This exploratory research used content analysis with the objective of examining the specificities of digital participation of stakeholders of a UNESCO music city. Using digital ethnography methodologies, the author conducted an analysis of the digital presence of the official Katowice account. This analysis involved the systematic recording of posts disseminated through these social media platforms, as well as interactions, including comments, generated by users.

Instagram was chosen as the platform for data extraction due to its widespread popularity and effectiveness in documenting personal experiences, as well as its ability to share photos and videos with social networks (Rejeb *et al.*, 2022). To elucidate its digital presence, the authors documented Instagram posts from the past 11 years, since the designation of the this city in the list of UNESCO Creative Cities Network.

The collected content excluded "Instagram Stories" due to their limited availability of 24 hours. Additionally, these stories lack features, such as the ability to include captions, display comments, and express endorsements through likes. A total of 868 posts were collected for analysis. On 6 May 2026 the official account of Katowice had 1,925 followers.

Data were collected using the Apify Instagram Scraper from the official Katowice a city of music account (@katocityofmusic). The results were exported to Excel format and subsequently uploaded to Google Sheets. This research did not require formal approval from an ethics review board, as it did not involve sensitive personal data, vulnerable populations, or experimental interventions. All the collected data were publicly accessible.

Furthermore, in the context of ethics concerning the collection of data from social media, researchers have argued that when data are classified as public or "naturally occurring" (Silverman, 2013), the requirement to obtain informed consent from users is generally not imposed by the majority institutional ethics committees (Ravn *et al.*, 2020). Analysis was carried out using Google Sheets.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Analysis and Interpretation

Based on the analysis of 886 posts, spanning from 2016 to mid-2026, the distribution of post types is as follows: Images: 64.22% (569 posts), Videos: 9.82% (87 posts), and Sidecars (Multiple Media Items): 25.96% (230 posts). The term "UNESCO" is referenced in more than 63% of all posts, amounting to 560 mentions. Hashtags such as #unescocityofmusic, #katounescocityofmusic, and #katocityofmusic are extensively utilized throughout the data set (Table 1).

Effectively using hashtags, particularly UNESCO or creative city, can enhance the authenticity of place branding. This approach attracts related content shared by both visitors and locals, ultimately leading to unique contributions that showcase a place's distinct features.

The exploration of musical events and genres constitutes the second most prevalent topic, with jazz (227 mentions) emerging as a significant focus, as evidenced by hashtags including #jazzart and #jazz. Other notable genres include world music and folk.

Keywords such as "koncert" (409 mentions) and "festiwal" (201 mentions) dominate captions, showing that the content depicted a variety of cultural events and vibrant entertainment associated with Katowice. Labeling social media content in this way can help build a shared community of those interested in a specific topic tied to the brand of the place (Pedeliento and Kavaratzis, 2019; Schivinski *et al.*, 2019).

Table 1. *Top 10 Most Common Hashtags in Instagram Content*

Hashtag	Occurrences
katowice	366
unescocityofmusic	214
katounescocityofmusic	210
katocityofmusic	205
miastomuzyki	199
katowicemiastoogrodow	96
jazzart	76
katowicemiastomuzyki	73
katowiceunescocityofmusic	68
koncertwkatowicach	53

Source: *Own study.*

In the case of visual descriptions, they are categorized into several key domains: Music Festivals and Events, Artists and Performances, Workshops and Education, Cultural Spaces, and Decorative Graphics (Table 2). This visual data set demonstrates that the official Katowice Instagram account builds the identity of this city predominantly through cultural narratives. This finding aligns with the work of Smółka-Franke (2021), which emphasized the cultural potential in Katowice.

In addition, from a perspective on place branding, the emphasis on cultural space fostered a more pronounced and distinctive sense of place, enabling observers to engage with the diverse array of physical environments available. This emphasis underscores Katowice's distinctive musical identity and the opportunities it presents to both residents and visitors, thus reinforcing its status as a prominent destination for music (Zuzańska-Żyśko, 2018).

This finding highlights the recurring portrayal of postindustrial cultural venues, which reflects a broader narrative of urban transformation (Smółka-Franke, 2021). Furthermore, workshops and educational activities underscore a commitment to participation and community engagement, as well as the enhancement of place branding (Baiocchi *et al.*, 2025).

Table 2. *Visual descriptions of posts*

Category	Description	Examples from Dataset
Music Festivals and Events	A significant portion of the images consists of infographics, posters, schedules, and promotional materials related to music festivals and cultural events.	Katowice JazzArt Festival, Tauron Nowa Muzyka, Festiwal Kultura Natura, Orlen Elektronarracje
Artists and Performances	Many photos capture musicians, bands, and performers during concerts, rehearsals, backstage moments, or promotional activities.	Robert Więckiewicz, Modeselektor,...
Workshops and Education	Images frequently depict educational and participatory music activities, which	Songwriting Camp Katowice, Biuro Dźwięku Katowice

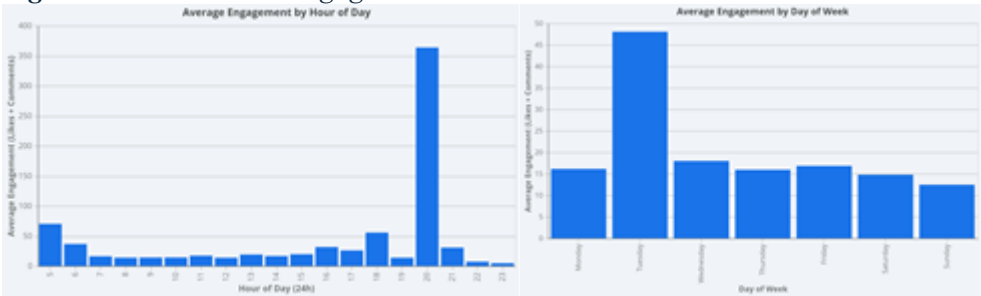
	emphasize creative learning and stakeholder engagement.	(BDK) sessions
Cultural Spaces	The posts highlight iconic cultural and postindustrial venues that contribute to the symbolic identity of the city.	NOSPR, Jazz Club Hipnoza, Walcownia Cynku, Guido Mine
Graphics	Some visual materials consist of decorative graphics, collages, and aesthetic compositions that are used to support promotional communication.	Promotional Communication

Source: *Own study.*

Based on an analysis of post timing and engagement metrics, specifically likes and comments, it is evident that posts published at 20:00 (8 PM) exhibit the highest average engagement, followed closely by those at 18:00 (6 PM). However, it is important to note that this pattern is significantly influenced by a limited number of exceptionally successful posts, rather than representing a consistent trend across all content.

Furthermore, Tuesday emerges as the day with the highest average engagement, approximately 48 interactions per post, while other days range from an average of 12 to 18 interactions (Figure 1).

Figure 1. *Post-time and engagement*

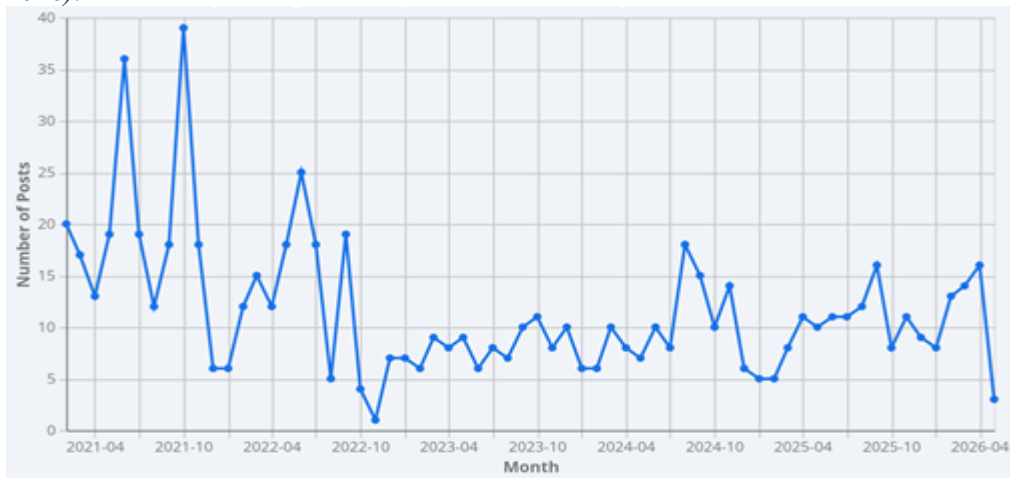


Source: *Own study.*

Regarding the communication frequency of the Katowice account, since 2021, the account has maintained a consistent presence, averaging approximately 14.8 posts per month (Figure 2).

In the most recent full years (2023–2025), the frequency has stabilized at approximately 9.3 posts per month, which is equivalent to roughly 2 to 3 communications per week. The account's activity frequently experiences significant fluctuations during major cultural events. In particular, the peak volume of communication was recorded in October 2021, with 39 posts generated within that month, presumably correlating with a concentrated array of musical festivals and city events.

Figure 2. Monthly posting frequency of Katowice, a city of music account (2021-2026).



Source: Own study.

In examining engagement through the lens of the ratio of engagement to video views, it is evident that local cultural and traditional music content exhibits remarkable performance. This observation indicates a highly dedicated and active audience for these particular themes (Table 3). The findings indicate that music serves as an iconic mechanism through which audiences engage with the cultural significance of place (Bakas *et al.*, 2024; Kavaratzis, 2024). Also, these subjects are regarded distinctive to Katowice and serve as a source of pride that underpins the unique place-based subject matter.

Table 3. Videos of highest engagement

Rank	Post Title / Theme	Description	Engagement Rate
1	Jubileusz 10-lecia Kapeli Fedaków	Video celebrating the 10th anniversary of Kapela Fedaków; achieved 59 likes and 3 comments from 295 views.	21.0%
2	Z KOLEDECZKĄ IDZIEMY! (Katowicki Orkiestrowy Uniwersytet Ludowy)	Post highlighting Silesian caroling traditions and local musical heritage.	19.4%
3	Zespół Śląsk and Ansambl Lado	Collaborative folklore performance that emphasizes cultural and musical traditions.	19.3%
4	Śląskielskie kolyndowaniy (Kapela Fedaków Workshops)	The post of the traditional music workshop focused on regional cultural practices.	19.2%
5	Arsen Petrosyan Quartet	Performance of the Armenian Culture Festival that showcases intercultural musical exchange.	18.1%

Source: Own study.

The analysis indicates a total of 18,596 likes and 401 comments, resulting in an overall engagement rate. Looking at the features of these posts can help determine what drives higher engagement from followers. Given that the number of followers is 1,925, the stakeholder engagement rate (average per post) is calculated to be 1.12%.

4.2 Emotional Engagement

Analysis of Katowice's social media posts and their accompanying captions indicates that emotional appeals play an important role in fostering interaction among audiences by emphasizing themes of community, shared identity and human connection. Although explicit emotional keywords are present in a limited subset of posts, the descriptive characteristics of the alt text demonstrate a consistent strategy aimed at engaging audiences through relatable and evocative imagery.

Sometimes, posts often underscore human emotions and personal interactions, as evidenced by the inclusion of emotional stickers in captions such as "smiling warmly" and "holding hands." For example, a depiction of a woman on stage with arms extended before a large audience, or a musician smiling at the camera, fosters a direct emotional connection with the viewer. In the context of interactions, this phenomenon is significantly influenced by the representation of shared social spaces and collective experiences (Björk and Virtanen, 2005; Mariani and Baggio, 2020).

Additionally, a notable proportion of posts depict crowds engaging in activities within the Culture Zone and individuals singing carols together. Posts that portray crowds demonstrate a higher average engagement (13.3 likes) compared to the overall average for emotional appeal, indicating that residents are attracted to representations of themselves and their neighbors within the city's narrative (Braun *et al.*, 2013).

There are several posts that emphasize the identity of the city as a post-industrial center, where spaces have been repurposed for cultural purposes (Zenker and Braun, 2015). Highlighting these distinctive cultural markers fosters a sense of local pride.

The final point, which holds considerable significance within the emotional dimension, concerns the strategic use of inviting language in captions, such as "Let us create together" (Stwórzmy razem) and "Enter the orbit," (Wejd w orbitę) which explicitly fosters audiences participation. In addition, the descriptive emphasis on vibrant colors, joyful faces, and energetic performances ensures that the emotional appeal is effectively communicated to all.

findings reveal a significant relationship between emotional engagement and place brand on social media (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014).

4.3 Cognitive Involvement

Cognitive engagement with Katowice's identity as a UNESCO City of Music manifests itself in distinct patterns of interaction that vary considerably depending on the stakeholder and the nature of the content. Although the "UNESCO" designation offers an institutional framework, audiences predominantly focus on and engage with the practical and experiential dimensions of the city's music scene. They actively seek clarification of information and evaluate the quality of cultural offerings.

Cognitive engagement is predominantly reflected in residents' efforts to resolve ambiguity (Dessart *et al.*, 2016). They use comments to inquire about ticket availability, location changes, and specific event times. For instance, these accounts receive numerous inquiries regarding logistics ("Zaczynamy o 20.00 w kiele?", "Czy bilety kupione... to bilety na to wydarzenie?"). Stakeholders respond by providing detailed and informative responses that reinforce the cognitive loop. Audiences exhibit nearly a fivefold increase in cognitive engagement when posts or comments refer to specific local landmarks (eg, Mariacka, KMO, Strefa Kultury) or the city of Katowice itself.

For example, the average engagement score increases from 0.20 for general comments to 0.94 for those with a local focus. This indicates that audiences exert greater mental effort and critical thinking when content is relatable to their immediate physical environment. In their response, they demonstrate critical evaluation and analytical thinking.

This finding aligns with studies that mentioned about the complexity of place branding process (Bisani *et al.*, 2021; Hanna *et al.*, 2021; Kavaratzis and Kalandides, 2015). Additionally, posts that disseminate information about events and festivals from the official account primarily facilitate social sharing and mentions, accounting for 23% of comments.

Audiences utilize these posts as a medium to tag friends and extend invitations to events, illustrating a connective form of cognitive engagement in which the city's identity is collaboratively shared within social networks. Rather than offering praise, they engage in an evaluative discourse, questioning the artistic merit, financial implications, and feasibility of events.

Comments such as (Ja sie zastanawiam gdzie ci wszyscy ludzie sie tam pomieszcz?), critiques of specific performances (e.g., kakofoniczne... ile oni zarobili na tym?) demonstrate a level of critical analysis that transcends mere emotional reaction. It may result from a lack of clear and effective communication with the audience (Hanna *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, this indicates that they are not merely passive consumers; rather, they serve as active evaluators of the city's musical identity,

demonstrating a keen awareness of both the quality and accessibility of the city of music offerings.

4.4 Behavioral Engagement

The highest levels of engagement, as evidenced by likes and comments, are influenced by prominent events such as the OFF Festival. For example, a post announcing the headliners, Yung Lean and Bladee, garnered more than 3,700 likes, illustrating how world-class events under the "City of Music" banner generate substantial social media activity and foster a sense of pride among residents.

The posts that garnered the highest levels of engagement shared a common characteristic: the influence of the individual responsible for their creation, who also tagged another account, such as the Off Festival account or a prominent musician. Given that these accounts possessed a substantially larger following than that of Katowice's account, the overall level of engagement was markedly elevated.

This finding aligns with research indicating that music festivals, which serve as flagship events for cities that promote inclusivity, simultaneously underscore the importance of place branding (Bakas *et al.*, 2024; Kavaratzis, 2024). Content produced by local artists, bands, and cultural partners (e.g., `kapela.fedakow`, `hengeloband`, `dzielnica\_brzmi\_dobrze`) (kapela.fedakow, hengeloband, dzielnica_brzmi_dobrze) results in markedly higher average engagement levels compared to official posts.

This approach facilitates the integration of diverse stakeholder groups (Slocum, 2023). The analysis of post-categories reveals a branding gap, characterized by a notable disparity in engagement levels. Posts that explicitly incorporate UNESCO and identity-related keywords demonstrate significantly lower engagement, averaging 13.5 likes and 0.27 comments, in contrast to general music and event-focused content, which averages 33.8 likes and 0.77 comments.

This finding suggests that the cognitive engagement is more profoundly influenced by tangible musical offerings—such as artists, concerts, and festivals—rather than by the abstract institutional identity of the city. In the context of user-generated and partner content, there is an average of 120.7 likes and 2.5 comments per post. On the contrary, the content of official accounts averages 13.4 likes and 0.3 comments per post.

This disparity suggests that audiences are more inclined to engage with the "City of Music" identity when it is conveyed through the authentic voices of artists and community members. Posts that explicitly encourage participation, using terms such as "join" (dołącz), "comment" (skomentuj) or "tag" (oznacz)—exhibit a statistically significant increase in likes, averaging 28.0 compared to 16.8 for posts without calls to action (CTAs). Furthermore, interactive strategies, such as soliciting users to

"comment the word 'ticket' for a direct message link," have demonstrated efficacy in transforming passive viewers into active participants.

Moreover, significant engagement is closely associated with local milestones, such as the 160th anniversary of Katowice. Social media posts from bands such as *hengeloband*, expressing gratitude to the city for the opportunity to perform at these celebrations, resonate profoundly with the local audience, thus reinforcing a shared cultural identity (Kemp *et al.*, 2012).

5. Conclusions

This study examines the role of social media, with particular emphasis on Instagram content, in enhancing the visibility of place brand communications within the context of a UNESCO Creative City of Music. The predominant themes of the posts focused primarily on characteristics distinctive to this music city, including music festivals and events, artists and performances, workshops and educational opportunities, and cultural spaces.

The elements that increased engagement included the use of tags, hashtags and also posts timing. This revealed that when the official Katowice account tags other stakeholders, it attracts greater engagement from individuals. Posts that highlighted musical identity and showcased cultural locations received a higher level of engagement.

These findings indicate that the content of official accounts, in alignment with the intended brand message, can be enhanced through various strategic initiatives. These strategies include the targeted use of tags, particularly focusing on accounts with a larger follower base, optimizing post-timing, and the strategic application of hashtags.

However, audience engagement is more profoundly influenced by tangible musical offerings, rather than by the abstract institutional identity of the city, such as the UNESCO designation. Thus, the act of labeling a city does not inherently promote engagement. This study demonstrates that such a label must first be recognized by the audience. It is this perception that underpins the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of engagement.

Additionally, the development of themes that foster content richness, the provision of detailed and clear information, and the creation of posts that reflect the musical identity of Katowice and its associated activities are essential.

Ensuring that this account achieves higher levels of influence should be integrated into the formative stages of place brand planning. Creative cities can use the findings of this study to improve their social media presence, thus strengthening their brands.

Furthermore, other stakeholders, particularly those involved in the branding of the location, could gain valuable information from this research, allowing them to make more informed decisions about being active in social media platforms. Our findings provide significant insight into the utilization of specific social media techniques to enhance stakeholder engagement in the context of place branding.

Future research should also explore the application of analogous techniques on various social media platforms like Facebook to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the visual and textual attributes associated with stakeholder engagement and to identify effective strategies for branding culturally rich cities.

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