**An integrated model of city and neighborhood identities: A tale of two cities**

**Abstract**

Drawing on the place branding literature, we explain how identity formed at a lower level of place scale (i.e., neighborhood) influences identity formation at a higher level of place scale (i.e., city). We tested the proposed hypothesesby developing and testing an integrated model of place identity for two cities in Bangladesh. Findings suggest that neighborhood brand love, resident-neighborhood relationship, place dependence and place social bonding positively impact neighborhood identity, which in turn positively influences resident-neighborhood satisfaction and resident-neighborhood citizenship behavior. The study also finds that city identity is formed by neighborhood identity and resident-neighborhood satisfaction. This research addresses the calls for more research on place branding and marketing to advance the development of theory in the area of city branding.

**Key words:** City identity, Resident-neighborhood identity, Place scale, Branding, Emerging markets

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1. **Introduction**

Research and practice on place branding has gained momentum in recent times in marketing, urban planning, and tourism (Acharya & Rahman, 2016; Lewcika, 2010; Oguztimur & Akturan, 2015). The aim of place branding is to create awareness of nations, cities and regions to potential tourists, investors and residents. “*City branding is here suggested as a new episode in the application of city marketing, because it changes the focus of the endeavour. Branding is attempting to create associations with the city, associations that are emotional, mental, psychological, moving away from the functional – rational character of marketing interventions. This does not mean that the functional or rational aspects are becoming less important. It signified a change of direction in that the desired brand is what guides the marketing measures on the city’s physical environment and functionality*” (Kavaratzis, 2004, p.11). This notion is confirmed by Braun’s (2012) idea that “*a shift from marketing to branding*” is alluded to in the practice of city marketing. The practice of place branding is investigated to shed light on the relationship between cities and people.

City branding is considered to be a sub-field of place branding that focuses on branding cities to the residents as a place to live and invest (Merrilees, Miller, & Herington, 2009; Powell, 2016). The importance of city branding is driven by increasing demand among cities and local authorities for government resources such as finance and urban services and for attracting private investments. Recent observations show that better economic and lifestyle conditions significantly influence residents’ mobility (Green et al., 2016; RAJUK, 2015). Such mobility adversely impacts the long-run sustainability of cities and neighborhoods. Losing residents implies that city and local authorities cannot compete for government and private investments without good justification. This can inhibit the city and local authorities from obtaining funds to develop neighborhoods and cities. It becomes difficult to attract new residents and investors in their area. Given these potential negative impacts, it is imperative to investigate how city and local authorities can retain existing residents and attract new residents and in turn, government and private investments into their area (Acharya & Rahman, 2016; Metaxas, 2010).

Increasingly, cities are turning toward the application of place branding as a way not only to attract visitors, but also to connect to the entire experience, ranging from investing to improving the qualities of schools (Martin, 2017). Place branding is not just about logo and slogan but should also reflect, engage and activate people of the place (Salzman, 2016), as individual involvement could be an influential element in driving people’s interests and developing positive relationships between people and cities. The consequences of adopting a place branding approach can be financially beneficial as well. Research by Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority (CRVA), from the city of Charlotte in USA, found that every $1 spent on print media generated $115 for businesses located in the city (Martin, 2017). Austin, a city in the State of Texas in USA, attracted over 45 million visitors and travellers in 2014 by promoting itself as the “Live Music Capital of the World.” This has created a place identity for Austin which has transformed it into a place where people want to live (Salzman, 2016). In recent times, city planners are also recognizing the importance of neighborhood identity for community participation, which can help address neighborhood issues proactively (Viau, 2017).

This study focuses on place identities of two place scales – the neighborhood and the city. Place scales refer to the different sizes of physical living places. For example, one’s home is considered the lowest place scale, with the neighborhood as the next highest one, followed by city, region, country, and perhaps the continent. Lewcika (2011) notes that “*one of the definitional features of place is its concentric character: smaller places are incorporated within larger ones*” (p. 211). Based on this notion, it is argued that identities of the lower place scale would be incorporated within the identities of higher place scale. Kalandides (2011) also notes that the identity of a place can rarely be understood without examining the place in relation to other places. This is because a place’s identity is historically dependent on its relationship with other places. For example, Kalandides (2011) argues that the place identity of Prenzlauer Berg (a district in Berlin) cannot be understood without understanding its identity in relation to the identity of the greater city of Berlin. In other words, it is important to understand how the identity of Prenzlauer Berg is connected to the identity of Berlin.

 It is argued that the majority of place marketing and place branding research is qualitative in nature and overtly descriptive, not based on primary data and testable models or hypotheses. Previous research has failed to extend theoretical knowledge on place branding and marketing (Vuignier, 2017). Prior studies do not provide a conceptual clarity and theoretical foundation for the place branding and marketing domain (Vuignier, 2017). Similar conclusions have been reached by other researchers who have reviewed published researches in the area of place branding and marketing (Acharya & Rahman, 2016; Oguztimur & Akturan, 2016). Limited research exists on the psychological processes through which people become attached to the places (Lewicka, 2011). Thus, there is a need to develop and test integrated models that includes resident focused constructs in order to measure the success of place branding efforts (Zenker & Martin, 2011). The current study builds on these criticisms and investigates how place identities are developed for residents living in neighborhoods and city. Specifically, we develop and empirically test an integrated model of place identity that considers both the neighborhood and city identities. Thus, the two primary research questions for this study are:

1. What are the antecedents of neighborhood identity?
2. How does neighborhood identity affect city identity?

The findings of the current study contribute to the place branding literature in several ways. First, the study finds that neighborhood brand love, resident-neighborhood relationship, place dependence and place social bonding influence neighborhood identity. Prior studies have investigated the role of destination brand love on destination brand identity (Swanson, 2015, 2017). However, identity formation takes time and therefore would be more applicable in the context of residents, most of whom have frequent contacts with their place of living compared to tourists who have occasional contacts with the destination. Understanding the neighborhood identity formation will assist city brand planners to engender greater attachment to their neighborhood and the city. Second, the findings show that city identity is positively influenced by neighborhood identity. In other words, managing neighborhood identity is crucial for managing city identity. To our knowledge, this study is one of the first to develop an integrated model of neighborhood identity and city identity. This finding provides empirical support of the notion that places are concentric in nature (Lewcika, 2011). Third, city identity is also influenced by resident-neighborhood satisfaction but not resident-neighborhood citizenship behavior. In other words, identity at a higher place scale is only influenced by satisfaction at the lower place scale and is not infleunced by citizenship behavior at the lower place scale. Thus, this establishes a boundary condition for the influence of residents’ citizenship behavior. Fourth, the extant literature on place branding has been broadly based on individual case studies (Aronczyk, 2008) and researchers’ knowledge and interpretation (Lucarelli & Berg, 2011). Prior studies indicate that there is a lack of empirical studies on place branding (Niedomysl & Jonasson, 2012). Thus, by adopting a quantitative research methodology, this study contributes toward reducing an identified methodological gap in the place branding research (Chan & Marafa, 2013). Specifically, this study does not only investigate one place scale but develops an integrated model that includes a lower place scale (i.e., neighborhood) and a higher place scale (i.e., city). Overall, the findings from the study show that the place branding research needs to adopt a holistic perspective because residents are part of both their neighborhoods and the city.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. First, a review of literature on the constructs used in the research model is provided, along with the proposed hypotheses. Next, the research methodology is explained followed by data analysis and results. Finally, the implications of the research findings are discussed along with limitations and future research directions.

1. **Literature review and hypothesis development**

**2.1 Do individuals form relationships with their place of living?**

The current study proposes that residents can form deep and personal relationships with their place of living. Research on consumer brand relationships has shown the existence of relationships between an animate object (i.e., a person) and an inanimate object (i.e., a brand, a product) (Fournier, 1998). Subsequent reported studies also provide support for such a relationship. For example, Rauschnabel and Ahuvia (2014) found that “…*anthropomorphism makes consumer–brand relationships more like interpersonal relationships*…” (p. 388). Fournier and Alvarez (2012) note that “*people in many ways relate to brands similarly to how they relate to people. Over the past fourteen years, numerous tests of the applicability of the relationship metaphor to brand consumption have coalesced to support the validity of this basic tenet.*” (p. 177). In the context of place branding, prior research has associated human characteristics like personality with places such as cities (Lee & Suh, 2011;Tugulea, 2017) and tourism destinations (Hosany, Ekinci, & Uysal, 2006; Kumar & Nayak, 2018). Based on the above discussions, it may be concluded that residents can form relationships with their place of living.

**2.2 Self-identity theory (SIT) and self-expansion theory (SET)**

The research model in the current article is based on two complementary theories: self-identity theory (SIT) and self-expansion theory (SET). SIT posits that individuals are inclined to categorize themselves into specific social groups in order to differentiate themselves from other groups (Tenenbaum & Eklund, 2014). One of the consequences of identifying with a specific group is that individuals try to act or behave in ways that help maintain the group membership (Hornsey, 2008).

SET is a conceptual framework that describes how individuals think, feel and act in the context of a close relationship. The model emphasizes that individuals have an innate desire to expand the self by incorporating resources, perspectives and identities of other entities with which they have close relationship (Reimann & Aron, 2014). This can effectively change the structure of an individual’s self in that the self will come to include the other entity (Reimann & Aron, 2014). The emotional bond increases as the other entity becomes part of the self (Malar, Harley, Hoyer, & Nyffenegger, 2011). The fundamental principle of SET can be applied to research domains dealing with person-object relationships, including environmental psychology (i.e., person-place relationships) (Reimann & Aron, 2014).

In accordance with SET, residents are motivated to invest their own resources in the place to maintain person-place relationship (Chen & Dwyer, 2017). Prior research has found that consumers are likely to invest their own resources to maintain relationship with the brands that they are highly attached to (Breivik & Thorbjørnsen, 2008; Sung & Campbell, 2009). Resources can be direct (e.g., time and money) and indirect (e.g., friendships, personal identity, material possessions). The main theme is that the value of resource investment would be lost if the relationship is to end (Breivik & Thorbjørnsen, 2008). In the context of place branding, this implies that residents invest their direct and indirect resources to maintain resident-place relationships. For example, residents spend time developing relationships with their neighbors. They may also make an effort to give recommendations to the city authorities that improves the image or conditions of their city or their neighborhood.

*2.2.1* ***Place branding***

Zenker and Braun (2010) define place branding as “*a network of associations in the consumers’ mind based on the visual, verbal, and behavioral expression of a place, which is embodied through the aims, communication, values, and the general culture of the place’s stakeholders and the overall place design*” (p. 3). Boisen, Terlouw, and van Gorp (2011) argue that place branding shares similar characteristics with product or service brands. For example, the name of the place can evoke specific associations and perceptions in people’s minds similar to product or service brands. The author provides an example of the city of Paris, which can evoke the association of romance. In this regard, Parkerson and Saunders (2005) underscore a similar theme by noting that many businesses attach the name of the city or region to their products to lend positive associations. For example, prawns harvested in the region of Exmouth in Western Australia are well known because of their quality and reputation. Sellers and restaurateurs frequently sell these prawns as “Exmouth Prawns” and charge premium prices. Themes of brand loyalty and brand extension can also be observed where the residents show greater preference for living in a particular city and where the name of a particular city or region was transferred to a new colony. For example, the city of Perth in Western Australia was named after the Scottish city of Perth because it reminded the settlers of their place of origin.

Previous researchers tend to use place marketing and place branding interchangeably (Lucarelli & Brorström, 2013). However, there are differences between the two concepts. Place marketing primarily focuses on the interaction between the place and its residents, where place is viewed as a product (Boisen, Terlouw, Groote, & Couwenberg, 2017). It deals with the supply and demand of the place to suit the needs of the residents. Place branding, on the other hand, is related to the image and identity of the place. Identity of the place helps to differentiate the place over other competing places. The goal of place branding is to develop a positive image and reputation of the place over a longer period of time and represents the hedonistic approach to places (Boisen et al., 2011). Thus, the task of place branding is managing the reputation and perception of the place (Boisen et al., 2017).

***2.2.2******Place identity***

Proshansky (1978) defines place identity as a sub-category of an individual’s self-identity which is related to the physical environment and is considered as a cognitive construct (Rollero & De Piccoli, 2010). According to SIT, individuals have a need to distinguish themselves from others in social contexts (Tajfel, 1978) and seek to identify themselves with groups that fulfil this need (Cornelissen, Haslam, & Balmer, 2007; Kim, Han, & Park, 2001). In this regard, Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff (1983) note that place identity is formed through a complex cognitive process influenced by attitudes, values, thoughts, beliefs, meanings, and behaviors.

Consistent with SIT, place identity implies that residents identify with their neighborhood or city because these fulfil the need for distinctiveness in social contexts. The assumption is that through personal attachment to a specific and identifiable place, a resident develops a feeling of belongingness and purpose in life that shapes the identity of that resident (Proshansky et al., 1983). Place identity involves psychological investment that develops over time (Giuliani & Feldman, 1993). For example, Hernandez et al. (2007) found that residents who lived in a place for a long period of time showed stronger place identity compared to residents who lived there for a short period of time.

Prior research has considered place identity as a static concept dominated by communication-promotional tools (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013). There is now an increasing acceptance that place identity develops through a dynamic process which incorporates the role of the key stakeholders (Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2012; Zenker & Erfgen, 2014). For example, Warnaby (2009) suggests that it is important for the place brand administrators to interact with the place consumers and customers in order to co-create meaning and identity of the place.

***2.3 Antecedents of neighborhood identity***

*2.3.1 Neighborhood brand love*

Brand love is defined as emotional and passionate feelings for a brand that might lead to commitment and loyalty (Batra, Ahuvia & Bagozzi, 2012; Roy, Eshghi, & Sarkar, 2013). Individuals have a great desire to maintain relationships with objects which they love (Chen & Quester, 2015). Past research indicates that consumers become emotionally attached to the brands they love (Ahuvia, 2005) and that brand love develops over time (Langner et al., 2016). In addition, consumers who show love towards a brand also tend to speak to others positively about the brand and as a result market the brand through positive word of mouth (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010; Batra, Ahuvia & Bagozzi, 2012). Consequently, the concept of brand love has become a subject of increased interest because of the associated benefits.

Ahuvia, Batra, and Bagozzi (2014) contend that love for an object can extend to a wide variety of things other than family, friends, and lovers. They find that people cognitively incorporate a lover’s object identity into their own extended self. The identity of an inanimate object such as a brand is a unique set of associations (e.g., product attributes, user profile, product performance, symbol, and personality) related to the brand (Ghodeswar, 2008). Previous studies report that consumers include an inanimate, non-human entity (i.e., brands) into their self-definition (Trump & Brucks, 2012) and that a brand’s identity can become fused with a consumer’s own personal and social identities in a phenomenon termed “brand identity fusion” (Lin & Sung, 2014). Through a series of experimental studies, Reimann et al. (2012) found that identities of loved brands become incorporated into a consumer’s sense of self over time which supports the assertions of self-expansion theory (SET). In addition, Rauschnabel and Ahuvia (2014) report that anthropomorphism increases the sense of relationship with brands, which is then reflected through personal attachment, desire for long-term relationship, and anticipated separation distress.

Recently, the concept of “destination brand love” has gained traction in academic literature (Aro, Suomi, & Saraniemi, 2018; Lee & Hyun, 2016; Swanson, 2017). Tourists who profess love for a particular destination are more likely to return to that destination, promote it to friends, feel separation distress, exhibit switching resistance, show greater willingness to invest, and resist negative information about the destination.

Masuda and Bookman (2016) define neighborhood branding as the “*symbolic and material practices of state and/or private cultural producers who aim to enhance the appeal of local areas within the city in order to attract investment, promote consumption, reduce criminality, or to achieve social and cultural aims such as invoking civic pride*” (p. 2). In this research, love for one’s neighborhood is likely to occur because neighborhood is the place where residents spend most of the time. Residents are more likely to be familiar with the physical structures of the neighborhood, make friends with neighbors, and feel attachments to the local shops and facilities. Consistent with the concept of destination brand love (Aro et al., 2018; Swanson, 2017), residents are also likely to feel distressed when separated from their neighborhood, exhibit switching resistance and resist negative information about it. Swanson (2017) also found that self-brand integration (e.g., when brand becomes part of one’s life) can occur in the context of destination brand love. Similarly, residents can expand their selves by incorporating the identities of their place of living. This reasoning is consistent with the propositions of Lin and Sung (2014) on the fusion of brand identity and self. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

**H1:** *Neighborhood brand love has a positive impact on neighborhood identity*.

*2.3.2 Resident-neighborhood relationship*

Research on consumer-brand relationships suggests that customers are more likely to identify with the company when they have a good relationship with the company (Ahearne et al., 2005). Previous research on place branding has emphasized that place brand identity needs to be co-produced with multiple stakeholders (Hanna & Rowley, 2011; Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2012). In a review of past literatures on place branding, Acharya and Rahman (2016) note that stakeholder participation is related to place brand identity. Based on the preceding discussion, we propose that residents are likely to integrate the identity of the neighborhood they live in if they perceive that they have a good relationship with the neighborhood. This is consistent with SIT, whereby residents are likely to view themselves as part of a special group because of the good relationship they have with the neighborhood. Thus, we advance the following hypothesis:

**H2:** *Resident-neighborhood relationship has a positive impact on neighborhood identity*.

*2.3.3 Place dependence*

Place dependence is defined as the functional connection between the resident and the physical environment which helps to meet the individual’s needs and achieve goals (Anton & Lawrence, 2014; Raymond et al., 2010). Place dependence occurs when the current place that a resident lives in provides the facilities that support him/her better than an alternative place. Consistent with SET, this implies that residents are likely to incorporate the attributes of place (e.g., facilities, environment) within their identities in order to expand their self-identity. Therefore, we advance the following hypothesis:

**H3:** *Place dependence has a positive impact on neighborhood identity*.

*2.3.4 Place social bonding*

Place social bonding refers to the residents’ sense of interpersonal relationship and group belongingness in a place (Hammitt et al., 2006; Ramkissoon & Mavondo, 2015). This is different from resident-neighborhood relationship, which refers to the relationship between the authority (e.g., city council, ward) and the residents. In other words, resident-neighborhood relationships operate in a formal world, whereas place social bonding operates in an informal world (Van Dam, Salverda, & During, 2014). Place social bonding arises from social bonds that residents develop with other residents through interpersonal interactions (Ramkissoon et al., 2013). Place social bonding could include a sense of belongingness (i.e., residents feel a sense of membership to the place), place rootedness (i.e., residents feel a very strong bond with the place), place familiarity (i.e., residents can invoke pleasant memories and images of the place) and attachment with physical surroundings (i.e., residents feel emotional connection with the place) (Raymond et al., 2010). Therefore, consistent with SIT, residents develop a distinct neighborhood identity through place social bonding. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H4:** *Place social bonding has a positive impact on neighborhood identity.*

*2.3.5 Resident-neighborhood satisfaction*

Resident-neighborhood satisfaction refers to residents’ evaluation of their neighborhood environment that includes psychological, social and physical attributes (Hur et al., 2009). Previous research found that residents’ satisfaction is related to services, safety, facilities, parking, noise, and social contacts (Buys & Miller, 2012; Lovejoy, Handy, & Mokhtarian, 2010). Residents’ satisfaction has been positively linked to word-of-mouth and decreased intention to leave (Chen & Dwyer, 2017; Zenker & Rütter, 2014). Prior studies on tourism destinations indicate that place identity has a positive relation with place satisfaction (Kyle, Graefe, & Manning, 2003; Yuksel, Yuksel, & Bilim, 2010). Based on the preceding discussion, it is hypothesized that neighborhood identity will positively impact resident-neighborhood satisfaction. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H5:** *Neighborhood identity has a positive impact on resident-neighborhood satisfaction.*

Prior studies find that positive image about store brands, when considered in whole (i.e., not distinguished in terms of product categories) is positively related to retailer’s brand image (Kremer & Viot, 2012). In other words, it is not necessary to individually like specific store brand product categories to form a positive image about the retailer. Similarly, if one likes or loves the neighborhood that he or she lives in, then this love or liking could transfer to the city level. This does not imply that liking a city means liking all the neighborhoods in that city. A resident may not be able to judge all the neighborhoods in the city equally. In the present study, we argue that residents are more likely to incorporate the identity of the city if they are satisfied with their neighborhood. Uzzell, Pol, and Badenas (2002) found that satisfaction with place of living is positively related to place identity for two villages situated in the county of Surrey in England. This finding is contrary to the findings of Kyle et al. (2003) and Yuksel et al. (2010). However, Uzzell et al. (2002) did not investigate whether satisfaction with the lower place scale (i.e., villages) influenced identity for larger place scale (i.e., the county of Surrey).Residential satisfaction is a positive affective state which can cause the residents to behave in ways intended to maintain congruency with the residential environment (Amérigo & Aragones, 1997), and includes the overall city environment (Lewcika, 2011). Thus, we advance the following hypothesis:

**H6:** *Resident-neighborhood satisfaction has a positive impact on city identity*.

*2.3.6 Resident-neighborhood citizenship behavior*

In this study, resident-neighborhood citizenship behavior is defined as the behavior of the residents that includes helping their neighborhood beyond the required normal role as a resident. This is based on the literature of customer citizenship behaviors (CCBs) which focus on customer extra-role behavior, such as helping other customers and the company (Bartikowski & Walsh, 2011). There is now an increasing academic and professional interest in understanding the role of citizenship behavior, which is considered as a novel concept in city marketing research (Taecharungroj, 2016). Residents’ citizenship behavior includes word-of-mouth about the place and intention to stay at the place (Zenker & Petersen, 2014; Zenker & Rutter, 2014). It has been argued that residents who identify with their place of living are more likely to become ambassadors of their place (i.e., engage in positive word-of-mouth about the place), and participate in activities and decision making processes about their place of living (Braun, Kavaratzis, & Zenker; 2013). This finds empirical support from Taecharungroj (2016), who reports that resident identification has a positive relationship with city citizenship behavior. Swanson (2017) reports that tourists who love a tourism destination are more likely to promote it to their peers. While tourists may choose a tourism destination for hedonic purposes, residents may choose a place of living for both hedonic and utilitarian purpose. Residents may choose a place of living not only for its easy access to transportation and shopping, but also for the amenities (e.g., park, access to cinema) provided by the location. Previous studies report that word-of-mouth place was positively related to place attachment and residents identifying with their place of living(Chen, Dwyer, & Firth, 2014; Choo, Park, & Petrick, 2011).In contrast, residents can become disengaged with the city when they cannot identify with the branding “highlights” promoted by the city authority (Insch & Stuart, 2015). Based on the preceding discussion, it is argued that neighborhood identity is likely to lead to stronger resident-neighborhood citizenship behavior. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H7:** *Neighborhood identity has a positive impact on resident-neighborhood citizenship behavior*.

Arnett, German and Hunt (2003) report that participation in university-related activities is significantly associated with university students’ identity. However, Van Dick, Grojean, Christ, and Wieseke (2006) found that organizational citizenship behavior is not related to organizational identity. In this study we argue that residents who are engaged in neighborhood citizenship behavior are more likely to identify with their city. Residents’ engagement in neighborhood citizenship behavior indicates their favorable perception of the neighborhood, which may ultimately lead to incorporation of a city identity. Thus the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H8:** *Resident-neighborhood citizenship behavior has a positive impact on city identity*.

*2.3.7 Neighborhood identity and city identity*

In this research, we argue that neighborhood identity will influence city identity. Balmer (2008) also notes that national identities are formed partly by the individual identities of business corporations originating in those nations. Research evidence suggests that consumers’ perceptions of a country are based on the country’s well-known brands (Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Rojas-Méndez, 2013). For example, consumers perceive some countries as innovative, based on the innovativeness of the corporations located in those countries (e.g., Germany, Japan, and France). For example, Germany’s image is closely associated with people’s perceptions of its engineering prowess and the image of France is closely associated with the high quality of French wines. Over time, this attribute of innovation becomes incorporated within the national identities of these countries. This implies that the identity of a lower level entity (i.e., corporations) can become incorporated into the identity of a higher level entity (i.e., country).

Based on this notion, and also on the idea that definitional features of a place comprise its concentric character (Lewcika, 2011), it is argued that as neighborhoods are part of the city, then a neighborhood’s identity will become incorporated into the higher level place scale (i.e., city).

According to the self-categorization theory (Turner, 1975), individual identities can operate at different levels of inclusiveness (Hornsey, 2008). In other words, multiple identities can exist at the same time. For example, a person can hold both an identity of a parent and an office worker. Individual members would categorize themselves as members of a particular group in order to make the group membership salient (Van Dick et al., 2006). Research shows that the bases for place identity may differ in terms of scale; that is, one can perceive one’s self as the resident of city district, then city, country, and then continent (Lewcika, 2008). SET supports the argument that individuals incorporate the identities of other entities in order to expand ones’ self. Thus, city identity can be considered a self-definition or cognitive self-representation adopted by residents through neighborhood identity. Based on the preceding discussion and empirical evidence we propose the following hypothesis:

**H9:** *Neighborhood identity has a positive impact on city identity*.

The research model is shown in Figure 1.

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Insert Figure 1

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1. **Method**

*3.1 Study location and sample*

Data was collected from residents of Dhaka and Khulna cities of Bangladesh. Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, is the eleventh largest megacity in the world, with a population of 18.2 million people living in an area of 1528 sq. km. (Swapan et al., 2017). Dhaka has a rich urban history, with colonial and modern architecture, and is home to country’s major administrative and business centers. The urban sector in Bangladesh is the main thrust of the economy, which contributes more than 60 percent of GDP (RAJUK, 2015). Dhaka is the prime urban agglomeration and economic hub of the country, having a current GDP of US$ 10 billion (Swapan et al., 2017). The city offers 44 percent of total formal employment in the country, consisting of office jobs, business, and manufacturing industries.

Khulna is one of the largest metropolitan cities in Bangladesh. Khulna has an area of 41 sq. km. and 31 administrative wards for local level urban management. A ward consists of several neighborhoods and is governed by individual representatives from the Khulna City Corporation, which is the city level authority. The city is located in the southwest coastal areas of the country and about 250 kms away from the capital city, Dhaka. The economy in Bangladesh is highly polarized and Dhaka is considered as the primate city as it offers around 44 percent of the total formal employment of the country (RAJUK, 2015). Consequently, other metropolitan cities in the country struggle to retain their own residents and also suffer significantly from identity crisis. In response, there is an increasing trend to diversify the economic sector of Khulna city. The city has invested in improving its resource base, particularly in tourism, shrimp export, and higher education. However, how the current trend of economic development is able to facilitate the residents to form their self-identity by incorporating neighborhood or the city identities is unexplored.

An interceptive questionnaire survey was administered by the local research team of Khulna University at thirty two public spaces within Dhaka and Khulna cities, including shopping malls, transportation hubs, universities, and neighborhood pedestrian nodes. Potential respondents under 20 years of age were excluded in order to comply with the research objectives. A total of 285 valid responses were collected from Dhaka and 555 valid responses were collected from Khulna city. The majority of the respondents are in the age range of 20-35 years. Participants represented different education levels with the majority having completed higher secondary education.

*3.2 Measures*

We operationalized all the constructs using multi-item scales using seven-point Likert type scales (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree) as shown in Table 1. Measures for neighborhood identity, place dependence and place social bonding were adapted from Ramkissoon et al. (2013). The scales for neighborhood identity were also adapted for measuring city identity. Items for neighborhood brand love and resident-neighborhood relationship were adapted from Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) and Evanschitzky et al. (2011) respectively. Measures for resident-neighborhood satisfaction and resident-neighborhood citizenship behavior were adapted from Ramkissoon et al. (2013) and Balaji et al., (2016) respectively.

1. **Data analysis and results**

We employed partial least squares (PLS) path modelling using SmartPLS 3.2.3 to analyze the data. PLS was used for several reasons, the first of which is that in most of the marketing studies, the data are non-normal and PLS does not require the normality assumption like covariance-based structural equation modelling (Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics, 2009). Secondly, according to Chin (1998), PLS accounts for measurement errors, and provides accurate estimates of mediation effects. Third, PLS can be used to estimate path models with small sample size (Chin & Newsted, 1999). Fourth, PLS does not require equality of weights for all indicators of a scale; it allows the indicators to vary as it contributes to the composite score of the latent variables. Finally, PLS provides an alternate method to test theory (Henseler et al., 2009).

Harman’s single factor test and the marker variable approach (Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012) are used to ensure that common method bias is not a problem in this study. Figure 1 shows that there are four endogenous variables NI, CI, RNS and RNCB.

4.1 *Measurement model*

The outer model was used to assess the reliability and validity of the constructs. Table 1 shows that the factor loadings (λ) of each of the indicators of latent constructs for both the datasets are greater than 0.50 (Hair et al., 2012). All of the constructs in the model for both the datasets have Cronbach’s alpha values and composite reliability (CR) values greater than 0.7, which indicates that the measurement model has adequate internal consistency (Barclay, Higgins & Thomson, 1995). The convergent validity of the measurement model was assessed by computing the average variance extracted (AVE) values of the constructs, which surpassed the threshold value of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2012) for the datasets. Discriminant validity was assessed through the variance extracted test (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As Table 2 shows, discriminant validity was met for both the datasets as the square root of the AVE of each construct is larger than the correlation it shares with other constructs in the research model.

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Insert Table 1

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Insert Table 2

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The significance of the outer measurement model was tested by using the bootstrapping t-values, which were computed on the basis of 555 cases (for Khulna dataset) and 285 cases (for Dhaka dataset) and 5000 sub-samples (Hair et al., 2012). The t-statistics of all the measurement items are greater than 1.96, which indicates the significance of the reflective outer measurement model.

4.2 *Structural model*

In the second stage, we examined the structural model representing our proposed research model. Based on the recommendations of Hair et al. (2012) and Henseler et al. (2009) we analyse and report the findings of PLS path modelling. The predictive validity of the research model is assessed with the value of the explained variance. The average variance accounted (AVA) for the model is 0.51, which is greater than the cut-off value of 0.10 (Falk & Miller, 1992). This indicates that the structural model tested in this study shows adequate explanatory power. The R2 values of the two important endogenous constructs – neighborhood identity is greater than 0.80 and city identity is greater than 0.55 in the model for both the datasets is greater than the cut-off values. Consequently, we examined the significance of the relationships between the constructs in the research model.

We used age and education level as control variables in the research model, which helps to account for heterogeneity. Results indicate that control variables did not have a significant effect on city identity. The explained variance (R2) of city identity with the control variables (R2=0.60) and without them (R2=0.57) showed no significant difference (F2 = 0.02) (Aiken & West, 1991).

Results of hypotheses testing are shown in Table 3. It shows that neighborhood brand love has a significant impact on neighborhood identity, which supports H1 (β = 0.46, t = 8.20 for Khulna and β = 0.25, t = 3.07 for Dhaka); resident-neighborhood relationship has a positive and significant impact on neighborhood identity, supporting H2 (β = 0.07, t = 2.13) only for Khulna but not for Dhaka (β = 2.31, t = 0.68); place dependence impacts neighborhood identity positively, supporting H3 (β = 0.24, t = 5.03 for Khulna and β = 0.25, t = 4.04 for Dhaka); place social bonding has a positive relationship with neighborhood identity, supporting H4 (β = 0.21, t = 4.56 for Khulna and β = 0.42, t = 6.66 for Dhaka); neighborhood identity has a positive and significant impact on resident-neighborhood satisfaction, supporting H5 (β = 0.76, t = 29.41 for Khulna and β = 0.29.41, t = 33.30 for Dhaka); resident-neighborhood satisfaction significantly affects city identity, supporting H6 (β = 0.28, t = 3.88 for Khulna and β = 0.34, t = 4.20 for Dhaka); neighborhood identity significantly affects resident-neighborhood citizenship behavior, supporting H7 (β = 0.81, t = 39.02) only for Khulna but not for Dhaka (β = 0.03, t = 0.47); and neighborhood identity affects city identity significantly, which supports H9 (β = 0.42, t = 6.14 for Khulna and β = 0.46, t = 5.21 for Dhaka). However, resident-neighborhood citizenship behavior does not significantly affect city identity in both the datasets (β = 0.02, t = 0.27 for Khulna and β = 0.03, t = 0.80 for Dhaka) which rejects H8.

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Insert Table 3

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The cross-validated communalities for all constructs in both the data sets are higher than the threshold level of 0 (NI = 0.58; CI = 0.56; RNCB = 0.44; RNS = 0.63; NBL = 0.33; RNR = 0.62; PD = 0.51; PSB = 0.52) (Fornell & Cha, 1994). The cross-validated redundancies for RNS, NI and CI are 0.54, 0.63 and 0.45 respectively. This suggests the model’s sufficiency in predicting the endogenous latent variables (Hair et al., 2017). The goodness-of-fit (GoF) value obtained is 0.53, which is greater than the cut-off value of 0.36 for large effect sizes of R2 (Tenenhaus et al., 2005; Wetzels, Odekerken-Schröder, & VanOppen, 2009). This indicates good overall predictive validity of the model.

1. **Discussion and conclusion**

Research on place branding has been growing in recent times (Powell, 2017). Place branding is about managing the identity of a place (Boisen et al., 2017; Kerr & Oliver, 2015). The concept of place is regarded as a concentric one, where identity at a lower level is incorporated at the higher level (Lewicka, 2011). This study examines how identity formed at a lower place scale (i.e., neighborhood) influences identity formation at a higher place scale (i.e., city). The present research finds that residents develop neighborhood identity when they love their neighborhood, which indicates that residents who have higher involvement with their neighborhood are most likely to generate liking and emotional attachment to their residence place or neighborhood (Moven & Minor, 1998).

The similar impression can also be linked between possessions and sense of self. As Belk (1988) argues, that relationship is important in order to understand consumer behavior as well as their extended self. The nature of self-perceptions has been identified as an influential factor. In addition, individuals’ possessions are considered a part of themselves, which indicates the influence of extended self (Schultz, Kleine, & Kernan, 1989; Kamptner, 1991). In extended self, there are four levels, including individual level (e.g., individual possessions), family level (e.g., residences and furnishings), community level (e.g., neighborhood or home town), and group level (e.g., social group) can be applied to community level (Ahmed, Nahiduzzaman, & Hasan, 2017). The same notion of community level of extended self has confirmed how individuals feel about their chosen neighborhoods and illustrated how the resident-neighborhood relationship is positively related to neighborhood identity. This suggests that local authorities responsible for neighborhoods should engage residents when making decisions which may affect the neighborhoods. For example, local authorities could consult with the residents before deciding on building a park or demolishing an old building that may hold some value for the residents. Local authorities should also organize more local events which allow the residents to gather together and help form place social bonding, which in turn helps in forming neighborhood identity, as this will reduce the feeling of separation distress. This also supports the call for more stakeholder participation in developing place branding (Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2012). Increased participation will lead to positive relationships between the residents and the local authorities and engender place dependence, which positively influences neighborhood identity. Residents are the most important target group of any place marketing or branding effort and any external place branding should proceed by place internal branding (Govers & Go, 2009).

A desirable consequence of strong neighborhood identity is resident-neighborhood citizenship behavior, which is supported for the Khulna city but not for Dhaka city. One possible explanation for this could be the diverse population that lives in Dhaka city (as this is the capital city of Bangladesh). Place identity is dependent on the length of residence (Shamai & Ilatove, 2004) and as a large number of people in Dhaka are from outside the city (Ahmed, Nahiduzzaman, & Hasan, 2017), it is possible that they do not feel greater attachment to the city. This result provides partial support to the findings of Taecharungroj (2016), who reports a positive relationship between identification and city citizenship behavior for the city of Bangkok. This notion can indicate metropolitan areas or famous cities tend to have stronger bond with residents. Furthermore, this will lead to positive relationship with cities individuals are interested in or associated with. However, this research did not investigate the role of neighborhood identity on city identity.

The present study finds that the resident-neighborhood citizenship behavior did not impact the city identity. This result supports previous findings that organizational citizenship behavior does not influence organizational identification (Van Dick et al., 2006). That study did not provide any reasoning for this lack of relationship, although the study confirmed the relationship in the opposite direction. Identity is an attitudinal item and is cognitive, whereas citizenship behavior represents conative behavior. It is therefore, possible that the relationship in the identity and citizenship behavior context takes the form of cognitive to conative and not the other way round. The results in the current study similarly imply that citizenship behavior at the neighborhood level does not influence city identity. This means that the citizenship behavior at the neighborhood level is an expression of the neighborhood identity only.

Finally, the results show that both resident-neighborhood satisfaction and neighborhood identity influence city identity. The latter relationship is particularly important and forms the major contribution of this research as it clearly shows the importance of neighborhood identity in the formation of city identity. This also provides support for the assertions by Lewicka (2011) that the concept of place is a concentric one where smaller places are incorporated in larger places. This research shows that identities formed at a lower level (i.e., neighborhood) are incorporated at the higher level (i.e., city). This implies that the city planners need to show awareness that a city’s attractiveness as a place to live and work is very much dependent on the image of neighborhoods. In other words, a favorable impression of neighborhoods is akin to the building blocks for a favorable impression of the city. Therefore, it is imperative that the city planners take a holistic view of the development of the city by incorporating the needs of the neighborhoods.

The practice of place branding includes geographic location (e.g., cities) and the available resources needed to develop the cities and neighborhoods. Many countries (e.g., Portugal, Singapore, Germany, United States and Switzerland) spend the a proportion of public funding, utilize project-based resources, and develop time frames to work with local authorities to engage place branding and marketing activities (Jacobsen, 2009; Young & Lever, 1997; Kotler, Haider, & Rein, 1993; Morgan, Pritchard, & Piggott, 2002). Many famous international tourism cities such as Istanbul, Paris, London, Sydney, and Dubai also apply the same notion to promote their cities to attract business and tourism opportunity. Cities are now increasingly competing for government resources because of the increasing mobility of people and capital (Green et al., 2016). The local authorities (e.g., wards of Khulna city) and city authorities (e.g., Khulna City Corporation) need to understand how they can make their places more attractive for the residents as places to live, work and attract government and private investments. Furthermore, the political and institutional aspects of place branding have been treated as part of marketing strategy as well as a part of place strategy. Unfortunately, very limited resources can be identified and researchers have a very limited understanding of the major influences when it comes to public management (Vuignier, 2015). The current research findings show that these authorities cannot focus on neighborhood and city branding as individual silos and that these are related. Marketing and branding actions to improve a neighborhood’s identity would influence the city’s identity as well. Recognizing the different roles of local and city authorities will also positively influence the long-run sustainability of the neighborhood and the city as a whole. This research provides a timely call for local and city authorities to take greater responsibilities and work together.

*5.1 Limitations and future research*

The study is not without some limitations which can be explored in future research. First, the study relied on cross-sectional data. Given that previous research reports that place identity formation is time-dependent (Hernandez et al., 2007), a longitudinal analysis is recommended for future research. Second, the study was carried out in a developing country, Bangladesh. Future research can investigate whether the current findings also hold in developed countries and other developing countries. Next, the endogeneity problems in a research model arise primarily from three sources i.e., direction of causality, measurement error, and omitted variables (Guide & Ketokivi, 2015). Based on the recommendations of Rutz and Watson (2019) regarding addressing endogeneity, we relied on theory to develop the research model proposed and tested in this study, which provided guidance to the research design as well as selection of variables. We also made efforts to minimize the measurement error in our research by an extensive procedure of item selection, data collection, and adequate reliability and validity checks for the constructs used in the research model. Hence, the study does not present any endogeneity problems in this case (Guide & Ketokivi, 2015). However, the issue of omitted variables in this study is a limitation, as with any other research model. Future research can investigate other potential antecedents to formation of place identities across other place scales such as at the nation or country level. Endogeneity issues can also be addressed by using latent variables using the maximum likelihood method to account for regressor-error dependencies (Rutz & Watson, 2019). Finally, future researchers can examine whether identities formed at lower place scales (i.e., neighborhood and city) influences identity at the national level and whether city identity influences neighborhood identity (i.e., reverse causality).

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