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Editorial Note

This issue of *AYIKA* brings together a rich and timely collection of scholarship that underscores a central truth: in Africa, environmental questions are deeply political, and political realities are increasingly shaped by environmental change. The contributions in this volume reflect the growing complexity of this relationship, engaging themes that span governance, technology, security, sustainability, and identity across diverse African contexts and beyond.

A defining feature of this issue is its strong engagement with the role of digitalisation in advancing sustainability. From the systematic review on how digitalisation enables decarbonisation, to analyses of agri-tech adoption in Nigeria and South Africa, the volume highlights the transformative potential of technology in addressing environmental challenges. These contributions move beyond optimism, carefully examining the mechanisms and constraints that shape technological uptake. They remind us that digital solutions are not neutral; their effectiveness depends on policy frameworks, institutional capacity, and socio-economic conditions.

Equally prominent is the question of governance, particularly in relation to service delivery and institutional performance. The examination of water service failures in Gauteng Province offers a sobering account of how governance lapses can translate into environmental and public health crises. Similarly, the discussions on public service reform and parliamentary oversight reveal the persistent challenges of accountability and administrative effectiveness across the continent. Together, these studies point to a critical insight: sustainable environmental outcomes are contingent on capable, transparent, and responsive institutions.

The issue also engages deeply with questions of political order, security, and regional cooperation. Analyses of Zimbabwe's political history, hybrid regimes in Central Africa, and border conflicts involving Nigeria reveal how political instability and governance structures shape environmental management and development trajectories. The exploration of indivisible security within the SADC region further highlights the interconnectedness of peace, cooperation, and sustainable development. These contributions reinforce the idea that environmental sustainability cannot be pursued in isolation from broader political and security dynamics.

Another important strand in this volume is the emphasis on economic strategies and livelihoods, particularly in rural contexts. Articles on organic agribusiness, marketing strategies aligned with climate action, and the challenges faced by women in agribusiness illuminate the everyday realities of sustainability. They foreground the experiences of local actors, especially women entrepreneurs, whose resilience and innovation are often overlooked. By examining the socio-economic factors shaping revenue growth and participation, these studies contribute to a more inclusive understanding of development.

The volume also makes a significant intellectual contribution by foregrounding indigenous knowledge systems and alternative epistemologies. The exploration of

Ubuntu as a framework for regional governance offers a human-centred perspective that challenges dominant policy paradigms. Similarly, the critique of epistemic violence in transboundary conservation highlights the marginalisation of local knowledge and agency. These interventions are particularly important in rethinking whose knowledge counts in environmental governance and how more equitable frameworks can be developed. Urban spaces and cultural expressions are not left out of this conversation. Contributions on city branding in Harare and the intersection of art, space, and identity in Durban demonstrate how environmental and political dynamics are experienced and expressed in urban contexts. These studies expand the scope of environmental politics by incorporating cultural and spatial dimensions, offering fresh insights into how cities in the Global South are responding to climate change.

Notably, this issue also extends its analytical reach beyond Africa, with a study on urban climate initiatives in Brazil and a comparative examination of socio-economic vulnerability in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Pacific Islands. These contributions enrich the volume by situating African experiences within a broader global context, encouraging cross-regional learning and dialogue.

Finally, the inclusion of research on language and education, such as the study on tense substitution errors among Tshivenda-speaking students, serves as a reminder of the interconnectedness of knowledge production, communication, and development. It highlights the importance of education in shaping the capacity to engage with complex environmental and political issues.

Taken together, the articles in this issue reflect a vibrant and interdisciplinary field of inquiry. They challenge simplistic narratives and instead offer nuanced analyses that recognise the interconnected nature of environment and politics in Africa. As the continent continues to navigate the pressures of climate change, population growth, and political transformation, the insights presented here are both timely and necessary. This volume invites scholars, policymakers, and practitioners to think more critically and act more collaboratively. It is our hope that the conversations sparked within these pages will contribute to more just, sustainable, and context-sensitive approaches to environmental governance in Africa and beyond.

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TRANSFORMATIVE CITY BRANDING IN THE FACE OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH: A LITERATURE ANALYSIS.

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ABSTRACT

Climate change is a contemporary global phenomenon that is widely viewed negatively. This paper examines climate change from a positive, holistic business perspective, particularly in the tourism sector. Transformative city branding, in this context, takes an optimistic view of climate change as a novel opportunity to turn cities into centres of tourism. There have been limited studies on city branding in the face of climate change with a view of positively positioning cities. Drawing on relevant literature, the paper presents narratives that positively transform cities in the global south in the face of climate change. Most cities in the global South face the threat of climate change, which is compounded by a range of factors. The paper identifies branding opportunities that are presented by climate change, as well as the best ways of branding global south cities in the face of climate change. Findings indicate that robust city branding through infrastructure optimisation and modernisation negates the impact of climate change and expedites city transformation in the global south. The paper recommends that global South cities engage in city branding and continuous urban planning to build resilience against climate change and foster optimism in the face of it. The enactment of relevant climate change and city branding policies, alongside stakeholder engagement, becomes necessary.

Keywords: Transformative, City branding, Climate change, Global South,

INTRODUCTION

Climate change has become an unavoidable reality on the face of the earth. Across all socio-political and economic divides, people are struggling with the impact of climate change, hence the need to be proactive. Lin et al (2021:479) explained the manifestation of climate change through several wildfires across cities even in the global north, extreme and variable drought inducing precipitation, floods and a marginal increase by 2-8% in

temperatures, among other natural phenomena changes.

According to Lin et al (2021: 479), the impact of climate change on cities has prompted several governments and business institutions to scale up activities, initiatives and innovations for cities to manage the impact of climate change. However, most of these activities and strategies have since proven inadequate, hence there the need for well sought, strategically crafted, and adaptive solutions within cities. An integrated, diverse, and adaptive

approach is needed to achieve transformative results, leading to climate-resilient cities whose infrastructure and communities are well protected (Lin et al., 2021: 479). It is an integration of technological, nature-based, and social solutions. The challenge also remains as to how best to integrate such important solutions. This study is premised on The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) number 11, which talks about building sustainable communities and cities. Some cities not only in the global north but also in global south regions now include the aspect of sustainability into their urban development plans and city branding narratives as enshrined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Gonzalez and Gale, 2023:21). Such an integration can successfully happen when city branding and planning processes speak to each other more inclusively. City branding in general, especially in the global north, has received significant attention in academia, so is climate change studies. However, city branding in the global south in the face of climate change has received very limited research. That was concurred by Mbinza (2024: 233) who said:

“...inquiry into place branding in the context of Global South settings is relatively thin, and the source material related thereto is sparse and sporadic”

That further shows the research gap for the study. The study integrates literature from city branding and that from climate change that worked on global south regions to augment the scant literature on city branding under climate change.

BACKGROUND

Most cities in the global south act as central hubs to economic activities of various destinations. For instance, Harare is principally the political and administrative centre of Zimbabwe. So is Johannesburg in South Africa, Kampala in Uganda or Windhoek in Namibia. The state of such cities affects the flow and perception of tourists, hence the need to comprehensively and competently brand them. The effects of climate change have never spared such global south cities, hence, all efforts to brand the cities must consider the contemporary “monster” of climate change. This paper looks at the transformative city branding of global south cities in the face of climate change. How best to brand them, capitalising on the new paradigm as ushered by climate change. There are opportunities that are created in every crisis that include during this climate change era. For instance, climate change brings severe hot weather and relatively dry conditions among other ills. Why not brand cities as solar hubs, capitalising on the abundance of solar energy brought about by severe dry spells and hot temperatures. Hydro power energy has been severely affected by the lack of enough rains and incessant droughts. This is the thrust of this study, premised on branding global south cities in the face of climate change. However, these cities are under serious municipal surveillance and control because they have an impact on the image of the city (Bandaiko et al. 2023, as cited in Bandaiko and Arku (2024: 2)

For instance, according to Bandaiko and Arku (2024: 1), Most cities in the Global South, are grappling with the challenge of public image and perception because of street vending, hence the need for an effective city branding strategy. Street

trading has become an epitome of urban informality in most Global South cities and has a bearing on the tourists' perception of cities (Bandaiko and Arku 2024: 2).

Tourism in Zimbabwe is largely nature-based, Kariba is known for its dam infrastructure and wildlife, Victoria Falls for its natural falls that attract tourists across the globe, and Hwange National Park for its spectacular wildlife. Dube and Nhamo (2020: 2) said that nature-based tourism has a direct relationship with the climatic and environmental conditions of any place. In other words, the tourism business is climate dependent. Therefore, climate change has a significant impact on the tourism business in the global south. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change - IPCC (2013) agreed that there is unquestionable evidence to show that climate change has a severe Impact on both nature and humanity (Dube and Nhamo 2020: 1). Likewise, the aviation industry, which plays a pivotal role in the tourism industry, is equally affected by severe temperatures that affect tourists' movement. Given the significance of the tourism industry to national economies, there is a need for the global north countries to assist those in the global south to build climate-resilient cities to protect the tourism sector (Dube and Nhamo 2020: 12). Cities serve as a vital component of various economic actors whose visions, beliefs, and interpretations are shaped by the state of the cities in which they are domiciled. These actors influence the way cities are governed internally and understood by externals (Bandaiko and Arku 2024: 1). Therefore, proper City branding communicates volumes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of sustainable city branding

Branding is generally associated with outcompeting or matching competition. City branding is about telling the outside world what a city is or how it wants to be seen (Scholvin 2023: 359). City branding, according to Joo and Seo (2018: 243), goes beyond building a symbolic positive image of a city but takes a participatory approach aimed at supporting the city image with all the necessary policies. City branding and identity is better characterized by mega projects or large-scale infrastructure projects, added Syed et al. (2024: 2).

Now, city branding in the context of sustainability or greening encompasses city branding efforts bearing in mind the reconciliation or realignment with the protection of the environment enacted at national policy level (Gonzalez and Gale 2023:23). Most governments in the global south have been trying to adopt Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under the auspices of UN-SDGs (Syed et al. 2024: 2). This study looks at a more advanced and contemporary perspective of city branding in the environment where climate change is wreaking havoc, and instead of focusing primarily on investment, the focus is now skewed towards remaining buoyant in this turbulent terrain of climate change. Mbinza (2024: 232) added that even cities in the global south are now showing modern versions of development, hence city branding should flow in the same vein. In other words, that's transformative city branding as depicted in figure 2 below.

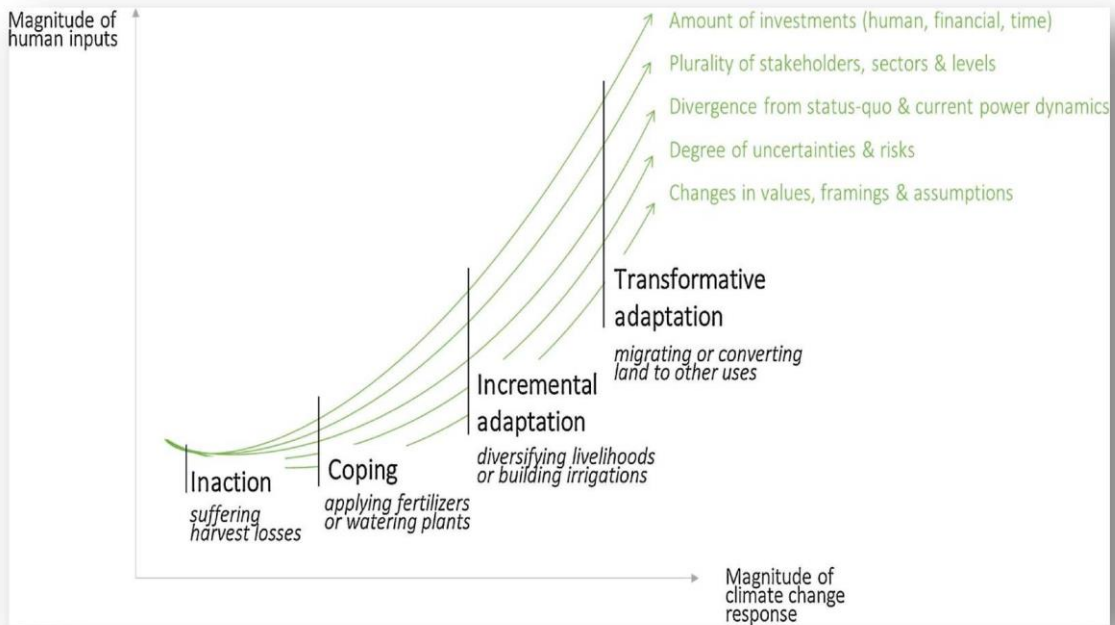


Figure 1, Transformative city branding strategy. Source: Adapted from (Fedele et al., 2019).

According to Fedele et al. (2019), transformative city branding involves adopting new development trajectories that defy or disrupt the normal processes of doing things. It also means adopting a strategy that acknowledges the unwavering need for dynamism and resilience in the face of climate change (Ziervogel et al. 2022). Figure 1 above highly praises the significant investment in human, financial, and time resources, as well as the plurality of stakeholders, among others. Place branding in the global south, according to Mbinza (2024: 240), is still in its infancy, and the few studies identified are investment-(FDI-) and tourism-based, without incorporating the climate resilience component. Global South cities have always been associated with informality, violence, and impoverishment. Only City branding studies can change these

narratives for the better (Mbinza 2024:240). For example, Harare City, according to The Herald newspaper, as quoted in Bandaiko and Arku (2024: 6), described the situation in Harare as “catastrophic circumstances of stratospheric magnitudes”. Metaphorically describing Harare as being in a state of unexplainable filth and decadence.

Modern and more climate-conscious names such as “ecocities”, “green cities”, “low carbon cities”, “resilient cities”, and “sustainable cities are gradually being adopted in the New Urban Management paradigm (Garcia-Lamarca et al. 2021, as cited in Gonzalez and Gale, 2023:22).

Characteristics of Global South cities

According to Bandauko and Arku (2024: 2), several authors (Turner and Schoenberger, 2012, Gillespie, 2016) have penned down that most cities in the global south are poised to position themselves competitively in the context of globalisation. Global south cities especially in Africa, are marred by informal settlements that lack the agility to have serious pathways for resilience to climate change (Kareem et al. 2020: 1). Harare, like many other cities across the Global South, is grappling with the challenge of public image and perception because of street vending (Bandauko and Arku 2024: 1). This is typical of many global south cities, hence the need for an effective city branding strategy. Street trading as shown in figure 2 has also become an epitome of urban informality in most global south cities and has a bearing on the tourists' perception of the cities, added Bandauko and Arku (2024: 2). From the academic perspective, much of the climate change resilience agenda has

been influenced by global north policies and discourses, hence limited practical coverage in the global south cities. Rising rate of urban violence, crime and insecurity and food insecurity characterise global south cities, Additionally, these cities are marred by spatial planning and governance challenges coupled with rapid population growth, rampant urban migration and inadequate and depleted infrastructure (Kamana, Radoine and Nyasulu 2024: 9). City growth outgrows infrastructure and service delivery in African cities and there is lack of decent accommodation and its highly informal and fragmented leaving the people subjected to climate related risks (Leck et al. 2025: 1). Figure 3 illustrates two fundamental aspects of global south cities that are informal settlements and gradual adoption to cleaner energy as response to climate challenges.



Figure 2. Street food vending in Lusaka. Pic courtesy of ICLEI Africa (2024)



Figure 3. Informal settlements BUT adopting cleaner use of energy in Searra Leone (Afrigas). Pic courtesy of ICLEI Africa (February 2024).

Kareem et al. (2020: 13) postulate three theoretical perspectives from global south cities that will transform cities to resilient cities, and these are (1) social resilience (2) ecological resilience and (3) institutional resilience. These will make inter-municipal and intra-metropolitan collaborations flexible and well-coordinated, thereby capacitating global south cities' ability to respond to climate risks and impacts. In other words, unlike the global north cities, global south cities lack the coordinated and integrative approach to fight the impact of climate change.

Unfortunately, the city branding concept in the global south is still developing and has a limited scope of essentially attracting tourism and direct investments (Mbinza 2024: 232). Gradually, global south governments are beginning to appreciate that their cities play an essential role in climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts, in line with the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement (UNFCCC, 2015[8]) added Anderson et al, (2023: 6).

The value of sustainable city branding.

Sustainable city branding requires a more system-based and integrated approach in line with the dictates of the SDGs agenda. It encapsulates urban development policies that integrate economic, environmental, and social imperatives (Gonzalez and Gale 2023:24). In other words, sustainable city branding enhances the positive policy direction. According to Mbinza (2024: 233), sustainable city branding initiatives are a valuable lesson for the world, especially the global north, that the global south can successfully deliver narratives beyond the usual FDI and tourism attraction. Such unexpected narratives include climate change mitigation efforts and capitalisation of the effects of climate change for the betterment of governments in the Global South. In Harare, for instance, houses are now being built with solar-engineered roofs, making use of the abundant sunshine that has been intensified by climate change. Such solar-engineered roofs are even adding energy output to the national grid. In this case, the city branding initiatives may carry a caption

promoting the use of solar energy, like **“Harare- The sunshine City”**

Sustainability of cities naturally requires that goods and services carry other values, excluding their exchange value in markets. Such other values may include their environmental functions as derived from the extraction of raw materials, the manufacturing processes and even the disposal of waste (Gonzalez and Gale, 2023:25). These narratives must carry the city branding message as enshrined in the city branding manual. In Zimbabwe, for example, some Lithium mining operations are taking place right in the vicinity of the City of Harare, hence, in line with the above literature, the Harare city branding manual must delicately outline the other benefits that the city is deriving from the Lithium mining operations. They may even include robust employment creation coming from the mining operations. A caption like **“Welcome to Harare... the hub of diverse employment creation in the Lithium extraction”** will also look smart.

Sustainable city brands evoke a deeper sense of hope, selling the city's future, uplifting residents' spirits, and even democratising society at large (Ooi 2008 as cited in Mbinza 2024: 236). City brands developed under these precepts have long life and are easily recognisable, added Mbinza (2024:236). The application of sustainable urban development models also improves the overall quality of life, creates city resilience, and fosters dynamic city spaces (Gürçam 2024: 19). This is over and above the mitigation efforts against the effects of climate change. Furthermore, sustainable city branding and urbanisation develop long-term solutions to other challenges facing

cities (Arıcan 2020, as cited in Gürçam 2024: 19). Other cities face perennial water shortages for both domestic and industrial use. Therefore, water harvesting from boreholes and other preserved sources may become part of the city branding message, thus providing a permanent solution to the problem of water shortage.

The cities should be built well to promote tourism business, at the same time considering the global and localised effects of climate change. According to Gonzalez and Gale (2023:21), cities are special, localised geographic enclaves whose contemporary and primary mandate includes publicising their climatic sustainability credentials, which brand them as “resilient” and “sustainable”. Gonzalez and Gale (2023:21) added that sustainable cities adopt a robust, participatory, and collaborative approach to ensure a complete threefold sustainability across economic, social, and environmental imperatives.

Mbinza (2024: 239) proposed the use of influential people like Nobel Peace prize winners in the city branding message. This will certainly imprint their images on the minds of city residents and visitors. Additionally, that exercise will integrate the city into its image, including not-so-popular places. A city in South Africa, like Durban, has people like the late N Mandela or O Tambo who can be used in such cases.

City branding conveys a city's value proposition; hence, it is the means of communicating to visitors and residents what the city values most (Mbinza 2024:24). Similarly, the city narrative is disseminated through city branding. The City of Lusaka in Zambia can walk the talk when it comes to climate change initiatives. Building infrastructures in

Lusaka must be heavily solar powered with vast masses of solar farms and the message for branding that city must communicate the same. Reliance on solar shows utilisation of lots of solar as caused by climate change. That's taking advantage of climate change to change the city narrative.

Van Ham (2008 as cited in Mbinza 2024: 240) says city branding can be used for public diplomacy, hence its useful in strengthening regional and international relationships. City branding can further be used to strategically promote the reputation by allaying the negative image and perception of a city by the externals. Several literatures have shown that cities in the global south are marred by poverty, informal trading and ramshackle settlements whose narrative can only be changed by city branding towards the green city. The discourse of never-ending growth measured only in exchange value terms can be challenged through sustainable city branding and urbanisation added Gonzalez and Gale (2023: 23).

Green Infrastructure (GI) contributes to the social resilience of cities, and its successful implementation means its incorporation into the city planning laws and policies and these processes can be heightened by proper sustainable city branding (Pamukcu-Albers 2021: 669)

Climate change phenomenon

The climate change phenomenon is not only confined to the Global south regions but it's a worldwide development that is sweeping across all divides including in the global north areas. Common characteristics of climate change include, principally the extreme weather events such as widespread heatwaves, wildfires, more extreme precipitation and both urban

drought and floods. Rising sea levels and increased environmental issues cannot be overemphasised in the narrative of climate change (Lin et al. 2021: 479).

According to Frischen et al. 2020 and Tanyanyiwa 2020 as cited in Kareem et al. (2020: 2), Harare has witnessed episodes of drought during the years 1991–1992, 1994–1995, 2002–2003, 2015–2016, and 2018–2019 because of climate change, and that had serious negative impact on water availability and security. The average projections indicate that temperatures in the North African cities such as Cairo in Egypt and Casablanca in Morocco are likely to increase by 1.5° and 3° Celsius by 2060, risking the increase of desertification in the region, added Kareem et al. (2020: 2). African cities are further projected to progressively face exposure to excessive heat in the decades to come with an increase in aggregate exposure of multiple of 20–52, up to 86–217 billion people per day by 2090 (Kareem et al. 2020: 2)

However, Leck et al. (2025:2) suggested an integrated solution to address the impact of security as well as safeguarding the wellbeing of the general and vulnerable populace of the region. In the northern province of Mozambique, precisely in the Cabo Delgado, in 2019 Cyclone Kenneth killed 45 people and 374,000 were left homeless and at risk of waterborne diseases because of this climate induced cyclone (Kareem et al 2020: 1). Floods wreaked havoc in 2006 in Ethiopia, killing more than 100 people and in Ugandan City of Kampala flash floods normally destroy homesteads and road infrastructure to an impassable state (Kareem et al 2020: 1).

As a way of mitigating against climate change and enhance resilience in urban

areas in global south, informal settlements need serious upgrading, land tenure also need strengthening and finally low emission and climate resilient houses need to be constructed (Leck et al. 2025:2). Urban green infrastructure in the global south cities will cushion them against climate change-induced stresses (Pamukcu-Albers et al. 2021: 667). Cities in the global south are urged to adapt public transportation infrastructure that is amenable and robust against adverse events of climate change because they have facilities that enable emergency access that are quicker and easier during evacuations (Sharifi 2021: 10). There is convincing evidence from reviewed papers that illustrate additional benefits of investing in multi-modal public transportation and Transit-Oriented Development (TOD). Coupled with good and effective policies like congestion charging and fuel tax schemes there will be increased reduction in Vehicle Kilometres Travelled (VKT) and the resultant emissions that propagate the impact of climate change (Sharifi 2021: 10). Other measures include green roofing and rainwater harvesting initiatives in the global south cities, aimed at properly regulating building temperatures and reducing urban heat-island effect (Kareem et al. 2020: 4). Recently, the 'Covenant of Mayors in Sub-Saharan Africa' (CoM SSA) was launched by the European Commission aimed at working alongside African cities to seek lasting solution to the challenge of climate change (Kareem et al. 2020: 4)

Challenges of city branding under climate change in the Global South

In the global south, the matrix of climate change cannot be complete without

considering its cultural implications, and as such, they must be considered in all efforts to combat its effects. City branding in the face of climate change, naturally, involves sustainable urbanisation. In contemporary society in the Global South, it is vital for mitigating the effects of climate change. However, there is a risk of cultural erosion and weakening of historical heritage during climate change mitigation efforts, especially through neglect of traditional urban layouts that may not be compatible with climate resilience and the destruction of rich historical enclaves (Gürçam, 2024: 20).

City branding that is skewed towards climate change management is not as simple as ordinary place branding. Even if there are appropriate governance structures, processes, and financial capacity to work in line with climate pressures, the pace at which climate change happens may not be in convergence with the pace of city response, and that will eventually erode their ability to institute effective, equitable and timely responses to climate change pressures (Lin et al. 2021: 481). Being in the global south, responses to natural phenomena have always lagged. In the African cities, urbanisation and climate change may be moving too fast to keep pace with infrastructural development, which also includes city branding, added Anderson et al. (2023: 6).

There is a tendency to neglect what matters most and to pursue minor issues in global South cities. Like in Harare, authorities chose to concentrate on evicting illegal settlers in the face of climate change challenges instead of capitalising on the opportunities created for the informed mitigation and adaptation strategies that include

rebranding the city of Harare to show authorities' efforts towards climate change resilience (Leck et al. 2025: 22). According to Gürçam (2024: 27), city branding and sustainable urbanisation in the face of climate change comes with its own challenges. The most critical challenge is balancing economic growth, social equity, and environmental preservation, particularly in global South cities where resources are relatively scarce. The issue of potential trade-offs between resilience and compactness, for example, can lead to a steady gravitation towards the loss of green space and an increase in urban heat island effects (Anderson et al. 2023: 3). So, the city branding exercise faces this tricky trade-off.

This study advocates for managing communities in the global South cities in line with climate change management. Managing waste collection in informal settlements poses a significant challenge, making it difficult to implement city branding with a thrust towards waste management to create a resilient city (Leck et al. 2025:23). The dense, unplanned layout of these communities renders service provision by waste trucks impossible. Eventually, the residents of such places will resort to unorthodox methods of waste disposal, including burning, thereby exacerbating air pollution by releasing chemicals such as carbon dioxide and methane, which in turn increase gas emissions and environmental degradation (Abubakar et al., 2022). In this scenario, city branding initiatives may become contradictory to action.

Effective city branding initiatives must be accompanied by adequate infrastructure and supportive policies. Leck et al. (2025: 3) consider a serious challenge in the global south cities where there are vast informal

settlements and inadequate risk reduction infrastructure and services. Such a high level of informality in developing cities exposes residents to precarious conditions, thereby exacerbating their vulnerability to the effects of climate change despite efforts to rebrand the city. According to Gonzalez and Gale (2023: 24), there is a mismatch in understanding between economics and ecological phenomena (including climate change) in global South cities. City branding is an economic concept derived from 19th- and 20th-century economics, whereas climate change is an ecological phenomenon of the 21st century; hence, it's considered to lack economic value. Because of that misunderstanding, the expected integration, endogenization, and coherence for city sustainability are lacking.

Branding the cities in the global south is a big challenge because of several systemic barriers that include, chief among them, the lack of dedication and commitment to deal with climate issues that reflects a broader institutional weakness that also shows a lack of resource mobilisation for climate related issues (Leck et al. 2025:24). Additionally, there is lack of a clear strategic direction for climate responses in global south cities like Harare, including city branding trajectory, outdated and lack of data on vulnerability and past climate responses (Leck et al. 2025:24).

Lastly, literature has suggested the use of integrated solutions to achieve effective city branding in the face of climate change, but competing priorities, limited resources, and planning marred by uncertainty continue to weigh down the sustainable city branding and rebranding efforts (Lin et al. 2021: 485). Sustainable city branding and urbanisation

encompass aspects beyond green infrastructure and energy-efficient technologies that resemble resilient cities, but also complex ecological, health, and economic issues that may pose serious challenges for developing cities (Gürçam 2024: 20).

Despite these discussed challenges, the twin concepts of city branding and urbanisation cannot only advance the economic side of things, but also significantly push the climate agenda (Anderson et al. 2023: 6).

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE STUDY

The researcher has identified two theories as relevant to the study.

The Resilience Theory (RT): According to Crane et al. (2020: 5), the theory is premised on the response to a system that has been disrupted. In this study, the understanding is that climate change is rapidly altering and redirecting business processes. Therefore, resilience invokes adaptation and transformation to adjust to the new paradigm. Transformative city branding, by definition and in context, is a business process aimed at adapting to an environment redefined by climate change. The researcher agrees with Folke et al. 2010), who further refined the RT to Social-ecological resilience (SER). The focus of this latter dimension is on introducing the human face or human touch, where there is a need to think through the complexity and dynamics of the transitional system, which includes forms of city infrastructure, governance, policy and planning, and material flows. From a city's dimension, the city's politics come into play as well (Crane et al. 2020: 5). It is against these constructs of this theory that this study also focuses on city branding with adaptation to appropriate

city infrastructure, as well as the buy-in of policy makers as an integrated effort against climate change effects. The theory is crucial to the study.

Socio-Technical Studies (STS): Studies conceptualised that it's quite ideal during the urban sustainability transition (Markard et al. 2012). In this research, transformative urban branding in the face of climate change is a transitional process from general city branding to sustainable city branding as a mitigation measure against its effects. Crane et al. (2020: 5) highlighted 4 main approaches to STS, namely, Transition Management (TM), Technological Innovation Systems (TISs), Strategic Niche Management (SNM) and Multi-Level Perspective (MLP). The researcher also agrees with Geels (2005), who defined sustainable urban change as movement from one socio-technical system to another. Such a movement involves drastic changes in social norms, market dictates, and institutional structures, and that takes place over a period. Therefore, urban change requires integration, coordination and unity among various institutional lines of power. This social-technical change takes three interrelated levels: the micro level (localised innovations), the regime level (the institutional structure of the system), and the macro socio-technical level (national level). According to Muehlberger et al. (2024: 2), they redefined these as 'Collectively held', institutionally stabilised" and "Publicly performed" visions.

This study, therefore, adopted the TM approach of STS highlighted above at all three levels, and one of the recommendations is to adopt an integrated, well-coordinated effort at all levels to achieve transformational city branding as a mitigation measure against

climate change. That makes this theoretical foundation relevant to this study.

METHODOLOGY

Quite a lot of literature on city branding, particularly in the global south, has focused on attracting tourism and FDI (Mbinza 2024: 233). This paper, however, dissects the literature on City Branding and climate change and analyses the points of convergence, especially in the global South. The study assumes the city branding exercise is transformative, enabling the city to capitalise on climate change impacts. When sifting through the available literature to identify studies directly related to city branding in the face of climate change in the global south, only a few were found, and Table 1 presents some of the research closest to the aim of this study. Therefore, other relevant literature on city branding and climate change has been consulted to develop a consolidated, comprehensive body of literature on city branding in the face of climate change. The researcher considered alternative terms for the city, such as 'place,' 'urban,' or a specific city name. Similarly, other terms considered for climate change include sustainability, green, and resilience. Literature that uses any of these terms principally refers to issues of climate change and is deemed relevant. The researcher also confined the research papers to the period 2020 to 2025. That would guarantee data recency. However, one or two pieces of research prior to 2020 were also explored.

- The researcher found only 2 documents with two key words (city branding and climate

change) most of the articles had alternative but acceptable words.

- About 90% of the articles came from Google Scholar. Two articles from Scopus and the other two from Web of Science that had alternative but acceptable terms. The alternative words like *urban* or *place* instead of City, and *resilient, green or sustainability* instead of climate change were considered relevant. These were peer reviewed papers.
- All the included articles were English documents, non-English were excluded from the study.
- About 90% of the reviewed documents were published within the period 2020-2025 for data recency.
- Finally, 2 straight documents and 21 with alternative keywords were included, thus a total of 23 documents were included in the study.
- Other relevant, additional, or supplementary documents were also consulted, including just a few that were published before 2020.

Aim of the study: To find the best ways of branding cities in the face of climate change.

Based on the study's aim, the following are the corresponding research questions.

RQ1: Is it possible and easy to brand and rebrand cities in the global south, given the impact of climate change?

RQ2: What governance structures and initiatives are necessary for successful city branding to manage the impact of climate change?

Table 1: Selected relevant literature for the study (Researcher's Own Construction)

Author (s)	Title	Year	Summary of Literature	Relevant findings to the study
L R Gonzalez F Gale	Sustainable city branding narratives: A critical appraisal of processes and outcomes	2023	This study is poised to explore adoption of sustainable city branding for inclusive governance in line with the UN's SDGs.	Despite claiming commitment to urban sustainability, cities value economic benefits like growth, more than sustainability.
Z Mbinza	Exploring place branding in the global south: The case of Johannesburg, South Africa	2024	Global south cities must be looked at from other angles apart from poverty, informality and violence.	Johannesburg has made strides in city branding, on par with global northern cities, not confined to violence and poverty alone.
B B Lin <i>et al.</i> ,	Integrating solutions to adapt cities for climate change	2021	The study explores the adaptation measures that include technological, nature based and social solutions that provide multiple co-benefits for resilience to impact of climate change.	Cities in the global south are key to future urban development and planning and must be prioritised in the integration solutions towards solutions to the effects of climate change.
P Pamukc- Albers <i>et al.</i>	Building green infrastructure to enhance urban resilience to climate change and pandemics	2021	The research has highlighted the value of sustainable infrastructure in managing the effects of climate change.	Green infrastructure is vital to creating sustainable cities. There is need for improved green infrastructure especially in the global south regions through collective processes.
B Kareem <i>et al.</i>	Pathways to resilience to climate change in African cities.	2020	The study aims to addressing city scale intervention mechanisms that enhance resilience to the effects of climate change in the global south.	African cities need to table climate resilience debates at global for a to discuss intercity collaborations.
M Syed Y A Aina T Yigitcanlar	Smart and sustainable Doha? From urban Brand identity to Factual veracity.	2024	This research examines the drawbacks of the city in becoming a smart and sustainable city.	More socio- economic effort is needed by Doha for the city to align with sustainable goals.
T F Felters	Urban transformation at a local level? The case of Durban's 100 resilient cities campaign.	2020	The study explores interdependencies between urban transformation and urban resilience. Transformative and resilient urban management are a key to the challenges of climate change.	It was recommended that new governance models for cities be explored. Resilient approaches are needed for any urban transformation process and identities for beneficial city networks and international exchange.

Author (s)	Title	Year	Summary of Literature	Relevant Findings to the study
S <u>Gürçama</u>	Paving the way for climate resilience through sustainable urbanization: A comparative study	2024	This study looks at the fundamental role of sustainable urbanization to address the impact of climate change.	There is need for coordinated cross sectional efforts to get sustainable urbanisation. An integrative approach is required to create cities that are inclusive, resilient and sustainable.
A <u>A Kamana</u> H <u>Radoine</u> C <u>Nyasulu</u>	Urban challenges and strategies in African cities – A systematic literature review	2024	The papers <u>works</u> on proving a precise direction for sustainable urban Planning and development using integrated strategies.	The study's findings proposed City shifting <u>towards urban</u> resilience <u>and to</u> improve urban infrastructure that mitigate the effects of climate change.
<u>Y Joo</u> B Seo	Transformative city branding for policy change: The case of Seoul's participatory branding	2018	This paper worked on the role of transformative city branding aimed at making the city progressive.	City branding frameworks must have a transformative element to cover sustainability issues among others.



DISCUSSIONS

Findings have shown interesting results regarding city branding in the face of climate change, particularly in developing cities. Based on the study objectives, the following interesting results came out.

RQ1: Is it possible and easy to brand and rebrand cities in the global south, given the impact of climate change?

Any city, whether in the global north or south, can be branded or rebranded for specific reasons. In this study, cities in the global south can be branded to align with the dictates of contemporary climate change. The study considers looking at city branding from the perspective of capitalising on the effects of climate change. Climate change ushers a vast of transformations due to a combination of natural and anthropogenic factors. Kareem et al. (2020: 10) concurred that resilience to climate change in Global South cities is about harnessing positive interactions and interventions at both the local and city levels. Such positive interactions include, principally, broadening and widening existing and new interventions towards climate change. For instance, the city of Harare can easily adopt Green Infrastructure (GI) and scale it up to mitigate the effects of climate change. Therefore, the city branding initiatives should align to the going green trajectory for Harare. Capitalising on and harnessing the local resources and available technology form the base of city resilience, elaborated Kareem et al. (2020: 5). This literature indicates the possibility and practicality of branding a city in the face of climate change and cultivating resilience. GI increases city resilience by reducing urban heat islands, reducing surface runoff and enabling

house insulation against severe temperatures (Pamukcu-Albers *et al.* 2021: 670). Cape Town, one of the cities in the global south, has managed to transform its image in the outside world through concrete actions of intent towards rebranding (Scholvin 2023: 363). Any city can build infrastructure by mobilising and assembling the necessary resources. With commitment and the mobilisation of resources, city branding that is inclined towards climate change is quite possible even in global South cities. The Johannesburg authorities branded the city as '***South Africa's most vibrant and dynamic city.***' The local weather is generally characterised by pleasantly warm summers and sunny winters that are also a result of unforgiving climate change (Scholvin 2023: 365).

According to Dube and Nhamo (2020: 12), Kariba town has an option of creating activities that mimic a buffer to climate change. Such activities include, among others, aqua farming and fish processing, all powered by solar energy, which becomes the thrust of branding the city/town. Caption like '***Kariba, the aqua life town...***' may be adopted in the branding message. Similarly, any city can safely rebrand in line with the negative-to-positive impact of climate change.

The following matrices, according to Kareem et al (2020: 10), build up the sustainable city branding exercise.

"By 2030, all new buildings will be carbon neutral; by 2050, reduce GHG emissions by 80% below 2005 levels; by 2050, 80% of City's energy will be from clean, renewable sources."

All these narratives agree that a city can successfully brand or rebrand by making use of available resources and capitalising on what the environment offers, and proper utilisation of these resources brings a sustainable, positive, and laudable brand image for the city. It's also about improving city infrastructure and optimising existing cities to correct the environmental degradation and expedite city transformation to adapt and mitigate the effects of climate change (Kamana, Radoine, Nyasulu 2024: 1)

RQ2: What governance structures and initiatives are necessary for successful city branding to manage the impact of climate change?

First, it is a shift in mindset and the narrative associated with branding, in general and city branding in particular, that is required to embrace a sense of climate change. According to Gonzalez and Gale (2023: 25), city branding that is skewed towards environmentalism should narrowly focus on the exchange value but have a renewed and broader focus that is holistic and inclusive of the environmental function as shaped by the climate change phenomenon. This requires a complete shift in the mindset of town planners and branding experts, not to say doing away with the business exchange value but to embed all in one. Policy formulation should encapsulate not only environmental issues but also socio-economic impact, and city branding should evolve and condense adaptability and resilience strategies in this era of climate change (Gürçam 2024: 27). This literature emphasises the need for clearly formulated policies that look at environmental issues as a prerequisite of city branding in the face of climate change. Alongside policy

formulation, Kareem et al. (2020: 10) added that setting of milestones and targets is a good commitment towards dealing with climate change issues. Similarly, cities in the global south must set targets for GI and related climate change initiatives, and these must be included in the blueprint for city branding. However, a plethora of vast spatial planning models, technological dynamics, environmental challenges, and socio-economic changes are reshaping global south cities thereby bringing confusion and inconsistencies in the planning policies (Kamana, Radoine, Nyasulu 2024: 1). Addressing the issue of climate change comes along with challenges that call for integration across all policy domains added Becken et al. (2020: 1603).

In addition to policy formulation, institutional planning for city transformations into resilient cities in the global south requires active participation from internal stakeholders, including informal city dwellers, business owners, and street vendors. These constituencies of stakeholders are involved in the promotion and management of waste, energy-efficient cooking stoves, green roofing and informal transport operations within the city (Lindell et al. 2019 as cited in Kareem et al. 2020: 10). In other words, city branding initiatives that are pro-climate change cannot be executed successfully without the involvement of key stakeholders. It must be an all-inclusive and integrated exercise. Critical factors consider climate-proof infrastructure and collaborative engagements among all relevant stakeholders (Tirivangasi and Nyahunda 2025: 12).

There must be adequate financial capacity, appropriate governance structures, and seamless processes to manage the pressures associated with climate change (Lin et al. 2021: 481). There must also be a shift in the spatial planning paradigm towards city resilience as an interoperable system of different spatial planning policies and city development strategies, including city branding strategies. (Kamana, Radoine, Nyasulu 2024: 1)

City branding initiatives aimed at working within the dictates of climate change are equally subject to these factors for their success. It is therefore in the interest of Global South cities to cultivate an environment conducive to city branding in the face of climate change if the efforts are to yield positive results.

Literature synthesis

This study assumes that climate change crises can offer opportunities for city branding. As highlighted in the literature above, opportunities come in various forms but require a diagnostic mind. However, not all climate-induced catastrophes offer opportunities for city branding. There are several cases of severe climate change effects. Mozambique's provinces of Tete and Maputo, Antananarivo in Madagascar, and Moroni in the Comoros are good examples of places where cyclones wreak unprecedented havoc, leaving homes damaged and people homeless. Heat waves leave no cities or species safe. Lagos, Nigeria, and Cairo, Egypt, frequently experience severe heat waves due to climate change. In 2015 and 2023, Chennai, India, and in 2017 and 2023, Mumbai, India, suffered some of the worst flooding in years. These are some of the effects of Climate

change that cannot pose any positive opportunity for city branding. The researcher acknowledges the devastating effects of climate change. However, mitigation measures are always recommended against such effects and studies should always be conducted in this area.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Several studies have been done regarding the effects and mitigation of climate change. Similarly, studies on city branding have also been done abundantly. This paper has focused on the integration of two research areas: transformative city branding in the face of climate change, especially in the global South. Most cities in the Global South face similar developmental challenges due to the effects of climate change. This paper has analysed the relevant city branding literature and explored the potential of using the effects of climate change to improve global South cities. Hunger mitigation, infrastructure solarisation, carbon emission reduction and adoption of cleaner energy sources are some of the bases on which city branding can leverage. Coupled with a proper policy framework, political will, and stakeholder involvement, the global south cities can be transformed into better, resilient, and adaptive cities. Eventually, sustainable tourism businesses will become a viable economic activity in such cities.

The study's findings also reveal that certain governance systems are a prerequisite for successful city branding, especially when the effects of climate change are determining factors.

Some notable governance issues are enabling policies and proper institutional planning. The literature has also revealed areas that still require further research for successful city branding in the wake of climate change. Studies that inform policies on nature-based tourism are quite scarce. Most cities in the global South have nature-based tourism businesses, and branding such cities requires appropriate policy direction (Dube et al., 2024: 1822). The study further revealed that there is limited research on wind, fire, dust storms and snow as mediating factors of climate change (Dube et al. 2024: 1822). This study adds to the body of knowledge by offering possible ways to brand cities to mitigate the negative effects of climate change. Future research should be conducted in this area.

Recommendations

Given the discussion above, for city branding to yield positive results under adverse climate change conditions, the following recommendations are suggested:

City authorities in the global south must thoroughly identify potential city branding opportunities to capitalise on them and mitigate the effects of climate change. Every crisis brings opportunities, and it is the responsibility of the authorities to keep watch for them. For instance, droughts caused by excessive precipitation are a consequence of climate change, but governments may adopt water-harvesting techniques, and cities may be branded accordingly.

Total stakeholder inclusivity is also recommended. Collaborative engagements with critical stakeholders are recommended for climate-proof

infrastructure. (Tirivangasi and Nyahunda 2025: 12). Governments must engage various stakeholders to develop convincing blueprints, feasibility studies, and projects on climate change. For instance, the Harare City Council may work with the central government, universities, and private organisations to develop robust solar projects, utilising the abundant sunshine and hot weather driven by climate change. Such projects give a better image of the city of Harare.

Provision of resources is a necessity. Fighting climate change can only happen successfully if resources are available. Funding and expertise are essential for the successful implementation of high-impact city branding, especially in light of climate change. Central governments must provide enough financial resources to their cities for such projects. Expert human capital is also required to execute meaningful projects, and that needs funding. In other words, local authorities and central governments must work together in providing enough resources for the projects of this nature.

It is further recommended that good planning should be done. Appropriate planning brings good policies and statutes. Kamana, Radoine, Nyasulu (2024: 1) said that there must also be a shift in the spatial planning paradigm towards city resilience, taking into cognisance city branding requirements. Global south cities are recommended to embrace mindset shift with regards to climate change and city branding. Climate change must not always be viewed from the negative perspective but be optimistic about it. Positive minds in the face of adverse environment produce good results.

Cities can successfully brand and rebrand even if the environment may be communicating otherwise. Cities must therefore tap into the slightest opportunity that arise.

Finally, further research is recommended in this area. Substantial work has been done towards sustainable urbanization, but quite a lot of virgin academic land remains untilled in this area (Gürçam 2024: 27). City branding as a business concept and climate change as a contemporary phenomenon have all received individual significant attention in the academia, but a synchronization or harmonisation of these two concepts have not received much attention hence the thrust of this study. Climate change poses some challenges, as witnessed even in the global north, and it is those threats that city branding can leverage to transform the cities. More research and academic papers are required in this area. Studies and source materials in the field of place branding, particularly in the Global South, have been thin, sparse and sporadic; hence the need for more research in this area, added Mbinza (2024: 233). This study is one such research effort aimed at closing that gap. Future research should also delve into Afrocentric resilience-building to add impetus to transformative city branding, as well as the equitable distribution of resources (Tirivangasi and Nyahunda 2025: 12). Global South regions rely heavily on nature-based tourism, yet the studies that inform policy are scarce. National policies that address climate change, resilience strategies, and city branding should be given priority (Dube et al., 2024: 1822). Other essential areas of climate change that have limited coverage and literature include wind,

fire, dust storms, and snow, and these deserve more research (Dube et al. 2024: 1822).

The narrative of NetZero emissions by 2050 lacks academic traction in global South studies, and the documentation of such emissions has made little progress; hence, the need for more research (Dube et al. 2024: 1823). According to Rice et al. (2020: 162), more data from cities are required, especially at a finer spatial resolution, to connect and integrate city activities, particularly consumption, to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Disclosure statement

The author discloses non conflict of interest.

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