

Selling Cities: Exploring online city branding in Tokyo, Athens, and New Orleans

An image cluster analysis of three DMO Instagram accounts in Tokyo, Athens, and New Orleans

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ABSTRACT

In the digital age, visual communication has become a vital tool for city branding, with social media platforms like Instagram playing a pivotal role. This study examines how Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) in Tokyo, Athens, and New Orleans use Instagram to craft and reinforce their unique city identities. The research investigates the kinds of images and content themes these cities employ to convey their distinct identities for city branding. The main research question guiding this study is about the kinds of images and content themes that are employed on Instagram for Tokyo, Athens, and New Orleans to convey and reinforce their distinct city identities for city branding. A sub-question further explores the ways these cities create an image through their visual communication on Instagram.

Using a qualitative research design, the study employs Image Cluster Analysis to systematically examine 600 Instagram posts from the official Instagram city accounts of Tokyo (@TokyoTokyoOldMeetsNew), Athens (@ThisisAthens), and New Orleans (@Visit New Orleans). These posts were analyzed to identify recurring themes, visual elements, and the overall narrative strategies used to promote the cities. The theoretical framework integrates Erving Goffman's impression management theory and John Berger's concept of conceptual interpretation in "Ways of Seeing." Goffman's theory suggests that cities, like individuals, actively manage their public image through deliberate self-presentation, while Berger's approach emphasizes that the meaning of images is constructed by viewers based on the historical and cultural contexts of images. The analysis reveals that Tokyo uses a blend of traditional and modern elements, showcasing both its cultural heritage and technological advancements through clusters like "Exhibited Culture" and "Futuristic." Athens emphasizes its historical preservation and dynamic urban life with clusters such as "Snapshots and Relatable Photos" and "Historic Monuments." Finally, New Orleans highlights its rich cultural heritage and vivid community spirit through clusters like "Carnival Celebrations and Parades" and "Colourful Houses."

The findings demonstrate that each city strategically creates and publishes its Instagram

content to manage public perceptions and reinforce its unique identity. Tokyo presents itself as a city where tradition coexists with modernity, Athens as a city deeply rooted in history yet vibrant in modern life, and New Orleans as a culturally rich, festive, and inclusive community. This study underlines the importance of strategic visual communication in city branding and provides insights into how DMOs can effectively use Instagram to enhance their city's identity and appeal. Future research could expand on these findings by incorporating interactive media formats and comparative analyses across more diverse cultural contexts.

KEYWORDS: *City branding, City identity, Instagram, Images, Destination Marketing Organizations, Visual Communication*

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1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction to Concepts

Photography is a powerful communication tool, leveraging visual imagery to create messages, evoke emotions, and influence perceptions (Ballenger, 2014, p. 1). Through storytelling, representation, engagement, and persuasion, photographs bridge cultural and language differences, making them a versatile and impactful medium in various contexts. From its early recognition by Bell (1914) as a communication tool, photography has evolved beyond traditional advertising to play an essential role in digital tourism, shaping destination images online (Jenkins, 2003, pp. 312-315; Geary & Webb, 1999, pp. 14-15). This evolution, marked by the rise of digital photo sharing and social media platforms like Instagram, has significantly shifted perceptions, underlining photography's impact on tourism promotion in the digital era (Manovich, 2016, p.1; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010, pp. 182-184). Destinations have been forced to adjust their marketing strategies, using analytics to effectively navigate online promotions (Centobelli & Ndou, 2019, p. 1865).

Instagram, as a new media platform, has a wide range of uses, beyond image production and sharing. It functions as a camera, a private and public photo album, a source of information, and a medium for self-expression and identity construction both individually and within a community (Zamora, 2018, p. 520). Social media has become central to modern life, and Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) try hard to keep pace with emerging platforms. In recent years, many DMOs have incorporated Facebook and Twitter into their marketing strategies, despite these platforms still evolving (Fokkema, 2016, p. 5). To attract tourists, DMOs are continually seeking innovative ways to promote cities. City branding through social media is a relatively new development, particularly on Instagram. Instagram has rapidly become one of the leading social media platforms, and businesses increasingly recognize its potential and leverage it for marketing purposes (Fokkema, 2016, p. 5). DMOs and other tourism organizations are encouraged to embrace current trends and advancements.

The role of DMOs in leveraging social media activities greatly impacts destination image and visitor intentions (Acuti et al., 2018, pp. 187-189; Neuhofer et al., 2012, pp. 37-40). Lev Manovich's (2016, p. 4) analysis of over 15 million Instagram images across 16 global cities brought to light significant variations in how different locations and demographics are portrayed, emphasizing the platform's role in showcasing a wide range of perspectives. We live in an aesthetic society where the production of beautiful images, interfaces, objects, and experiences is central to its economic and social functioning, as well as the identities of millions of people (Manovich, 2017, p.3). A destination marketing organization (DMO) that

can effectively utilize digital platforms to strengthen stakeholder participation will have the opportunity to improve its competitive advantage (Hays, Page, & Buhalis, 2013, p. 213).

Social media and photography have transformed tourism promotion. DMOs' accounts, by incorporating personal experiences, offer a more relatable and engaging portrayal of their destinations, creating a stronger connection with potential visitors. Images often trigger emotions more directly than words. The use of color, composition, subject matter, and lighting in photography can create an emotional response, making the communicated message more compelling and memorable (Manovich, 2017, p.10). Moreover, photography is widely used in advertising, journalism, and propaganda to persuade and influence public opinion. Photographers can shape viewers' perceptions and attitudes toward the subject matter, with the method of framing subjects in a particular way.

People create specific perceptions through the images they share on social media or other platforms, communicating aspects of their identity and connecting with others with similar interests or values. Erving Goffman suggests people use strategies to manage their public image, while John Berger emphasizes the viewer's perception of an image regarding the history or culture behind that. This concept applies to cities worldwide, which can use their history, monuments, identity, and culture to construct an image for branding and tourism purposes. This research explores the types of images and content themes employed on Instagram to convey and reinforce the distinct city identities of Tokyo, Athens, and New Orleans for city branding purposes. Specifically, the study will investigate the various strategies these cities use to create an image through their visual communication on Instagram.

The primary research question guiding this study is: What kinds of images and content themes are employed on Instagram for Tokyo, Athens, and New Orleans to convey and reinforce their distinct city identities for city branding?

Additionally, the study will address a sub-question: How do these cities create an image through their visual communication on Instagram?

This study explores the dynamic relationship between photography, social media, and city branding on Instagram, emphasizing how DMOs capitalize on this platform to depict and market their cities. By analyzing the visual strategies and content themes of DMOs from Tokyo (@TokyoTokyoOldMeetsNew), Athens (@ThisisAthens), and New Orleans (@Visit New Orleans), this research seeks to understand how these cities use images (photographs) to craft and reinforce their unique brand identities. Examining these Instagram profiles demonstrates the innovative digital branding efforts of these cities, underscoring the significant impact of social media on tourism through photography.

1.2. Academic Relevance

From an academic viewpoint, this study examines how Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) use Instagram for city branding. The study contributes to a better understanding of how digital platforms can be used for city branding and provides a foundation for future research in the field of urban marketing. Recent research reveals Instagram's role in destination marketing, showing how DMOs use it for city branding through content analysis and interviews (Fokkema, 2016; Wegerer & Volo, 2021). This marks a gap in the literature and the need for further study. Another field that has already been researched is how destination marketing organizations (DMOs) use offline tools, official websites, and social media to engage stakeholders in destination management, providing new methods to assess engagement and confirming that Italian regional DMOs effectively use these tools for enhanced decision-making (Trunfio & Della Lucia, 2018).

Moreover, this research addresses the evolving role of social media in tourism promotion, offering practical insights for DMOs. The study's methodological approach, particularly the use of image cluster analysis, provides an efficient framework for systematically categorizing and interpreting visual themes and contents. This methodological contribution is valuable for future research aiming to explore the impact of digital platforms on urban identity construction and tourist behavior.

In conclusion, this research strengthens the academic understanding of digital city branding by bridging theoretical concepts with practical applications. It underlines the importance of strategic visual communication in managing city identities and provides a foundation for future studies to investigate further the dynamic relationship between DMOs, social media, and public perception.

1.3. Societal Relevance

From a societal perspective, this research provides important insights into how cities represent themselves on Instagram and the wider impact of these representations on how people view cities. By examining the content choices made by DMO Instagram accounts, this study underscores the significant role of online self-presentation for cities.

The findings from this research highlight the potential of Instagram to influence community engagement, cultural exchange, and tourism development. As DMOs leverage Instagram to reveal urban culture, landmarks, and history, they not only attract tourists but also develop a sense of pride and identity among local residents. This digital representation can lead to increased community involvement as residents see their city displayed in a positive way and get worldwide recognition, encouraging them to participate in local events and initiatives

(Rheingold, 2008, pp. 101-103).

Moreover, the portrayal of cities on Instagram, itself, can create cultural exchange by exposing users from around the world to diverse urban environments and cultures. This exposure can break down stereotypes and build a more in-depth understanding of different cities, promoting a sense of global interconnectedness (Boy & Uitermark, 2017, p. 622). By showing unique cultural aspects and local traditions, cities can attract tourists interested in experiencing authentic cultural exchanges, thereby contributing to the city's economic growth and sustainability.

Tourism development is another significant societal benefit of effective city branding on Instagram (Todua, 2017, p. 168). When strategically curating and sharing visual content that appeals to potential visitors, cities can enhance their attractiveness as tourist destinations. This increased tourism can lead to economic benefits, including job creation and increased revenue for local businesses (Giglio et al., 2019, pp. 306-307). Additionally, well-executed digital branding can attract investors and new residents, contributing to the city's long-term development as it will be discussed in the theoretical framework.

This research, also, provides valuable insights for policymakers and urban planners. Understanding how visual content on Instagram shapes perceptions can inform strategies for urban development and tourism marketing. Policymakers can use these insights to develop campaigns that spotlight the strengths and unique attributes of their cities, ensuring that the promotional content aligns with broader urban development goals.

In essence, this study underscores the importance of understanding and utilizing online platforms for city promotion. The strategies behind successful Instagram campaigns are revealed and it offers practical recommendations for DMOs and city officials. These insights can help cities craft more effective digital narratives that connect with diverse audiences, creating positive perceptions and encouraging tourism and cultural exchange.

In conclusion, the societal relevance of this research lies in its potential to improve city branding efforts, promote cultural understanding, and support economic development through the strategic use of social media. By analyzing how cities like Tokyo, Athens, and New Orleans utilize Instagram, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the powerful role that digital platforms play in shaping urban identities and influencing public perceptions in the digital age.

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the theoretical foundation of this study. It delves into the key concepts and theories that inform the research, highlighting their relevance and application to the research topic. A detailed explanation of the theoretical perspectives is offered, so the chapter helps readers grasp the intellectual basis for the study, the concepts that are developed, and the reasoning behind the chosen theoretical approach, and how these theories are applied to analyze and interpret the research findings effectively.

2.1. Image and Identity

Cities create unique identities through images, in a manner comparable to how individuals use photographs to craft their personas. This aligns with Erving Goffman's impression management theory, which asserts that people control the impressions others form of them through selective self-presentation (Fine & Manning, 2003, pp. 42-43). Similarly, cities employ photographs, advertisements, and media to shape their public images and identities, often focusing on architectural landmarks or cultural events (Cheshmehzangi, 2020, pp. 66-69; Fine & Manning, 2003, pp. 42-43). John Berger's "Ways of Seeing" (1972, p. 8-11) explores how the perception of images is shaped by personal beliefs and experiences, influenced by the cultural and historical backgrounds of the image, which directly influence a city's identity shaped through the interpretation of images. For example, a city's skyline might signify progress to some, while presenting economic disparities or environmental issues to others, indicating that perceptions can greatly vary based on an individual's viewpoint.

While both Goffman and Berger explore the relationship between image, identity, and perception, their approaches emphasize different aspects of this relationship. Goffman's impression management theory focuses on the strategic presentation of self. According to Goffman, individuals (including those who promote cities) carefully and purposely use their images to control others' perceptions (Tseëlon, 1992, pp. 115-116). This involves intentional efforts to show certain aspects while hiding others in order to create a specific, often favorable, impression (Goffman, 1976, as cited by Tseëlon, 1992, pp. 115-116). For cities, this means showcasing iconic landmarks, cultural events, or positive narratives in media to attract tourism, investment, or a desirable reputation. To be more specific, based on Erving Goffman's impression management theory, just as individuals use strategies to shape how others perceive them—by controlling their facial expressions, body language, or speech to create a desired image—the same concept applies to the depiction of cities. Social media managers and users can craft specific impressions of a city by carefully choosing and framing photos from certain viewpoints. By doing so, they create a particular image or impression to viewers on social

media, effectively influencing how the city is perceived by others.

In contrast, Berger's approach in "Ways of Seeing" (1972) is centered on the interpretation of images by viewers that is often influenced by historical and cultural background and knowledge regarding the image. Berger argues that the meaning of images is not fixed but is constructed by the viewer's context, beliefs, and experiences (1972, pp. 8-11). This means that a single image can have multiple interpretations, shaped by individual perspectives who know or ignore the image's contextual background. For instance, while city planners might intend a new skyscraper to symbolize innovation and progress, residents might see it as a sign of community upgrade or social inequality. Berger's work offers insights about seeing and perception. Similarly, these factors influence how people perceive a city's landmarks, monuments, overall structure, and cultural offerings. Just as the understanding of a painting's historical context affects its perception (Berger, 1972, p. 9), the perception of cities is shaped by the viewer's recognition of background and context. When cities are depicted in photos on Instagram—whether through user-generated content or DMO-generated content—the perception of these images varies. The framing, filters, point of view, and storytelling employed by the "photographers" play a role, but ultimately, it is the viewer's interpretation that has the most significant impact.

Thus, the primary distinction between their theories lies in the source of influence. Goffman emphasizes the active role of the entity in managing its image, suggesting a more controlled and performative process. Berger, on the other hand, emphasizes the passive and varied reception of these images, pointing to a more fluid and interpretative process. This emphasizes the dynamic relationship between how cities attempt to present themselves and how they are perceived by different audiences.

The complex relationship between a city's representation and its perception by the public, explored by both Goffman (1976) and Berger (1972), underlines, like humans, that city identities evolve through ongoing interactions between how they are portrayed and how these portrayals are perceived. This process is influenced by historical, cultural, and social contexts. This dynamic, similar to Goffman's presentation of self, shows that cities engage in impression management to develop a favorable public image. However, according to Berger's theory, the city's identity is greatly influenced by the various interpretations of its viewers and the historical or cultural background that frames it, resulting in a complex and sometimes debated public image.

In the digital era, images are collaboratively created on social media by both consumers and producers, who continuously edit, track, and refine these images through shared data (Chu,

2020, para 5). The rise of social media has amplified the capacity for destination images to be promoted by both the supply and demand sides, as well as by independent influencers like news and movies (Tasci and Gartner, 2007, p. 413; Nautiyal et al., 2022, p. 578). Additionally, Regional Tourism Organizations (RTOs) and Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) actively utilize social media to enhance and shape destination images (Ahuja, 2020, pp. 28-30; Nautiyal et al., 2022, p. 578). Tying in Goffman's and Berger's theories by showing how modern technology enables both the controlled presentation of images and the diverse interpretations by viewers.

2.2. Destination Image

Destination image (DI) is defined as "the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination" (Crompton, 1979, p. 18). DI is a multi-dimensional concept within both academic research and the tourism industry, encompassing various elements such as perceptions (Milman, 1995, pp. 21-22), impressions (Reynolds, 1965, p. 71), beliefs, ideas, expectations (Crompton, 1979, p. 416), and feelings (Chon, 1990, p. 8). It is also understood as a mental process (Milman and Pizam, 1995, pp. 21-27), and can be subject to bias due to different communication channels. Kevin Lynch conceptualized the image of a city through elements such as "path," "node," "edge," "district," and "landmark" (Xu et al., 2024, p. 1). An image encompasses the beliefs, thoughts, and impressions individuals hold about an object (Kotler et al., 1997, as cited in Xu et al., 2024, p. 1). It is well-established that these images significantly influence people's attitudes, emotions, and behaviors toward a destination (Dinnie et al., 2002, pp. 396-398; Xu et al., 2024, p. 2). In this way, urban design elements and media representations shape public perceptions and identities.

With the advent of postmodernism, the importance of socio-economic factors, such as social consciousness, cultural customs, history, and urban functions, in shaping city images has been increasingly recognized (Al-Ghamdi et al., 2015, pp. 737; Xu et al., 2024, p. 2). Research suggests that both cognitive and emotional aspects determine individuals' perceptions of a destination (Kotsi et al., 2021, p. 575; Xu et al., 2024, p. 3). Consequently, while the image represents the result of geographic awareness, cognition, and emotion together influence the formation process of that image (Xu et al., 2024, p. 3). Similar to Berger's concept of contextual interpretation and Goffman's managed presentation.

Deep learning was used to categorize images from Flickr, in Luo et al. (2016) research, conducting a statistical analysis of images from seven typical cities worldwide to study image relevance and diversity (Luo et al., 2016, as cited in Xu et al., 2024, p. 3). Moreover, images and texts on social media serve as both methodological tools and public practices that actively

contribute to constructing a place's identity and image (Hodgetts et al., 2012, p. 299; Xu et al., 2024, p. 3).

Iconic buildings significantly contribute to the sustainable shaping of cities (Zamparini et al., 2023, p. 60; Kornberger et al., 2021, pp. 3318-3319; Xu et al., 2024, p. 3). Additionally, buildings often serve as recreational spots, and their tourist attractions can be seen as key landmarks (Xu et al., 2024, p. 3). Bell et al. showcased that cities can shape an individual's identity and that the desire for a unique and particular experience is deeply rooted in human nature (Bell et al., 2013, p. xi). However, there remains a gap in theorizing what differentiates cities from one another and the normative importance of city-based identities (Bell et al., 2013, p. xii).

City identity is inherently present in everyday life and is reflected in how people perceive the city, as noted by Zhou et al (2016). This recognition occurs almost instinctively as individuals draw upon their previous experiences and knowledge to identify the city portrayed in photographs (Zhou et al., 2016, p. 526). Gartner (1989, as cited in Mak, 2017, p. 282) points out that tourists' perceived destination image (DI) is largely influenced by the projected DI, which is derived from both the destination's identity and the local actors' marketing strategies. This implies that projected DI and marketing communications by national tourism organizations (NTOs) or destination management organizations (DMOs) are significant agents affecting the perceived image of a destination. Projected DI has the potential to shape tourists' perceptions of host cultures and direct their gaze when they travel (Mak, 2017, p. 282). As Caton and Santos (2008, pp. 8-10) describe, tourists seek objects to gaze upon that conform to the representations of places and cultures (e.g., projected online DI). They then record these experiences (e.g., through written accounts and photos in travel blogs, etc), thus replicating and encouraging existing perceptions. Accordingly, tourists are both consumers and reproducers of the images in a destination (Mak, 2017, p. 282).

2.3. Destination Image on Social Media

The formation of Destination Image involves various stakeholders, including supply-side entities like Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), demand-side participants such as tourists, and independent actors like news media and residents (Tasci and Gartner, 2007, pp. 414-415; Nautiyal et al., 2022, p. 579). Online destination image can be conceptually divided into projected and perceived online DI, although they often are combined in reality (Hunter, 2016, pp. 221-229). Projected online DI refers to the attributes projected through marketing communications, such as those on DMO websites, representing the ideal characteristics of tourism products and offerings in a destination. On the other side, perceived online DI consists

of the holistic impressions, perceptions, and feelings that tourists share online regarding the tourism products and offerings in a destination.

However, social media has revolutionized this process by assisting co-creative interactions that disrupt and facilitate these dynamics, transforming how destination images are shaped and perceived (Nautiyal et al., 2022, p. 579).

2.4. City Marketing & City Branding

City marketing and city branding are deeply linked but distinct strategies used in urban development and promotion. City marketing focuses on enhancing a city's overall appeal to attract visitors, investors, and residents. This approach prioritizes aspects such as entertainment, security, and education, and involves a comprehensive strategy that mixes infrastructure, governance, and stakeholder collaboration to competitively position the city on a global scale (Kavaratzis, 2004, p. 45; Gümüş, 2017, p. 30). This strategic presentation of the city's image is similar to Goffman's theory.

On the other hand, city branding concentrates on defining and communicating a city's unique identity to make it an appealing destination for living, investing, and visiting. The goal is to distinguish the city in the global marketplace by curating a positive image and emotional resonance (Kotler & Gertner, 2002, p. 478; Deffner & Liouris, 2005, pp. 3-4). This process involves navigating the challenges of managing diverse stakeholder opinions and complexities (Konečnik & Go, 2007, pp. 180-181). City branding encompasses the city's values, ideas, and perceptions (Baloğlu & McCleary, 1999, p. 873), and employs a variety of communication modes including advertising, sales promotion, events, public relations, direct marketing, interactive marketing, word-of-mouth marketing, and personal selling to enhance brand equity and sales (Kotler and Keller, 2012, p. 478).

Additionally, in the tourism context, destinations are described as "places where people travel to enjoy a range of products and services like accommodations, attractions, events, and other tourist facilities, offering diverse experiences" (Ali and Frew, 2013, p. 56). Eventually, the primary distinction between city marketing and branding lies in their focus: city marketing aims to promote the city's overall offerings to meet the needs of its audiences, while city branding aims to create a unique and appealing city image that establishes emotional connections with its target audiences.

2.5. Tourism Branding & Tourism Branding

While the thesis mainly focuses on city branding, it is important to clarify the related concepts of tourism marketing and branding, which fall under the same promotional framework. Tourism marketing is focused on attracting visitors by using targeted advertising,

participating in travel fairs, and leveraging online platforms, particularly social media, to enrich the appeal of a destination (Gössling et al., 2020, pp. 2-3; Kuzucanli & Barakazı, 2022, pp. 112-113). It also involves community engagement to enhance the tourism experience (Dosinaen et al., 2023, p. 175).

On the other hand, tourism branding is focused on crafting a distinct image for a destination. This involves strategic planning and collaboration with stakeholders and utilizes digital marketing and social media to engage visitors and establish a memorable identity (Tran & Rudolf, 2022, p. 15), similar to city branding. Given the significant investment of time and money that travel often requires, travelers are keen to gather and review various forms of travel information early in their decision-making process. This careful consideration helps minimize the risk of making unsatisfactory decisions (Leung et al., 2013, Allen, 2019, pp. 11-12).

2.6. DMOs in Digital Platforms

Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), often called Destination Marketing Organizations, as already stated, are essential entities in the tourism sector, playing a pivotal role in the branding and management of tourist destinations. They commonly use digital platforms, particularly social media like Instagram, to present unique features of destinations globally (Hays et al., 2013, p. 212). Often structured as non-profit or government-authorized bodies, DMOs include and establish tourism activities, adapting digital strategies to promote sustainable development and effective management of tourism networks (Fokkema, 2016, pp. 14-15). DMOs constitute a practical application of strategic image presentation as an analogy to what was discussed by Ervin Goffman.

The competitive nature of the tourism industry has led many destinations to establish DMOs focused on attracting tourists through various promotional efforts, including both traditional media such as newspapers, radio, and TV, and digital platforms like websites and social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube (Morosan, 2014, pp. 49-50). These organizations are diverse in their size and scope, tailored to the destinations they serve and promote (Allen, 2019, p. 2).

Empirical studies have indicated that the social media activities of DMOs positively influence the formation of destination images and can increase visitors' intentions to travel to these destinations (Acuti et al., 2018, p. 190; Neuhofer et al., 2012, p. 43; Wegerer and Volo, 2021, p. 1, para.1). As part of their marketing strategy, DMOs produce marketer-generated content (MGC) to promote their destinations and represent a variety of stakeholders—hotels, restaurants, and souvenir vendors—who benefit from increased tourism (Allen, 2019, p. 11;

Morosan, 2014, p. 48).

With over a century of evolution, DMOs significantly shape destination branding and marketing strategies across various geographic levels, illustrating their important role in shaping the dynamic nature of the tourism industry (World Tourism Organization, 2004; Kotler & Keller, 2009, p. 3; Presenza et al., 2005, pp. 3-5). The operational models of DMOs are diverse, often including terms like "Experience," "Go," "Visit," "Discover," "Meet," and "Destination" in their names, which emphasize their geographic focus and adaptability in digital tourism promotion (Bertrand, n.d., para.8).

In sum, DMOs are vital in developing tourism strategies that adapt to digital trends, ensuring they effectively reach a global audience and drive to economic development within their communities (Allen, 2019, p. 3; Leung et al., 2013, p. 4).

2.7. Social Media: Instagram

Instagram, originally a platform for instantly sharing photography, has evolved into a crucial marketing tool across various industries, particularly in tourism and city branding. Its visually centered format supports the promotion of destinations through captivating imagery, significantly impacting how cities and destinations are perceived (De Souza E Silva & Sutko, 2011, p. 29; Hoelzl & Marie, 2015, p.112). Instagram features like stories, live videos, and polls encourage creative engagement, enabling organizations to interact dynamically with their audiences (Casaló et al., 2020, pp. 510-511).

Research by Avraham (2016) and Gümüş (2017) presents Instagram's role in enhancing the entire travel experience, from the planning phase to the creation of post-visit memories. This aligns with the findings of Fatanti and Suyadnya (2015, pp. 1091-1094) and Allen (2019, p. 8) who note its importance in sharing visual representations of products and services. Social media platforms, once primarily personal communication tools, are now core to business marketing strategies, with the travel and tourism industry experiencing extraordinary growth in its use for marketing and trip planning (Allen, 2019, p. 2).

The platform's capacity for visual storytelling and user interaction highlights its value in digital marketing, helping with instant feedback and the sharing of opinions and visuals that enhance the visitor experience (Gümüş, 2017, p. 31). Instagram's role in creating and promoting destination brands is increasingly recognized, acknowledging the active participation of various users—from travelers to Destination Management Organizations (DMOs)—in co-creating destination images (Wagerer & Volo, 2021, p. 6).

However, while the collaborative nature of social media incorporates the roles of DMOs, tourists, and residents in image co-creation, the promotion by destination/brand managers is

often seen as more favorable than tourists' opinions (Nautiyal et al., 2022, p. 579). Given the significant increase in tourists using social media for trip planning, DMOs must include social media into their marketing strategies to reach a broader audience effectively (Leung et al., 2013, p. 14; Allen, 2019, p. 10).

2.8. Affordances of Instagram

To broaden the discussion about the ways digital platforms influence image and identity, Instagram's design, centered around visual storytelling and user engagement, positions it as a powerful platform for destination marketing. Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) exploit these features to create captivating and immersive experiences, effectively presenting destinations in ways that resonate with their audiences. The platform's design elements, such as pixels and interfaces, play a critical role in shaping how users perceive and interact with digital images, underscoring the significance of visual content in establishing connections with viewers (Buhalis & Law, 2008, p. 610, Fokkema, 2016, p. 118).

The unique affordances of Instagram, such as its emphasis on visuals and interactive capabilities, enable DMOs to not only outline destinations but also to foster strong engagement with their audience. In broader terms of social media, these affordances—such as the platform's specific design features—shape user interactions and perceptions, providing opportunities rather than limitations and necessitating thoughtful analysis (McVeigh-Schultz and Baym, 2015, pp. 5-6).

2.9. DMOs and Possibilities

Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) are increasingly utilizing social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to strengthen their marketing efforts. These digital tools offer DMOs the ability to engage in real-time communication, expand their promotional activities, and display the unique features of their destinations, enhancing the visibility and appeal of their locations (Buhalis & Law, 2008, p. 618; Hays, Page, & Buhalis, 2013, p. 214).

DMOs are encouraged to adopt innovative marketing strategies that include promoting communities of interest, using and sharing user-generated content, and using effective visual storytelling. These approaches not only help in vividly presenting the destination but also in building emotional connections with the audience, which is very important for effective online promotion (Christou, 2016, chapter 8, p. 1; Popesku, 2014, p. 716).

The role of social media in destination marketing is essential as it goes beyond traditional promotional techniques, allowing DMOs to create a sense of community around their destinations. With strategic approaches such as interactive engagement and visual storytelling,

DMOs can effectively join in and captivate their target audience, showcasing their destinations in an immersive and compelling way.

2.10. Social Media Used by DMOs

Before the rise of social media and the internet as key sources of travel-related information, the primary role of Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) was to provide information that could intrigue travelers to visit specific destinations (Morosan, 2014, p. 48; Allen, 2019, pp. 12-13). However, with the significant increase in these marketing channels and the aforementioned benefits, DMOs are now challenged to effectively apply social and online resources to market their destinations to consumers who rely heavily on these platforms for primary travel information.

Pabel and Prideaux (2016, p. 336) underscore that social media offers DMOs additional avenues to increase awareness about their destinations and provides opportunities to engage with potential tourists through interactive features that encourage content co-creation. Social media marketing is essential and should be interconnected naturally with traditional marketing strategies, not merely added as an afterthought (Pabel & Prideaux, 2016, p. 336; Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009, pp. 90-102). Oliveira and Panyik (2015, p. 55; Allen, 2019, pp. 12-13) argue that social media platforms are ideal for spreading the messages and stories that shape destination brands.

DMOs represent various stakeholders in their communities, such as restaurants, hotels, and attractions, adding a layer of responsibility to advertise their destinations effectively. They must use their marketing strategies to not only promote the destination but also support these stakeholders (Morosan, 2014, p. 48). However, many travelers are skeptical of social media advertisements from DMOs that solely point out the benefits of visiting their destinations, suggesting a need for more authentic and trustworthy promotional content (Kiráľová & Pavlíčka, 2015, p. 366; Allen, 2019, p. 15).

In response, DMOs are actively diversifying their online presence by expanding their social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, to reach a broader audience and strengthen their marketing effectiveness (Morosan, 2014, p. 55; Allen, 2019, p. 15).

2.11. Engagement

Engagement is a crucial strategy for Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) in maximizing their social media marketing effectiveness. Hudson & Thal (2013, p. 160) and Allen (2019, p.14-15) emphasize that engaging with consumers on social media significantly reinforces brand strength. Zouganeli, Trihas, and Antonaki (2011, p. 118; Allen, 2019, pp. 14-

15) consider the evolution of consumer interaction as one of the most important innovations in social media marketing. Engagement goes beyond just answering consumer questions; it also influences the visibility of posts within followers' newsfeeds. Young et al. (2014, p. 427) explain that posts with higher engagement levels are more likely to appear in the newsfeeds of friends, thereby increasing further interaction and the potential for gaining new followers.

Research indicates that many DMOs may not fully leverage engagement strategies, possibly due to a lack of understanding of their critical role in social media marketing (Zouganeli et al., 2011, p. 112; Allen, 2019, pp. 14-15). Oliveira and Panyik (2015, p. 70) argue that with travelers greatly influencing destination brands through User Generated Content (UGC), the tourism sector should actively engage with them to enhance brand visibility and reputation.

Moreover, interacting with consumers can positively impact the building of destination brands by increasing awareness of travelers' preferences and needs (Oliveira & Panyik, 2015, p. 70). To boost engagement, DMOs can employ tactics on their social media such as contests and calls-to-action (CTAs). Contests on social media, which typically involve giveaways, can organically boost promotion and attract new followers (Sachs, 2017, para. 7, para. 14; Allen, 2019, pp. 14-15). CTAs, on the other hand, encourage users to perform specific tasks like signing up for newsletters, reading more information on blog posts, or purchasing event tickets, which can drive website traffic and foster more interaction from followers (Marinigh, 2015, para. 5-6; Allen, 2019, pp. 14-15). These strategies, when used effectively, can fundamentally strengthen the engagement levels of DMOs on social media platforms, showing the practical application of theories on image management and perception.

3. Methodology

This chapter thoroughly explains the methodology employed to investigate the research topic, focusing on the processes and rationales behind the choices made during the study. By providing an in-depth explanation, the chapter enables readers to understand the underlying decisions, the approach taken, and the specific research methods used to address the research question effectively.

3.1. Qualitative method

Research methodologies are generally categorized into two primary types: qualitative and quantitative. This fundamental division is crucial as it influences the methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Pathak et al., 2013, p. 192; Creswell, 2014, p. 42). Choosing the appropriate methodology is critical and must align with the core objectives and nature of the research question. Creswell (2014, p. 42) describes quantitative research as focusing on testing objective theories by examining the relationships among variables. This approach often uses tools such as surveys, questionnaires, and hypothesis testing to collect and analyze measurable data, providing a structured and statistically solid framework (Creswell, 2014, p. 42).

On the other hand, qualitative research is characterized by its exploratory nature, aiming to gain a deeper understanding of patterns and meanings embedded within the data (M. Saunders et al., 2009, p. 151). This method not only gathers text-based data but also extends to non-numerical data such as images and videos, which help provide a richer, clearer understanding of the research context (M. Saunders et al., 2009, p. 151). While qualitative research is valuable for generating insights about specific phenomena, it comes with certain limitations. It is less capable of quantifying the relationships between variables compared to quantitative research and often relies on individual statements to identify general trends. Moreover, qualitative research is not ideal for formulating general theories, which necessitates a focus on a narrower segment to ensure the research findings are meaningful. This method requires the researcher to engage deeply with the data, immersing themselves to interpret the underlying dynamics and relationships within the data (M. Saunders et al., 2009, p. 151).

For this thesis, a qualitative research design was adopted to investigate how cities use visual communication on Instagram to craft their images. The study focuses on identifying the types of visual elements, especially themes utilized on specific Instagram pages. The qualitative approach is particularly suitable for this research due to its detailed, exploratory, inductive, and interpretative nature, which are crucial for effectively addressing the research question (Boeije, 2009, p. 5). Qualitative research is noted for its strength in fostering new ideas and delving into

areas that have not been extensively explored, making it an ideal choice for uncovering fresh insights into digital communication strategies (Doz, 2011, p. 583).

The inductive nature of qualitative research allows theories to emerge organically from the observed data, rather than imposing theoretical frameworks prematurely, which can influence the interpretation (McDowell, 2004, p. 219). This approach particularly helps investigate recent and evolving topics, such as the use of Instagram by Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) for city branding, a field that remains relatively unexplored.

3.2. Research Focus and Methodological Framework

This section analyses the specific methodology employed in this thesis to contribute to the field of media and communication studies. The research focuses on how the cities of Tokyo, Athens, and New Orleans use visual elements and content themes on Instagram to establish and promote their unique identities for the purpose of city branding. It investigates the specific imagery, styles, and motifs each city employs in its Instagram posts to differentiate themselves and attract attention. To maintain objectivity, the latest 200 static posts from each account will be evaluated, totaling 600 posts. These posts are analyzed according to the protocols specified in the Thesis Methodology Handbook for visual-based media posts. Tools such as Miro.com are used as a visual board and workspace for categorizing and clustering visual materials.

Recent literature underscores the increasing adoption of Instagram by DMOs and its significant impact on city branding strategies. This thesis applies qualitative research methodology, image cluster analysis, as recommended by Müller (2021) to gain a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon. The study aims to understand the identities conveyed through visual communications by using image cluster analysis. This method approach is particularly effective in fields where existing research is limited, offering a solid framework for identifying the patterns, thematic concepts, and categories from the data. By following this method, the research seeks to explain the multiple layers and kinds of visual storytelling from accounts that promote and show cities on Instagram use, providing insights into how digital media influences urban identities and public perceptions.

3.3. Detailed Methodological Steps

This research focuses on analyzing the unique visual strategies employed by three specific Instagram pages: @ThisisAthens, @TokyoTokyoOldMeetsNew, and @Visit New Orleans. These pages are carefully selected due to their distinct approaches to visual storytelling and the limited prior research on their methods. The examination of these diverse representations of city branding on Instagram leads to the study's aims to shed light on how destination marketing organizations (DMOs) utilize this platform to shape urban identities and public perceptions.

To conduct the analysis, the most recent 200 static posts from each Instagram page are collected, resulting in a total of 600 posts. This substantial yet manageable sample size is intended to provide a solid data set for a thorough examination. Using Miro.com as a visual board and workspace, the posts are systematically categorized and clustered based on identified themes and visual elements. This process involves gathering and grouping similar posts to uncover patterns and trends in visual communication strategies.

The study uses image cluster analysis to group similar images, aiming to identify common themes and visual strategies. By interpreting these clusters, the research aspires to understand the social meanings conveyed through visual communications. This includes analyzing how these visual strategies influence city identities and shape public perceptions. After all the data is gathered and clusters are repeatedly created on Miro, a Word document is compiled containing a detailed analysis of each cluster, including the emerging concepts, key findings, and all the static images.

Following these detailed methodological steps, the research aspires to provide a comprehensive analysis of how DMOs leverage Instagram for city branding. The findings offer new insights into digital communication strategies and their impact on city/town image crafting, contributing valuable knowledge to the field of city branding and digital marketing. It is important to note that not all clusters created are relevant to the research of this thesis, nor do all clusters provide fundamental and significant information regarding the research points of this thesis. As a result, many of the clusters initially created during the analysis were not ultimately used in the formation of this thesis. However, they are available in the Appendix and the accompanying dataset for reference.

3.4. Sample and Sampling Strategy

The sampling strategy for this thesis involves systematically collecting primary data from the official Instagram accounts of three cities: Tokyo (@TokyoTokyoOldMeetsNew), Athens (@ThisisAthens), and New Orleans (@Visit New Orleans). These cities were chosen due to their distinct cultural backgrounds, tourist attractions, and unique urban identities, providing a rich basis for analysis. Tokyo blends ancient traditions with modernity (Mizukami, 2008, p. 29), Athens is known for its historical richness and Mediterranean appeal (Ioannides et al., 2016, p. 230), and New Orleans is celebrated for its sparkling cultural diversity and historical depth (Gotham, 2007, p. 306).

Following the master thesis framework guidelines (Janssen & Verboord, 2023-2024, p. 7), the sampling strategy involves selecting the most recent 200 posts from each city's official Instagram account. This approach captures current trends in destination promotion and

advertising. The focus is on static posts to best represent Instagram's visual storytelling capabilities, excluding videos, reels, and purely informational or promotional posts.

Theoretical sampling is employed to ensure category saturation by identifying data that reveals the conceptual properties of each category (Konecki, 2011, p. 149). Data collection is manual, involving screenshots of selected posts from the DMO Instagram accounts, organized into a Google document to analyze and clustered using Miro.com. This manual process ensures precise selection, enhancing the reliability of the collected data.

In conclusion, this sampling strategy provides a strong framework for capturing the visual content used by DMOs in city branding. By focusing on recent, static posts, the study ensures the relevance and authenticity of the data, setting a solid foundation for subsequent analysis of how urban identities are crafted and communicated through Instagram.

3.5. Data Collection

In this thesis, primary data collection is utilized to conduct a thorough empirical analysis of city branding on Instagram. Primary data, defined as information collected directly by the researcher (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, Chapter 7), ensures that the data is specifically tailored to address the research questions. For this study, the primary data comprises Instagram posts from the official accounts of Tokyo, Athens, and New Orleans. These posts are systematically collected and analyzed to examine how each city uses visual content to convey and reinforce its brand identity. By focusing on primary data, this research provides an in-depth understanding of the visual strategies employed by these cities, allowing for a detailed exploration of the relationship between destination photos and brand identity as communicated through social media.

3.6. Image Cluster Analysis

In this thesis, Image Cluster Analysis is used as the qualitative method to examine how cities utilize visual communication for branding on platforms like Instagram. This systematic approach delves into how digital images, when divided into clusters, form cohesive units that communicate broader narratives or themes, profoundly influencing how city brands are perceived. Michael R. Müller's comprehensive framework underpins this methodology, emphasizing its capability to reveal the dynamics within visual flaws and their power to construct and convey symbolic and ideological meanings (Müller, 2012, p. 156).

Müller (2021, pp. 6-9) explores the idea that representational pictorial forms (like paintings or photographs) are self-sufficient, meaning they contain their meaning like a container holds its contents. This concept is influenced by modern views on art and people's experiences in museums, as discussed by Bourdieu (1984, as cited in Müller, 2021, p. 6) and Gehlen (1965, as

cited in Müller, p. 6). These pictorial representations interact with viewers and have implications in both traditional and digital contexts. For interpretation, viewers need to spend time engaging with the images, suggesting that the images encourage extended interaction.

Drawing from George Herbert Mead's (1987) perspective on gestures, the meaning of pictorial representations also depends on the viewer's reaction, such as the picture catching their attention and provoking thought or action (Müller, 2021, p. 25). New digital image technologies offer many ways for viewers to interact with images. For instance, a blog's dynamic sequence requires users to scroll and physically engage with the content. This perspective is supported by Leroi-Gourhan (Müller, 2021, p. 6). Viewers adjust their perception through their physical movements and cognitive style, a concept discussed by Schütz (1945; Müller, 2021, p. 7).

Wolfgang Kemp's (1992) work on art history and the media, along with sociological analyses by Hans-Georg Soeffner (2014) and Horst Wenzel (2009), reveals that pictures are more than just containers of symbolic values (Müller, 2021, pp. 6-9). They are also organizational forms that interact with the viewer's specific context and perception. From the sociology of knowledge perspective, pictures have a symbolic media-based organizational form, influencing how individuals experience the world (Goffman, 1976, as cited in Müller, 2021, p.6).

The methodology involves systematically collecting and analyzing Instagram posts from the official Instagram city pages of Tokyo, Athens, and New Orleans. Each cluster of images must be seen as a blended visual statement reflecting the city's themes and branding strategies. The analysis focuses on the relationships—similarities and differences—among the images, using figurative analysis to understand how visual elements are combined to convey specific messages about the city (Müller, 2021).

Furthermore, this method recognizes the dynamic nature of digital image clusters on platforms like Instagram, where boundaries are continuously reshaped by user interactions such as scrolling and varying modes of representation, making a necessity a flexible and adaptive analytical approach (Müller, 2021, p. 23). Image clusters vary in diverse forms, ranging from traditional media such as photo albums to recent digital streams and Web 2.0 platform galleries. Each cluster embodies a specific symbolic expression, which may be ideologically driven, aimed at creating relationships, or designed to evoke emotional responses. The analysis of these clusters involves pinpointing their distinctive pictorial qualities and applying methodological principles to evaluate their structure and meaning. This approach challenges the conventional view of images as isolated units, acknowledging their

potential to combine diverse elements like text, architecture, or culturally modified human forms (Müller, 2012, p. 156).

The figurative analysis involves systematically comparing individual visual representations within a cluster to differentiate and contrast formal, representational, and thematic aspects, ultimately categorizing various types of images (Goffman, 1979, as cited in Müller, 2021, p. 9). Digital image clusters are characterized by ephemeral boundaries and rely heavily on how viewers interact with them (Müller, 2021, p. 7). These features complicate the empirical analysis, which has to account for the fluidity and dynamic nature of digital image clusters. By applying a hermeneutic approach, researchers can identify the principles of composition and montage that guide the creation of image clusters (Müller, 2021, pp. 7-9).

Image Cluster Analysis provides a methodological framework for investigating how visual communication on Instagram is applied to city branding. This approach allows for a thorough exploration of both individual and collective meanings of the images, revealing how cities like Tokyo, Athens, and New Orleans craft and reinforce their identities through visual storytelling. By extensively exploring these principles, researchers can discover how image clusters function as dynamic entities within visual culture, shaping perceptions and contributing to social discourse. This shows the evolving role of images in forming collective consciousness and social identities (Müller, 2012, p. 156; Boehm, 2011, pp. 170-176).

3.7. Operationalization

In the operationalization phase of this thesis, a comprehensive methodology is employed to investigate the relation of city marketing, branding, and identity creation on Instagram. The focus is on how Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) leverage visual content to shape and convey urban identities. This phase unfolds through two interconnected stages, ensuring a thorough examination of the research questions. The research utilizes Image Cluster Analysis to systematically examine the visual content shared by DMOs on Instagram. This method, as recommended by Müller (2021), involves a detailed breakdown of images based on various visual elements such as color schemes, themes, well-known landmarks, and popular styles. Each image is carefully categorized and analyzed to understand how these elements correspond to and reinforce theoretical frameworks of city identity and branding.

The study also brings together into a whole the theoretical insights of Erving Goffman (1976) on self-presentation and John Berger's (1972) work on social construction and public perception with the practical aspects of city marketing. Goffman's theory explores how individuals and organizations manage their public image through deliberate self-presentation, which is crucial for understanding how DMOs create city images. Berger's ideas on the ways

in which visual culture shapes public perception provide a foundational perspective on how images are interpreted by audiences. A detailed examination is conducted to understand the selection and presentation of images by DMOs to create an attractive city identity that appeals to potential tourists. This involves analyzing how these images craft narratives that align with Goffman's and Berger's theories, effectively reflecting urban identities and cultural values. The analysis looks at how strategic visual storytelling is used to create compelling city identities, focusing on the elements that make these narratives engaging and persuasive.

The operationalization process methodically evaluates DMO-generated visual content on Instagram to enhance city branding. By analyzing these visuals, the study identifies types of images and content themes that convey city identities, highlighting emerging motifs. Using Image Cluster Analysis, the visual elements of each post are coded and categorized into clusters, revealing patterns and common visual strategies. This approach provides a detailed framework for comprehensively exploring and understanding the visual content used in city branding.

Through detailed analysis, the research aims to offer valuable insights into effective strategies for digital city branding and present the kinds of identities these cities may radiate. With the procedure of understanding how visual content on social media can influence perceptions and engage audiences, the study provides practical recommendations for DMOs and, in general, for organizations that promote cities as destinations. These insights can help in constructing more effective visual narratives that align with the desired brand identity and resonate with target audiences. In conclusion, the operationalization phase of this thesis employs a detailed and methodical approach to investigate the role of visual content in city branding on Instagram. By combining Image Cluster Analysis with theoretical insights from Goffman and Berger, the research provides a comprehensive understanding of how DMOs use visual storytelling to shape city identities. This approach not only enhances the academic understanding of digital city branding but also offers practical strategies for leveraging visual content to create compelling and engaging city brands in the digital age.

3.8. Reflexivity

Reflexivity is essential in this thesis, emphasizing the important role researchers play in the research process (Symon & Cassell, 2012, p. 72). This study uses an exploratory approach to look at a specific aspect of a larger trend, focusing on the ways the researcher's views, shaped by previous experiences with Instagram, affect the research.

The researcher's initial interest in and familiarity with Instagram and branding was key in forming the research question and choosing the environment of the research (data collection).

This prior engagement not only became an inspiration for the study but also influenced the analysis, adding a layer of subjectivity. However, this subjectivity is not just a bias; it enriches the research by providing a deeper and more informed understanding of social media. This insider perspective allows for a more thorough analysis and interpretation of the data, offering unique insights into the subject. Recognizing the researcher's subjectivity is not about eliminating it but embracing and revealing its impact on the findings. This approach aligns with the principles of critical realism, which proves that research results are shaped by the researcher's past experiences and subjective interpretations (Given, 2008, p. 6). Understanding that the outcomes of this study represent a constructed view of reality rather than an exact replication is essential. Maxwell (2022, Chapter 9) supports this idea, emphasizing that interpretation is an unavoidable part of the research process.

This reflexive approach recognizes the co-creation of knowledge between the researcher and the subject, a dynamic not yet thoroughly explored in existing literature from a multi-dimensional perspective (Egger et al., 2022, pp. 343-345; Nautiyal et al., 2022, p. 579). Embracing reflexivity acknowledges the relation between the researcher's insights and the data, contributing to a richer understanding of the subject.

The reflexive process in this study involves a critical self-awareness that ensures the research contributions are credible and contextually grounded. This helps keep personal biases in check while maintaining academic honesty. By doing so, the research not only adds valuable insights into the academic discussion on social media analysis but also ensures these insights are deeply rooted in the contextual realities of the platform under investigation.

By integrating a reflexive approach, the study ensures its contributions are both credible and contextually grounded, adding meaningful insights to the academic discourse on social media analysis. This approach acknowledges that the researcher's involvement with the subject matter is not a limitation but an advantage, enriching the depth and quality of the analysis.

3.9. Ethical Framework and Methodological Clarity

High ethical standards are a priority in this research. The ethical standards align perfectly with the data types and methods employed. This study examines publicly accessible content from three Instagram accounts: @ThisisAthens, @TokyoTokyoOldMeetsNew, and @Visit New Orleans. The usage of public sources, leads to research without ethical issues related to privacy and consent, as it does not involve directly interacting with individuals. The analyzed content is intended for public engagement and visibility, and although it wasn't originally created for academic purposes, its public nature makes it ethically acceptable for scholarly use.

Although these Instagram posts were not initially created for research purposes, their public

availability makes their studying in this academic context appropriate. The main ethical duty is to represent this content accurately and respectfully, ensuring transparency throughout the analysis. This involves presenting the material in a way that respects its original context and purpose, ensuring the analysis does not misinterpret or misrepresent the creators' intentions. Also, the study strictly follows proper citation practices, in line with academic norms, to enhance its credibility (Given, 2008, p. 10). This means carefully citing all sources and clearly attributing all content used. Proper citation not only maintains academic integrity but also allows readers to trace the original material, thus increasing the transparency and trustworthiness of the research.

The research also carefully considers how interpreting and presenting the analyzed content might impact public perception of the featured destinations. Conducted impartially and respectfully, the study includes a thorough discussion of how the researcher's perspectives might influence the findings. This self-awareness ensures that the results are presented responsibly, reflecting broader social implications while maintaining academic honesty. The analysis is conducted objectively and respectfully, acknowledging the researcher's inherent biases. This reflexive approach ensures that the findings are credible and thoughtfully reflect the broader social context. The research maintains a high level of methodological transparency by openly addressing potential biases and influences in the reflexivity section.

Moreover, the study considers how the interpretation and presentation of the content could influence public perception of the analyzed cities. This careful consideration ensures that the analysis does not unintentionally harm the reputations or identities of the destinations. The research aims to present its findings fairly and accurately, avoiding any misrepresentation that could negatively influence public opinion.

To summarize, this research is committed to ethical considerations and methodological transparency. By using publicly available content, following proper citation practices, and maintaining awareness of the researcher's influence, the study upholds high ethical standards. This thorough approach ensures the research is conducted with integrity, offering valuable insights while respecting the original context and creators of the content analyzed.

4. Results

In this chapter, the data collected from the Instagram accounts will be analyzed and a conceptual model (clusters) that summarizes the findings will be presented. The results of the analysis will be discussed in great detail.

4.1. Description of DMO data

The DMO content data were collected from three Instagram accounts related to Athens, Tokyo, and New Orleans. These accounts, publicly accessible, were analyzed between March and April 2024. A total of 600 photos were extracted for the analysis. The photos were collected from September onwards for Tokyo, from November onwards for New Orleans, and from October onwards for Athens. It is important to note that only static posts were included in this research, excluding any captions, hashtags, or other lexical details. In the course of the analysis, 397 photos were selected as suitable for clustering. After a thorough evaluation, it was determined that 20 out of the 32 clusters demonstrated substantial impact and distinctly identifiable content themes and forms of identity, providing valuable insights for this research. The images sourced from the three Instagram accounts included a diverse range of content such as reposts, professional photography, user-generated content, and candid snapshots.

4.2. Visual Comparisons

The photos were collected as screenshots and analyzed using the tool Miro.com. The researcher organized them into clusters based on Müller's (2021, 2012) theory of Image Clusters and Cluster Analysis. These clusters emerged through the identification of common thematic concepts, aesthetic, and visual elements. Through analysis, the principles of composition and montage used to select images for a cluster can be identified. The creation and reproduction of digital image clusters are guided by these principles, which are continually expanded by new images (Müller, 2020, p.8). An individual Cluster Analysis was conducted for each city, revealing unique clusters specific to each location. This analysis showed a variety of types and elements of identity that conveyed the essence of each city's identity to the viewer. The results of the Cluster Analysis indicate that the photos on these accounts were meticulously selected, with each account seeking to capture and present the city's identity in a cinematic and clear manner for the audience. Based on Soeffner (2010, p.88) Image clusters must be materially open yet structurally closed to maintain meaningful and communicative coherence.

4.3. Cluster Analysis

4.3.1. Tokyo

Studio Ghibli Inspired

The "Studio Ghibli Inspired" cluster captures the magical and playful essence of Studio Ghibli's animated films. The images show architecture with organic, flowing shapes and fantastical features, reflecting the unique style of movies like "Spirited Away" and "Howl's Moving Castle." Vivid colors and complex details in the buildings and street scenes grab attention and evoke the wonder and nostalgia typical of Ghibli's narratives. This cluster blends blooming natural elements with urban settings, creating a balance between nature and human-made structures, a common theme in Ghibli films that promotes environmental awareness.

The presence of this cluster in Tokyo suggests the city embraces a mix of modernity and fantasy, creating spaces that foster emotional connections and a sense of wonder. Studio Ghibli's influence underscores Tokyo's appreciation for storytelling and environmental harmony, indicating the city's values of creativity and cultural heritage. The whimsical architecture and floral environments depict a city that is technologically advanced yet deeply connected to its cultural roots and the natural world.



Fig.1: Image Cluster "Studio Ghibli Inspired" from @TokyoTokyoOldMeetsNew.

Metropolis and Urban Oases

Metropolis

The "Metropolis" cluster captures the lively essence of Tokyo's urban life with its emblematic skyscrapers and neon-lit streets, showcasing the city's innovative use of vertical space due to limited land. These images illustrate the busy activity and luminous nighttime scenes that position Tokyo as a cultural and economic hub. The bright lights and active public spaces reveal a radiant city that thrives on energy and movement while still offering some private spaces (C1, C2). This blend of full of lights and life urban environments and tranquil spots reflects Tokyo's adaptability and commitment to enhancing the quality of urban life.





B6

Fig.2: Image Cluster “Metropolis” from @TokyoTokyoOldMeetsNew.

Urban Oases

In contrast, the "Urban Oases" cluster reflects a harmonic combination of nature and city life, where green spaces and traditional architecture coexist within the urban expansion. This cluster emphasizes the importance of such oases in providing psychological and ecological relief within extremely populated areas. The peaceful gardens, green pathways, and tranquil interiors featured in the images offer residents a break from the urban hustle, contributing to urban livability and social interaction. Tokyo’s commitment to incorporating these green spaces into its metropolitan infrastructure depicts a forward-thinking approach to sustainable urban planning and a dedication to maintaining a balanced lifestyle. The presence of urban oases reflects a commitment to sustainable urban planning and a balanced lifestyle, where nature is flawlessly merged into the metropolitan environment.



C1

C2

C3

C4

C5

Fig.3: Image Cluster “Urban Oases” from @TokyoTokyoOldMeetsNew.

Comparing these two clusters marks Tokyo's dual commitment to both technological advancement and environmental management. The "Metropolis" cluster illustrates the city's skills in technological urban planning, while the "Urban Oases" cluster emphasizes its equal dedication to ecological sustainability and mental well-being. This duality not only enhances the city's livability but also positions it as a leader in addressing the challenges of modern urban living and the need of citizens to unwind and relax even in the context of a busy metropolis. The clear contrast between the bustling energy of the Metropolis and the quiet break of the Urban Oases exemplifies how Tokyo successfully manages the complexities of modern urban living by providing diverse environments that cater to both the dynamic and peaceful aspects of city life.

Futuristic

The "Futuristic" cluster portrays a compilation of images that illustrate the evolving intersection of modern technology, architecture, and urban planning in creating the future of metropolitan landscapes. These images collectively present skyscrapers(D2, D3, D4), advanced transportation systems like high-speed trains (D1), and embedded green spaces (D3), underscoring a forward-looking vision that balances aesthetic innovation with functionality. The cluster emphasizes not just the architectural glory but also the adaptation of technology in urban environments, visible in the shining exteriors, reflective surfaces, and complex structural designs that suggest a blend of sustainability with modern engineering.

This cluster underscores that Tokyo is a city at the forefront of technological and architectural innovation. The emphasis on futuristic designs and advanced infrastructure reflects Tokyo's identity as a global leader in modern urban development. The city's commitment to integrating sustainability with state-of-the-art technology showcases its dedication to creating a progressive and environmentally conscious urban environment. Tokyo's vision for the future embraces innovation while ensuring the functionality and aesthetic appeal of its city spaces.



Fig.4: Image Cluster "Futuristic" from @TokyoTokyoOldMeetsNew.

Geisha

The "Geisha" cluster provides a captivating glimpse into the elegant and culturally rich world of geishas in Tokyo. These images reveal geishas in traditional kimonos, often set against serene, and beautiful backgrounds, such as gardens (E2, E3) and historic architecture. Their bright, detailed clothing and elegant movements unravel this Japanese tradition's deep cultural heritage and careful preservation.

This cluster portrays Tokyo's role as a city where ancient traditions coexist harmoniously with modernity. The presence of geishas, an emblem of Japan's cultural history, within the fuzzy metropolis of Tokyo, shows the city's commitment to keeping its cultural identity alive despite rapid urban growth. The geisha tradition, rooted in artistry and performance, underlines the rich cultural practices that still flourish in Tokyo, offering a bridge between the past and present.

It illustrates the art form of geishas, who are well-known for their skills in traditional

Japanese arts such as dance, music, and tea ceremony. The images capture not only the aesthetic beauty of the geishas but also the environments that enrich their presence even more—tranquil gardens (E2, E3), and traditional tea houses (E4) that bring a sense of timelessness and persistence.

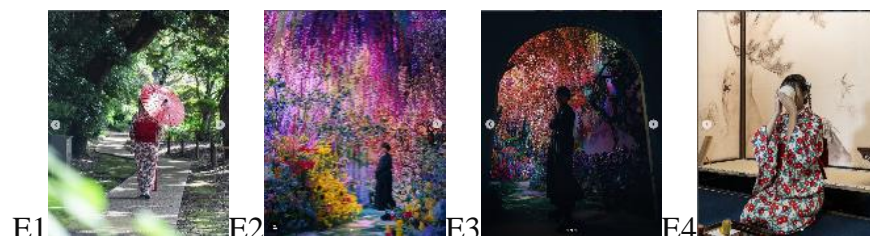


Fig.5: Image Cluster “Geisha” from @TokyoTokyoOldMeetsNew.

Culinary Journeys

The "Culinary Journeys" cluster offers brilliant and diverse visual food content, capturing the rich mixture of Tokyo's gastronomic landscape. These images depict various culinary delights, from traditional Japanese dishes such as sushi and ramen (F4, F5) to modern interpretations of classic desserts and innovative street food. The variety and presentation of these foods not only spotlights the city's deep-rooted culinary traditions but also its dynamic and evolving food culture.

This cluster underscores Tokyo's identity as a culinary capital that mixes tradition and innovation. The presence of detailed prepared traditional dishes reflects the city's respect for culinary heritage and cooking techniques. Simultaneously, the images of avant-garde desserts and trendy cafes (F1, F2) illustrate Tokyo's role as a trendsetter in the global culinary scene, where creativity and experimentation are celebrated.

The importance of food as a cultural and social pillar in Tokyo is highlighted. The variety of dining settings—from crowded street markets to calm tea houses and chic new-age eateries—demonstrates the primary role of food in daily life and social interactions. Each image captures not just the food itself but also the atmosphere and experience of dining, reflecting the city's multifaceted approach to gastronomy.



Fig.6: Image Cluster “Culinary Journeys” from @TokyoTokyoOldMeetsNew.

Exhibited Culture

The "Exhibited Culture" cluster beautifully captures the preservation and presentation of cultural artifacts in modern and historical museum settings. It emphasizes the diverse methods through which societies maintain and celebrate their heritage. Each carefully curated image depicts different aspects of exhibition design, from the minimalistic display of singular artifacts to the majestic halls designed to frame historical narratives in an engaging and educational context. The varied lighting techniques enhance the aesthetic appeal and historical significance of the artifacts, illustrating the attention to detail which is necessary for artifact preservation.

This cluster indicates that Tokyo places a high value on preserving and presenting its cultural heritage. The city's museums and exhibition spaces reflect a commitment to cultural education and appreciation, showcasing both historical and modern artifacts. Tokyo's ability to blend traditional and modern exhibition techniques draws attention its dynamic cultural landscape and dedication to fostering a deeper understanding of its rich heritage. The city's identity is marked by a respect for history and cultural preservation.

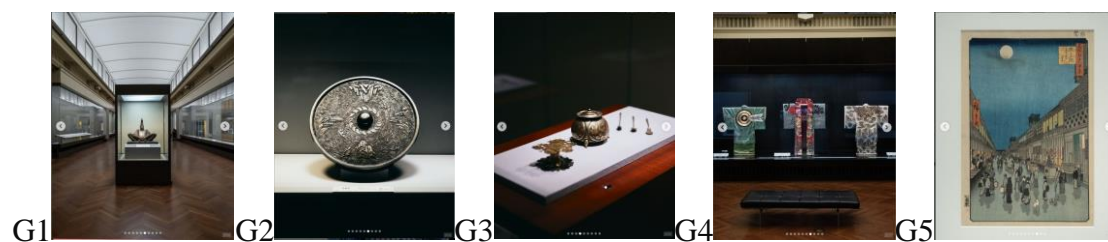


Fig.7: Image Cluster "Exhibited Culture" from @TokyoTokyoOldMeetsNew.

4.3.2. Athens

Snapshots and Relatable Photos and Urban Life and Spaces

The casual photo on Instagram can be understood through the concept of "home mode," developed by Chalfen in 1987 in his book "Snapshot Versions of Life." He introduced the term "Kodak culture," referring to traditional subjects appearing in situations like birthdays, celebrations, and family holidays, typically shared within an intimate circle. These images usually feature friends or family, people we know, intended for networking within this close group (Manovich, 2017, p. 41).

On Instagram, the subjects of these casual photos have expanded to include food, selfies, and travels, broadening the intimate circle beyond traditional categories (family and friends) to include close acquaintances, community members, and subcultures. This expansion is driven by a mutual interest in sharing pictures, in the spirit of "home mode": sharing a moment rather than just a photograph from an aesthetic or technical perspective.

This cluster offers a glimpse into everyday experiences and leisure activities, capturing

universally relatable moments. The images reflect various settings from crowded public gatherings to relaxed beach scenes and casual strolls through parks and cafes, resonating with a broad audience. For example, the crowded cafe scene (H5) demonstrates social interactions in casual settings, while the rooftop gatherings in I2 and the festive game atmosphere in H2, and H3 present team activities and leisure.

This cluster emphasizes the role of everyday spaces in shaping the urban experience. It shows how public spaces support social cohesion through both organized events and spontaneous gatherings. The connection between people and their surroundings is evident in how individuals personalize public spaces for relaxation and socializing, whether in natural settings like beaches or urban landscapes like streets and cafes. The presence of green spaces, even in a city with fewer green landscapes compared to other European cities, underscores their importance in enhancing quality of life.

In summary, the "Snapshots and Relatable Photos" cluster encapsulates the essence of everyday urban life, outlining the connections between people, places, and activities.

This analysis suggests that Athens is a city deeply connected to its public spaces and social interactions, where the urban environment supports a dynamic and engaged community. The snapshot aesthetic captures meaningful moments often shared within families and reflects a broader cultural identity where personal experiences and communal activities are highly valued (Zuromskis, 2020, para. 9; *Photographers and the "Snapshot Aesthetic,"* 2015, para. 1-2).



Fig.8: Image Cluster "Snapshots and Relatable photos" from @thisisathens.

This cluster provides a closer view of the diverse and dynamic nature of urban environments, capturing a variety of settings such as residential streets, bustling cafes, vivid nightlife, and peaceful green spaces. For instance, images like H1 show skateboarders enjoying urban structures, while H2 captures children playing, emphasizing active public spaces. H3's basketball court and H4's scenic sunset view showcase the integration of recreational spaces within the city. The architectural diversity, from modern apartment buildings adorned with plants as seen in I1 and I2, to historical exteriors, underscores the blend of old and new in

Athens. These images indicate the role of architecture in shaping the urban landscape and experiencing social interactions.

The cluster also emphasizes the importance of public and semi-public spaces such as cafes, parks, and pedestrian walkways in fostering community engagement. Images like H4, showing people gathered at a scenic spot, underline the public use of urban spaces. Night scenes and social venues, such as I3 and I4, reveal the city's dazzling nightlife and social dynamics, illustrating how the character of the city transforms after dark. The "Urban Life and Spaces" cluster offers a detailed visual narrative of city living, emphasizing the connection between architecture, social interactions, and urban planning. This analysis suggests that Athens is a dynamic and diverse city where everyday life is enriched by a variety of social and architectural environments, illustrating the city's commitment to creating livable and engaging urban spaces.



Fig.9: Image Cluster "Urban life and spaces" from @thisisathens.

Both clusters together provide a comprehensive view of Athens, showing its ability to blend historical persistence with current growth. The "Urban Life and Spaces" cluster presents the structural and social dynamics of the city, emphasizing the architectural diversity and the importance of public spaces. On the other hand, the "Snapshots and Relatable Photos" cluster captures the essence of daily life and leisure activities, reflecting the personal and public use of urban environments.

Together, these clusters portray how Athens values both its historical heritage and modern development. They show a city where everyday life is enriched by a variety of social and architectural environments, creating a full of life and engaged community. The images collectively suggest that Athens is a dynamic city deeply connected to its public spaces and social interactions, making it a place where history and modernity coexist in harmony.

Retro/Vintage

The "Retro/Vintage" cluster captures nostalgia and historical consistency through architectural and social scenes. These images show how elements from past eras are preserved and celebrated in urban environments. Features like pastel-colored buildings (J1, J2), fancy, decorative window frames, and vintage signboards (J3) define the aesthetic and cultural

character of these spaces. The images include not only buildings but also scenes of everyday life, blending retro and vintage styles into the present cityscape. This mix reflects a societal respect for history and tradition, and a preference for the nostalgic appeal of older styles, contrasting with modern architecture.

This cluster indicates the effort of the city to preserve cultural identity through architecture and urban planning. Retro and vintage elements are not just artifacts but active parts of the city's living history. Urban spaces become opportunities for cultural expression and memory, engaging both residents and visitors in a dialogue with the past. These environments boost the uniqueness of urban settings, add value to community spaces, and potentially boost local tourism and commerce through their historical charm.

The inclusion of joyful street life and community interactions in these settings suggests that these areas are appreciated not only for their aesthetic appeal but also as vital spaces for community engagement. The "Retro/Vintage" cluster suggests that Athens values its historical heritage and adapts it flawlessly into modern life. This reflects a city identity that appreciates historical persistence, architectural beauty, and community engagement, making Athens a living museum of cultural and architectural history.



Fig.10: Image Cluster "Retro/Vintage" from @thisisathens.

Greek Markets and Commerce

The "Greek Markets and Commerce" cluster effectively portrays the dynamic nature of traditional Greek marketplaces, emphasizing their significance as hubs of social and economic activity. These images capture market life, from striking displays of fresh produce and local goods to the interactions between vendors and customers. Each photo outlines different aspects of market culture, including the variety of goods, traditional display methods, and the morning crowds, emphasizing the markets' role in community life.

Furthermore, this cluster represents not only economic transactions but also cultural exchanges occurring in these public spaces. Markets are depicted as more than just places of commerce; they maintain cultural cohesion by offering a space where traditional foods, crafts, and practices are appreciated and preserved. This is particularly significant in the context of globalization, where local markets help preserve unique cultural identities in a world where

everything becomes homogenous and same.

Additionally, the cluster shows the layout of Greek cities, where markets are central landmarks that affect how people move and cities develop. The interaction between historical contexts and present market activities can be explored, providing a deeper understanding of how these markets adapt while retaining their traditional character.

To conclude, the "Greek Markets and Commerce" cluster suggests that Athens values its traditional marketplaces as essential components of its cultural and economic identity. These markets are important to community life and cultural preservation, reflecting a city that treasures its heritage and inserts it into everyday life.

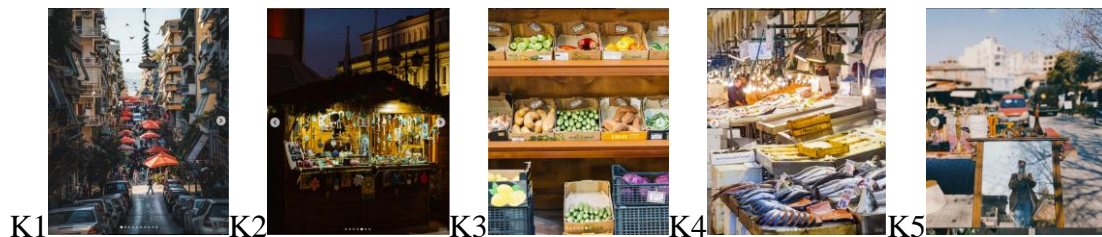


Fig.11: Image Cluster "Greek market and commerce" from @thisisathens.

Historic Monuments

The "Historic Monuments" cluster brings to life the magnificence and beauty of ancient Greek civilization, showcasing stunning sites and structures that remain central to Greece's cultural identity. Each image points out the architectural elegance of these monuments, presenting them in diverse settings—from full of people tourist attractions to tranquil, historic locations.

This collection reflects the lasting impact of Greek architecture and its smooth blending into modern society. These ancient structures are not just remains of the past; they are active, living parts of the city, engaging with modern cultural and social life. They serve as popular tourist destinations and community gathering spots, demonstrating their important role in today's urban landscape.

This cluster encourages discussions about conservation efforts and the effects of tourism, providing a deeper understanding of how heritage is managed in urban settings. It also explores how these monuments shape national identity and collective memory, symbolizing historical presence and pride. The "Historic Monuments" cluster reveals that Athens is a city deeply connected to its ancient roots and proud of its historical heritage. These monuments are not just reminders of the past but vital parts of the city's present and future, reflecting a city identity that values history, cultural pride, and the integration of heritage into modern life.



Fig.12: Image Cluster “Historic monuments” from @thisisathens.

Panoramic Views

At the same time, the "Panoramic Views" cluster provides a comprehensive visual exploration of Athens' expansive views and architectural shapes, capturing both the natural beauty and the built environment. This set of images includes various perspectives of the urban landscape, from iconic historical sites like the Acropolis to modern architectural wonders and busy city streets. Each photo captures a part of the city's story, showing how historic landmarks stand alongside new buildings, blending old charm with modern life.

Furthermore, this cluster emphasizes the importance of urban design and the visual impact of cityscapes on residents and visitors alike. The images display a range of times and weather conditions, from calming sunsets and “full of energy” night scenes to clear day views, presenting how the city's skyline transforms and interacts with natural light. This connection that is made, enhances the aesthetic appeal and emotional connection people have with their surrounding environment.

The cluster reflects the role of strategic viewpoints and public spaces in providing residents with accessible locations to appreciate these panoramic views. By depicting both elevated perspectives and ground-level views, the images reveal how different viewing spots contribute to the overall perception of the city. This aspect is crucial for urban planning, as it addresses the need for thoughtfully designed public spaces that maximize visual access to the city's most striking and breathtaking features.

Moreover, the presence of both historical landmarks and modern structures within the same visual frame invites discussions on heritage preservation and recent architectural trends. The coexistence of old and new within the same city is proof of the city's adaptive reuse strategies and its commitment to maintaining culture while embracing modernization.

The "Panoramic Views of the City" cluster provides a scenic beauty and serves as a critical tool for understanding urban aesthetics, planning, and the relationship between built and natural environments. This analysis shows that Athens cherishes its history while embracing modern growth. The city beautifully blends the past and present, creating a unique urban identity. This is evident in the previous cluster and the historic monuments found throughout

the city.



Fig.13: Image Cluster “Panoramic views” from @thisisathens.

Greek Gastronomy

The "Greek Gastronomy" cluster offers a rich visual exploration of the culinary traditions and current practices in Greek cuisine, presenting the detailed processes, skilled expertise, and cultural significance behind each dish. The images capture a range of gastronomic activities, from the preparation and cooking techniques to the presentation of finished dishes, reflecting the deep-rooted culinary heritage and the innovative approaches of modern Greek chefs.

This cluster underscores the importance of food as a cultural artifact, showing how Greek gastronomy is both a preservative of tradition and a field of creative evolution. The photographs depict chefs at work, emphasizing the expertise and dedication required to maintain the authenticity of traditional recipes while also introducing modern recipes with twists. This duality is crucial for understanding how culinary practices adapt to new, modern tastes without losing their traditional essence. It shows the variety and richness of Greek ingredients, from fresh seafood and local producers to traditional pastries and desserts. This focus on ingredients not only indicates the diversity of Greek cuisine but also emphasizes the importance of local sourcing and sustainability in maintaining the quality and authenticity of dishes. The detailed visual representation of food preparation processes, such as the precise layering of ingredients in a dish (N3) or the careful crafting of galaktoboureko (N1) (traditional Greek delight), provides insights into the technical proficiency and cultural rituals that define Greek cooking and aesthetically showcasing them.

Furthermore, the images of plated dishes and dining experiences reflect the aesthetic and multiple layers of Greek gastronomy, where the presentation is as important as the flavor. The attention to detail in plating and the emphasis on communal dining experiences emphasize the social and cultural functions of food in Greek society. These elements demonstrate how gastronomy serves as a medium for social interaction, celebration, and cultural expression.

This analysis suggests that Athens is a city where culinary traditions are deeply embedded in cultural identity and social life, signifying the importance of food as a means of cultural expression and community bonding.



Fig.14: Image Cluster “Greek gastronomy” from @thisisathens.

4.3.3. New Orleans

Wedding Celebrations

The "Wedding Celebrations" cluster presents a diverse and vibrant portfolio of images that collectively capture the diverse and multi-dimensional nature of new-age marriages. These photos present various wedding traditions, styles, and cultural practices, outlining the universal significance of weddings while sheds light on individual uniqueness and creativity. The visual narrative depicts different stages of wedding celebrations, from intimate moments of preparation and emotional exchanges during vows to the joyful festivities and community gatherings that follow.

This cluster points out that New Orleans is a city that values diversity and inclusivity -as it is shown in O2, O3, O4, and O5 different styles and concepts of weddings are promoted in the Instagram page-celebrating a wide range of wedding traditions and styles. The images reflect a community that honors both personal and collective aspects of marriage, emphasizing the city's rich culture and its ability to combine traditional and modern influences. The variety of venues, from historical landmarks to modern urban settings, pinpoints the city's adaptability and the significance of place in the celebration of life events. Moreover, New Orleans is renowned for its unique wedding traditions. One standout custom is the "wedding parade," which includes enthusiastic dancers and dance troupes (O7) (Elysianstaging, 2024, para. 10-11). The city also has special traditions related to wedding cuisine (Elysianstaging, 2024, para. 8-9). Notably, it's customary for the bride and groom to leave the wedding chapel in a carriage drawn by mules rather than horses (Elysianstaging, 2024, para. 14-15).





Fig.15: Image Cluster “Wedding celebrations” from @visitNewOrleans.

Regional Delicacies

The "Regional Delicacies" cluster focuses on the beignet, a traditional New Orleans sweet prominently featured in the Disney movie "The Princess and the Frog." This set of images captures various presentations of beignets, from the classic powdered sugar-covered treats served at iconic local establishments (P2, P5) to casual street food settings. Each photo emphasizes the cultural significance and widespread popularity of this dessert within New Orleans and beyond.

This cluster reflects that New Orleans has a strong culinary identity that is deeply rooted and connected with its cultural heritage. The beignet, as a symbol of local cuisine, reflects the city's rich food traditions and its ability to capture the imagination through popular media. The inclusion of this dessert in a Disney movie (Princess and the Frog) located in New Orleans, certifies the global recognition and appreciation of New Orleans' culinary delights, and the iconicity of this specific delight (beignet). The images suggest that food in New Orleans is not just sustenance but a cultural ambassador that connects the city to the world, showing the world its unique flavors and food culture.



Fig.16: Image Cluster “Regional delicacies” from @visitNewOrleans.

Colorful Houses

The "Colorful Houses" cluster provides a cheerful and picturesque depiction of the architectural charm and festive spirit that characterize the neighborhoods of New Orleans.

These images present a palette of brightly painted houses, each decorated with detailed designs that feel magical and playful.

One theory suggests that the vivid colors and bright decorations of these houses were influenced by the Caribbean heritage of many early New Orleans residents, or by the colorful traditions of Mardi Gras (Tebeau, 2019). These houses are particularly iconic in New Orleans, contributing significantly to the city's unique aesthetic and cultural identity. They often feature prominently in tourist photos and promotional materials, making them a central part of the city's appeal to visitors.

In essence, the "Colorful Houses" cluster not only captures the visual delight and festive atmosphere of New Orleans but also flags the cultural influences that have shaped this distinctive architectural style. The colorful houses are more than just picturesque scenes; they are testimonials to the city's rich heritage and its ongoing celebration of diversity and festivity. The practice of decorating homes (Q1) suggests a strong sense of neighborhood pride and social cohesion. This reflects an urban identity that is deeply connected to its architectural heritage and common traditions, making New Orleans a visually enchanting and culturally active city.



Fig.17: Image Cluster "Colorful houses" from @visitNewOrleans.

Disney Inspired

The "Disney Inspired" cluster demonstrates a collection of visually striking images that evoke the whimsical and magical qualities often associated with Disney's architectural designs. The centerpiece of this cluster is the series of photographs featuring the iconic St. Louis Cathedral, whose towering spires and ornate details bear a striking resemblance to the fantastical castle that is a symbol of Disney's brand.

This cluster indicates that New Orleans embraces a sense of enchantment and historical magnificence in its architectural identity. The resemblance of the St. Louis Cathedral to Disney castles outlines the city's ability to evoke a fairytale-like atmosphere, blending real-world architecture with elements of fantasy. The photographs capture the cathedral from various perspectives and under different lighting conditions, showcasing its versatility as an architectural symbol. Whether in the sunrise hour with the golden light around it, captured

against a twilight sky, or framed by the vivid colors of daylight, the cathedral maintains its enchanting presence. This visual narrative presents how lighting and context can transform a static structure into a dynamic element of urban storytelling. Moreover, the inclusion of other visually stimulating elements, such as colorful light installations (R2) and misty river scenes (R4), complements the fairytale theme, reinforcing the overall magical atmosphere of the cluster and the city of New Orleans in general. These features create a sense of escape that people often look for in architecture and city life. They offer residents and visitors a temporary getaway into a world of imagination and wonder.

In conclusion, the clusters collectively paint a picture of New Orleans as a city rich in cultural heritage, and creativity building a city straight out of a fairytale.

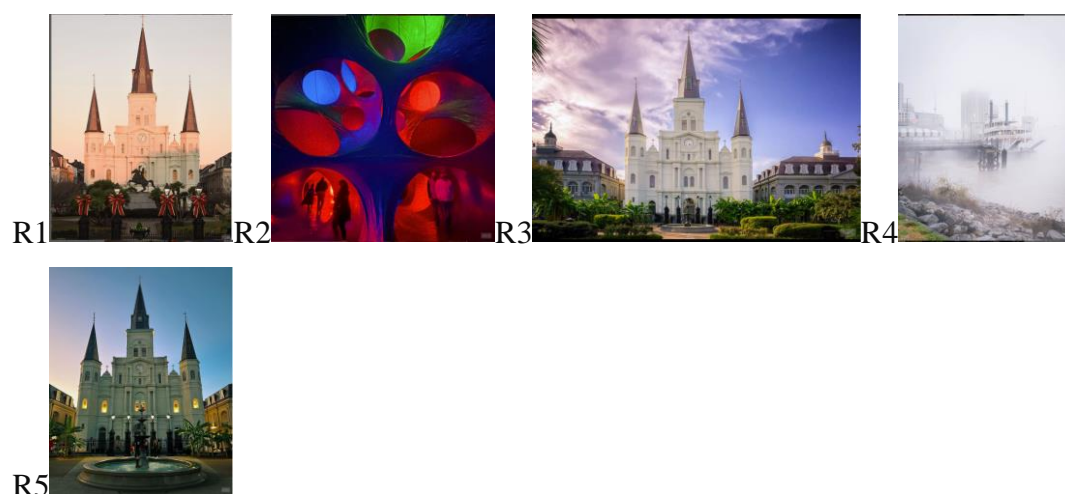


Fig.18: Image Cluster “Disney inspired” from @visitNewOrleans.

Carnival Celebrations and Parades

The "Carnival Celebrations and Parades" cluster encapsulates the joyful and radiant spirit of one of New Orleans' most iconic and culturally significant events. These images show a dazzling variety of costumes, parades, and public festivities that define the Carnival season, signifying the rich cultural heritage and joy that characterize this annual celebration.

Similar to Rio de Janeiro's famous annual carnival, New Orleans is renowned for its spectacular parades and celebrations, particularly during Mardi Gras. These events are a testament to the city's identity, drawing in tourists from around the world and significantly boosting the local economy. The Carnival season not only attracts visitors but also engages numerous local artists, musicians, and performers, thereby contributing to the city's creative economy and cultural vitality. The arrival of tourists during this period underscores the event's importance as a driver of cultural tourism and economic activity. The preparation and execution of Carnival involve a wide range of local talents, underlining New Orleans'

overflowing with energy and creative community.

This cluster illustrates that New Orleans is a city celebrated for its festive and celebratory spirit, especially during carnival. The elaborate costumes and parades reflect the city's creativity, cultural pride, and historical depth. The participatory nature of Carnival underscores a strong sense of community and inclusivity, bringing together people from diverse backgrounds to celebrate. This ecstatic tradition of public celebration and deep-rooted community joy establishes New Orleans as a cultural hub with a unique and spirited identity.



Fig.19: Image Cluster “Carnival celebrations and parades” from @visitNewOrleans.

Music Festivals and Jazz

The cluster presents a variety of images that capture the essence of New Orleans' rich musical heritage and its full-energy festival culture. These photos depict scenes from various music festivals, particularly the famous New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, depicting large crowds, energetic performances, and the spirit of unity that defines these events. The prominence of jazz in these festivals reflects New Orleans' historical significance in the development of this genre, which has roots in the city's African American communities. The images of performances, whether on grand stages or in more intimate settings, illustrate the enduring legacy of jazz and its evolution within the present-day music scene.

This cluster indicates that New Orleans is a city deeply rooted in its musical traditions, particularly jazz, which is a fundamental part of its cultural identity. The images reflect the city's reputation as a global hub for music lovers, where festivals are celebrated with great enthusiasm and serve as significant social gatherings. The large, diverse crowds and the presence of various stages and performers show the inclusive and celebratory nature of these festivals. This suggests that New Orleans values its musical heritage and uses it as a means to bring people together, fostering a sense of community and shared cultural appreciation.

More specifically, the cluster emphasizes the importance of music festivals as cultural landmarks in New Orleans. The Jazz Fest, in particular, is not just a local event but an international attraction that draws visitors from around the world, showcasing the city's cultural vitality and its role as a major player in the global music scene (The Ultimate Jazz Fest Guide | New Orleans, n.d., para.7-8).



Fig.20: Image Cluster “Music Festivals and Jazz” from @visitNewOrleans.

4.4. Identities of the Cities Through the Images

Through this image cluster analysis, it is evident that each city has its own unique identity. The research aimed to identify and illustrate the specific elements and content themes that define and illustrate each city's distinct identity. Comparative research between the cities was unnecessary because each one portrays a different identity and offers visitors a unique experience. To address the research question, "What kind of images and content themes are employed on Instagram for Tokyo, Athens, and New Orleans to convey and reinforce their distinct city identities for city branding?" a detailed analysis of the Instagram content from the official accounts of these cities was conducted. The findings reveal distinct visual themes and content strategies that each city utilizes to project its unique identity. In an initial overview, Tokyo emerges as a city of the future, yet it deeply respects the tradition, spirituality, and history of Japan. This duality is captured clearly in images showcasing its massive and modern skyscrapers, neon-lit streets, futuristic buildings, and advanced transportation systems. Simultaneously, Tokyo offers glimpses of Japanese culture and heritage, balancing its modernity with deep historical roots. While, Athens, in contrast, is a historic city that has preserved its character over time. The culture here is inseparably linked with food, and the city gives a relaxed, relatable vibe. The concepts of images illustrate traditional marketplaces serve as cultural hubs, while historic landmarks, visible from every corner of Athens, offer a

continuous historical tour. These elements combine to create a cityscape where the past is always present, weaving through the everyday life of its residents and visitors. Lastly, New Orleans stands out as a city of vibrant color, with a fairytale-like scenery influenced by diverse cultures and a rich history deeply rooted in music and spirituality. Images of New Orleans are filled with lively, energetic parades, brightly painted houses, and captivating architecture that seems straight out of a storybook. The city's unique mix of cultural influences and its deep-rooted traditions create an atmosphere that is both magical and deeply reasonable with its historical legacy.

These identities are evidently displayed in the Instagram pages of each city's DMO (Destination Marketing Organization) accounts. The images realistically and vividly convey the true character of each city when carefully observed. These DMO accounts promote their cities through iconic imagery that effectively illustrates the unique essence of each location. The comprehensive analysis of these image clusters further reveals the distinct identities and content themes that define Tokyo, Athens, and New Orleans, presenting their cultural essence and urban character.

In a more in-depth, detailed description, Tokyo effortlessly combines tradition with modernity. The imagery captures a city where fairytale and magical aesthetics inspired by Studio Ghibli coexist with the intense urban density and architectural sophistication of a modern metropolis. Tokyo's commitment to incorporating green spaces within its compact city design shows a commitment to caring for the environment and improving city life. The city's advanced technology and innovative architecture further underscore its identity as a global leader in modern urban development. Tokyo values creativity, cultural heritage, and sustainable progress, creating an urban environment that is both forward-looking and deeply connected to its past.

Athens stands out as a city that cherishes its historical legacy while embracing contemporary growth. The snapshots of everyday life, from bustling markets to peaceful public spaces, reveal an active and involved community. The architectural combination of retro and vintage elements with modern structures signifies a deep respect for history and tradition. Athens' dynamic markets and grand historic monuments underscore the city's role as a living museum of cultural and architectural history. The city's culinary traditions and full of life street art scene further illustrates a commitment to preserving cultural heritage while fostering innovation. Athens' identity is marked by a harmonious mixture of historical continuity, cultural pride, and modern city life.

New Orleans is depicted as a city rich in cultural heritage, creativity, and team spirit. The

joyful celebrations of Carnival and other festivals show the city's festive and inclusive nature. The colorful houses and majestic decorations during festive seasons reflect a strong sense of neighborhood pride and social cohesion. The culinary delights, particularly the iconic sweet treat beignet, emphasize New Orleans' strong culinary identity and global recognition. New Orleans' identity is characterized by its rich cultural blend, public celebrations, and a mixture of historical glory with creative expression.

To answer the sub-question, "How do the cities create an image through their visual communication on Instagram?" it is essential to examine how these visual themes are strategically curated and presented. The analysis shows that each city uses a combination of cultural, historical, and existing elements to craft a cohesive and appealing narrative that enhances its city branding and engages its audience.

Each city strategically displays its Instagram content to create a compelling image that reflects its unique identity. By analyzing how these visual themes are presented, we can understand the specific strategies used by Tokyo, Athens, and New Orleans to enhance their city branding through visual communication. Across these cities, several unified themes emerge. Each city demonstrates a unique blend of tradition and modernity, balancing historical preservation with current growth. They all highlight the importance of public spaces and public celebrations in fostering social cohesion and cultural identity. The use of green spaces and sustainable practices reflects a common commitment to enhancing city livability. Additionally, the emphasis on culinary traditions and local markets underscores the role of food in cultural expression and community bonding.

The analysis of the three Instagram accounts for Tokyo, Athens, and New Orleans reveals that each city is dedicated to portraying its unique identity in the most effective manner. The images featured on these accounts are either user-generated content, for which the aforementioned accounts have obtained copyright permission or photos taken by professional photographers. A significant emphasis is placed on high-quality images, in line with current photography and Instagram trends.

Moreover, the accounts utilize a variety of content formats, including reels and videos, in addition to static images, which were the primary focus of this research. Notably, the consistent and prominent use of carousel posts across all three accounts allows them to share multiple images in a single post, thereby maximizing content delivery. This strategy enhances the richness of the visual content and provides a more comprehensive depiction of each city's identity.

In conclusion, the cluster analysis reveals that Tokyo, Athens, and New Orleans each

possess a distinct city identity shaped by their unique cultural, architectural, and social elements. Tokyo is characterized by its creative fusion of tradition and modernity, Athens by its harmonic integration of history and present life, and New Orleans by its rich cultural heritage and community spirit. These insights offer a deeper understanding of how the identities of these cities are continuously shaped by their cultural, social, and environmental contexts, magnifying the dynamic and multilayered nature of urban life in each location.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter, the main findings of the research will be summarized and their relation to the current academic literature will be highlighted. Finally, the limitations of the research and how further exploration of the topic might be performed will be discussed.

5.1. Discussion

The connection of theoretical concepts with practical visual representations reveals how cities actively manage and project their identities through the strategic use of images. Cities create unique identities through images, much like individuals use photographs to craft personas, as described by Erving Goffman's impression management theory (Fine & Manning, 2003, pp. 42–43). The cluster analysis demonstrates this concept by showing how Tokyo, Athens, and New Orleans each utilize specific visual themes to manage their public images and convey distinct identities.

Tokyo's "Studio Ghibli Inspired" and "Futuristic" clusters (Studio Ghibli, 2024) illustrate Goffman's theory by presenting a combination of traditional and modern elements to control public perception. The magical aesthetics inspired by Studio Ghibli films evoke a sense of wonder and nostalgia, while the futuristic images showcase Tokyo's advanced technology and modern architecture. This duality reflects Tokyo's strategy to present itself as both a place of innovation and a city that guards cultural heritage.

Similarly, John Berger's "Ways of Seeing" (1972) outlines the contextual interpretation of images by viewers which is influenced by the historical and cultural backgrounds of the image (in this case the city), which directly influences a city's identity. This is, also, evident in Athens' "Snapshots and Relatable Photos" and "Urban Life and Spaces" clusters. The everyday scenes and relatable moments captured in these images demonstrate the city's full of energy community life and historical continuity. The mix of retro and vintage architectural elements with modern structures underscores Athens' ability to maintain its historical identity while embracing growth.

Athens' "Historic Monuments" and "Panoramic Views of the City" clusters further illustrate this concept. The majestic ancient structures and expansive views of Athens' skyline show the city's historical prestige and its smooth integration into the modern urban environment. These images emphasize the importance of strategic viewpoints and public spaces in appreciating the city's architectural and natural beauty. It shows the ways cities maintain historical continuity while embracing modern growth, offering insights into the strategies used to balance preservation with innovation in urban development.

In the digital era, images are created on social media by both consumers and producers in

collaboration, continuously edited and refined through shared data (Chu, 2020, para 5). This is evident in the "Colorful Houses" and "Carnival Celebrations and Parades" clusters of New Orleans. The vibrant depictions of New Orleans' neighborhoods and festive events signify the city's rich cultural heritage and team spirit. The participatory nature of social media enables a diverse range of stakeholders, including tourists, residents, and DMOs, to contribute to the city's image co-creation, enhancing its visibility and appeal (Tasci & Gartner, 2007, pp. 413–425; Nautiyal et al., 2022, p. 578).

Culinary traditions play a really important role in cultural expression and community bonding, as demonstrated in the "Culinary Journeys" cluster of Tokyo and the "Greek Gastronomy" cluster of Athens. The variety and presentation of foods in these images highlights the importance of food as a cultural and social pillar, reflecting each city's deep-rooted culinary heritage and evolving food culture (Mak, 2017, p. 282). This aligns with the theoretical framework's emphasis on the dynamic nature of city identities, shaped by historical, cultural, and social contexts (Al-Ghamdi et al., 2015, pp. 736-739; Xu et al., 2024, p. 2). Furthermore, with the analysis of the representation of culinary traditions in city branding, the study adds to theories on food and cultural identity. It illustrates how cities use gastronomic imagery to express cultural heritage and foster community bonding, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of food's role in urban cultural expression.

The core of this research lies in understanding how cities leverage extensively visual communication to create and reinforce their unique identities on Instagram. The theoretical foundation is built upon Erving Goffman's impression management theory and John Berger's concept of contextual interpretation in "Ways of Seeing." Goffman's theory posits that individuals (or entities, in this case, cities) actively manage their public image through deliberate self-presentation. This selection, with a purpose, aims to control the impressions formed by others. Similarly, Berger's work emphasizes that the meaning of images is not inherent but constructed by viewers based on their contexts and experiences influenced by the image's background. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing how cities present themselves and how these presentations are perceived.

The findings reveal that cities strategically manage their public images through visual content on Instagram, aligning with Goffman's impression management and Berger's subjective interpretation of images. By using images that underscore both traditional and modern elements, cities control public perception and reinforce their unique identities. These identities are interlinked with both the past and the future, demonstrating that tradition and history should be considered as significant as progress and futurism. The research evolves

Goffman's impression management theory by applying it to cities, rather than individuals. Cities, through their DMOs, actively manage their public image on platforms like Instagram, curating visuals to control and influence public perception. This theoretical extension demonstrates how urban environments can strategically present themselves to get the desired impressions among potential tourists and residents.

Additionally, it is important to underline that the effectiveness of Destination Image (DI) management depends on understanding the perceived images held by target markets (Gartner, 1993, as cited in Xiang & Gretzel, 2010, pp. 182-183). While some argue that online DI mirrors its offline, real-world version, the growing influence of tourist-generated content suggests a more complex interaction. Tourists increasingly rely on the Internet for destination information (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010, pp. 182-183), making the content created by Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) crucial in shaping perceptions and co-creating destination images online. As social media evolves from Web 2.0 to Web 3.0, it is essential to rethink the role of DMO content in DI construction and tourist behavior. This study is an initial step toward this broader understanding, highlighting the dynamic nature of visual communication in destination marketing.

5.2. Future research

Future research should delve deeper into the differences in how images are shown between content generated by Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) or National Tourism Organizations (NTOs) and that created by tourists online. This analysis could spark broader discussions about the sustainability of local economies, the impact of tourism, and the preservation of cultural heritage in urban settings. Furthermore, expanding the scope of data selections to include videos, reels, and other interactive media formats would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how DMOs utilize various media types to engage audiences and convey city identities. Additionally, incorporating audience perspectives through surveys or interviews could offer a more balanced view of how visual content is perceived and interpreted by different demographic groups, thus providing deeper insights into the effectiveness of branding strategies. Other researchers may consider proceeding into comparative studies focusing on the visual strategies of different cities and could explore how cultural, economic, and social factors influence branding approaches, showcasing best practices and unique strategies that contribute to effective city branding. Further research could also delve into the cultural and contextual themes that shape the interpretation of visual content, ensuring that analyses are more culturally sensitive. Last but not least, research on other cities may present new findings regarding the cities' identity and image. Future studies

can enhance our understanding of digital city branding and its complex impact on urban identities and perceptions by addressing these areas.

5.3. Limitations

This study faces some limitations that must be acknowledged. Firstly, existing research has not yet thoroughly explored the co-creation of destination images from a multi-dimensional perspective. This presents a significant challenge for empirical analysis, as it requires considering dynamic and fluid elements that are not easily captured or quantified. Furthermore, the study focuses exclusively on static Instagram posts, excluding other forms of media such as videos and reels. This limitation narrows the scope of visual content analysis and may overlook important aspects of how DMOs use various and diverse media formats for city branding. Additionally, the data collection is restricted to the most recent 200 posts from each city's official Instagram account. While this approach captures current trends, it may not reflect long-term strategies or changes in visual communication over time. Moreover, the study does not engage in comparative analysis between the cities, which could have provided deeper insights into differing strategies and similarities in city branding across diverse cultural contexts. These limitations present areas where future research could expand to provide a more comprehensive understanding of digital city branding.

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APPENDIX A

This section presents the first and detailed written version of the Image Cluster Analysis. The referenced images are organized within their respective clusters, in the accompanying dataset.

Tokyo

Studio Ghibli Inspired:

The “Studio Ghibli Inspired” cluster captures the magical and playful essence of Studio Ghibli’s animated films. The images show architecture with organic, flowing shapes and fantastical features, reflecting the unique style of movies like “Spirited Away” and “Howl’s Moving Castle.” Vivid colors and intricate details in the buildings and street scenes grab attention and evoke the wonder and nostalgia typical of Ghibli narratives. This cluster blends lush natural elements with urban settings, creating a balance between nature and human-made structures, a common theme in Ghibli films that promotes environmental awareness

The presence of this cluster in Tokyo suggests the city embraces a mix of modernity and fantasy, creating spaces that foster emotional connections and a sense of wonder. Studio Ghibli’s influence underscores Tokyo’s appreciation for storytelling and environmental harmony, indicating the city’s values of creativity and cultural heritage. The storytelling architecture and flourishing environments depict a city that is technologically advanced yet deeply connected to its cultural roots and the natural world.

Metropolis:

The “Metropolis” cluster vividly shows the crowded and tall buildings typical of big cities. The images feature high-rise buildings and neon-lit streets, highlighting the use of vertical space and advanced lighting in city design. This upward building trend is a practical solution to the limited land available, showing how cities maximize space in crowded areas. The cluster also contrasts busy public spaces with quiet private ones, like balconies with city views. This contrast highlights the challenge of balancing public areas with private ones. The vibrant images with numerous lights and signs reflect the city's 24/7 lifestyle and the important role of digital displays and lighting in the city's look.

This cluster shows that Tokyo thrives in its busy, fast-paced environment, balancing a dense population with smart urban design. The city’s identity as a cultural and economic center is strengthened by its lively nightlife and sophisticated architecture. Tokyo’s ability to keep a lively urban environment while offering private retreats demonstrates its adaptability and dedication to improving urban life quality.

Urban Oases:

The “Urban Oases” cluster shows how nature blends with city life, creating peaceful green spaces in busy urban areas. The images feature various settings, from blooming gardens and leafy pathways to quiet indoor spaces with natural designs. These spaces not only look beautiful but also help people’s mental and environmental health. Adding green spaces to crowded cities shows a planned effort to make city life better by giving people places to relax and socialize away from the busy streets.

This cluster shows that Tokyo values green spaces in the city, understanding their importance for improving life and well-being. The presence of these urban oases shows a commitment to sustainable city planning and a balanced lifestyle, where nature is smoothly integrated into the city. Tokyo’s ability to provide these calm spaces in a dense urban area shows its innovative approach to city design and care for the environment.

Futuristic:

The “Futuristic” cluster shows a collection of images that depict the future of city landscapes with modern technology, architecture, and urban planning. These images feature advanced skyscrapers, high-speed trains, and green spaces, showcasing a vision that combines beauty with practicality. The cluster highlights not just the impressive buildings but also the use of technology in city environments, seen in shiny exterior faces of buildings, reflective surfaces, and complex designs that mix sustainability with modern engineering.

This cluster shows that Tokyo is a leader in technological and architectural innovation. The focus on futuristic designs and advanced infrastructure reflects Tokyo’s role as a global leader in modern city development. The city’s commitment to combining sustainability with cutting-edge technology shows its dedication to creating a forward-thinking and environmentally friendly urban environment. Tokyo’s vision for the future embraces innovation while ensuring its city spaces are both functional and attractive.

Exhibited Culture:

The “Exhibited Culture” cluster shows how cultural artifacts are preserved and displayed in both modern and historical museum settings. The images highlight different ways societies keep and celebrate their heritage. Each photo, carefully chosen, displays various exhibition styles—from simple displays of single artifacts to grand halls that tell historical stories in an engaging way. Different lighting techniques are used to enhance the look and importance of the artifacts, showing the careful work needed to preserve them.

This cluster shows that Tokyo values preserving and showing its cultural heritage. The city’s museums and exhibition spaces are dedicated to cultural education and appreciation, displaying both old and new artifacts. Tokyo combines traditional and modern exhibition

methods, reflecting its vibrant cultural scene and commitment to understanding its rich history. The city's identity is marked by a respect for history and a forward-thinking approach to cultural preservation.

Matcha Preparation:

The "Matcha Preparation" cluster provides a focused exploration of the cultural and ritualistic significance of matcha, a finely ground powder of specially grown and processed green tea leaves, which is central to Japanese tea ceremonies. The images vividly capture the meticulous process involved in preparing matcha, from the sifting of the powder to the whisking of the tea, highlighting not only the technique but also the ceremonial implements used, such as the chawan (tea bowl), chasen (bamboo whisk), and chashaku (bamboo scoop).

This cluster indicates that Tokyo values the preservation and celebration of traditional cultural practices. The detailed focus on matcha preparation reflects a broader appreciation for mindfulness, aesthetics, and the ritualistic aspects of Japanese culture. Tokyo's ability to integrate such traditions into modern life highlights its cultural continuity and respect for heritage. The city's identity is thus characterized by a harmonious blend of tradition and modernity, where age-old practices are maintained and celebrated within a contemporary urban context.

By analyzing these visual representations, the cluster underscores the fusion of tradition and modernity in culinary culture, illustrating how traditional practices are preserved and adapted in modern contexts. This analysis not only enhances our understanding of cultural heritage in culinary arts but also reflects broader themes of globalization and cultural exchange, as matcha becomes a global phenomenon, transcending its traditional roots to become part of a worldwide culinary trend.

Geisha:

The "Geisha" cluster offers a fascinating look into the elegant and culturally rich world of geishas in Tokyo. These images show geishas in traditional kimonos, often set against peaceful and beautiful backdrops like gardens and historic buildings. The bright colors and detailed patterns of their clothing, along with their graceful movements and artistry, highlight Japan's deep cultural heritage and the careful preservation of this tradition. This cluster emphasizes Tokyo's unique combination of ancient traditions and modern life. Seeing geishas, symbols of Japan's cultural history, in the busy city of Tokyo shows the city's commitment to keeping its cultural identity even as it rapidly develops. The geisha tradition, rooted in art and performance, shows the rich cultural practices that continue to thrive in Tokyo, connecting the past and present.

The cluster also highlights the cultural importance and delicate artistry of geishas, who are admired for their skills in traditional Japanese arts like dance, music, and the tea ceremony. The images capture the beauty of the geishas and the settings that enhance their presence—calm gardens, traditional tea houses, and culturally rich environments that create a sense of timelessness. Moreover, the cluster shows how geishas help maintain and promote Japanese culture to both locals and visitors. The images of geishas in various settings, from traditional interiors to vibrant floral displays, demonstrate their adaptability and the evolving nature of their role in today's society. This flexibility is crucial for keeping cultural traditions alive in a globalized world, where preserving heritage often means blending with modern influences.

The cluster also invites discussion on the intersection of tourism and cultural preservation. Geishas serve as cultural ambassadors, attracting tourists who want an authentic experience of Japanese culture. This dual role of preserving culture and promoting tourism highlights the economic and social importance of maintaining such traditions in modern cities.

Culinary Journeys:

The “Culinary Journeys” cluster offers a vibrant and diverse look at Tokyo's rich food scene. The images show a variety of dishes, from traditional Japanese foods like sushi and ramen to modern takes on classic desserts and creative street food. This variety and presentation highlight Tokyo's deep culinary traditions and its dynamic, evolving food culture. This cluster shows Tokyo as a culinary capital that mixes tradition with innovation. The traditional dishes, prepared with great care, reflect the city's respect for culinary heritage and long-standing techniques. At the same time, images of cutting-edge desserts and trendy cafes showcase Tokyo's role as a global trendsetter, celebrating creativity and experimentation in food. Food is shown as a crucial part of Tokyo's culture and social life.

The variety of dining settings—from busy street markets to quiet tea houses and stylish urban eateries—demonstrates how integral food is to daily life and social interactions. Each image captures not just the food, but also the dining atmosphere and experience, reflecting Tokyo's multi approach to gastronomy.

The cluster also emphasizes the sensory experience of Tokyo's cuisine. The careful presentation, vibrant colors, and attention to detail in each dish highlight the importance of food's visual appeal in Japanese culture. This focus on aesthetics, combined with flavors and textures, enhances the dining experience and reflects a broader cultural appreciation for harmony and balance. Additionally, the cluster invites discussion on how globalization influences Tokyo's food culture. The fusion of traditional Japanese elements with international influences in some dishes shows the city's openness to global culinary trends and its ability to

adapt and innovate. This fusion creates a unique food landscape that attracts both locals and tourists, contributing to Tokyo's reputation as a global food destination. In conclusion, the "Culinary Journeys" cluster provides a rich visual story that explores the blend of tradition and modernity in Tokyo's food culture.

Athens

Snapshots and relatable photos:

The "Snapshots and Relatable Photos" cluster gives a clear view of everyday experiences and leisure activities in both urban and natural settings, capturing moments that are familiar and reflective of modern social life. The images show various scenes—from crowded public events and peaceful beach moments to casual walks in parks and busy cafes—each representing a part of daily life that many can relate to.

This cluster highlights the significance of everyday spaces and activities in shaping the urban experience. It shows how public spaces foster community interactions through events like festivals or spontaneous gatherings in parks. This is important for understanding how urban environments support social connections and offer opportunities for communal engagement. The images also show a strong bond between people and their surroundings, illustrating how individuals use and personalize public spaces for relaxation and connection. This can be seen in how people interact with both natural settings, like beaches and forests, and urban areas, such as streets and cafes. The presence of nature in urban contexts highlights the importance of green spaces in improving city life, providing a needed escape from the busy urban environment, even though Athens lacks abundant green landscapes compared to other European and Greek cities. Moreover, the cluster offers a visual story of contemporary lifestyles, showing trends in social behavior, leisure activities, and the use of public and private spaces. It provides valuable data for analyzing the city's identity and the relatable lifestyle of its residents.

In summary, the "Snapshots and Relatable Photos" cluster captures the essence of everyday urban life, showing the interaction between people, places, and activities. This analysis suggests that Athens is a city deeply connected to its public spaces and social interactions, where the urban environment supports a lively and engaged community. The snapshot aesthetic, which captures meaningful moments often shared within families, reflects a cultural identity that values personal experiences and communal activities.

The snapshot aesthetic refers to the characteristics of snapshot photography, recognized as a form of "folk art" since the 1960s. Its purpose is to record meaningful moments, often within families, capturing the essence of personal experiences (Zuromskis, C. (2020). *Snapshot

Photography; *The Lives of Images**. New York: MIT Press; *Women Photographers and the “Snapshot Aesthetic,”* n.d., para 9). In fine arts, women photographers like Nan Goldin, Petra Collins, Gillian Wearing, and Lorna Simpson use the snapshot style to convey messages. They adopt the immediacy and informality of snapshot composition, giving authenticity to their photos (Zuromskis, C. (2020). **Snapshot Photography; The Lives of Images**. New York: MIT Press; *Women Photographers and the “Snapshot Aesthetic,”* n.d., para 9).

Retro/Vintage:

The “Retro/Vintage” cluster captures the nostalgic charm and historical preservation through old-fashioned architectural and social scenes. These images show how elements from past eras are preserved and celebrated in city environments. Features like pastel-colored building fronts, fancy window frames, and vintage signs are key to defining the look and cultural feel of these places. The images include not just buildings but also everyday life scenes, showing how retro and vintage styles are seamlessly integrated into today’s urban life. This blending illustrates a societal respect for history and tradition, as well as a love for the aesthetic qualities of older styles that evoke nostalgia and stand out from modern architecture.

The cluster shows a deliberate effort to preserve cultural identity through architecture and city planning, where retro and vintage elements are active parts of the city’s living history. It reflects how urban spaces serve as canvases for cultural expression and memory, engaging both residents and visitors in a dialogue with the past. Such environments enhance the uniqueness of urban settings, adding value to community spaces and potentially boosting local tourism and business through their historical charm. Furthermore, the vibrant street life and community interactions in these settings suggest that these areas are not only appreciated for their beauty but also serve as important spaces for community engagement and social continuity. The analysis of this cluster could explore themes like architectural conservation, heritage tourism economics, and the social dynamics of historical urban districts, enriching discussions on sustainable urban development and cultural preservation.

The “Retro/Vintage” cluster suggests that Athens values its historical heritage and integrates it seamlessly into modern life. This reflects a city identity that cherishes historical continuity, architectural beauty, and community engagement, making it a living museum of cultural and architectural history.

Greek Markets and Commerce:

The “Greek Markets and Commerce” cluster portrays the lively and busy nature of traditional Greek marketplaces, showing their role as key centers of social and economic activity. These images capture market life, from colorful displays of fresh produce and local

goods to the lively interactions between vendors and customers. Each photo highlights different aspects of market culture, like the variety of goods, traditional display methods, and the crowd of people, making markets essential hubs of community life.

This cluster shows that markets are not just places for buying and selling but also cultural exchanges. Markets are depicted as crucial for maintaining cultural continuity, offering spaces where traditional foods, crafts, and practices are appreciated and preserved. This is especially important in the context of globalization, where local markets help preserve unique cultural identities amidst widespread commercial sameness. The cluster also provides insights into how Greek cities are organized, with markets often serving as key landmarks that influence human movement and urban development. The interaction of historical contexts with contemporary market activities can also be explored, showing how these markets adapt while retaining their traditional character. This analysis can lead to broader discussions on the sustainability of local economies, the impact of tourism, and the preservation of cultural heritage in urban settings.

To conclude, the “Greek Markets and Commerce” cluster suggests that Athens highly values its traditional marketplaces as vital parts of its cultural and economic identity. These markets are integral to community life and cultural preservation, highlighting a city that values its heritage and integrates it into everyday life.

Historic Monuments:

The “Historic Monuments” cluster beautifully showcases the grandeur and architectural brilliance of ancient Greek civilization. The images highlight well-preserved sites and structures that remain important in Greece’s cultural landscape. Each photo emphasizes the beauty and integrity of these monuments, showing them in different contexts—from busy tourist spots to peaceful historical sites. This cluster demonstrates the lasting impact of Greek architecture and its integration into modern life. It shows how these ancient structures are not just remains but active parts of present culture and society. The varied uses of these spaces, such as tourist attractions and public gathering spots, highlight their important role in today’s urban life.

The presence of these historic sites in modern cities raises questions about preservation and the challenges of integrating such heritage into growing urban areas. This cluster invites discussions on how to conserve these sites and manage the effects of tourism. It offers a deeper understanding of heritage management in cities. The analysis could also explore how these monuments shape national identity and collective memory, serving as symbols of history and pride. Additionally, it could look at the economic benefits of tourism, examining how these sites contribute to local and national economies.

The “Historic Monuments” cluster suggests that Athens is deeply connected to its historical roots and proud of its ancient heritage. These monuments are not just symbols of the past but active parts of the city’s present and future, reflecting an identity that values historical continuity, cultural pride, and the integration of heritage into modern life.

Panoramic Views of the city:

The “Panoramic Views of the City” cluster offers a broad look at Athens’ stunning views and architectural scenes, capturing both its natural beauty and urban environment. This set of images shows various perspectives of the city, from famous historical sites like the Acropolis to modern buildings and busy streets. Each photo helps tell the story of Athens’ changing skyline, highlighting the mix of historical and contemporary elements.

This cluster highlights the importance of city design and the visual impact of cityscapes on both residents and visitors. The images display the city at different times and in various weather conditions, from peaceful sunsets and lively night scenes to clear daytime views. This range shows how Athens’ skyline changes and interacts with natural light, enhancing its beauty and the emotional connection people feel with the city. The cluster also points out the value of strategic viewpoints and public spaces that give people easy access to these panoramic views. By featuring both elevated and ground-level perspectives, the images demonstrate how different vantage points shape people’s overall perception of the city. This is important for city planning, as it emphasizes the need for well-designed public spaces that offer the best views of the city’s highlights. Moreover, the combination of historical landmarks and modern buildings in the same frame sparks discussions about preserving heritage and following modern architectural trends. The coexistence of old and new shows the city’s efforts to adapt and reuse spaces while maintaining its cultural history and embracing modern growth.

The “Panoramic Views of the City” cluster not only provides beautiful visuals but also helps understand urban aesthetics, planning, and the relationship between built and natural environments. This analysis suggests that Athens values both its historical legacy and modern development, creating a unique mixture of past and present that defines its urban identity.

Greek Gastronomy:

The “Greek Gastronomy” cluster provides a rich visual tour of Greek cuisine, showcasing both traditional and modern practices. The images display a wide range of culinary activities, from preparation and cooking techniques to the final presentation of dishes, reflecting Greece’s deep culinary heritage and the innovative approaches of contemporary chefs. This cluster highlights food as an important cultural artifact, showing how Greek cuisine preserves traditions while evolving creatively. The photographs feature chefs at work, emphasizing their

skill and dedication in maintaining traditional recipes while adding modern twists. This balance is key to understanding how Greek culinary practices adapt to modern tastes without losing their historical roots.

Showcases the variety and richness of Greek ingredients, from fresh seafood and local produce to traditional pastries and desserts. This focus on ingredients highlights the diversity of Greek cuisine and the importance of local sourcing and sustainability in maintaining dish quality and authenticity. Detailed visuals of food preparation, such as layering ingredients in moussaka or crafting baklava, provide insights into the technical skills and cultural rituals of Greek cooking. Analytically, the images of plated dishes and dining experiences emphasize the aesthetic and sensory aspects of Greek gastronomy, where presentation is as important as flavor. The careful plating and focus on communal dining underscore the social and cultural roles of food in Greek society, showing how food serves as a medium for social interaction, celebration, and cultural expression.

The “Greek Gastronomy” cluster not only captures the essence of Greek culinary traditions but also explores broader themes of cultural preservation, innovation, and the socio-economic impact of cuisine. This analysis suggests that Athens is a city where culinary traditions are deeply rooted in cultural identity and social life, highlighting the importance of food as a means of cultural expression and community bonding.

Urban Life and Spaces:

The “Urban Life and Spaces” cluster provides a detailed look at city living, capturing everyday interactions, architectural variety, and social dynamics that define urban environments. The images show different settings, from quiet residential streets and busy cafes to lively nightlife and peaceful green spaces, giving a comprehensive view of city life. This cluster highlights the complexity of urban spaces and how they encourage social interactions and community building. The photos feature a mix of architectural styles, from modern apartments with plant-filled balconies to historic buildings that add character and continuity to the city. This variety in architecture reflects the city’s historical development and the different socioeconomic conditions influencing urban growth.

Public and semi-public spaces like cafes, parks, and pedestrian walkways are shown as essential places for socializing and relaxation. These spaces help foster a sense of community and provide a break from the fast-paced city life. The images of people walking, dining, and talking show how these urban spaces are used and personalized, reinforcing their importance in daily life.

Night scenes and lively social venues highlight the city’s vibrant nightlife, revealing

another aspect of urban dynamics. These images show how the city's character changes after dark, with lit-up streets and busy establishments creating a unique atmosphere crucial to urban life. The cluster also addresses urban challenges like traffic jam and the need for more green spaces, suggesting areas for urban planning improvements.

The "Urban Life and Spaces" cluster offers a detailed visual story of city living, showing the interaction between architecture, social interactions, and urban planning. This analysis suggests that Athens is a dynamic and diverse city where everyday life is enriched by various social and architectural environments, highlighting the city's commitment to creating livable and engaging urban spaces.

Street Art & Murals:

The "Street Art and Murals" cluster highlights how street art transforms urban spaces, playing a crucial role in cultural expression, social commentary, and revitalizing cities. The images show large murals and graffiti that bring life to ordinary buildings, turning them into vibrant canvases with powerful messages and artistic visions. This cluster emphasizes the wide-ranging impact of graffiti and street art on city areas. These artworks often tell stories reflecting the social and political issues of their surroundings. The murals in the images cover themes like cultural pride, historical reflection, and modern societal issues, showing how street art serves as a voice for the community.

The public nature of these artworks highlights the inclusive nature of street art. Unlike traditional art in galleries and museums, graffiti is accessible to everyone, engaging a broad audience and encouraging public interaction and interpretation. This accessibility fosters a sense of community and shared cultural heritage, sparking dialogue and reflection among city residents. The placement of graffiti and murals on prominent buildings shows their role in revitalizing urban areas. These artworks can rejuvenate neglected spaces, attract tourists, and boost the local economy by making neighborhoods more visually appealing. The impact of street art can also change how a city is perceived, positioning it as a center of creativity and cultural vibrancy. This cluster also raises questions about the legal and social challenges of graffiti. While some see it as vandalism, others view it as a legitimate form of art and cultural commentary.

The "Street Art and Murals" cluster suggests that Athens embraces creativity and cultural expression through public art. This reflects a city identity that values artistic innovation and community engagement, highlighting how street art shapes the urban landscape and fosters a vibrant cultural scene.

New Orleans

Wedding Celebrations:

The “Wedding Celebrations” cluster showcases a vibrant and diverse array of images capturing the essence of contemporary weddings. These photos illustrate various wedding traditions, styles, and cultural practices, highlighting the universal importance of weddings while showcasing individual uniqueness and creativity. The images cover different stages of wedding celebrations, from intimate preparation moments and emotional vows to joyous festivities and communal gatherings.

This cluster suggests that New Orleans is a city that values diversity and inclusivity, celebrating a wide range of wedding traditions and styles. The photos reflect a community that honors both personal and collective aspects of marriage, emphasizing the city’s rich cultural tapestry and its blend of traditional and modern influences. The variety of venues, from historical landmarks to modern urban settings, showcases the city’s adaptability and the significance of place in life celebrations. A unique tradition in New Orleans weddings is the “wedding parade,” featuring dancers and dance troupes. Additionally, traditions around wedding food and the iconic image of the bride and groom leaving the wedding chapel in a mule-drawn carriage, rather than horses, highlight the city’s distinctive cultural practices.

The wedding traditions, reflecting its cultural richness and ability to integrate tradition with contemporary influences.

Regional Delicacies:

The “Reginal Delicacies” cluster focuses on the beignet, a traditional New Orleans sweet famously featured in Disney’s “The Princess and the Frog.” These images showcase different presentations of beignets, from the classic powdered sugar-covered treats served at famous local spots to casual street food versions. Each photo highlights the cultural importance and popularity of this dessert in New Orleans and beyond. This cluster shows that New Orleans has a strong culinary identity deeply connected to its cultural heritage. The beignet symbolizes the city’s rich food traditions and its influence in popular media. Featuring this dessert in a Disney movie emphasizes the global recognition and love for New Orleans’ cuisine. The images suggest that food in New Orleans is more than just sustenance; it serves as a cultural ambassador, connecting the city to the world with its unique flavors and vibrant food culture.

Halloween:

The “Halloween” cluster captures the unique spirit of Halloween in New Orleans. The images show a variety of Halloween decorations, from elaborately decorated homes and creative yard displays to people in ghostly costumes, reflecting the city’s deep-rooted traditions and enthusiastic embrace of this spooky season. This cluster shows that New Orleans

loves creativity and community spirit, especially during Halloween. The detailed decorations and costumes highlight the city's flair for theatricality and celebration. The widespread participation in Halloween festivities indicates a strong sense of community and shared cultural practices, where residents come together to create a festive atmosphere. This reflects New Orleans' identity as a city that values tradition, creativity, and communal engagement, making it a vibrant and culturally rich place. Additionally, it underscores the deep-rooted spiritual and voodoo history that is an integral part of New Orleans' culture.

Colorful Houses:

The "Colorful Houses" cluster presents joyful images showcasing the architectural charm and festive spirit of the city's neighborhoods. These photos highlight brightly painted houses adorned with intricate decorations, especially during festive seasons like Halloween and Christmas. One theory suggests that these houses were influenced by the Caribbean heritage of early New Orleans residents or by the vibrant colors and decorations from Mardi Gras festivities and traditions.

This cluster presents that New Orleans values aesthetic vibrancy and architectural diversity. The colorful houses reflect the city's rich history and cultural diversity, while the elaborate decorations during festive seasons underscore the importance of community celebrations. Decorating homes suggests strong neighborhood pride and social cohesion. This shows an urban identity deeply connected to its architectural heritage and communal traditions, making New Orleans a visually enchanting and culturally dynamic city.

Cats in the City:

The "Cats in the City" cluster offers charming insights into the lives of cats in New Orleans' urban landscape. The images capture various scenes of cats interacting with their surroundings, highlighting their role in the city's social and cultural fabric. From lounging on porches and exploring gardens to observing passersby from windowsills and cozying up in local shops, these photos show how cats are integrated into daily life in New Orleans' neighborhoods.

This cluster shows that New Orleans values the presence and companionship of animals in its urban fabric. The integration of cats into various urban settings reflects a sense of community and warmth, where pets are seen as an integral part of daily life. The architectural features that provide ideal habitats for cats highlight the city's attention to creating a livable and inclusive environment. This suggests that New Orleans embraces a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere, cherishing the relationship between humans and animals.

Carnival Celebrations and Parades:

The “Carnival Celebrations and Parades” cluster captures the festive spirit of one of New Orleans’ most iconic events. The images depict dazzling costumes, parades, and public communal festivities that define the Carnival season, showcasing the city’s rich cultural heritage and communal joy. The flow of visitors highlights the event’s importance as a driver of cultural tourism and economic activity. Additionally, the preparation and execution of Carnival involve many local artisans, musicians, and performers, contributing to the city’s creative economy and cultural vitality.

This cluster verifies that New Orleans is renowned for its festive spirit, particularly during Carnival. The elaborate costumes and parades reflect the city’s creativity, cultural pride, and historical depth. The participatory nature of Carnival highlights the strong sense of community and inclusivity, where people from diverse backgrounds come together to celebrate. This reflects New Orleans’ identity as a cultural hub with a vibrant tradition of public celebration and communal joy.

Fireworks:

The “Fireworks and Disney Magic” cluster showcases visually striking fireworks displays, capturing the enchanting atmosphere of Disney-themed events. These images illustrate the grandeur and spectacle of fireworks, creating memorable experiences for audiences of all ages.

This cluster presents that New Orleans values grand celebrations and creating memorable experiences through spectacular displays. The integration of fireworks into public events reflects the city’s dedication to creating magical and immersive experiences for residents and visitors. The connection to Disney-themed events suggests a combination of local tradition and global influences, highlighting New Orleans’ ability to incorporate elements of popular culture into its festive landscape. This underscores the city’s identity as a place where imagination and celebration are central to its cultural fabric.

Disney Inspired:

The “Disney-Inspired” cluster showcases images evoking the whimsical and magical qualities of Disney’s architectural designs. The centerpiece is the St. Louis Cathedral, whose towering spires and ornate details resemble Disney castles logo and trademark.

New Orleans embraces enchantment and historical grandeur in its architectural identity. The resemblance of the St. Louis Cathedral to Disney castles highlights the city's ability to evoke a fairytale-like atmosphere, blending real-world architecture with fantasy elements. The photographs capture the cathedral from various perspectives and lighting conditions, showcasing its versatility as an architectural symbol. Whether bathed in golden light, illuminated against a twilight sky, or framed by vibrant colors, the cathedral maintains its

enchanting presence. The inclusion of colorful light installations and misty river scenes complements the fairytale theme, enhancing the cluster's magical atmosphere. These elements provide a sense of escapism, offering residents and visitors a retreat into a world of imagination and wonder.

This suggests that New Orleans values its historical heritage and the ability to inspire wonder and imagination, making it a city that captivates and enchants both residents and visitors. The city's architectural aesthetics reflect a mix of tradition, creativity, and cultural storytelling.

Music Festivals and Jazz:

The "Music Festivals and Jazz" cluster captures New Orleans' rich musical heritage and vibrant festival culture. The photos depict scenes from various music festivals, especially the renowned New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, showcasing large crowds, lively performances, and the communal spirit that defines these events.

This cluster shows that New Orleans is deeply rooted in its musical traditions, particularly jazz, which is central to its cultural identity. The images reflect the city's reputation as a global hub for music lovers, where festivals are celebrated enthusiastically and serve as significant social gatherings. The large, diverse crowds and various stages and performers highlight the inclusive and celebratory nature of these festivals. This suggests that New Orleans values its musical heritage and uses it to bring people together, fostering community and shared cultural appreciation. The cluster emphasizes the importance of music festivals as cultural landmarks in New Orleans. The Jazz Fest, in particular, is an international attraction that draws visitors worldwide, showcasing the city's cultural vitality and its role in the global music scene.

Conclusion

Through this image cluster analysis, it is evident that each city has its own unique identity. The research aimed to identify and showcase the specific elements and content themes that define and highlight each city's distinct identity. Comparative research between the cities was unnecessary because each one portrays a different identity and offers visitors a unique experience.

Tokyo emerges as a city of the future, yet deeply respects the tradition, spirituality, and history of Japan. Athens, on the other hand, is a historic city that has preserved its character over time. Its culture is intricately linked with food and exudes a relaxed and relatable vibe. Lastly, New Orleans stands out as a city of color, with a fairytale-like scenery influenced by diverse cultures and immigrants, and a long history of music and spirituality.

These identities are clearly reflected in the Instagram pages of each city's DMO

(Destination Marketing Organization) accounts. The images realistically and vividly convey the true character of each city when carefully observed. These DMO accounts promote their cities through iconic imagery that effectively illustrates the unique essence of each location.

APPENDIX B

Declaration Page: Use of Generative AI Tools in Thesis

Student Information

Name: Papantonaki Evangelia

Student ID: 708309

Course Name: Master Thesis CM5000

Supervisor Name: Dr. Charlotte Bruns

Date: 26.06.2024

Declaration:

Acknowledgment of Generative AI Tools

I acknowledge that I am aware of the existence and functionality of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, which are capable of producing content such as text, images, and other creative works autonomously.

GenAI use would include, but not limited to:

- Generated content (e.g., ChatGPT, Quillbot) limited strictly to content that is not assessed (e.g., thesis title).
- ~~Writing improvements, including~~ grammar and spelling corrections (e.g., Grammarly)
- Language translation (e.g., DeepL), without generative AI alterations/improvements.
- Research task assistance (e.g., finding survey scales, qualitative coding verification, debugging code)
- Using GenAI as a search engine tool to find academic articles or books

I declare that I have used generative AI tools, specifically the basic version of Grammarly, the basic version ChatGPT (3.5), in the process of creating parts or components of my thesis. The purpose of using these tools was to aid in generating content or assisting with specific aspects of thesis work.

Extent of AI Usage

I confirm that while I utilized generative AI tools to aid in content creation, the majority of the intellectual effort, creative input, and decision-making involved in completing the thesis were undertaken by me. I have enclosed the prompts/logging of the GenAI tool use in an appendix.

Ethical and Academic Integrity

I understand the ethical implications and academic integrity concerns related to the use of AI tools in coursework. I assure that the AI-generated content was used responsibly, and any

these tools has been appropriately cited and attributed according to the guidelines provided by the instructor and the course. I have taken necessary steps to distinguish between my original work and the AI-generated contributions. Any direct quotations, paraphrased content, or other forms of AI-generated material have been properly referenced in accordance with academic conventions.
content derived from

Used AI prompts:

-Use of Grammarly basic version for grammar, syntax and lexical mistakes.

-Synonyms or another word for saying...,to avoid repetition of the constant use of the same wording, pasting my own word and lexical choices (e.g.: synonyms for words: enhance, urban, utilize, use, present, illustrate, vivid, lively, use, create, present, enrich, analyze, furthermore, etc).

Note: I never copied content out of ChatGPT or any other AI tool.

-Use of AI for further explanation and simplification of complex concepts and theories from scientific articles, it was used only for further understanding and comprehension for personal cognitive reasons in very specific parts (e.g.: explain in a more simple and comprehensive way impression management of Erving Goffman, explain in more simple and comprehensive way George Herbert Mead's gesture theory, etc).

- Check the APA 7 referencing... (specific parts, not my whole thesis references).

By signing this declaration, I affirm that this declaration is accurate and truthful. I take full responsibility for the integrity of my assignment and am prepared to discuss and explain the role of generative AI tools in my creative process if required by the instructor or the Examination Board. I further affirm that I have used generative AI tools in accordance with ethical standards and academic integrity expectations.

E.Papantonaki

Signature: Evangelia Papantonaki

Date of Signature: 26.06.2024