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# Perception of city management, fellow residents, and Perceived External Prestige (PEP) as antecedents of city affective commitment - The city marketing perspective

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## ABSTRACT

This study analyses the role of perception of city management, perception of fellow residents, and Perceived External Prestige (PEP) on affective commitment from the city marketing perspective. The research model is tested based on the data collected on the residents of two different cities, on residents (N = 402) of Ljubljana – Green capital of Europe, 2016, and (N = 403) of Maribor – Capital of Culture, 2012. The results showed that both Perceived External Prestige and perception of fellow residents were significant drivers of city commitment. Perception of city management had a significant effect on Perceived External Prestige and perception of fellow residents, although no significant direct effect on city commitment. The results revealed that Perceived External Prestige and perception of fellow residents mediate the relationship between perception of city management and affective commitment fully. The study recognises the relationships between analysed variables, and confirms their crucial role as drivers of the residents' city commitment.

## 1. Introduction

Although there are several studies regarding city marketing and its aspects, most of the studies focus on tourists and other external stakeholders, and only a few of them take into consideration city residents. In fact, according to Braun, Kavaratzis, and Zenker (2013), residents are the most neglected target group in place branding and marketing theory. Residents, however, through their expressed characteristics and behaviour, have great importance on the acceptance and perception of place brand (Braun et al., 2013), place development projects, and appear as vital participants in the place marketing process (Zenker & Seigis, 2012). City managers should, therefore, seek to establish closer links between residents and the city by developing the residents' commitment to the city and maintaining their successful long-term relationship (Belanche, Casaló, & Orús, 2016).

The most important aim of any city marketing strategy is defining factors that affect residents' affective commitment to the city in which they live (Hoornweg et al., 2006). Residents with high city commitment will not exit their relationship with the place when problems arise, and will make long-term plans to stay in the city (Zenker & Petersen, 2014), and place marketers will aim to mobilise civic pride (Braun et al., 2013) and more positive attitude to city management decisions easily.

Residents can meet the expectations of visitors, tourists and investors, and become living ambassadors of their city (Anholt, 2007) only when they feel a connection with the city and are committed to the city affectively.

Unfortunately, to date, the question of how different factors influence residents' commitment to the city remains open. There have been some studies dealing theoretically with conceptualisation of place satisfaction for city residents (Insch & Florek, 2008), or place attachment and loyalty (Florek, 2011), city identification and commitment (Zenker & Petersen, 2014), or have dealt empirically with the commitment in the context of the city branding (Braun et al., 2013; Zenker, Braun, & Petersen, 2017), also analysing the correlations between citizen satisfaction, place brand attitude, place attachment and positive citizenship behaviour (Zenker & Rütter, 2014). However, despite the increased research attention focused on city marketing, little is known regarding the predictors of city commitment (Zenker and Petersen (2014), and academic research on resident city commitment is still scarce. As noted by McCunn and Gifford (2014), understanding more about the antecedents and outcomes of commitment may help planners prioritise ideas and projects to enhance residents' engagement and suggest how resources should be allocated.

To contribute to the knowledge on city marketing, the aim of this

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paper is, based on a survey conducted on two independent representative samples of the residents of the two major cities in Slovenia, to explore how the perception of the city management, the perception of the fellow residents, and Perceived External Prestige of the city influences residents' affective commitment to the city. According to our preliminary survey of relevant literature, none of these relations in the context of city marketing has been explored empirically also, although these variables, in theory, appear implicitly as one of the decisive factors for building city commitment.

This paper is structured as follows. The first section reviews the current literature on residents' city commitment, followed by a literature review on the importance of perception of city management, as well as the fellow residents of the city, and Perceived External Prestige. The paper then presents the conceptual model and hypotheses, the methodology used in the empirical study and, finally, the results and discussion, by addressing some limitations and suggesting some directions for further research.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Affective commitment

Several authors consider commitment to the place as an important construct, as a type of relationship a person has with the place (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; Lalli, 1992; Scannell & Gifford, 2010), as a certain stage in the person-place bonding (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Relph, 1976; Shamai, 1991), or as a consequence in the cause-dependence process influenced by the identification (Udir Mišič & Podnar, 2016; Zenker & Petersen, 2014). It is a part of individual urban identity, perceived as the significance of the city for a person's future relationship with the city (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; Lalli, 1992). For Burke and Reitzes (1991), commitment refers to the sum of the forces, pressures, or drives that influence people to maintain congruity between their identity setting and the input of reflected appraisals from the social setting. Zenker and Petersen (2014), understand commitment as a psychological ownership extended to the intention to stay in a city and to make long-term plans such as buying a house, etc., which, in turn, should lead to even more commitment. The most used definition of commitment in general comes from the organisational field (see Allen & Meyer, 1990), where commitment indicates the strength of people's ties with that particular group (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002) and it is characterised by “a person's (a) Belief in and acceptance of the organisation's goals and values, (b) Willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organisation, and (c) Desire to maintain membership” (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 20). As such, city affective commitment refers to an individual's willingness and strong desire to devote effort in a relationship with the city he/she lives in, to stay in a (pseudo) relationship with it. Residents who feel strong affective commitment continue living in the city because they want, wish and love to do so. Zenker and Petersen (2014) also argue that individuals with affective city commitment will have positive spontaneous behaviour that goes beyond duties and positive word-of-mouth opinions, and can be completed in resident activity as ambassadors for the city who are naturally considered informal, authentic, and insider sources of information about the place.

A high level of affective commitment is reflected in the participation of the individual in the activities and in their relations with other people (Burke & Reitzes, 1991), in satisfaction, prosocial behaviours, turnover, productivity, sportsmanship and civic virtue (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000), as well as altruism and compliance (Carmeli, 2005). Affective commitment tends to be stronger in more positively evaluated groups (because these groups may contribute more to a positive social identity), while people are inclined to distance themselves from less attractive groups (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999). Ellemers et al. (2002) also claim that, for those with low commitment, inclusion in the group may be threatening, whereas the possibility of exclusion from the

group or category can be a source of threat when commitment is high.

A high level of affective commitment can, therefore, be seen in a strong belief in common goals, values, in willingness to try more for the good of the city, and in a clearly expressed desire to maintain or stay in the city in which they live. If a resident's evaluation of the city in which they live improves continuously and there are no intervening life events, a resident's commitment to the city is expected to grow (Insch & Florek, 2008). Their ability of and willingness to address local problems are influenced by their affective commitment to their places (Manzo & Perkins, 2006).

Among various elements of the place (Udir Mišič & Podnar, 2016; Zenker et al., 2017), some of the more important ones are also the perception of city management by residents, Perceived External Prestige and perception of fellow residents. It is essential for those working in city management and planning to understand better those emotional connections to place, how they are fostered, and how they might lead to action and effective participatory planning processes (Manzo & Perkins, 2006).

### 2.2. City management and its perception

In general, local government has been recognised as being the most important authority in establishing numerous city development policies. However, in the process of efficient and strategic positioning of urban project and services, agreement and assistance of local people is needed and cannot be taken for granted (Braun et al., 2013). Positive residents' perception of city management work and decisions can also result in positive attitude and commitment towards the city, which is also extremely important for city management and their future work.

City management work and decisions can be perceived by residents through different factors, and can, consequently, also affect their attitude towards the city. One of them is environment that, when by appearing unsafe, unpleasant, non-profitable due to chaotic planning and lack of order or an unpleasant social mix, reduces identification with the place by increasing the residents feeling of uncertainty (Zenker & Petersen, 2014). On the contrary, a clear image of the city can enable residents to feel comfortable, secure and emotionally involved and committed with that city (Casakin, Hernández, & Ruiz, 2015). Also, Hubbard (1995), acknowledges the environmental quality aesthetic improvement as one of the strategies used by urban governors for improving the activities in urban areas, for making the city more attractive and friendly to potential investors, new industries, government investment, and the newly affluent.

Financial and fiscal incentives offered by central government and policies pursued by local development agencies and government incentives also affect increased commitment (Freeman, Giroud, Kalfadellis, & Ghauri, 2012). Measures taken by government that cover and manage the basic actions (e.g. funding, financing, facilitating and legislation of the programming) of the city that occur on different city functional systems (health, education, culture, Information Technology, infrastructure ...) (Udir Mišič & Podnar, 2016), affect local urban development, as well as different neighbourhood communities (Van den Berg & Braun, 1999) and their commitment to the place.

There is also the political nature of places, that shapes the ways how socially constructed identities influence individual relationships to place (Manzo, 2005). These dimensions of identity go beyond individual characteristics; they are part of a larger socio-political reality that affects the lives of people, and also their perceptions of the city (Manzo, 2005). Local political satisfaction, which includes both the delivery of services and the responsiveness of government, is, according to Fried (2000), one of four distinctive community satisfaction factors.

Because of the complexity, dynamic and diversity of present society, and due to the influence of the above-mentioned factors, city management is not just a matter of formal public administration. Its perception has a strong influence on residents' city commitment, Perceived External Prestige and, most important, on interaction processes

between the public, private target groups and individuals involved (Van den Berg & Braun, 1999). The way top executive leadership in organisations acts is complex and vital in representing their organisations, in taking crucial strategic decisions, allocating resources, and shaping the communication climate and culture of organisations, and, therefore, linked closely to organisational performance, reputation (Meng & Berger, 2013) and commitment. So, we presume city management have the same role in city concerns. City management as elected by the residents, with their decisions taken, their communication, overall atmosphere and attitude, influences not only public (residents') reaction, but also the overall atmosphere and climate in the city, relationships between people (Van den Berg & Braun, 1999), residents' attitude and commitment towards the city, their loyalty.

Public managers should, therefore, seek to establish closer links between residents and the city to maintain their successful, long-term relationship (Belanche et al., 2016). Thus we hypothesise:

**H1.** The more that residents perceive city management positively, the greater will be the affective commitment.

### 2.3. Perceived external prestige

Perceived External Prestige is a construct that has become the centre of many authors in the field of Organisation (Carmeli, Gilat, & Weisberg, 2006; Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994; Podnar, 2015), however, in the field of Place Marketing, the main attention is currently focused on the concept of image and reputation, while the concept of Perceived External Prestige still remains under-researched. Dutton et al. (1994), Carmeli (2005), Carmeli et al. (2006), distinguish between two different uses of the term image, one focusing on the beliefs that outside members have of the organisation, defined as organisational reputation, and the other focusing on the beliefs that refer to inside members, defined as Construed External Image. If reputation is defined as the overall assessment of an organisation's current assets, position and future behaviour, and refers to outsiders' beliefs and views about the organisation (Carmeli, 2005), then the Perceived External Prestige (Smidts, Pruyn, & van Riel, 2001), or Construed External Image (Dutton et al., 1994), is concerned with an internal stakeholders, that is employee's assessment, and their belief about how other people outside the organisation, such as customers, competitors and suppliers, judge or evaluate the status and prestige of the organisation. The beliefs of outsiders' actual perceptions (reputation), and insiders about perceptions of other people outside the organisation (PEP) may differ, because they share diverse sources of information (Carmeli, 2005). Perceived External Prestige acts as a potentially powerful mirror, reflecting back to the members how the organisation and the behaviour of its members are likely to be seen by outsiders (Dutton et al., 1994).

When members perceive External Prestige of their group as attractive - meaning that they believe the group has elements that others are likely to value, then organisational affiliation creates a positive social identity that increases the level of overlap between how a member defines him- or herself and the organisation (Dutton et al., 1994). People, namely, classify themselves and others into various social categories, defined by prototypical characteristics abstracted from the members. This social classification enables the individual who perceives him- or herself as psychologically intertwined with the fate of the group, to locate or define him- or herself in the social environment. By being part of that group, the individuals support the institutions, embodying those identities which also affect group integration, cooperation, and loyalty, pride to be in the group and be part of its activities (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

Several authors (e.g. Herrbach & Mignonac, 2004), have demonstrated the significant positive effect of PEP on affective organisational commitment. According to Meng and Berger (2013), the top executive leaders have big responsibility by managing the organisation, dealing with organisational performance, facilitating effective internal

communication, and therefore, consequently, influencing the representation, reputation (Meng & Berger, 2013) and Perceived External Prestige of their organisations. There is also the prestige of nations, countries which has a direct impact on personal prestige (Anholt, 2010) and neighbourhoods, the reputation of which influences the behaviour of residents, who adjust their social actions with the area's reputation (Kullberg, Timpka, Svensson, Karlsson, & Lindqvist, 2010). According to Kullberg et al. (2010), residents' perception of an area's reputation is associated strongly with environmental wellbeing, and also to their relationship and commitment to the city.

The ways in which the Perceived External Prestige of the organisation can influence the employees may be similar to how Perceived External Prestige of the city influences city's residents. With the decisions taken, city management also influences city reputation, and also the residents believe about how other people outside the city such as tourists, investors, residents from other cities, judge or evaluate the status and prestige of the city. The perception of city management and their influence is, therefore, fundamental for understanding the Perceived External Prestige and, consequently, the residents relationship and commitment to the city.

Consequently, we can assume:

**H2a.** The more positively that residents perceive city management, the greater will be the Perceived External Prestige.

**H2b.** The higher the Perceived External Prestige, the greater the affective commitment.

### 2.4. Perception of fellow residents

Residents are one of the primary elements of the various marketing and tourism constructs (Udir Mišič & Podnar, 2016; Wall & Mathieson, 2006; Zenker et al., 2017; Zenker & Petersen, 2014) defined as essential for building, creating and maintaining the sustainable development of a city as a target group or as a product of the place (Zenker et al., 2017), benefitting from positive developments of the city, or perceiving the negative social and environmental effects (Sharpley, 2014). However, local residents are still underrepresented in the existing literature of place. Tourism research has, namely, devoted considerably more attention to residents' attitudes towards tourists (as individuals) and tourism planning (Zenker et al., 2017), and neglected the role of residents (Braun et al., 2013) and relations between residents in the legitimization of place planning and development in general.

However, the aim of tourism marketing and place marketing should not only be to attract tourists and new residents, but also to strengthen the current residents' commitment with the place and, thereby, transform them into authentic place ambassadors (Braun et al., 2013), retaining them in the city they live in (Zenker et al., 2017). To become good ambassadors of the city, people must first connect with the city emotionally. They must have a positive perception of the city, not only in the physical, but also within the social dimension, which is also influenced by the positive perception of their fellow residents, their characteristics and relations between them, and also to others. Residents and their interactions with each other and with outsiders, namely, form the social milieu of a given place (Braun et al., 2013) and the perceived degree of friendliness in local peoples' attitudes (people ready to help others, talkative and family oriented ...) is the main characteristic that influences the perception of local people positively (Freire, 2009). Belanche et al. (2016) also claim that residents' demographic characteristic may affect both city attachment and the use of urban services.

However, local people as a factor, according to Freire (2009) has a mixed nature; it is partly nonmanageable, as they are linked intimately to the local culture, and partly manageable by local managers and entrepreneurs as a consequence of certain work practices. City management can affect the residents intentionally, as well as unintentionally

with their decision-making process, through their communication, overall attitude and political climate (Braun et al., 2013), and, therefore, through the perception of their activities by the residents, they are thus affecting the interaction among residents and the perception of fellow residents in the city. Better quality of urban services relates closely to more satisfaction with city management, better quality of life in the city (Belanche et al., 2016) and contributes to a better relationship between residents. Emotional bonds may vary among people and become stronger when people feel comfortable and safe (Hernández, Hidalgo, Salazar-Laplace, & Hess, 2007). The positive perception of city management work is, therefore, an important step for further integration of residents in the process (Braun et al., 2013) and positive perception of fellow residents, which is also reflected in local people's active integration in different city communities, and values such as pride in their compatriots, friendliness, solidarity, sense of security. This leads to the following hypothesis:

**H3a.** The more positively that residents perceive city management, the more positive will be the perception of fellow residents.

The perceptions of characteristics which people bring to places, the structure of their relationships (among local people and also to outsiders), the experiences people have with places, and a strong inter-relationship between the consumers (tourists) and the local inhabitants (Freire, 2009) have, therefore, great importance and influence on place commitment (Cuba & Hummon, 1993). Strongly involved, committed residents will demonstrate positive behaviour beyond expectations, and more sense of responsibility for development, management of the city (Braun et al., 2013).

On the basis of the above, we can conclude:

**H3b.** The more positively that residents perceive fellow residents, the greater will be the perceived affective commitment.

To sum up, our conceptual framework, as illustrated in Model 1, employs the perception of city management, Perceived External Prestige of the city, and perception of fellow residents of the city as highlighted by the literature as antecedents of residents' city commitment.

### 3. Research methodology

#### 3.1. Sample and data collection procedure

For our research purpose, the survey was conducted on two independent representative samples of respondents in the two biggest cities in Slovenia (Maribor and Ljubljana) in the form of a telephone survey - CATI method. Maribor is the second biggest city in Slovenia, and it was European Capital of Culture in 2012. Ljubljana is the capital and biggest city in Slovenia, and it was Green Capital of Europe in 2016.

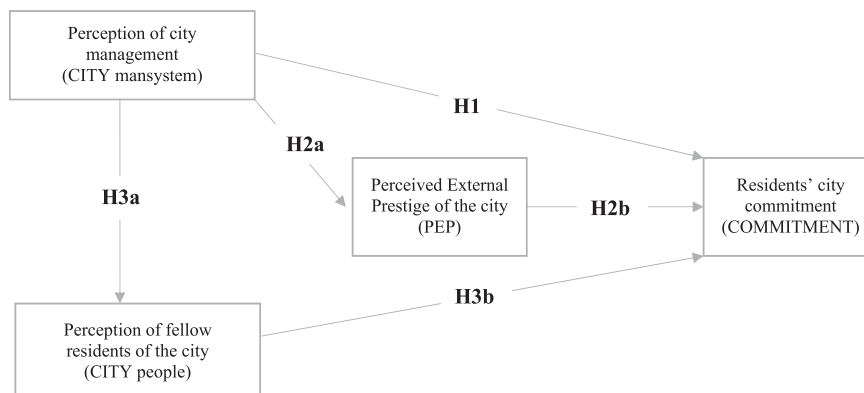
In both cases, the structure of the sample was controlled by quotas (gender and age) regarding the actual status of the population in the Municipality of Ljubljana and Municipality of Maribor by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (2013). In the case of Ljubljana, the survey was conducted on 402 respondents; 191 (47.5%) men and 211 (52.5%) women participated in the structure sample. In the age structure, there is a dominated generation between 20 and 79 years, where age classes are represented about equally. In the case of Maribor, the survey was conducted on 403 respondents; 196 (48.6%) men and 207 (51.4%) women. In both cases, the age and gender structure of structured patterns correspond to the age and gender structure of the population of the cities of Ljubljana and Maribor. In the age structure, there is dominated generation between 20 and 79 years, where age classes are represented about equally.

#### 3.2. Measures

A structured questionnaire is utilised and all constructs in the research model are measured using multi-item scales. Scale items in the questionnaire are measured with a 5-point Likert scale (anchored by 1 = Strongly disagree and 5 = Strongly agree with the option). All measured variables are reflective. For measuring residents' affective city commitment, we consider and adapt the measuring instrument for affective organisational commitment developed by Allen and Meyer (1990). To capture Perceived External Prestige of the city, three items were included in the questionnaire, based on the adopted measurement instrument for PEP constructed by Mael and Ashforth (1992). Measurement scales for the perception of the city management, and the individual perception of the fellow residents of the city were taken from Udir Mišič and Podnar's (2016) instrument. All adapted indicators of individual variables were reviewed further by four independent researchers. From the initial list, which consisted of several indicators, we eliminated inappropriate ones (vague, ambiguous, and repetitive) to get the optimal list of indicators by which we measured all variables discussed in the paper.

Because our main focus is on the theory development rather than on the theory confirmation, and our aim is to examine simultaneously the structural components of both the measurement and causal models for our conceptual model, the present study employed Partial Least Squares – Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) by using SMART PLS 3.0 software to analyse the collected data and to examine the hypothetical framework. This approach allows us to evaluate the relationships between constructs and, for this purpose, both the PLS-SEM algorithm and bootstrapping are performed, in order to assess the measurement, as well as the structural model. In particular, PLS is “suitable for data analysis during the early stage of theory development” (Tsang, 2002, p. 841).

In our initial stage of analysis, all measured indicators of our



Model 1. Conceptual framework diagram.

variables are included in the model. After performing initial PLS-SEM analysis to test the adequacy of our measurement model and control, whether each of the measurement items would load significantly onto their respective scales, the final model is decided after dropping out insignificant indicators that had factor loadings of less than 0.7. As suggested by Nunnally (1976), items with low loadings should be reviewed and dropped, since they would add very little explanatory power to the model and, therefore, bias the estimates of the parameters linking the latent variables (Aibinu & Al-Lawati, 2010). For each of the measured variables we were following a suggestion by Bagozzi and Heatherton (1988) that measurement models with 3 to 5 indicators per latent construct are ideal for SEM models.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Reliability & validity of the proposed measurement models

The first step in the PLS analysis is the evaluation of the measurement model. After we have examined the loadings of respective indicators on their respective latent constructs, and all the indicators in the final model had item loading greater than 0.7 (see Chin, 1998), the reliability of each variable is assessed through Fornell and Larcker's (1981) measure of composite reliability. In this study, the composite factor reliability coefficients of the constructs ranged from 0.777 to 0.928 in the first study and 0.819 to 0.922, which is, in both cases, well above the 0.7 threshold. Although composite reliability measure in PLS is preferred over Cronbach's alpha (see Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006), we also calculate Cronbach's Alpha coefficients. Each indicator has an around or greater than 0.57 threshold coefficient value, despite the fact that, in most cases, we only had 3 items per construct (see Tables 1a, 1b). Based on these results, we can conclude that the research model is considered to be sufficiently reliable.

In terms of assessing the convergent validity, all items loaded significantly, and their respective latent variable and bootstrapping analysis of 5000 subsamples revealed that the standardised loadings exceeded 0.60 and were highly significant ( $p < .001$ ). As suggested by the literature, the estimates of AVEs exceeded 0.50 for all of the latent variables and, as such, met the criterion set by Fornell and Larcker (1981), which says that at least 50% of measurement variance should be captured by the construct.

Discriminant validity was confirmed for all latent constructs. The square root of each construct's AVE is greater than the bivariate correlation with the other constructs in the model. In addition, factor loading and cross loading matrix are also examined, with each item having the strongest loading on its associated latent variable. In addition, we have performed the most rigorous new SmartPLS Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) test for assessing the discriminant validity (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015), and all the values in both samples were well above the suggested threshold 0.85 criteria. HTMT inference results, obtained by the bootstrapping routine, indicate that, with all

variables, the upper confidence interval (97,5) limit is below the 1 value, which means that all HTMT values are significantly different than 1, and that discriminant validity has been established (see Table 2).

Based on the aforementioned results, we can conclude that the convergent and discriminant validity of the model on two different samples are sufficient, and that the measurement models demonstrate the sufficient robustness needed to test the relationship among the predicted variables in our models.

### 4.2. Structural model analysis

After the measurement was tested, the structural model was tested using the PLS-SEM algorithm function. The structural model in PLS-SEM is usually assessed by looking at the explanatory power of the structural model and the path coefficients, because there are no adequate single model fit assessment criteria. SmartPLS uses the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) as an approximate model fit criteria, which helps in answering the question how substantial is the discrepancy between the model-implied correlation matrix and the empirical one (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016), but this measure has to be used with caution. In both of our samples, SRMR value is below the 0.08 suggested threshold, indicating an adequate fit for PLS path models.

After we examine the structural model for collinearity and the obtained VIF test reveals that all values are well below the (3.3) threshold, blindfolding (Q2) is used to evaluate the model's predictive relevance for each of the endogenous constructs. Running the blindfolding procedure with an omission distance of seven yielded cross-validated redundancy values for both endogenous constructs larger than zero (providing support for the model's predictive relevance). Results show that city commitment, the primary outcome measure of the model, has moderate  $R^2$  value in both samples; for Ljubljana  $R^2 = 0.349$  and Maribor  $R^2 = 0.352$ , which means that more than 34% of the changes in the city commitment were due to our 3 variables in the model. Prediction of Perceived External Prestige (Ljubljana  $R^2 = 0.160$ ; Maribor  $R^2 = 0.175$ ) and perception of fellow residents (Ljubljana  $R^2 = 0.164$ ; Maribor  $R^2 = 0.153$ ) is weak in both cases, but, considering the multitude of potential antecedents of both variables, still satisfactory.

In order to test our hypotheses we examine the size, statistical significance and sign of the coefficients ( $\beta$ ) between each latent variable and the dependent variable. We were using the bootstrapping function of the SmartPLS with 5000 resamples for checking the significance of the t value for path coefficients. The hypotheses are considered supported based on the conventional significance level of 0.05.

As illustrated in Table 3 and Fig. 1, all of the path coefficients, with the exception of the path leading from perception of city management to city commitment, were significant, with an associated p value lower than 0.05. Results in both samples show the important role of Perceived

**Table 1a**  
PLS reliability and validity statistics.<sup>a</sup>

	<sup>b</sup>	CR	AVE	R square	Cronbach's alpha	CITYmansystem	CITYpeople	PEP	COMMITMENT	Inner VIF commitment	Inner VIF CITYpeople	Inner VIF PEP
CITYmansystem	L	0.832	0.622		0.700	<b>0.789</b>				1.292	1.000	1.000
	M	0.853	0.660		0.743	<b>0.812</b>				1.299	1.000	1.000
CITYpeople	L	0.777	0.538	0.164	0.570	0.405	<b>0.733</b>			1.335		
	M	0.819	0.601	0.153	0.669	0.391	<b>0.775</b>			1.313		
PEP	L	0.786	0.552	0.160	0.595	0.400	0.432	<b>0.743</b>		1.329		
	M	0.844	0.644	0.175	0.726	0.419	0.429	<b>0.803</b>		1.348		
COMMITMENT	L	0.928	0.762	0.349	0.896	0.391	0.472	0.501	<b>0.873</b>			
	M	0.922	0.748	0.352	0.887	0.293	0.436	0.550	<b>0.865</b>			

<sup>a</sup> Square root of AVE on diagonal.

<sup>b</sup> Meaning of the Abbreviations used in Table 1a: L – City of Ljubljana, M – City of Maribor.

**Table 1b**  
PLS reliability and validity statistics/cross loading analysis.

	<sup>a</sup>	CITYmansystem	CITYpeople	PEP	COMMITMENT	Outer VIF
<i>Perception of city management (CITYmansystem)</i>						
CITYmansystem (1)/City management encourages diverse cultural and artistic activities.	L	<b>0.819</b>	0.408	0.351	0.331	1.323
	M	<b>0.804</b>	0.329	0.357	0.248	1.400
CITYmansystem (2)/City management includes and takes into account various disciplines regarding the development of the city.	L	<b>0.781</b>	0.294	0.293	0.298	1.388
	M	<b>0.824</b>	0.314	0.364	0.258	1.508
CITYmansystem (3)/The city management has a clearly defined vision.	L	<b>0.765</b>	0.232	0.295	0.293	1.386
	M	<b>0.809</b>	0.309	0.292	0.205	1.559
<i>Perception of fellow residents of the city (CITY people)</i>						
CITYpeople (1)/City residents are proud of their compatriots (inventors, scientists and experts) who live in the city where I live.	L	0.259	<b>0.721</b>	0.307	0.362	1.163
	M	0.271	<b>0.751</b>	0.293	0.306	1.301
CITYpeople (2)/Residents in the city where I live, feel safe.	L	0.309	<b>0.739</b>	0.362	0.349	1.166
CITYpeople (2)/In the city where I live, people show solidarity to each other.	M	0.330	<b>0.771</b>	0.325	0.310	1.290
CITYpeople (3)/Residents of the city are in favour of and friendly to tourists.	L	0.321	<b>0.740</b>	0.282	0.328	1.177
	M	0.307	<b>0.803</b>	0.373	0.391	1.312
<i>Perceived External Prestige (PEP)</i>						
PEP (1)/The city in which I live, is considered reputable.	L	0.269	0.254	<b>0.646</b>	0.269	1.147
PEP (1)/People who are not residents of the city think highly of the city in which I live.	M	0.234	0.360	<b>0.724</b>	0.365	1.338
PEP (2)/It is believed that it is good to live in the city where I live.	L	0.307	0.325	<b>0.781</b>	0.427	1.215
	M	0.363	0.362	<b>0.833</b>	0.487	1.468
PEP (3)/It is believed that the city in which I live is one of the most prestigious in the country.	L	0.316	0.375	<b>0.794</b>	0.402	1.262
	M	0.389	0.322	<b>0.846</b>	0.462	1.539
<i>Residents' city commitment (affective commitment)</i>						
Commitment (1)/I would like to continue to live in the city where I live now because it makes me feel good.	L	0.342	0.429	0.481	<b>0.899</b>	2.879
	M	0.339	0.436	0.498	<b>0.881</b>	2.460
Commitment (2)/In the city where I live, I will continue to live, because I love my city.	L	0.382	0.421	0.501	<b>0.891</b>	2.697
	M	0.221	0.420	0.435	<b>0.869</b>	2.417
Commitment (3)/In the city where I live, I will continue to live, because this is the best place for me and my family.	L	0.315	0.346	0.357	<b>0.846</b>	2.287
	M	0.186	0.292	0.481	<b>0.837</b>	2.078
Commitment (4)/I wish to continue to live in this city because I enjoy it.	L	0.321	0.444	0.393	<b>0.854</b>	2.252
	M	0.258	0.353	0.489	<b>0.871</b>	2.403

The text marked as bold are variables and regular text under the variable (3 or 4 lines of text) indicates the measurement instrument that applies to a specific variable.

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of the Abbreviations used in Table 1b: L – City of Ljubljana, M – City of Maribor.

**Table 2**  
Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio HTMT.

	<sup>a</sup>	CITYmansystem	CITYpeople	PEP	COMMITMENT
CITYmansystem	L			0.613	0.489
	M			0.553	0.355
CITYpeople	L	0.623		0.733	0.657
	M	0.552		0.617	0.559
PEP	L				
	M				
COMMITMENT	L			0.666	
	M			0.678	

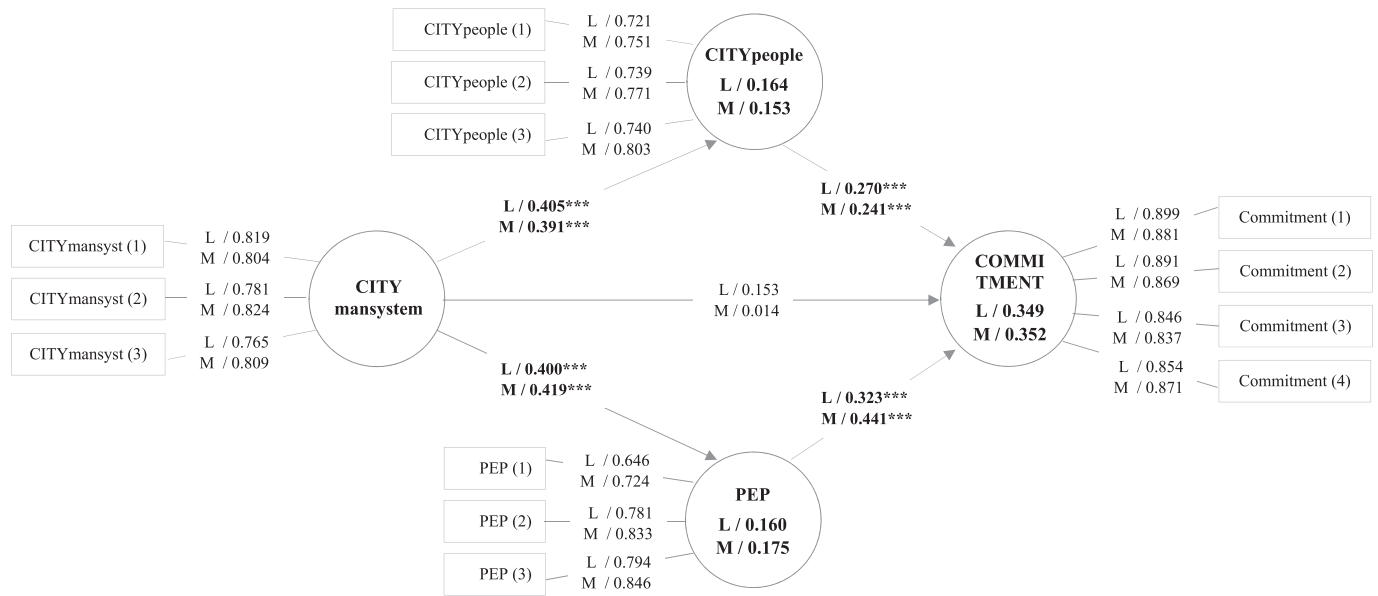
<sup>a</sup> Meaning of the Abbreviations used in Table 2: L – City of Ljubljana, M – City of Maribor.

**Table 3**  
Results of structural model.

	<sup>a</sup>	Expected sign	Path coefficient (R)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	p values	Inference
CITYmansystem → COMMITMENT	L	+	0.153	0.152	0.055	2.765	.006	Not supported
	M		0.014	0.013	0.045	0.322	.747	
CITYmansystem → CITYpeople	L	+	0.405	0.409	0.053	7.707***	.000	Supported
	M		0.391	0.393	0.048	8.121***	.000	
CITYmansystem → PEP	L	+	0.400	0.404	0.045	8.888***	.000	Supported
	M		0.419	0.421	0.044	9.470***	.000	
CITYpeople → COMMITMENT	L	+	0.270	0.269	0.053	5.098***	.000	Supported
	M		0.241	0.244	0.047	5.182***	.000	
PEP → COMMITMENT	L	+	0.323	0.327	0.053	6.134***	.000	Supported
	M		0.441	0.441	0.043	10.139***	.000	

Note: \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of the Abbreviations used in Table 3: L – City of Ljubljana, M – City of Maribor.



\* Meaning of the Abbreviations used in Figure 1: L – City of Ljubljana, M – City of Maribor

Fig. 1. Final structural model.

were significant drivers of city commitment. Perception of city management had a significant effect on Perceived External Prestige and perception of fellow residents but, surprisingly, had no significant direct effect on city commitment. It is important to recognise the relationships between the analysed variables and their vital role as drivers of residents' city commitment.

#### 4.3. Mediation analysis

Since the analysis did not find a direct effect of perception of city management on affective commitment, a mediation analysis was also done to determine whether or not it was possible that both Perceived External Prestige (PEP) and perception of fellow residents mediate that relationship fully. The model was tested using the PROCESS tool by Hayes (2013). Hayes (2013) stated that mediation effect exists when indirect effect is significant and bias corrected confidence interval does not contain zero value. Therefore, we estimated indirect effect with 1000 bootstrap at 95 per cent confidence interval.

Before estimating the moderated mediation model, we first calculated a multiple mediation model (with PROCESS tool by Hayes (2013), version 3.0, model 6). Hayes (2013), stated that mediation effect exists when indirect effect is significant and bias corrected confidence interval does not contain zero value. Therefore, we estimated indirect effect with 1000 bootstrap at 95 per cent confidence interval. In this model, Perceived External Prestige and perception of fellow residents are introduced as mediators affecting the relationship between the Perception of City management and affective commitment.

As expected, under the mediation condition, the relationship (direct effect) between perception of city management and affective commitment, is decreased and has little (City of Ljubljana) or no significance (City of Maribor) (City of Ljubljana:  $\beta = 0.19$ , SE = 0.05,  $t(398) = 3.46$ ,  $p = .0006$ ; City of Maribor:  $\beta = 0.02$ , SE = 0.06,  $t(399) = 0.31$ ,  $p = .7571$ ) when estimated in a model where Perception of City management was related to both mediators positively: *Perceived External Prestige (PEP)* (City of Ljubljana:  $\beta = 0.24$ , SE = 0.04,  $t(399) = 5.71$ ,  $p = .000$ ; City of Maribor:  $\beta = 0.32$ , SE = 0.05,  $t(400) = 6.15$ ,  $p = .000$ ) and *perception of fellow residents* (City of

Ljubljana:  $\beta = 0.33$ , SE = 0.04,  $t(400) = 8.38$ ,  $p = .000$ ; City of Maribor:  $\beta = 0.38$ , SE = 0.04,  $t(401) = 8.42$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Both mediators also showed a strong direct effect on affective commitment: *Perceived External Prestige (PEP)* (City of Ljubljana:  $\beta = 0.40$ , SE = 0.06,  $t(398) = 6.47$ ,  $p = .000$ ; City of Maribor:  $\beta = 0.50$ , SE = 0.05,  $t(399) = 9.47$ ,  $p = .000$ ) and *perception of fellow residents* (City of Ljubljana:  $\beta = 0.38$ , SE = 0.06,  $t(398) = 5.94$ ,  $p = .000$ ; City of Maribor:  $\beta = 0.30$ , SE = 0.06,  $t(399) = 5.00$ ,  $p = .000$ ).

This leads to an indirect effect of perception of city management on affective commitment through Perceived External Prestige and perception of fellow residents on affective commitment: (City of Ljubljana)  $\beta = 0.45$ , SE = 0.05,  $t(400) = 8.38$ ,  $p = .000$ , CI = 0.3462, 0.5585; (City of Maribor)  $\beta = 0.36$ , SE = 0.06,  $t(401) = 5.98$ ,  $p = .000$ , CI = 0.2435, 0.4822 with CIs that do not include zero. The results show that correlation between the variables perception of city management and residents' city commitment is fully mediated by the constructs Perceived External Prestige and perception of fellow residents.

#### 5. Discussion, limitations and suggestions for further research

The objective of this study was to define residents' city commitment and determine perception of city management, Perceived External Prestige (PEP) of the city, and perception of fellow residents of the city, as antecedents of residents' city commitment. According to our preliminary survey of relevant literature, a study which would take into account the factors such as perception of city management, perception of fellow residents and Perceived External Prestige in the context of affective commitment from the city marketing perspective, has not yet been done. Therefore, our research leaned mostly on the theories from the organisational literature, Environmental Psychology, Urban Studies and Social Theory. The survey was conducted on two independent representative samples of respondents in the two biggest cities in Slovenia - Maribor and Ljubljana.

As suggested in organisational literature (Meng & Berger, 2013), and as confirmed empirically by this study, also in city marketing, perception of city management has great influence on the PEP and, as an upgrade of urban or city marketing theory (Bauder, 2002; Doucet,

van Kempen, & van Weese, 2011; Zenker & Petersen, 2014), considering influence on residents of the city, also on perception of fellow residents of the city. It can be assumed that city management as a vital, complex authority, plays a strong role in representing the city and, therefore, as can be transferred from organisational theory (Meng & Berger, 2013) is linked closely to city performance and reputation, shaping the communication climate and culture of the city. The perception of how city management leads the city (promotes diverse cultural and artistic activities, includes and takes into account the various disciplines in the development of the city, develops how clear the vision of the city is, etc.) does influence the PEP (that the residents of the city believe that the city is reputable for people who are not residents of the city, that it is good to live in the city where they live, etc.), and the perception of fellow residents of the city (on their pride in their compatriots (inventors, scientists and experts) who were or are living in the city where they live, on solidarity between people, feeling safe, on friendliness with others and to tourists, etc.). If the city's management works well, it manifests on the city, and on the perception of fellow residents. Positive perception of city management also influences residents' belief that others who do not live in the city see the city in a positive sense.

The research also confirmed that PEP plays a significant role in the residents' city commitment, supporting the findings from the psychology literature (Kullberg et al., 2010) and organisational literature (Carmeli et al., 2006). This means that residents who believe that outsiders think highly of their city may develop affective commitment, which influences behaviour that goes beyond formal role requirements, and is connected with altruism and compliance (Carmeli, 2005). Similarly, the correlation can be explained between perception of fellow residents of the city and residents' city commitment. The correlation is moderate, however significant, and upgrades and confirms empirically the brand marketing (Freire, 2009) and city marketing (Belanche et al., 2016) literature that perceived degree of friendliness in local peoples' attitudes (people ready to help others, talkative and family oriented ...), and also other residents' characteristics, influence the perception of local people, and may affect residents' relationship and commitment to the city they live in.

However, low correlation between the variables' perception of city management and residents' city commitment is a surprise, especially because of the very strong correlation shown between perception of city management and Perceived External Prestige, which means that more focus is needed in theory on finding antecedents of city commitment. Therefore, by analysing the mediating effect, the results of the analysis suggest that both Perceived External Prestige and perception of fellow residents mediate the relationship between perception of city management and affective commitment fully, meaning that perception of city management influences the affective commitment only indirectly through the aforementioned constructs.

It is necessary to emphasise that the results obtained in both cities (Ljubljana and Maribor) are similar, which indicates the relevance and importance of the relationships between the analysed variables. However, when discussing limitation, both studies were conducted in Slovenia in two cities with similar living conditions. Any generalization of these results to other cities in other countries requires caution. The limitation applies especially for the items comprising the scale measuring perception of city management and perception of fellow residents of the city, because the items can vary across cities, due to size, identity, different problems, etc.

Therefore, for future research, it would be interesting to see the results of the study in other cities, including differentiations between cities, different level of economic development, political situation and organisation, different sizes of cities, geographical and cultural characteristics. It would be interesting to explore how factors influencing the residents' commitment to the city respond to those different conditions and situations.

## 6. Conclusion

This study contributes to growing research on city marketing by addressing the relationships across city commitment and Perceived External Prestige (PEP), perception of fellow residents and city management empirically, and stresses the importance of city commitment when studying involvement processes of residents towards their city.

The study has showed that city management correlates positively with the Perceived External Prestige of the city and also with perception of fellow residents of the city, and that both constructs, PEP, and perception of fellow residents of the city, correlate positively with residents' city affective commitment. However, low correlation between the variables' perception of city management and residents' city commitment showed that that the perception of city management influences the affective commitment only indirectly through the aforementioned constructs.

The city management should, therefore, communicate regularly and carefully with the residents, and disclose to them about the projects, achievements, about the city's positive reputation and, also, through diverse cultural, artistic activities, by including various disciplines, nurture the positive atmosphere among residents in the city, emphasising values such as friendship, solidarity, security, pride, and ensuring that these values are maximised in day-to-day relationships and also reflected in the growing affective commitment.

Namely, the positive influence of high affective commitment could be seen in residents' participation in various projects, involvement in city events, picking up litter (and other projects in the sense of care for a clean green environment), use of leisure time to serve on a local committee (McCunn & Gifford, 2014). It could also be seen in political acceptance, and acceptance of city brand in making their city become a better place (as a volunteer in community gardens, markets, hospitals) which also influences the sustainable development of the city.

As McCunn and Gifford (2014) claim, finding the antecedents that influence city commitment could help planners and also city managers and authorities to prioritise ideas and projects in order to gain residents' support, or even enhance residents' engagement, and to distribute resources effectively.

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