



## Constructing a city's values in an official text: Discourse analysis of a city branding strategy

メタデータ	言語: eng 出版者: 公開日: 2020-10-02 キーワード (Ja): キーワード (En): 作成者: Takagi, Sachiko メールアドレス: 所属:
URL	<a href="https://doi.org/10.24729/00017085">https://doi.org/10.24729/00017085</a>

# Constructing a city's values in an official text: Discourse analysis of a city branding strategy <sup>1</sup>

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## 1 Introduction

Today, globalization has intensified the competition among cities, ranking them in terms of their performance in specific fields such as technology, banking, arts, and higher education (Flowerdew 2004). One of the strategies for developing and promoting a city is the process of “branding” to broadcast the core values of the city (Flowerdew 2004; Zhang and Zhao 2009). This is a discursive process that includes the development of the encoded core values and creation of the images communicated in discourse (Flowerdew 2004; Koller 2008).

Koller (2008) regards city branding as “the local expression of a global trend which sees cities throughout the world in increasing competition with each other to generate revenues from tourism [ . . . ] and to attract and retain a qualified workforce” (Koller 2008: 432). Thus, city branding is a social practice undertaken by the local government.

City branding is considered important, especially when the city hosts mega events (Zhang and Zhao 2009), as the administration must gain the support of its residents and encourage foreigners to visit the city.

This study examines this type of situation and aims to clarify a city's branding strategy through its official brochure, by analyzing discursively constructed values in the text. We examine data that emphasize the values of a city about to host a large event and how these values are encoded to

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on an oral presentation at the 16th International Pragmatics Association held at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University in Hong Kong, June 9-14, 2019.

produce effective branding. The findings of our study show what type of ideology is conveyed and what type of social practice is realized in the branding which might influence city residents.

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Analysis Framework

In this study, a critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach is used to analyze discursively constructed values in city branding. CDA aims to clarify how the writer or speaker presents ideologies<sup>2</sup>, which are embedded in language forms, through the discourse. Fairclough (2015) states CDA gives “a particular focus on the critique of discourse, and on the explanation of relations between discourse and other social elements (power relations, ideologies, social institutions, and so forth)” (Fairclough 2015: 7). The CDA performed in this study is based on the framework created by Fairclough (2003), focusing especially on vocabulary, sentence structures, and assumptions<sup>3</sup>.

In addition to Fairclough’s approach, we adopt Koller’s (2008) branding perspective. On the basis of the cognitive CDA<sup>4</sup> notion, Koller (2008) states that core values constructed in branding are socio-cognitive representations.

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<sup>2</sup> As for ideology, Fairclough (1992) states “I shall understand ideologies to be significations/constructions of reality (the physical world, social relations, social identities), which are built into various dimensions of the forms/meanings of discursive practices, and which contribute to the production, reproduction or transformation of relations of domination” (Fairclough 1992: 87).

<sup>3</sup> Fairclough (2003) says the term “assumption” such that it “includes types of implicitness such as presuppositions, logical implications or entailments, and implicature” (Fairclough 2003: 40). He divides assumption into three types: Existential assumptions are those about what exists, propositional assumptions are those about what is or can be or will be the case, and value assumptions are those about what is good or desirable (Fairclough 2003: 55).

<sup>4</sup> The notion of cognitive CDA is as follows: people act on specific mental representations of the world. Some of these people produce and distribute more or less influential texts. Texts are instances of discourse that are realized through a set of semiotic devices and their producers’ socio-cognitive representations. Other people receive these texts, and doing so repeatedly under similar conditions of reception is likely to impact their practices and mental representations (Koller 2008: 433).

They are structures jointly held by members of a group (Koller 2008: 431), and constitute the ideal self a company or council wishes to communicate to others (Koller 2008: 435). We, therefore, analyze the process of encoding these socio-cognitive representations, and identify how they are emphasized by city governments.

## **2.2 Previous Studies**

Flowerdew (2004) examined how bureaucracy develops and controls the planning process and discursively constructs Hong Kong as a World City. By using CDA and genre theory as the analysis tools, he examined three pieces of text belonging to different genres and tried to determine what type of voices are evident from the texts and how the government of Hong Kong, the producer of these texts, influences how the texts are read. His study shows that three kinds of voices—the promotional voice, the interpersonal voice, and the authoritative voice—coexist in the texts: 1) the promotional voice emphasizes the good traits of the people in Hong Kong; 2) the interpersonal voice shows the writer's tie with Hong Kong's people; and 3) the authoritative voice proclaims the city's prosperity, which naturally emphasizes the attraction of Hong Kong and convinces the reader of the writer's view.

Zhang and Zhao (2009) examined the effectiveness of the city branding of Beijing, which hosted the 29th Olympic Games in 2008. They reviewed the city's strategies and investigated the understanding of the general public. As for the branding strategies, the city promoted tourism and marketed Beijing as a friendly global city in preparation for the Olympics. However, a survey of people's understanding showed that they had a rather negative view on the city's social aspects, and the study concludes that the Olympics had a rather small impact on the city's brand.

Phoenix (2018) aims to clarify the major discursive patterns and strategies in constructing and realizing Hong Kong's place branding. She selected four

branding documents from the BrandHK website and compiled the corpus for analysis. The quantitative analysis of the top lexical items revealed five thematic groups as the main themes of the place branding discourse. The qualitative analysis revealed the dominant textual patterns of linguistic construction and possessive markers. Thus, the author demonstrated the Hong Kong administration's strategies to discursively construct and communicate the city's place branding as well as the effectiveness of a linguistic approach to a place-branding study.

Koller (2008) examined how the mental representations of the city that is brand is encoded, to what extent the local contexts adapt to global brand values, and what the encoding of the brand indicates in terms of relationships between councils and citizens. Using the approach of cognitive CDA, Koller analyzed various semiotic modes in the branding documents such as logos and community visions of mid-sized UK cities. These results were then compared with documents of a city in Germany to inspect global tendencies of city branding, and examine the relationship between councils and citizens.

### 3 Data

This study examines the city branding strategy of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (TMG), the host city for the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The data for analysis are from the TMG's publicized online brochure (English version), *Towards 2020 –Building the Legacy–*, which describes TMG's vision for the Olympic and Paralympic Games and the development of Tokyo.

Koller (2008) mentions local governments and councils send out brands<sup>5</sup> and perform impression management via texts regarding community

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<sup>5</sup> Koller (2008) also defines brands as “the cognitive-affective concepts stakeholders maintain about a particular product, service, company or, in the case of city branding, place” (Koller 2008: 435).

strategies and visions (Koller 2008: 435). As the data of the present study are from the TMG brochure on the vision for the Games and the city, it can be regarded as the site for branding. Moreover, the section of the perspectives of the data broadcasts TMG's message to the world, namely, that "Tokyo will serve as a display window to promote all of Japan's attractions, including its initiatives aimed at realizing a city leading the world in environmental policies and cutting-edge technologies, and the strength of Tokyo as a brand." Therefore, it is appropriate and meaningful to analyze the English version of the TMG's brochure for the study of city branding in globalization.

#### **4 Analysis**

Examining the data and taking into consideration eight themes for the legacy and three groups of action plans for 2020, we identified five values: 1) safety and security, 2) diversity, 3) cultural promotion, 4) environmental protection, and 5) economic effects. As they are emphatically conveyed in the texts and considered to be maintained during, and even after, the 2020 Games, we find them to be core values for the city branding in this brochure. By showing some typical examples, this analysis aims to clarify how the core values are represented and what strategies are defined. The brochure has eight headlines which include several headings. These headings are followed by several subheadings and body texts. This study analyzes the headings together with their subheadings and body texts that contain concrete descriptions of the vision for the Games and the city.

The two numbers before each datum (e.g., 1.5 and 2.1) are the headline number and heading number, respectively which are followed by the heading or its subheading (e.g. Heading of 1.5: Promote initiatives to enhance safety and security). The number in the parentheses is the data number.

#### **4.1 The Value of Safety and Security**

##### (1) Heading of 1.5: Promote initiatives to enhance safety and security

This heading is the only one that expresses the value of safety and security. The verb “enhance” indicates “a positively evaluated change to the present state” (Koller 2008:443), which clearly constitutes TMG’s branding of the value of safety and security. Moreover, usage of these two words— “safety” and “security”—shows that this assertion covers protecting people both mentally and physically.

The value of safety and security is emphasized in the second subheading of 1.5.

##### (2) Second subheading of 1.5: Build crisis management systems that unite the public and private sectors

The expression “that unite the public and private sectors” shows that TMG seeks the know-how of private institutions. In other words, the value of safety and security is represented as being able to be realized through the cooperation between public government and private enterprises, creating the image of the residents’ participating in improving safety and security of their city. The body text following this subheading represents the value of safety and security by protecting people from dangers and handling organizational risk management, and both of them emphasize assuring safety and security mainly for and during the Games.

The first representation of the value in the body text targets “everyone who comes to the Tokyo 2020 Games,” and considers safety and security in terms of social life, cyber world, natural environment, and human health (“we will investigate risks from the standpoints of public safety, cyber security, disaster response, and infectious diseases”).

The second representation of the value is supposed to be realized in

building “crisis management systems” and establishing “an urban operations center during the Games.” Here, the value of safety and security is handled in a very practical manner.

Three out of five paragraphs in the body texts focus on the 2020 Games, and the remaining two paragraphs emphasize TMG's preparation for disaster and their reassurance about the citizens' safety as follows:

“We will promote Tokyo's disaster preparedness and response capabilities to the world.”

“We will continue to apply these safety and security initiatives after the Games to enhance peace of mind for the people of Tokyo.”

With the agent “we,” referring to TMG, using technical terms such as “disaster preparedness” and “response capabilities” and clarifying the beneficiary as “the people of Tokyo,” TMG emphasizes the fortified value of safety and security for the sake of the citizens.

The first subheading of 1.5 conveys the value of beauty.

(3) First subheading of 1.5: Advancing the removal of utility poles to create landscapes befitting a host city

It is notable that under the heading “Promote initiatives to enhance the safety and security,” the value of beauty is asserted before the value of safety and security (the second subheading). The phrase “to create landscapes befitting a host city” presupposes that TMG should give attention to the appearance of the city holding the Games and that this principle applies to dealing with utility poles (the propositional assumption).

In fact, in the body text following this subheading, it is clear that TMG is conscious of the city's appearance to the visitors during the Games (“the removal of utility poles along metropolitan roads near competition venues,”



“removing utility poles in areas such as around competition venues”). Although they are concerned with removing utility poles for appearance, TMG does not directly command other municipalities to do so. Instead, they implicitly request them (“Support the initiatives of Tokyo municipalities aimed at removing utility poles [ . . .]”).

#### **4.2 The Value of Diversity**

(4) Heading 2.1: Build a framework for collaboration among various entities to promote sports

The core value of diversity is expressed in “collaboration among various entities,” and the following texts describe concrete measures to promote it. They not only promote sport to prepare for the Games but also emphasize TMG’s altruistic spirit.

(5) First subheading of 2.1: Build an environment to support the success of athletes

The first subheading and the following body text describe how to support athletes’ success. The line “to discover, cultivate and strengthen promising athletes” shows TMG will actively train a wide range of athletes, believing in their potential; “providing information and raising awareness among athletes and companies” indicates they will offer various opportunities to athletes seeking financial support.

(6) Second subheading of 2.1: Promote initiatives to raise participation in some form of sport by Tokyoites to 70%

The second subheading suggests diversity in Tokyoites, which TMG hopes to engage in sport by 2020. The following body of text asserts not only the

value of diversity but also sport promotion. TMG asserts the importance of popularizing sports among citizens by referring to sports culture in the community (“to revitalize sports in the community”), and authorizing companies in promoting sport and sport-related events (“to certify companies that promote sports, compile best practice and publicize this information”). They also mention that the promotion of engagement in sports among people is meaningful for an aging society (“to popularize exercise and physical activity that contribute to the prevention of lifestyle diseases and preventive care for the elderly”). Therefore, TMG presents concrete measures and considers the inevitable social problems in promoting the value of diversity.

- (7) Heading of 2.3: To make the Paralympic Games a success, promptly raise awareness and accelerate the creation of an environment to support sports for people with impairments

By using the expressions “promptly raise awareness” and “accelerate the creation of an environment,” TMG indicates that they have actually supported sports for people with disabilities so far, and that the Paralympic Games are an opportunity to strengthen their support with more awareness.

- (8) First subheading of 2.3: Create a Paralympic movement by promoting sports for people with impairments

Second subheading of 2.3: Upgrade facilities for sports for people with impairments

In the first subheading, the value of diversity is emphasized in the phrase “Create a Paralympic movement.” The word “movement” here means “gradual change in what people in society do or think”(Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 2015), therefore, TMG suggests people’s change in their awareness in sports and people with impairments.

The phrase in the body text (“Actively promote the excitement of sports for people with impairments, including Paralympic sports [. . .]”) presupposes that sports for disabled people are exciting (the propositional assumption), which conveys the value of diversity, and that the attractiveness in such sports has not been well publicized yet.

In the second subheading and the following body text, TMG implicitly indicates that well-equipped facilities for sports for people with disabilities are not available yet. The expressions, “upgrade,” “renovate,” “study the improvement,” and “promote the use of Tokyo Metropolitan Special Needs Schools to serve as centers for [. . .],” imply that TMG intends to utilize the current facilities by reforming them, not build new ones. This shows TMG’s fairness in administration, which is considered to contribute to protecting environment as well as keeping diversity.

(9) Heading of 5.1: Cultivate talent for the future and create an inclusive society

First subheading of 5.1: Olympic and Paralympic Education

Body text: We will support initiatives that specifically cultivate a volunteer mindset, understanding of people with impairments, and global awareness, which are advanced independently by schools on a continuous basis, so these qualities become qualities of the Games.

Second subheading of 5.1: Nurture a respect for diversity and global awareness

TMG aims to cultivate people’s qualities—“volunteer mindset,” “understanding of people with impairments,” and “global awareness”—to achieve diversity in society. These qualities are said to be developed in education based on Olympic and Paralympic values. The second subheading and its following body text depict actions based on these qualities.

They are “consideration for others,” “helping each other” based on a volunteer mindset, and understanding of people with disabilities, “cultural understanding,” and “international exchange” based on global awareness. Here, we can see the propositional assumption that the Olympic and Paralympic values foster an altruistic spirit and understanding of others, and TMG asserts these will promote such values to create an “inclusive society.”

The quality of global awareness as the value of diversity is shown and weighed in section 5.3 (Heading: “Create an intercultural society where foreign residents can participate and be successful”). This value is represented in foreign business's development, foreigners' comfortable life in Japan interacting with local people, and well-preparedness for possible disasters.

The quality of a volunteer mindset and understanding of people with disabilities as the value of diversity are shown in section 5.4 (Heading: “Create a supportive, inclusive society for all people based on mutual respect”). This value is represented in the views of facility, communication, and activity. TMG promotes universal design planning of the city with barrier-free buildings, barrier-free communication, and encourages the activities of people with disabilities in sports, arts, and culture. TMG asserts that the value of an inclusive society is in fairly providing people with possibilities, information, security, and comfort.

### **4.3 The Value of Cultural Promotion**

(10) Heading of 1.1: Using the games as an opportunity to expand Tokyo's centers for sports

Body text: The competition venues to be newly developed by the TMG [. . .] will be steadily advanced through strict progress management and proper disclosure of information.

For the new permanent venues, we will ensure effective post-Games use, based on the facility management plan formulated in

April 2017.

We will advance upgrades to the infrastructure aimed at realizing the “Sports City Tokyo” concept [ . . . ].

This heading and the following body text describe TMG’s initiatives in developing sport culture in Tokyo by making use of the Games. The value of developing sport culture is represented in developing venues and facilities for sports.

The first paragraph of the body text shows the responsibility of TMG as an agent (“by the TMG”) who will strictly manage the progress of the venues and will disclose information properly to the public. Thus, although TMG has the lead role in promoting this project, it will not go ahead with it as it wishes. Instead, it will collaborate with residents by informing them on the progress.

The next two paragraphs indicate TMG will not indiscriminately build new facilities—only the ones that will be used even after the Games are over (“ensure effective post-Games use”)—and will also renovate old facilities (“advance upgrades to the infrastructure”), showing its aim to reduce the waste of taxpayers’ money and support environmental friendliness. These paragraphs as well as the former one connotatively convey TMG’s attitude of seeking residents’ understanding of the cultural promotion project, that is, the preparation for the 2020 Games.

(11) Heading of 4.3: Promote the attraction of arts and culture in Tokyo to the world

This section starts with an existential assumption based on the nominalization (“the attraction”) that Tokyo has attractive arts and culture. The subheadings and the following body texts state what kind of art and cultural attractions are available in Tokyo and how TMG suggests developing

and promoting them.

The first subheading (“Enhance the attraction of diverse cultural centers”) and its following body text indicate that TMG recognizes cultural values in various areas of Tokyo and Japan, that is, it respects cultural diversity. The second subheading (“Blend state-of-the-art technology and arts and culture”) and its following body text convey the importance of introducing the most advanced technology into the tradition of arts and culture. This is a flexible attitude, unbounded by convention, meeting the needs of diversity. The third and fourth subheadings and their following body texts (“Strengthen global PR activities and exchanges”, “Develop human resources to support the arts and culture”) also emphasize diversity in promoting cultural exchanges and training artists.

The whole text of section 4.3 presents the value and promotion plans of art and culture with the value of diversity of many kinds.

#### **4.4 The Value of Environmental Protection**

(12) Heading of 1.2: Making the site of the Athletes’ village an attractive place for anyone to live

Subheading of 1.2: Near the center of Tokyo, surrounded by greenery and facing on to the sea, a new community will be born at the site of the Athletes’ Village

The heading states that TMG will change the site of the Athletes’ village into a place where a variety of residents enjoy living. The value of environmental protection is emphasized by two points, that is, reuse of the facilities and environment-friendly equipment in the “new community,” which are described in the subheading and its following body text.

In the subheading, the new community as the reuse of the Athletes’ Village site is positively described with the value of convenience and rich natural environment. Moreover, by using the passive voice (“a new community will

be born”), the community is represented as if it would appear of their own accord. There is no mention of agents who construct the new community with possible huge construction and demolition costs or by destruction of nature.

The value of environmental friendliness in the new community is presented and emphasized with some pragmatic devices in the body text. They are emphasized using a comparative description (“more accessible and eco-friendly transportation methods will be introduced”), an intensifier (“create Japan’s first fully fledged hydrogen supply system”), and an “authorization” of legitimization<sup>6</sup> (“make the city a model for the realization of a hydrogen society”) (underlines mine).

(13) Heading of 6.1: Using the Games as an opportunity to become a world-leading smart energy city

First subheading of 6.1: Promote energy saving measures

Second subheading of 6.1: Promote the introduction of renewable energy

Third subheading of 6.1: Expand the use of hydrogen energy

The heading of 6.1 asserts TMG will bring Tokyo to a globally leading position as an environmentally friendly city with its advanced technology, and that the Games give them the chance to do that.

In the three subheadings and their body texts, the value of environmental protection is encoded with various lexical items mostly related to cutting-

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<sup>6</sup> Fairclough(2003) says “Any social order requires legitimation – a widespread acknowledgement of the legitimacy of explanations and justifications for how things are and how things are done” (Fairclough 2003: 219), and utilizes the strategies of legitimation proposed by Van Leeuwen. They are “authorization,” “moral evaluation,” “rationalization,” and “mythopoesis” (Fairclough 2003: 98). Since the Van Leeuwen’s work for the division of legitimation cited in Fairclough (2003) has no date of publication, we have referred to Van Leeuwen (2007).

edge technology. The first subheading and its body text indicate that Tokyo has advanced technology to save energy by using lexical terms such as “use LED lighting and electric cars” and “aimed at reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emission.” The second subheading and its body text state Tokyo will actively deal with renewable energy and hydrogen energy policies for environmental protection by developing “solar power systems,” “geothermal heat pumps,” and “hydrogen supply system.” Moreover, using emphatic phrases such as “continue to implement,” “proactively install,” and “expand the use,” TMG is not only presenting its keeping values of environmental protection but also states its determination to enhance these values with assertiveness and concrete plans.

In section 6.2, TMG—aiming to make Tokyo a cool and clean city—takes the measures of utilizing scientific technology and living in harmony with nature instead of operating air conditioners. This policy also leads to emphasizing the value of environmental protection.

(14) Heading of 6.2: Using the opportunity presented by the Games to create a comfortable city that is cool and clean

First subheading of 6.2: Implement measures against the summer heat for the games and create a comfortable urban environment

Concrete measures for environmental protection are included in the following body text. They are encoded as “the application of pavement materials,” “create areas of lush greenery,” “effective use of water resources,” and “systematic pruning.” TMG aims to utilize technology and nature to reduce the rate of operating air conditioners which causes global warming. Thus, city development is advanced by raising ecological value.



#### 4.5 The Value of Economic Effects

(15) Heading 7.1: Realize the world's most business-friendly city

Subheading of 7.1: Create an international business environment

The expression “business-friendly city” means that TMG is turning Tokyo into a city which is helpful for companies operating in it. In the subheading, they promote the city's value which will attract global and international business.

In the body text, we find the merit of the Games for economic advancement. The phrase “Using heightened interest in Tokyo generated by the Games, we will promote initiatives such as the prompt development of global business centers [ . . . ]” presupposes that the Games contribute to creating a favorable business environment for global companies (the propositional assumption). In the phrases, “the prompt development of global business centers” and “foreign companies can quickly start a business,” TMG's proactive attitude and efficient operation are emphasized.

Moreover, the last two lines, “make Tokyo the world's best city to do business in – a city where capital, talent, and information converge” denote the value of Tokyo as a world city which meets all the requirements, that is, money, talented people, and information infrastructure to invite foreign enterprises. This makes an obvious branding of Tokyo towards the world.

(16) Heading of 7.3: Ensure the economic impact of the Games is spread in the whole country

First subheading of 7.3: Expand opportunity for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

Second subheading of 7.3: Create new technologies, products, and services and promote them to the world

Heading of 7.4: Promote domestically produced ingredients

Heading of 7.5: Promote the advanced technologies of Tokyo and Japan

In sections 7.3, 7.4, and 7.5—under the propositional assumption that the Games will have an economic effects—TMG asserts the value of economic effects in Tokyo and Japan as a whole. This value is emphasized in the development of medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), advancement of technologies, and agricultural, forestry and marine products from all over the country.

In section 7.3, TMG aims to let SMEs have more business opportunities by promoting business matching, promoting their entering into promising domains (“growing fields such as health care, environment, energy and crisis management”), and offering financial aid in starting business and creating products (“prepare an environment in which the public and private sectors unite to give start-up support”). TMG highly evaluates technologies and products of SMEs and private sectors, and asserts further promotion of these values to the world.

In section 7.4, TMG urges producers to increase the quality of their products using positively evaluated terms (“Promote high added-value agricultural, forestry, and marine products and the creation of specialty brands”) (underlines mine) and develop business skills. TMG promotes Japanese primary industry's branding, its producers' branding as well as the city's branding, by taking advantage of the Games when foreign people come and experience Japanese products.

The section 7.5 performs branding of industrial technology. TMG asserts promotion of cutting-edge technologies in the area of energy and AI (“hydrogen energy,” “Intelligent Transport Systems,” and “automatic translation technologies”) in order to deal with air pollution, traffic congestion, and aging society.

Lastly, we can say the encoded values of economic effects analyzed in these sections (SME development, cooperation between public and private sectors, promotion of domestic products in various areas in Japan, and dealing with aging society) are strongly related to the promotion of the value

of diversity.

## 5 Conclusion

This study examined a city branding strategy as expressed in the TMG's brochure regarding its initiatives for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and clarified the encodings of the values of safety, diversity, cultural promotion, environmental protection, and economic effects. The analysis revealed that TMG aims to enhance these values during the Games as well as after them, and that TMG will use the 2020 Games as a catalyst to further cultivate Tokyo as a mature city and create a truly fulfilling lifestyle for its residents. The data imply ideologies such as those of the Games bringing about eco-friendly development as well as the economic development of Japanese industry. Therefore, we can conclude that this city branding is a persuasive social practice that shows consideration for the people, encouraging them to look forward to the Games and instilling a sense of security about the future.

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