Statehood Allows Mexico City to Change its Branding to CDMX

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The final approval of the reform that allows Mexico City to change its political status to a state from a federal district also ushered a new era of labeling for the Mexican capital. Whereas the city was known as Distrito Federal, or D.F., for generations, the Mexican capital is now referred to as CDMX. The new name is very much in keeping with the use of acronyms in social media. For example, the Mexican Soccer league, once known as the Liga Mexicana de Fútbol, is now known simply as Liga MX.

Marketing implications
The change to CDMX has marketing implications for the capital city, particularly in tourist promotions overseas. In anticipation of the approval of statehood, authorities had been using the CDMX brand for tourist promotions during the past two years. According to the 2013-2018 business plan for the capital, the goal is to promote the international positioning of Mexico City as a tourist destination through campaigns that seek to underscore its unique cultural identities, including sports, education, and medical facilities.

Authorities in Mexico City ensured that CDMX would become a unique brand for use during the marketing efforts by registering the name with the Instituto Mexicano de la Propiedad Industrial (IMPI) back in 2014. “CDMX is a registered trademark of the Mexico City government,” CNNExpansión reported.

Observers said the Mexican capital is following strategies employed by tourism authorities in other large metropolitan areas that use a unique label or a symbol to help with name identification. Two examples are the famous “I [Heart] New York,” used by New York City, and “I Amsterdam,” employed by authorities in the capital of the Netherlands.

The effort to re-label the capital as CDMX is beginning to pay dividends. According the Fondo Mixto de Promoción Turística (FMPT), the new label has placed Mexico City among the top 20 most recognized cities at the global level, moving up 14 spots on the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) index. “In the Americas, CDMX occupies eighth place, ahead of cities like New York and Washington, D.C.,” the FMPT said on its website.

Dozens apply to sit on constitutional assembly
The change in status for the Mexican capital became official when Congress reaffirmed changes to the Mexican Constitution allowing the capital to gain a strong measure of autonomy (SourceMex, Jan 6, 2016), an effort that gained momentum in mid-2015 (SourceMex, May 6, 2015). A special constitutional assembly will write the Magna Carta for the new state, with the composition of the body still being determined.

Under the measure approved by both chambers of Congress, 40 members of the 100-member body would be appointed by the Mexican president, the federal Congress and the Mexico City
mayor. The other 60 would be selected by residents of Mexico City in a vote scheduled for June 5. As of early March, the federal electoral watchdog (Instituto Nacional Electoral, INE) had received applications from 74 individuals seeking to be placed on the ballot for the 60 independent seats. All the applicants were required to collect almost 74,000 signatures to qualify, and as of March 8, 50 of the 74 applications had been accepted.

The list of those who were accepted includes Luis González Placencia, former president of the Mexico City human rights commission (Comisión de Derechos Humanos del Distrito Federal); Gabriela Alarcón, director of urban development for the business organization Instituto Mexicano para la Competitividad (IMCO); Mónica Tapia, director of the pro-equality organization Ruta Cívica; independent human rights activist Alfredo Lecona; and Agustín Martínez, of the cycling promotion group Bicitekas.

Assembly to decide on fate of boroughs

The constitutional assembly will have to make a number of determinations, including how the current boroughs will be transformed into municipalities. The initial thinking was that each of the boroughs would become a city, but observers suggest this will not necessarily be the case because of disparities in population in each of the entities. “In the CDMX, there are boroughs with a population of 137,000, like Milpa Alta, and others, like Iztapalapa, that have 1.8 million residents,” columnist Cecilia Soto wrote in the daily newspaper Excélsior.

According to Soto, three of the boroughs—Iztacalco, Iztapalapa, and Benito Juárez—have extremely high densities, with 15,000 inhabitants per square kilometer. In contrast, Milpa Alta, Tlalpan, and Cuajimalpa have densities below 3,000 residents per square kilometer.

Soto noted that the density and population disparity would have to be addressed in order for governments to best serve the people. “The constitutional assembly will have to decide what criteria will be best to ensure that governments are closer to the citizens,” Soto wrote.

Business organizations are also expected to watch the constitutional assembly’s decisions on the composition of the municipalities very closely. A report from the Centro de Estudios Económicos del Sector Privado (CEESP) suggests that a set of criteria should be established to eliminate the corruption levels that exist within the governments of the boroughs. The think tank suggested the creation of a regulatory framework to promote investment and business activity in order to create jobs and halt corruption.

In its report, the CEESP included results of a survey conducted in 2013 and 2014 among 56 municipalities around the country to determine what mechanisms were in use to expedite paperwork or obtain business permits. For the purpose of the survey, the CEESP used a measure to determine bribes dubbed pagos extraoficiales. The four Mexico City boroughs that were included in the survey ranked above the median level for the 56 municipalities, particularly the borough of Azcapotzalco.

“This is a relevant concern as the process of drafting the Constitution of Mexico City gets underway,” said the CEESP. “The document will determine the rules of the game, which must change from current practice in order to ensure the well-being of families and the growth of productive activities.”
The change in status should also help the finances of the capital city. Once it becomes a state, authorities will be able to access certain federal funds for states that were previously not available to the federal district.

Any access to federal funds on the part of Mexico City had been subject to approval by the federal government. In contrast, state governments have been able to request money through the Ramo 33 Fund based on their needs and without direct interference from federal authorities.

Rosalinda Josefina del Carmen De León Zamora, a specialist at Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), said that under the previous practice, Mexico City would send its request to the federation, and authorities at that level would disburse funds in a piecemeal fashion.

“It was evident that there was little enthusiasm on the part of the federal authorities to allocate resources for the capital,” said De León Zamora, who is a special advisor to the capital on the political reforms.

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