

## CITY AS A PROMOTER OF CULTURE AND TOURISM ANIMATION THE EXAMPLE OF BARCELONA

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***Abstract:** Nowadays, every city seeks to use the best elements of its history, geography, and other resources available to it, including, above all, human resources, the more to affirm or to reaffirm their image and create brand recognition. It should be borne in mind that towns now primarily appear as products on the market that meet the diverse needs of tourists in order to strengthen urban tourism. To this end, in this paper the center of interest is the city as a cultural specificity, but one which is not the capital of the country. It is about the Spanish city of Barcelona, which is distinguished as a specific cultural representative of its country, preferring the authentic image, which radiates in European and planetary scale, with a particular tendency, in the context of improvement and development of its trademarks and its authentic cultural resources, to build and reinforce positive rivalry with other cultural capital cities, first of all with Madrid, the capital of Spain. Since Barcelona has in this sense already succeeded or has reached a very high level, it promotes in an effective way the idea of cultural tourism animation, which is an important structural element of modern tourism product of Barcelona. Tourist animation as such, particularly cultural and tourist animation, will become more prominent in the future, comprising the price of tourism product in the same way as the rest of its elements, ranging from transportation, to housing, to food.*

***Keywords:** City - Barcelona, urban tourism, image, brand, cultural and tourist animation.*

### **Introduction**

In the second half of XX century, there was an intensive establishment of city marketing teams, whose aim it was to renew the idea of the city as a tourist destination and an impression which the city makes not only on its inhabitants but all other visitors, businesspeople and tourists, as well. Marketing teams have a task to introduce an entrepreneurial spirit based on the created “brand” into the city. Marketing teams’ goal is reduced to an improvement of the overall image of the city in the country, Europe and the world, particularly its cultural potential, all this being in the function of economic and social progress (Dragičević-Šešić, M. 2009). *The European Capital of Culture* project,

i.e. event, as an event which has contributed to the revival of cities and also of the region where the city is located, is a good example for that. This event has contributed to the regeneration of culture, an improvement of education, as well as the inclusion of marginalized groups and the opening of new jobs for the local population. Today, the realized effects of the revitalization of the city and the way they have been achieved in can be seen and studied on the examples of Glasgow, Bergen, Lille etc., as the participants in this project (Bursać, B. 2009). Having that in view, A. Gospodini considers that cities are becoming progressively more important bearers of the development of regional integrations. In that sense, he implicitly says: “Europe is becoming a community of cities rather than of nations and/or countries” (Gospodini, A., 2002).

The concept of the development of the city actualizes tourists’ perceptual aspect during their visit and stay in the city. The perceptual aspect is directly incorporated into the image of the city which is being developed, cherished and improved to perfection. Among other things, it includes tourists’ perceptions and their showing an interest in the main elements of the brand of the city. In that sense, French author Moles uses the syntagm of “the heart of the city”, which – in the tourist’s perception – relates to the entropy of the tourist’s perceptions and micro-perceptions. Its synonymous elements, such as “the soul of the city” (*l’ame de la cite*) or the spirit of the place (*genius loci*), also include a set of phenomena contained in the tourist’s memory (if they have already paid a visit to the city). That memory has a direct influence on the perception of the image of the city as a brand of its own kind (Kapferer, 2012). The perceptual component of the tourist’s perception and memory is thus put in the function of spreading a positive emotional system, which includes the incorporation of diverse and exciting perceptions based on the tourism potential of the given urban ambience (Đorđević, 2013). This is also the basic starting point in the creation of the cultural-tourism animation of the city, its programming, promotion and strengthening.

### **Urban tourism and cultural animation**

Undoubtedly, tourism is exceptionally spread in urban spaces today, in its different aspects and forms (heritage tourism, cultural tourism or special cultural event tourism etc.). Having this in view, urban tourism can be said to be a rather complex, dynamic and changeable phenomenon which, in a certain way, resists or defies specific analyzing and defining. That is the reason why some authors are inclined to more expressly speak and mention city tourism (Genov, G. 2008). Cities emerge as specific multifunctional spaces of a complex

environment, where the possibilities of satisfying tourists' very different needs are "hidden". From that aspect, cities can be observed as the generators of urban tourism, in the function of satisfying tourists' and tourist groups' different and special interests. Under the "umbrella" of urban tourism, it is practically possible to put contemporary tourists' most diverse activities, i.e. various selective forms of tourism (Rabotić, B. 2013). In that sense, Sava and Coroamă considers that urban tourism is generally associated with cultural tourism which means visiting the elements of the historic patrimony (archeological heritage, monuments, castles, religious places, parks and gardens), visiting museums, participating to cultural events (Sava, C. & Coroamă, L., 2010).

It is not accidental, then, that Buhalis, D. quotes urban tourism with the different content of the 5 "S's" (Short breaks, Sightseeing, Shopping, Shows, Scotch Whisky) as an equivalent for traditional, mass tourism, as well as for the traditional 5 "S" elements (Sun, Sea, Sand, Sex, Sangria), which it has increasingly been ousting, so that – in the mutual transformation – he generates "new tourism" in a modified version of the 5 "S" elements (Segmentation, Specialization, Sophistication, Satisfaction, Seduction) (Buhalis, D. 2003). In that way, urban tourism figures as the "stepping-stone" in replacing "old" tourism with a "new" one (Poon, A.1993).

New researches are primarily oriented towards those consumers in tourism whose characteristics are related to specific situations, which are labelled and characterized with respect to the consumer's attitudes, their preferences, interests, opinions, benefits etc. (Bakić, O.& Čerović, S. 1989). According to Go and Pine's segmentation of tourists into target groups, those tourists who, for example, travel for their personal pleasure, prefer cultural tourism and cultural animation first of all given their relationship towards other passenger categories: corporate passengers, group passengers, conference participants etc. (Go, M. & Pine, R., 1995, Đorđević, 2012). So, the contemporary trend of individualization encourages the development of urban tourism which includes flexibility as its key element, which is in the function of strengthening all the forms of urban tourism, especially cultural tourism and the cultural animation of tourists in the city as a tourist destination (Law, C. M. 2002).

In that context, there are numerous possibilities for the current animation of tourists, their participation in the conducting of the offered animation programs by animators and animator groups, as well as their participation in the creation of new programs given their affinities, needs and wishes. Animation in general, and particularly cultural-tourism animation, is very close to cities, their distinctiveness and

authenticity. It has multiple functions in the forming of tourists' various perceptions, the strengthening of their interpersonal communication, satisfying their cultural needs and profiling their personalities from the point of view of universal values and norms.

### **The city brand as the basis of cultural animation**

The dividing line between a "tourism brand" and a "tourism image" is not sufficiently recognizable; however, it does exist. At the same time, a brand is dominantly commercially focused whereas an image, apart from containing a commercial character, also contains elements of a psychological character (safety, positive response, emotions, and so on) significant for the tourist's attachment (loyalty) to a brand (Đorđević, 2011). In that sense, primarily from a postmodern point of view, authors Vujović, Štetić and Tucović point out that "the economic base has redirected itself from production to consumption", gravitating from the "sphere of rationality toward the realm of wishes, from the objective toward the subjective, toward the realm of psychology" (Vujović, S., Štetić, S., Tucović, M. 2010). The brand and image of the city, understood in this way, stand for an animation programming base, first of all of cultural-tourism animation, as a specific and relatively new element of the contemporary tourist offer.

Branding cities has a big significance for the development of tourism and tourism animation. First of all, branding cities as tourist destinations is directly in the function of the actualization, promotion and affirmation of cultural-tourism animation as an integral part of a tourism product. Branding cities simplifies making decisions by potential tourists on the selection of a city destination since, without a strong brand, potential tourists are forced to involve themselves in the process of great involvement, which includes a big set of possible choices. Secondly, the existence of a city brand helps to overcome the problem of the intangibility of services given the fact that a brand has recognition and a symbolical meaning, especially if the tourist's previous experience is a positive one. Thirdly, branding enables consistency given the time and different outcomes, so potential buyers are aware that they will be served according to the expected standards. Fourthly, branding is important as a mechanism of risk mitigation when buying. A holiday time wrongly spent as an outcome of a wrong decision cannot basically be replaced – the holiday failed. However, branding reduces the outcome of social, psychological and economic risk, as well as performance risk (Zečević, B. & Aleksić, A. 2009).

Wally Olins provides some attributes of a brand which can be applied to city branding. She considers a brand to be a perceptual

concept in the context of the lifestyle created by a trademark, adding that a brand represents clarity, a belief, stability, a status, belonging – all that enables a human being to determine and define him- or herself. A brand represents an identity, opens its complexity which corrects it into a clear notion and idea (Olins, W. 2003).

In the context of a city brand, this practically means the creation of a unique entity on the basis of certain cultural patterns as the meaning systems within whose framework the form, order, sense and belief are clearly noticed (Gerc, K.1998). At the same time, not only cultural tradition as the cultural capital of its own kind of the past is important – innovativeness as the cultural capital of its own kind of the future is also important. The French city of Angoulême has effectively confirmed that, by “setting in motion” the whole of the region, particularly promoting France as the most significant country when concerning comic strips publishing (Đorđević, S. 2013). Although completely different from Angoulême, according to all the relevant criteria (country, size, history, culture, identity), the city of Barcelona has a common thread connecting it with the French city – the successful reconceptualization of the existing identity and the creation of a new one, as well as the promotion of the successful brand in the international tourism market (Čomić, Đ.2012). In that manner, through their specificity and differentness, the brands of these cities represent a combination of functional, emotional and strategic factors in several dimensions, which together make a unique set of associations in individuals’ minds or the public, playing the role of the cultural-tourism animation factor (Aaker, D. 1996).

Authors Čomić and Vičić indicate some of the concrete attractions which can be treated as the localized and materialized elements of the city image and brand: the monumental architecture with broad axes, collimation lines and boulevards, big squares (Concord Square, Red Square, Tiananmen Square); monuments with a strong symbolical meaning; grouped historical, sacral and iconic buildings (La Sagrada Família in Barcelona, The Opera House in Sydney, Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, The Reichstag Building in Berlin); museums (The Louvre, The British Museum, Prado Museum); street windows and scenes (the socio-cultural attractiveness of a space). The historical centers and cores of some cities (Florence, Venice, Prague), modern cities and parts of cities (Brasilia, La Défense) or some postmodern cities (Las Vegas), crated to be a tourist spectacle and an attraction *per se*, also attract tourists’ attention (Čomić, Đ.& Vičić, S., 2013).

### **The image of the city of Barcelona as the specificum of cultural animation**

The image of a city can be observed as a means or as a landmark on the basis of which potential tourists, aspiring to achieve their satisfaction, determine the potentials of the city as a tourist destination (Govers, 2003). The city image is the notion of the city, its residents, merchants, other tourists and employees (Gallarza, Saura & García, 2002), which strongly influences tourists' expectations and their future intentions, particularly their readiness to be some kind of animators for the promotion of the destination in their native environment (Gartner, 1989; Goodall, 1988).

The image of the city of Barcelona appears as a double specificum. On the one hand, it is about a city as a very complex tourism product with a wide range of numerous and diverse elements it consists of. The city is the specific context of the hybridization of the existing elements which, as interdependent categories, support and permeate its image (Đorđević, 2013). On the other hand, the city of Barcelona is also specific for not being the capital of the country, so it is not in a position to be recognizable "by default" in the contemporary phenomenology of the identities of cities as it is the case with capital cities. As a non-capital city of Spain, Barcelona stands for a double specificity in its own framework.

Differently from capital cities (Budapest, Prague, Vienna etc.), which authors Smith, Macleod and Robertson single out as cultural capital cities, today's Barcelona – as a creative city (Smith, M. Macleod, N. & Robertson, M. 2010) – justifiably competes with the cities-cultural capital cities Smith speaks about. All the more so, according to some authors, that – as the cultural capital city of Spain – Barcelona has replaced Madrid and become "a place (in Europe) one must pay a visit to" (Kalmić, L. & Čomić, Đ., 2009). This was also confirmed by a research conducted via the Internet in 2006, in connection with the practical parameters depicting a city, its traffic, climate, pollution, costs of living, sports activities, cultural life and entertainment, laws and legal regulations and its international status and position in the world. The research was conducted on the sample of 15,255 women and men between 18 and 64 years of age, in Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Mexico, Holland, the USA, Malaysia, Russia, New Zealand, Great Britain and Spain, and Barcelona was the 9<sup>th</sup> ranked, far ahead of many capital cities: Madrid was ranked 12<sup>th</sup> whereas the "golden triangle" (Prague, Budapest, Vienna) greatly lagged behind: Prague was the 34<sup>th</sup>, Budapest was the 46<sup>th</sup> etc. (Popesku, J. & Gajić, J., 2009). As an image criterion, however, Jeremy Hildreth detects the "Barcelona effect", showing it to be "an unnameable X factor that captures a wealth of place attributes in one fell

swoop – a single, bottom-line netpresent value on the experience of being in a place” (Hildreth, J. 2008).

### **Barcelona as a promoter of cultural animation of a global tourism significance**

Today, Barcelona appears as one of the most important cities of the world, as a capital city, although it is not the capital city of Spain. It is located in the province of Catalonia, which had been independent for a long time before it was annexed to Spain. Because of being neglected by Madrid, this province has always aspired to self-determination and strengthening its cultural identity. Barcelona has constantly been making progress, simultaneously with the progress of the local Catalanian culture, which has quickly and successfully been Europeanized and globalized. This has particularly been contributed by the “icons” of the Catalanian culture (Gaudí, Miró andPicasso) which have been used to develop urban tourism, connecting the local with the global. A strong growth in tourism in Barcelona exactly relies on the growth in cultural tourism, i.e. on the fame of the great artists, Gaudí in particular, who has been transformed into the global icon of the city used for commercial effects, similarly to American cities. In the conditions of commercialization, the cult status of the great Catalanian architect – Gaudí has also been attributed an ironic connotation in Barcelona, because until 1980, *La Pedrera*, one of Gaudí’s most significant buildings, was used as a bingo space. In the recent years, however, big efforts have been made to clear the name of Gaudí and use Gaudí’s heritage in the right manner; so, the year of 2002 was declared The Year of Gaudí in order to successfully celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth.

Barcelona’s cultural animation strongly contributes to the transformation of the “local cultural persons” into global cultural icons and, simultaneously, to a fast growth in cultural tourism and the creation of the international image of the city. Such a development tendency is, among other things, also confirmed by an increase in the number of visitors to cultural attractions in Barcelona since their number has increased by almost 150% since 1994. At the same time, Gaudí’s attractions alone have attracted around 22% of tourists, while all the three of them together (Gaudí, Miró and Picasso) have in total attracted 50% of culturally motivated visits.

The success of the idea of the regeneration of the cultural animation of Barcelona is the direct consequence of the intentions and demonstrated capability to have tradition renewed, while cultural products have not been fossilized or separated from the European cultural space but rather

included in the global tourism flows in a completely new manner (Kalmić, L. & Čomić, Đ., 2009).

The strategies of the renewal of the public spaces and the development of urban design, planning in culture and forming cultural quarters represent the main elements on which the plan of the urban renewal of Barcelona is based. The most successful application of these elements has been manifested in the area of the old city of Barcelona, the former Olympic village and what used to be the industrial quarter of *Poblenou*. By connecting this quarter with the other area, a new cultural center of the city and the center of cultural industries were established (Radišić, 2009). At the same time, by placing different surfaces made of concrete, some squares in Barcelona have been transformed into multipurpose creative places for one to entertain and relax. As time passed, these squares have captured the subculture of skaters who have recognized these places as suitable ones for them, and now come to Barcelona from all parts of the world, gathering at these squares (Florida, R., 2002, Howell, O., 2005). The central-city street of La Rambla, as the heart of the city, stands for a trademark of Barcelona. Then, there are: The Magic Fountain, The Picasso Museum, The Gothic Quarter (El Barrio Gótico), as well as the modernist buildings of La Pradera, Casa Batlló, Casa Amatller, Park Güell etc. ([www.barselonayellow.com](http://www.barselonayellow.com)). Today, Barcelona is also the main destination for ship cruises in the Mediterranean, and the best-known and the most visited beaches are the Barceloneta and Nova Icària. Via the media, Barcelona is also made popular as a place suitable for film stage designs, commercials and music videos.

Juan Carlos Belloso considers the success of the image and brand of Barcelona to be originating from the Olympic Games held in 1992. According to him, Barcelona in the best possible manner succeeded in taking all the advantages the city could have taken of the holding of one of the most significant events in the world. As this author says, thanks to that event, Barcelona draw attention to itself and, which is the most important, and managed to keep the focus of the world public's attention through creativeness and tenacious work performed by the city administration in the post-Olympic games time, having involved almost the whole of the local community in the branding of the city (Keith D. 2011). Barcelona's development went along the line of the establishment of a large number of micro-ambiences in the function of strengthening the feeling of togetherness amongst the local population as well as in the function of the scenic articulation of the space with the aim to attract tourists. Although socio-cultural events (street carnivals, exhibitions etc.) are an inevitable part of the cultural life of Barcelona, an accent is put on the redefining of urban aesthetics. By all accounts, such an orientation was predetermined by

the Olympic Games, which had a significant influence on the creation of the city image of Barcelona as one of the most desirable tourist destinations (Petković, G. 2005). The researches conducted in 2004 by ATLAS (The Association for Tourism and Leisure Education), in which almost one-half of the 600 interviewed tourists responded that they would like to stay and live in Barcelona, also confirm that.

Barcelona's attractiveness for tourists and mobile consumers stands for one of the brightest examples of successful development in the European urban space. Today, Barcelona plays the role of the cultural capital city of Spain, having replaced Madrid as its capital city. At the same time, and differently from other cities, Barcelona has affirmed the idea of the cultural-tourism animation of the city in the right manner. According to the statistical indicators, the scope of this transformation is huge because the tourists who have come to visit Barcelona have increased in number by 130% since 1990. Today, Barcelona is the first on the list according to the quality of living in Europe, ahead of Paris, Munich and Stockholm, and the second one according to the volume of investments in 2001 (Kalmić, L. & Čomić, Đ. 2009).

Greg Richard, a well-known theoretician of cultural tourism, has substantially contributed to the affirmation of the cultural and creative values of Barcelona. In that sense, in one of his interviews, he says:...in Barcelona, for example, there is a program of creative tourism specially designed to make easier the contact between the artist and the creative values in Barcelona and artists from the rest of the world. Now, it is much easier for people to go and compose music, shoot a movie or learn something about fashion in Barcelona than it used to be... ([http://yahti.com/kreativni\\_turizam\\_1.html](http://yahti.com/kreativni_turizam_1.html)).

## Conclusion

The city of Barcelona illustrates an interactive process of the influence of localization on a globally attractive destination. The local concept of the brand and the creation of the image of international significance have contributed to Barcelona's becoming a new cultural capital city of Spain, after having replaced Madrid as the capital city. In that manner, this city has obtained yet a higher specific value expressed in its distinctiveness and authenticity, especially at the cultural level. Having succeeded in globalizing the local and localizing the global, Barcelona has created a new urban tourism product containing, among other things, cultural animation as an important structural element of a tourism product as well. For that reason, Barcelona appears as not only a factor of the fast development of cultural tourism but also as a convincing promoter of cultural-tourism animation manifested, first of

all, in the transformation of the “local cultural persons” into global cultural icons. The number of visitors of Barcelona’s cultural attractions, which has increased by almost 150% since 1994, is among other things a sufficient indicator of this successful transformation. At the same time, Gaudí, Miró and Picasso alone have attracted over 50% of culturally motivated visits. Thanks to such development processes, this city ranks as the first in Europe for the quality of living, ahead of Paris, Munich and Stockholm. The attractiveness of Barcelona for mobile consumers, tourists in particular, stands for one of the brightest examples of successful city development in the European urban space, with the priority position being held by the development of cultural tourism and cultural-tourism animation.

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