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PLACE BRANDING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: BARCELONA

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Abstract

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland Report, 1987). In 1997, sustainable development became a fundamental objective for the UE. The Göteborg European Council (15-16 June 2001) approved the ***European Union*** *strategy for sustainable development. In the context of globalization, nation-state/city began to be perceived as a different kind of merchandise – blending various concepts, such as nation or place branding. As a multinational corporation or a product, the nation-state or the city can be branded. A brand is based on image, reputation, and certain values.Now, we assist to a competition – increasingly visible – between cities/areas/regions to promote their image and, hence, in this context, to a new demand for specialists with vision.*

In the early 17th century, Miguel de Cervantes set a long episode of the second part of Don Quixotein Barcelona. In that book the city is evoked as a "repository of gentility". In the 19th century, the time of industrialization, Barcelona was sometimes referred to as the "factory of Spain". Today, Barcelona is a new model, a pioneer, a success story in industry, science and tourism: in 2014, became European Capital of Innovation and, in spring of 2015, at World Communication Forum in Davos – City of the Future.

The aim of this research is to examine the Barcelona city brand construct and to establish its role in the sustainable development.

Keywords:

Sustainable development; European strategy; Europe 2020; Place branding; City branding; Barcelona Brand.

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"Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else." Italo Calvino, author of Invisible Cities

1. Sustainability. Urban sustainability. European perceptions

Sustainability is a kind of magic word, today more than ever at the center of discussions, turning into a tangible idea for European citizens.

In 1987, the Brundtland Report - "Our Common Future" of the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development – presented first coherent approach to the meaning of sustainable development. The strategy for a sustainable development "aims to promote harmony among human beings and between humanity and nature" (Brundtland, 1987). This development is based on "the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (ibid).

In these recent years, a global phenomenon occurred: according to the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNPFA), since 2008, for the first time in history, more than half of the world's population has been living in towns and cities and, by 2030, this number is to swell to almost 5 billion.

Sustainable development and urban policy are today two issues that are challenge worldwide, whether the subject was one of engineering and architecture; today it expands, obtaining other important dimensions. The town became an actor increasingly important for this kind of development, so it has obtained the right to have its own policy management.

The necessity for new strategy determined the cities to form networks for sustainable urban development. This kind of activities began to be considered as an efficient way to resolve environmental and social crises, and the way to a better management of towns' capacities.

Since 2010, in the European space, the new urban strategies and, especially, the success stories, are rewarded by the European Commission, with "European Green Capital Award". It is a method for supporting cities' environmental progresses and the compliance with high standards, and thus producing a model of good practices for other European cities to follow.

In theory, The European Commission offers in Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 (European Commission, 2011) the meaning of the variables concepts, like Integrated Sustainable Urban Development:

> "The various dimensions of urban life – environmental, economic, social and cultural – are interwoven and success in

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> urban development can only be achieved through an integrated approach. Measures concerning physical urban renewal must be combined with measures promoting education, economic development, social inclusion and environmental protection. In addition, the development of strong partnerships between local citizens, civil society, the local economy and the various levels of government is a pre-requisite".

Since then, almost all urban strategic documents, city web portals, or city advertising use terms such as "green", "clean", "smart", " friendly climate" in order to design their places as best as possible.

2. The brand Theory. City branding

But, in short: what is a brand?! The common definition is offered by the American Marketing Association in 2012:

> „A name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers. The legal term for brand is trademark. A brand may identify one item, a family of items, or all items of that seller. If used for the firm as a whole, the preferred term is trade name. A brand is a customer experience represented by a collection of images and ideas; often, it refers to a symbol such as a name, logo, slogan, and design scheme. Brand recognition and other reactions are created by the accumulation of experiences with the specific product or service, both directly relating to its use, and through the influence of advertising, design, and media commentary. A brand often includes an explicit logo, fonts, color schemes, symbols, sound which may be developed to represent implicit values, ideas, and even personality".

Every author has, in fact, his personal approaching to the concept of brand. A brand is born when enough people see and think the same about a brand's personality (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009, 7). In 1996, Simon Anholt writes about the nation branding, giving birth to an important new research area: place branding. It is a combination of techniques – adapted for commercial area – used to build an image of a place/city/nation…, based on its personal strengths, his identity marks.

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But, as suggested, e.g. Richards and Palmer (2010), a brand is much more than a simple logo; the brand permit to read how the peoples who lives inside, and, in same time, the peoples from outside, feel the place, in this moment, but, also, their expectations, their hopes, their dreams...

In the recent years, the significance of city branding increased (Dinnie, 2010). Many of us think about cities or places in terms of attributes, of living stories. "Paris is romance, Milan is style, New York is energy, Washington is power, Tokyo is modernity, Barcelona is culture, Rio is fun. These are the brands of cities, and they are inextricably tied to the histories and destinies of all these places" (Anholt 2006, 18.)

The use of branding principles and key-elements for city governance grows day by day. „Brands play an integrative role when related to places because at the core of the brand is culture and the people who create it. Beyond promoting destinations, experiences and products, place brands enhance identity and culture" (Gnoth.J. "Leveraging export brands through a tourism destination brand", in Journal of Brand Management no. 9, 2007:262-280)

"There are many substantial common characteristics of marketing and branding corporations and cities (…), they both have multidisciplinary roots, both address multiple groups of stakeholders, both have a high level of intangibility and complexity, both need to take into account social responsibility, both deal with multiple identities, both need a long term development. In this sense, corporate branding does seem to offer a multitude of lessons for implementing branding within cities"
„The brand of a city is the sum of the perceptions and associations that people have in relation to a particular city" www.ceosforcities.org/rethink/research/files/CEOsforCitiesBrandingYourCity2006.pdf.Or, as John Western pointed, multiculturalism can change the identity of a space, can open it, and make it more attractive(John Western, "Cosmopolitan Europe: a Strasbourg Self-Portrait", Ashgate, 2012)

Experience is a concept associated with a complex place on a visitor's actual interactions with that area. Vincent Gollain, Director of Attractiveness at the ARD (Ile de France Region Development Agency) managed to define so-called marketing mix model, applicable to the regions and cities (see the following diagram).

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"In today's globalized world, cities reflect our collective identity. At the same time, competition between nations for the financial and political predominance is constantly rising. Cities are the starting point for all human activities and therefore valuable networks that have created their own images and brands. Cities are the ambassadors of their countries and their essential goal is to be visible outside their borders. Visibility is a term that contains most of the contemporary cities' expectations; Modern cities, irrespective of their geographical position, aim to attract financial investments, become popular tourist destinations, centers of culture and all in all preserve or improve their current status quo." (Karavazaki, S., The Role of Place Branding for a Sustainable Urban Development in European Cities at a Time of Crisis: A Case Study, Department of Earth Sciences, Uppsala University, Villavägen 16, SE- 752 36, Uppsala, Sweden, No. 141, :10)

In July 2012, Barcelona has become the first city to officially register its name as a brand, at Spanish Patents and Trade Marks Office (OEPM). City officials thought this action as one that would offer them greater control over trading area Barcelona.

"In the age of globalization where intercity competition plays a paramount role, city branding appears as an increasingly relevant field in the wider sectors of public policy and urban governance" (…) "All world's cities, even those that are best placed in terms of economic development, quality of life and international influence, are continually evolving to

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consolidate their position on the global stage and guarantee their citizens a better life and better services. Barcelona, with is culture, entrepreneurial vigor and public spirit, is no exception" (Paganoni M. C.(2015):70)

3. Barcelona – History and vision

Barcelona is a tourist magnet. Since the early 1990s the city has pursued an effective re-imaging strategy. It all started with the 1992 Olympic Game. Catalans authorities have tried to do everything to reinvent the city. Examples are public investments to restore Gaudi's Sagrada Familia (construction commenced in 1882, today, UNESCO World Heritage Site) and Park Guell (built between 1900 and 1914, also World Heritage Site) and the erection of the Montjuic Communication Towers (popularly known as Torre Calatrava and Torre Telefónica, designed by Santiago Calatrava at the Olympic Ring) and the Fish Sculpture (by Frank Gehry, an animal of 56 meters long and 35 meters high[3]).

American sociologist(Florida, R.(2002):23) rank cities according to how competitive they demonstrated their residents or officials are. Above all, cities need to transform into 'plug-and-play' communities. From this perspective Barcelona can be considered a brilliant model.

Barcelona, with just over 1.6 million inhabitants (the entire Greater Metropolitan Area totals 3.8 million), is Spain's second largest city and it is the capital of the Catalonia region. It's the main engine of Spain's economy and accounts for more than 25% of all Spanish exports. It has 101.4 Km2 (4.58 Km of beaches) and is a city with more than 2,000 years of history and rich cultural heritage(http://placebrandobserver.com/rebranding-barcelona-city-branding-case-study/)

Over the last two decades, Barcelona has become a success story. One of the main tourist destinations in Europe, with more and 7.5 million tourists in 2013 – in 2014 and managed to exceed this limit – and is a popular place for corporate, scientific, cultural and sporting events and congresses (https://fortunedotcom.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/ndp_bcn_surpasses_the_7,5_million_tourist_ang.pdf)According to Joan Gaspart, executive president of Turisme de Barcelona "Barcelona's strength as a tourist destination is shown in the diversity of its loyal markets and the variety of

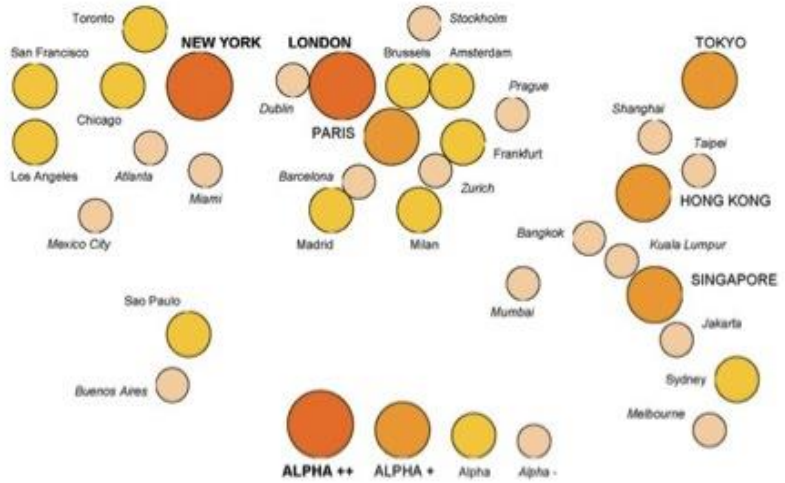
[3] Local authorities from all over the world conceived ambitious strategic visions for urban development, seeking to build up new identity marks for their cities (Bilbao, Malmö, Rotterdam. It was the era of so-called *Starchitects*, such as Rem Koolhaas, Frank Gehry or Norman Foster.

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countries that are sending us more and more tourists. The growth of well-established markets, such as France and the United Kingdom, is particularly important, as is the development of expanding markets, such as China, Scandinavia and Russia".

An important role was played Mayor Pascual Maragall (1982-1997): "The visionary leadership of then Mayor of Barcelona, Pascual Maragall, and the participation of the civil society itself throughout the whole process were essential" (Dinnie, K., (2010):201)

And since 1992, Barcelona started to collect top positions in all charts and hierarchies of the specialists. Anholt – Gfk Roper City Brands Index 2009: Sixth position in terms of brand image, behind Paris, Sydney, London, Rome and New York, and ahead of cities like San Francisco, Los Angeles, Vienna and Madrid; Saffron European City Brand Barometer[4] 2010: The third ranked European city brand together with Munich, behind only Paris and London and in front of many European cities and capitals such as Berlin, Amsterdam, Rome, Vienna or Madrid.



A GaWC cartogram from 2000 representing the city of Barcelona as an Alpha[5] – world city (http://www.newleftproject.org/index.php/site/article_comments/barcelona_and_city_branding)

[4] One of the cities with the greatest awareness, image and reputation on a worldwide scale.

[5] The first ranking of world cities was produced in 1998, by the Global and World Cities Research Network, University of Loughboroughm, at that time cities are divided into alpha, beta or gamma world cities according to how well connected each city was to the global network of producer services.

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In 2010, November 2, was made public the Barcelona long-term vision for city development, document entitled **Strategic Metropolitan Plan of Barcelona–Vision 2020** and structured on several levels: Barcelona brand promotion and management, and products and representative companies, sports clubs, educational system. It was the result of the joint work of over 650 experts in different fields, who collaborated for more than a year to create and shape a projection for the future (http://www.medcities.org/documents/12617/16874/Barcerlona_-_Visi%C3%B3n_2020.pdf/28593a7e-796e-4021-a4e0-fe2d051451fa)

Direct activities of city branding were doubled with legislative initiatives. The approval of PEMB 2020 coincided with the appearance of a new legislative framework: Act 31/2010 of 3 August, creating the Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB).

After this, a new communications strategy was put in place in November 2013 under the idea of Barcelona Inspira (Barcelona Inspires) (http://lameva.barcelona.cat/bcnmetropolis/en/dossier/barcelona-inspira/).

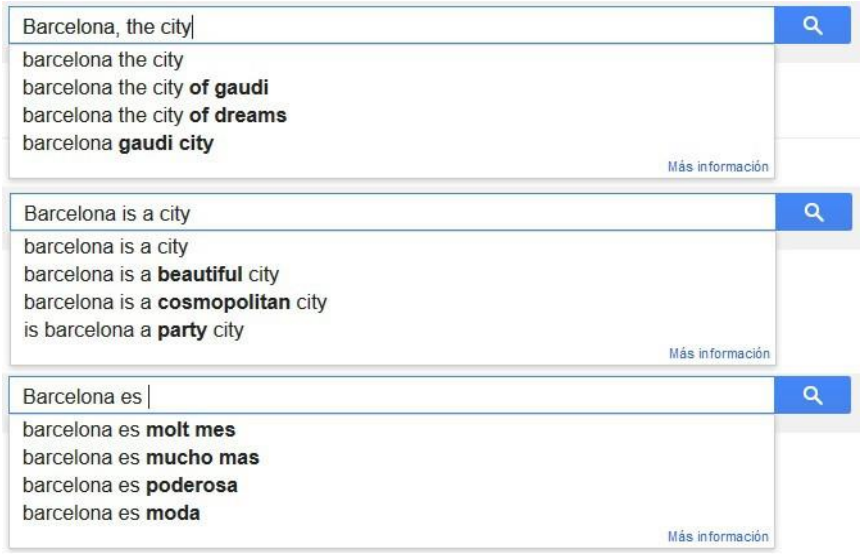
Barcelona officials have managed to impose his city in top of the choices using other methods: reinventing the city (e.g. 22@Barcelona)(; http://www.22barcelona.com/) 'Thematic years' (Gaudí, Picasso, Design, Science...); Products and services (e.g. Custo Barcelona) (http://www.barcelona.com/barcelona_directory/shops/custo_barcelona) New cultural, sports, professional events (ex. Mobile World Congress) (https://www.mobileworldcongress.com/, February 27-March 2 2017); Sport successes (e.g. FCB); Film (e.g. Vicky, Cristina, Barcelona, 2008, romantic comedy drama film, directed by Woody Allen, starring Javier Bardem, Penelope Cruz and Scarlet Johansson) and literature (La Catedral del Mar, a historical novel by Ildefonso Falcones, born 1958).

Sustained efforts proved purposeful lengthy and 2014 Safron Brand Consultants saw Barcelona in sixth position after two cities in North America (Los Angeles and New York), one of Asia (Seoul) and two European (Paris and London).

One of the examples of best branding strategies is Barcelona, according to Jordi Montaña and Isa Moll, publishers of*El poder de la marca*(Profit, 2013).

What is Barcelona?!

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