



CITIES BRANDING AS TOURIST DESTINATION: CASE BARCELONA

Abstract: The competence on the global market of places branding is becoming more rigid. Many cities and regions are trying to present their comparative advantages and to brand them in order to be recognizable with their brand. That enables differentiation and positioning of the regions compared to the other cities as a tourist destination. The places, the cities and the regions that are already affirmed as well as the new places are under big pressure of attracting residents, tourists and investors. They shall achieve that with different forms of marketing, which will create a good image for the city and an excellent basis for creating a familiar brand from the city.

A locality or place can be designated as product, service, person, company or event. The cities, the regions, the countries even the whole continents are competing for their own promotion, through different marketing forms in order to develop positive image and connection with certain destination, with the purpose of motivating tourists to visit them. The road traffic has become one of the main factors for life quality in the modern society and the level of its development and dynamics is one of the basic indicators for economic development. Many theoreticians that deal with branding apply different methods for evaluation of the opportunities of the cities that can be branded. A very important role in creating city brand have the following aspects: development of infrastructure (road, rail, water and air traffic), natural environment, rich historical inheritance, cultural and sport objects, education, urban infrastructure and natural surroundings of the city.

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1. City branding

City and region branding has become one of the leading topics for debate as well as a big challenge for academic, scientific circles and marketing experts in Europe in the first decade of the XXI century.

This topic is very important for the development of urban tourism; therefore, we will explain the theoretic concept further. In the beginning of the XXI century, a group of intellectuals in Europe began debating on marketing and city branding. It is about using different marketing techniques and branding techniques for creating the “*appearance*” – “*image*” of the cities and regions on the international market of territory units (cities, regions). In the recent several decades, the theory of city, region and country branding has become relevant scientific field.¹

¹ Consider the following papers: Erik Braun: *City marketing – Towards an integrated approach* (Rotterdam, Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, 2008); Simon Anholt: *Places : Identity, Image and Reputation*; Palgrave

Before we define the term **brand**, we will give terminological determination of the word brand and its etiology. According to Clifton and Simmons, the word *brand* comes from the old-Norwegian word “*brandr*” translated as: burns.² The old- Norwegian word regarded burning in (marking) of herds with hot objects – signs of the early beginnings of the humanity.³ This word is used in the Anglo-Saxon speaking region with identical meaning.

The term city and region branding is often equated with city and regional marketing, as well as with organized marketing activities of local government to promote opportunities and perspectives of cities and regions and to address target market groups in order to create recognizable image of the territory unit and to acquire developmental and marketing goals. Branding becomes mean for separating a product from one producer and the other producer. Branding is based on creating difference.⁴

2. Marketing of cities and regions

By the end of the 60s of XX century, the term marketing was related only to economic activity. The radical change in defining of marketing was in 1969, when Kotler and Levi gave a wider concept of marketing, increasing the scope of the definition, adding that marketing “*is a social activity that surpasses the sale of tooth pastes, soaps and steel*”.⁵

“*Welcome to marketing! Your passport to success!*” was emphasized by Kotler, Bowen и Makens in their study *Marketing in hotelier and tourism industry*, noting the great importance of the business success. They say that “*the basis of marketing for hotelier and tourism industry is creating values and pleasures for the client*”, “*i.e. the employed should be motivated to create excellent value for their own clients and to deliver pleasure for profit*”.⁶

In theory, there are many definitions of marketing. The term marketing is a model of specific business philosophy, on which the whole business and development politics of the entrepreneurship is based. By application of marketing strategy, a policy directed towards meeting the needs and requirements of customers is created and it is based on production, i.e. to produce what the customers seek. With the assistance of the marketing strategy, the sales sector is modernized, as well as its working technique, because it can not survive in the former level. In practice, it is known by the name “commercial working”. Peter Drucker says that “*marketing is a whole business, from the perspective of its final results, which is from the clients’ perspective...The success in work is not established by the producer, it is established by the client*”.⁷

The more significant authors that dealt with the causes and effects of marketing application on the level of cities and regions by the end of the XX century were *Van den Berg, Klaasen* and *Van der Mee*. They analyze the city marketing from the perspective of growing and intensive international competition of the cities. Their analyzes showed that the growth of life quality and the surroundings of the location combined with intensive space interaction among European cities lead to growth and change of the nature of economic competence among the cities and the regions. As a result of these processes, the number of cities and regions that compete is larger. According to Buursink, the growth of autonomy of the cities and the decentralization of the central government leads to their individual economic and developmental strategy as well as to specific stimuli for introducing marketing of cities.

Macmillan; UK; 2010.; Mark Schneider: *The competitive City*; University of Pittsburgh Press; Baker & Taylor International; 1991.

² Rita Clifton, John Simmons, et. al.: „*Brands and branding*“, The Economist, Bloomberg Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 2003., str. 13.

³ Marko Paliaga (2008): „*Branding & konkurentnost gradova: vizija napretka kroz razliku*“, Rovinj, str. 13.

⁴ Kotler&Keller (2006), Marketing menadgment, XII izdanje, Data status, Beograd, str. 275-276;

⁵ Erik Braun: *City marketing – Towards an integrated approach* ; Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam; Rotterdam; 2008; str. 2-3.

⁶ Kotler, Bowen & Makens (2009), Marketing vo hotelskata industrija i turizmot, DATA PONS, Skopje, str. 6-7

⁷ Kotler, Bowen & Makens (2009), Marketing vo hotelskata industrija i turizmot, DATA PONS, Skopje, str. 3

The competition of cities for providing better and more quality life is described by Kotler as “*war of cities*”.

The term city marketing was first introduced in the research of 1981 devoted to the city Apeldorn of the Netherlands.⁸

In the literature, the term city marketing is often used, and the following terms are used the most:

- regional marketing in the works of Van t Verlaat from 1997;
- urban marketing in the works of Corsico and Ave from 1994;
- municipal marketing used by Mayer;
- the term “place sale” used by Burg and Vard in their works of 1983 and 1988;
- place marketing used by Kotler Philip in his works from 1993 and 1999;
- urban place marketing used by Van der Berg and Brown in their works from 1999;
- geographical marketing in the works of Meester and Pellenbarg and
- destination marketing used in the industry of tourism and tourism studies.⁹

The above stated authors of city marketing defined it as “*marketing directed to promotion of harmonic city capable of meeting the needs of different users, their residents, investors and visitors (tourists)*”.¹⁰ Professors Koteski and Jakovlev think that tourism marketing is investment, not expenditure.¹¹

3. Kotler strategy of city promotion

In the academic circles, the most accepted definition of brand was created by Philip Kotler, who defines the brand as: *name, title, term, mark, symbol or design, or a combination of all stated elements with the purpose of identification of certain good or service of one salesman or many salesmen and differentiation of goods and services compared to other competitors (rivals)*.¹² The basic Kotler’s idea is to represent the brand as advantage and capital for the company.

Kotler identifies four strategies for promotion of place: “*Place as character*”, “*Place as built surroundings*”, “*Place as service provider*” and “*Place for entertainment and recreation*”. We shall further explain the meaning of the stated strategies for cities promotion.

By direct application of the strategy “*Place as character*”, the design of cities with a function of improving their own attractiveness and deeply developing their own aesthetic qualities, thus creating specific experience of the place is enabled.¹³

The strategy “*Place as built surroundings*” entails a requirement for the place to develop and manage with basic infrastructure compatible to natural surroundings of the places.

The strategy “*Place as service provider*” entails that places should provide basic services whose quality is based on the real needs of the community and the companies. The strategy “**Place for entertainment and recreation**” entails that the place has a variety of attractions for the citizens and visitors.¹⁴

⁸ Erik Braun: *City marketing – Towards an integrated approach*; Rotterdam, Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam; Rotterdam; 2008; str. 29.

⁹ Erik Braun: *City marketing – Towards an integrated approach* ; Rotterdam, Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam; Rotterdam; 2008; str. 29-30.

¹⁰ Ibid, str. 31;

¹¹ Koteski, C.& Jakovlev, Z. (2014), Marketing vo ugostitelstvoto I turizmot, 2-ti avgust, Shtip, str. 13;

¹² Philip Kotler, Gary Armstrong : *Principles of Marketing* ; Prentice Hall; 1991, str. 442.

¹³ Mihalis Kavaratzis: *From City Marketing to City Branding – An interdisciplinary analysis with reference to Amsterdam, Budapest and Athens* ; Groningen, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 2008; , str.. 35-36.

¹⁴ Philip Kotler, Christer Asplund, Irving Rein and Donald H. Haider: *Marketing Places Europe – How to attract investments, industries, residents and visitors to cities, communities, regions and nations in Europe* (London, Financial Times, Prentice Hall, 1999), str.126.

3.1 Barcelona – the construction of new image and city brand

The city of Barcelona is located in the administrative region of Catalonia. The region participates with 20% in the total Gross domestic product (GDP) in Spain. Barcelona is one of the rarest European cities that has a huge wealth in the brand, as investment destination, as tourist destination and as cultural tourism destination. In the research of ECM (*European Cities Monitor*) for 2010, Barcelona took the fifth place on the list – “*The best cities for locating the business in Europe*”. When it comes to tourist brand of Barcelona, it is ranked in the group of “*Top 5 most efficient cities regarding the night’s stay of foreign tourists in 2010*”.¹⁵ In 2010, Barcelona was visited by more than 10 million tourists. According to ECM ranking, Barcelona had better placement for several years than the main regional competitor Madrid.¹⁶

According to the analysis of *Mastercard Global Destination Cities Index*, Barcelona was on the 18th place of the most visited cities by international tourists in the world of 9.06 million international travelers for 2017. Only London and Paris come before Barcelona from the European Metropolitan cities regarding the number of tourists.

When it comes to tourism, Barcelona is one of the most attractive European destinations of congress tourism. According to the data of the International Congress and Convention Association for 2011, Barcelona is ranked on the third place within European and world frameworks with 150 organized congresses and conventions.¹⁷ Only Vienna (181 events) and Paris (174 events) are ranked before Barcelona. From the previously stated data and international ranking, we can see the modern touristic position of Barcelona as the main Spanish brand and one of the most important European city brands in the field of tourism and attracting tourists.

3.2 “Gaudi gambit” as a basis for construction of image and urban regeneration of Barcelona

Up to the seventies of the XX century, Barcelona had an image of harbor and industrial city and it was almost not known as tourist destination. The creation of modern brand for Barcelona began by adopting the local strategy for urban regeneration of the city. The mayor of that time, Pasqual Maragall and his successor Joan Clos, played a huge role in the process of urban restoration of Barcelona and in the transformation to a large financial benefit for the city, by positioning it in the top business – investment and tourist destinations.¹⁸

In the search for “*one (unique) sale’s characteristics for the city*” and for a new form of identity, Barcelona decided to establish a concept of personal branding and to direct the associations with the city on international level towards the local artist – architect and designer Antoni Gaudi.¹⁹

The image of Barcelona in Spain on European as well as on international level became inseparable with Gaudi, who provided creative dimension of the city, a basis for further cultural profiling and creating cultural and touristic products that are sustainable on long term and that are factors which support the new cultural image of the city. Due to the successful completion of the city branding process, this technique is known as “*Gaudi gambit*” in the literature, a name that is a sign of recognition for successful branding of Barcelona in 1980s.

¹⁵ *European Cities Monitor 2010-Summary*; Cushman & Wakefield – Global real estate solutions; str. 3.

¹⁶ *European Cities Monitor 2009*; Cushman & Wakefield – Global real estate solutions; 2009; str.7.

¹⁷ See: *International Congress and Convention Association: Statistic Report 2002-2011 – International Association Meetings Market*, Abstract for International Associations, press, universities, students and consultants; ICCA; July 2012; str. 52.

¹⁸ Philip Kotler, Christer Asplund, Irving Rein and Donald H. Haider:” *Marketing Places Europe – how to attract investments, industries, residents and visitors to cities, communities, regions and nations in Europe*”, Financial Times, Prentice Hall, p. 203.

¹⁹ Повеќе види во: Lukovic, Dragan (2013), *Brendiranje gradova i regiona: teorijske osnove i praksa u Istocnoj i Zapadnoj Evropi (doktorska disertacija)*, FPN, Univerzitet u Beogradu, str. 28-33;

The city branding of Barcelona would not have been successful without the international marketing agencies that advertised the art work of Gaudi. The Olympic games of 1992, organized by this city, contributed a lot to affirmation of the brand Barcelona as attractive tourist destination. The city government lead by the mayor Maragall directed all resources to construction of local infrastructure and sport objects and he emphasized that “when visitors of Olympiad arrived in Barcelona, they were welcomed in the new airport, the new train, the new motorway, the new hotels, the new museum and the restored sea shore. The system of city transport and telecommunication system were additionally restored for this event”.²⁰

Conclusion

The creation of destination brand entails development of marketing strategy for destination branding. Certain sports events, film and music festivals, cultural manifestations, natural beauties, well known and popular people that originate from certain cities, regions and countries, with the assistance of good marketing and intensive media coverage (advertising) can function as branding of certain tourist destination. The small cities, which are potentials and opportunities of creating positive image of the country, are shadowed by the bigger Metropolitan cities. The big cities in the world and Europe have become the largest tourist destinations. Therefore, the city tourism is mostly identified with the big cities and their urban development. The urban development dictates the urban tourism. There are national cultural institutions (museums, art galleries, theatres, opera, ballet), sport terrains (stadiums, sport halls, tennis courts, sport centers) as well as malls, business and congress centers in the big cities.

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