

Culture as a way of Redefining Image: Guimarães, European Cultural Capital 2012

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Abstract

In a highly competitive environment, where needs and desires of individuals are in constant evolution, one of the main challenges of cities lies in their ability to differentiate themselves and add value for residents, workers, visitors and investors. In order to attract potential target audiences (new residents, workers, tourists, investors) and maximizing the city's potential, place marketing actions and city branding techniques have become key instruments for local governments. Therefore, some cities have elected culture as a privileged means of gaining competitive advantage and disassociate themselves from an industrial tradition.

In this sense, the goal of this study is to understand how a medium-sized city with an industrial background can redefine its image through culture. Given the nature of the problem, it has been adopted a case-study research methodology, having been selected Guimarães European Cultural Capital 2012 (ECC 2012) brand as unit of analysis. The analysis was conducted using a mixed approach based on desk research and questionnaires to the brand's target audience (n = 938).

Introduction

In a global economy, where competition between cities for foreign investment, visitors and residents has been strongly increasing, the simple adoption of strategies designed to promote the city is not enough [1]. Consequently, it is important for cities the adoption of a marketing strategy, instead of purely operational marketing initiatives focused only on the promotion of the city. The formulation of a marketing strategy capable of creating a strong, unique and distinctive identity for the city that somehow is valued by its target audience is a way for cities to assert themselves in an increasingly competitive environment [2]. Therefore, for the city to position itself favourably in relation to other cities it needs to have a positive image and to be able to respond to a changing environment. It is in this challenging context of globalization and increasing competition between cities that the application of marketing techniques finds its foundation, in the sense that it allows cities to strengthen and sustain their position and achieve a competitive advantage. In this sense, culture and cultural events, such as European Cultural Capital (ECC), have been seen as a way to improve the city's image, strengthen its identity, attract new audiences and stimulate economic and social development as well as urban regeneration.

The aim of this study is to understand how a medium-sized city with an industrial background can redefine its image through culture. To this end, the study analyzes the Guimarães ECC 2012 brand in terms of its identity, object and market. Thus, the research questions of this study are the following: Q1: What is the identity of the Guimarães ECC 2012

brand?; Q2: How was the Guimarães ECC 2012 brand marketing-mix developed?; and Q3: What is the target audiences reaction to Guimarães ECC 2012 brand?

The research is organized as follows. Firstly, it is presented a brief literature review on place marketing and city branding. Secondly, the research methodology is explained, regarding data collection and the analysis methods. Finally, it is presented the findings and conclusions of the study as well as the limitations and further research.

Literature Review

City marketing can be understood as a “process by which urban activities are planned and developed, as far as possible, from the point of view of demand (i.e. target audiences) in order to maximize the economic and social city functions, according to the goals set” [3, p.4]. The application of marketing techniques to cities shouldn’t be seen only as a means of selling the city but as an essential tool in the planning and development of the city and the local economy. In this sense, city marketing can be an effective tool to turn the city attractive and competitive in its target markets [4].

Thus, city marketing operates for different types of audiences, including an internal audience that the city must retain (residents, workers and organizations installed in the area), and an external audience that the city needs to attract (residents of other cities, visitors, tourists and investors) [5]. For this reason, it is important to establish a link between the city and its target audiences [6]. Consequently, the crucial issue for the city marketing is the perception formed by audiences in relation to the city [7]. The encounter between the individual and the city produces a number of different messages, sometimes conflicting with each other, that form an image of the city in the mind of the individual [8]. Therefore, the city’s image can be defined as the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions of individuals towards the city [1]. The city’s image is the result of a passive process of communication on which the influence of the city is limited. On the other hand, the city’s identity is “a sum of characteristics that differentiate the place from other place” [9, p. 73].

In this sense, the formulation of a strategy capable of creating a unique and strong city’s identity, which is valued by its target audiences, is essential to improve city’s position [2]. As a result, the process of developing and managing a brand should be continuous, consistent and integrated into a global marketing strategy [10].

According to Lencastre and Côte-Real [11], the creation of a city’s brand must be founded on three fundamental pillars: brand identity, brand object and brand market. This perspective is central to our research.

Brand Identity

Brand identity is defined by the American Marketing Association as the “name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers”¹. Thus, Lencastre and Côte-Real [11] distinguish three levels of brand identity (identity-mix): core identity, current identity and enlarged identity. The name is the most distinctive element of the brand, therefore it is the core identity of the brand [10]. The current identity is the graphical expressions of the brand registered or liable to be registered (font, colour and design of the logo). Finally, the enlarged identity corresponds to all other signs of the brand’s identity, which are susceptible of legal protection (e.g. slogan, character).

However, the creation of a city brand cannot be limited to the creation of an identity for the city. The relation between the brand and its audience is a crucial issue for the success of the brand, since it is necessary that the functional attributes and symbolic values of the brand meet the physical and psychological needs of the brand’s audience [8]. It is in this sense

that the second pillar (object) and the third pillar (market) are important in the branding process.

Brand Object

The object of the brand can be “normalized as a series of concentric levels of marketing actions developed around the core product” [11, p. 107]. The product-mix of the brand can be more or less extensive depending on the number of categories the brand offers. For Kotler *et al.* [1], city marketing-mix must be founded on four strategies that represent the basis for a competitive advantage: urban design (place as character), infrastructure (place as a fixed environment), basic services (place as a service provider) and attractions (place as entertainment and recreation).

In the context of the construction or redefinition of a brand, urban design plays a key role in the sense that it is the reflection of the history and culture of the city. On the other hand, infrastructures are the tacit operationalization of the design strategy defined. Regarding to basic services, namely security and education, they interfere with the city’s ability to attract and retain people and investments. Thus, these two indicators can be used as an advantage in the communication strategy of the brand. Finally, the attractions are the physical characteristics and events available in a city. For Kotler *et al.* [1], the most important attractions in the city are: natural landscapes, historical places or famous people, shopping zones, cultural activities, recreation and entertainment spaces, stadiums/sport halls, events, buildings, monuments and city residents.

Brand Market

The third and last pillar of the brand is the market, i.e., the brand target audiences (public-mix) and their response to the brand [11]. Different audiences create different interpretations and reactions to the brand (response-mix). Based on these responses and their acceptance, it is possible to determine the assertiveness of the outlined strategy. In this sense, Anholt [12] proposed a tool for evaluating the attractiveness of a city based on 6 P’s: presence, place, potential, pulse, people and prerequisites.

The presence refers to the city reputation. The place is related to the physical aspects of the city (architecture, green spaces). The potential considers the economic and educational opportunities offered by the city to its audiences. The city pulse is related to the lifestyle, cultural and leisure activities provided by the city. The people component evaluates the hospitality and openness of city’s residents, as well as the feeling of security transmitted to visitors. At last, the prerequisites correspond to the basic qualities of the city, in terms of amenities, infrastructures and services (public and private).

In this sense, some cities have invested in the identification of unique expressions of identity and used culture and mega events, as ECC, to reinforce its competitiveness and attractiveness [13]. This research analyzes the last of these events: Guimarães ECC 2012.

Research Methodology

Given the nature of the problem, the research methodology adopted was the case-study. As unit of analysis, we have selected the Guimarães ECC 2012 brand. Guimarães is a medium-sized city, where the secondary sector is the main basis of both economy and employment. Additionally, the city has a vast historical and cultural heritage, as well as the visibility given by the title of European Cultural Capital 2012. Thus, the city has privileged conditions to enhance its image. Therefore, this study is intended to understand how this transformation has been developing and which has been the impact on its target audiences.

Research Design and Data Collection

The empirical analysis was conducted using a mixed approach based on both desk research and intensive application of questionnaires to the brand's target audiences.

The combination of data collected through desk research aimed to answer Q1 and Q2. For this study, it was adopted the three levels of brand identity proposed by Lencastre and Côrte-Real [11] and the variables of marketing-mix from the model of Kotler *et al.* [1]. The responses obtained by questionnaire were measured using five-point Likert scale and the indicators for measuring the image of the city (Q3) were adopted from Anholt [12]. In order to determine the degree of knowledge and participation on the event, questionnaires also had a set of questions about the involvement and familiarity of target audiences with the event and city. The online questionnaire allowed to inquire residents and potential visitors of Guimarães. In the same way, it was requested the assistance of Commercial and Industrial Association of Guimarães (in the realization of the questionnaire to workers) and the authorization of Fundação Cidade de Guimarães (City of Guimarães Foundation) and the city's cultural institutions to carry out the questionnaires to the audience of six events of the cultural program Guimarães 2012. The analysis of the questionnaires was performed using the IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 20, and the Microsoft Excel 2007.

Sample Design

The random sampling frame consists of 189 residents, 224 workers, 299 audience of ECC events and 226 potential visitors of the city. As a result, the effective sample size of the study was 938.

Findings

During the whole year of 2012 Guimarães was the hostess of the ECC event. The main goal of Guimarães ECC 2012 project was the use of culture as a catalyst for socio-economic development of the city and the region [14]. Additionally, it aims at promoting the access to culture, value the collective heritage and implement a vast urban regeneration program, in order to complement the symbolic capital of the city.

Thus, Guimarães selected as central theme "Identity and Innovation" as a way to express the interaction between two perspectives: "the connection of the city to its past as the crib of the nation, identity and tradition; that at the same time it is a creative, entrepreneurial, participative and dynamic city" [14, p. 64].

Guimarães ECC 2012 Brand Identity

The main objective of Guimarães ECC 2012 brand creation was extending the city symbolic value. To accomplish this, the city invested in a brand identity that intends to reflect its cultural diversity, as well as, its historical legacy.

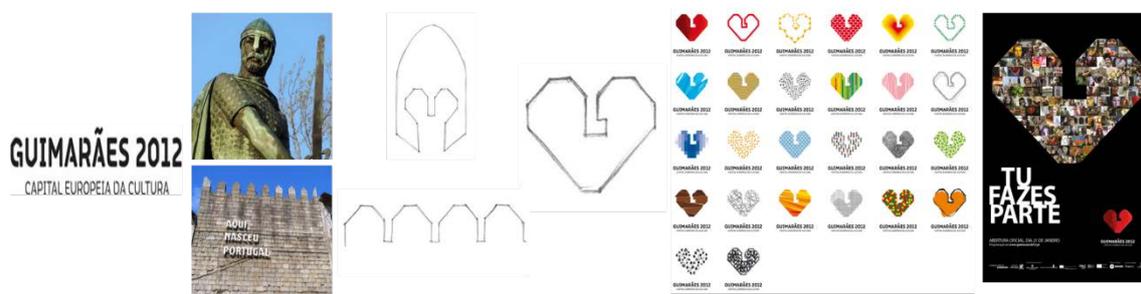
It is a common practice in the hostesses of the ECC event to use name of the city associated to the event, since it enables to give notoriety to the city itself and promotes the ECC event at the same time. For this reason the brand core identity is "Guimarães 2012, European Cultural Capital" in uppercases and stencil font, providing a contrast very evocative of the city's urban culture that combines the tradition with the contemporary. In addition, the color black transmits a sense of strength, power, nobility, elegance and distinction.

The current identity (graphic expression of the brand) reflects what the city has of truly differentiating and nationally and internationally recognized, its history and legacy. The design of the logo "aggregates allegorically the walls representing the heritage, the visor of a helmet that pays tribute to the vision of D. Afonso Henriques [first king of Portugal] (...) and

it is concluded in the form of a heart, evoking the pride and sense of belonging of city's residents towards Guimarães" [15, p.16]. Designed to be visually distinctive, protecting this way its recognition, the logo enables the participation, involvement and appropriation of the brand.

Regarding the enlarged identity, the brand has focused on creating various slogans, according to the stage of the communication program. The first slogans intended to appeal to what will happen in Guimarães: "Guimarães: Is where everything happens" (nationwide launching campaign of the brand, on August 2010), "This Brand is for You" and "Do you want to meet me on 28?" (for the launching of the brand in the city, on July 2010). The second slogan was "And Everything Changes" and it was created for the moments that led to the opening of ECC event, on January 21st, 2012. The latest slogans were "What Guimarães are you?" and "You are part of it", which summarized the spirit of the event and the brand, and aimed the involvement and participation of the local, national and European communities.

Figure 1. Core, Current and Enlarged Identity of Guimarães ECC 2012 brand



Guimarães ECC 2012 Brand Object

In order to enhance the city's identity, it is crucial that the city's physical appearance, the infrastructures, the services and the attractions convey a consistent message to the city's target audiences. Therefore, Fundação Cidade de Guimarães defines as mission for Guimarães ECC 2012 "generate a vibrant creative energy in Guimarães, through a strong community involvement, contributing to urban, social and economic regeneration of the city, consolidating its resources and cultural offer and creating in the memory and aspirations of the people a new dynamic and a wide cultural landscape" [14, p. 35]. Thus, the interventions in the city can be summarized into four types: urban design, infrastructures, basic services and attractions, which are the areas of intervention defined by Kotler *et al.* [1].

Regarding to the urban design, the city privileged the consolidation of the different times and spaces that exist in the city, as well as projects of rehabilitation of city's heritage and recovery of urban voids. In terms of infrastructures, the city has privileged the redevelopment of public spaces and buildings (e.g. transformation de old facilities into cultural spaces), namely in terms of technological and support infrastructures.

With regard to basic services, Kotler *et al.* [1] stress as fundamental factors for a competitive edge the security and the education service of the city. The country itself is seen as safe, which nurtures and promotes the city's image as a safe place, as confirmed by the study of CCDRN [16], in which security is one of the indicators best rated by tourists (8.1 in 10 points), who visit Guimarães. The education service was involve in the diverse projects of ECC, namely the University of Minho and the Artistic School. Nonetheless, the city felt the necessity to increase the city educational offer (e.g. CampUrbis) particularly in the areas of design and arts, in order to increase the attractiveness of the city for college students and develop new paradigms of teaching and learning (education-culture-economic activity).

Finally, we highlight the city's attractions that may present themselves as an asset in the consolidation of the city as a cultural attraction. Guimarães has several cultural spaces, among which are museums, auditoriums and galleries, as well as different cultural associations that have their own installations and cultural production. During the years of 2011 and 2012, Guimarães increased the number of cultural spaces with the implementation of five significant projects: Platform for Arts and Creativity, ASA Factory, Living Science Center, Center for Art and Architecture Affairs and House of Memory of Guimarães. In terms of events, Guimarães has several annual cultural initiatives, beyond the programming of ECC 2012. The popular festivals take place mainly in summer, such as the Gualterianas Feast, whose origin dates back to the fairs of D. Afonso V (15th century), and the Nicolinas (an academic feast). With a higher visibility a city offers other events, such as the Gil Vicente Festival (initiated in 1987) and the Guimarães Jazz Festival (initiated in 1991). Similarly, the Alphonsine Fair, which had its first edition in 2011, had a more extended program in 2012, which included medieval pageants and dances, artisans and workshops throughout the city. As historical sites, monuments and buildings a few can be highlighted, such as the Latito Hill with the Castel of Guimarães (10th century), the Church of St. Michael (13th century), the Palace of the Dukes of Braganza (15th century) and the São Mamede Field. It is also worth noting the historical centre of Guimarães, which was classified as World Cultural Heritage in 2001. It presents an abundant and rich architectural heritage representative of the 15th to the 19th centuries, where the continued use of techniques and traditional building materials allowed to conserve the medieval environment of the city. Guimarães is a city with a strong heritage, but it has managed over the years to establish a coherent link between tradition and modernity, that allowed it to have a relevant heritage and architectural image. In the historic centre, it is possible to find shops with regional products (e.g. Guimarães embroideries, linens, ceramics), as well as clothing and footwear stores with their own design created by local businesses. Ultimately, Kotler *et al.* (1993) refers as an attraction of the city its own inhabitants. In some of national and international publications, it is possible to find some references about the characteristics and nature of Guimarães citizens: "City with its own identity, preserved in the spaces and the people" (ESCAPE.PT^[2]), with "a vibrant art scene", which result from the fact that "more than half [of the population] have less than 30 years" (Rough Guides^[3]). Also it is mentioned, by LoneyPlanet^[4], New York Times^[5] and Wall Street Journal^[6], the "patriotism of the city", the "warrior tradition", the "reputation of hospitality" and the "gregarious feeling" lived across town.

Guimarães ECC 2012 Brand Market

Regarding the brand market, the sample consisted of 189 residents, 224 workers, 299 audience of ECC events and 226 potential visitors of the city. The sample comprised residents from the city's center (52%) and outside the city (48%), workers connected to areas with strong contact with residents and visitors (trade and services – 45%), potential employees and investors (industry, construction and support services to industry – 46%), as well as in the area of culture and cultural production (education and artistic activities – 9%). Relatively to the audience of ECC events, the majority is from the north coast of Portugal (85%) and the foreign respondents (15%) are mostly from Spain, Brazil and United Kingdom. At last, most of the potential visitors of the city came from the north of Portugal.

As regards to the degree of residents and workers involvement with the ECC, it was found that they actively participate and seek to connect with the event. The majority of the residents (96%) have attended one or more events of ECC. About 68% of the workers are involved through the volunteer program and initiatives undertaken in the areas of trade, education and vocational training. Others feel as an important element of information,

dissemination and promotion of the event and the city to customers, colleagues, friends and family.

Regarding to the audience of ECC events and the potential visitors, it appears that they have a great familiarity with Guimarães. In relation to the audience of ECC events, 42% had already visited Guimarães, of these 13% were in the city between 1 to 5 years ago and 17.7% came to Guimarães two or more time during 2012. The audience of ECC events showed a high level of satisfaction, since 62.9% intend to come back again and all respondents recommend a visit to the city. Of the 226 potential visitors, 35.5% became aware of the city through previous visits and 23.6% by relatives or friends. The majority (96%) had already been in Guimarães, those 44.7% were in the city between 1 to 5 years ago and 38.1% came to Guimarães two or more times during 2012. Once again, the degree of satisfaction is high, 94.7% of the respondents think to come back again and 95.6% recommend a visit to the city.

In relation to the perceptions of brand target audiences, the majority of the respondents have a positive image of Guimarães. From the six components defined by Anholt (2006), “People” has the highest rate and “Presence” has the lowest evaluation. This reveals that the city’s target audiences have an excellent perception of city’s residents and city’s safety, but less good impression of the city’s notoriety, namely at an international level.

Table 1. Perceptions about the “Presence and “People of Guimarães

	Residents	Workers	ECC Events Audience	Potential Visitors
PRESENCE	3.67	3.80	3.72	3.17
Visibility of Guimarães at a national level	3.98	4.06	4.11	3.79
Visibility of Guimarães at an international level	3.35	3.54	3.33	2.54
PEOPLE	4.50	4.25	4.50	3.96
Hospitality	4.62	4.39	4.57	3.95
Sympathy	4.62	4.41	4.60	3.96
Security	4.27	3.95	4.33	3.96

As regards to “Potential”, respondents evaluated the Guimarães potential in the following order: “place to visit”, “place to live”, “place to study” and “place to work”.

Table 2. Perceptions about the “Potential” of Guimarães

	Residents	Workers	ECC Events Audience	Potential Visitors
POTENTIAL	4.40	4.34	4.26	3.48
Place to Visit	4.84	4.74	4.82	4.38
Place to Live	4.58	4.40	4.23	3.36
Place to Study	4.30	4.22	4.19	3.11
Place to Work	3.90	4.01	3.80	3.08

Regarding, the indicators about the physical aspects of the city (“Place”), the best rated is “beauty” followed by “singularity” (in the case of residents and potential visitors) and “architecture” (in the opinion of workers and events audience). Indicators like “weather” and “urban design” have the lowest evaluations on this dimension.

Table 3. Perceptions about the “Place”

	Residents	Workers	ECC Events Audience	Potential Visitors
PLACE	4.36	4.29	4.31	3.82
Beauty	4.80	4.72	4.66	4.15
Weather	4.01	4.10	3.78	3.55
Cleanliness	4.30	4.20	4.36	3.78
Singularity	4.53	4.25	4.47	4.02
Architecture	4.41	4.37	4.51	3.94
Urban Design	4.04	4.03	4.10	3.55
Nature/Landscape	4.42	4.33	4.32	3.78

Concerning the indicators used to measure the city’s “Pulse”, the best rated are “heritage” (with about 80% of respondents rated with five points) and “culture”. On the other hand, and despite the fact that the questionnaires were conducted halfway through the year 2012, “events” has the lowest evaluation by the local community (residents and workers) and the indicators “lifestyle” and “leisure activities” have a less positive evaluation by the events audience and potential visitors.

Finally, with respect to the city’s “Prerequisites”, “quality of mobile phone network” has the highest evaluation, while among the less positive aspects stand out the “health care service” and “public transportation” with ratings of less than four points.

Table 4. Perceptions about the “Pulse” and “Prerequisites” of Guimarães

	Residents	Workers	ECC Events Audience	Potential Visitors
PULSE	4.42	4.25	4.35	3.89
Heritage	4.87	4.80	4.84	4.66
Culture	4.52	4.38	4.51	4.24
Gastronomy	4.46	4.37	4.33	3.77
Lifestyle	4.28	4.04	4.06	3.51
Leisure Activities	4.10	3.98	4.07	3.47
Events	4.26	3.93	4.28	3.71
PREREQUISITES	4.14	3.99	4.19	3.66
Environment Quality	4.17	4.08	4.23	3.87
Accommodation	4.02	4.00	4.17	3.61
Restoration	4.25	4.21	4.24	3.76
Educational Service	4.11	3.99	4.24	3.46
Health Care Service	3.73	3.56	3.80	3.34
Public Transportation	3.72	3.65	3.87	3.23
Sporting Venues	4.27	4.07	4.17	3.53
Leisure Spaces	4.27	4.17	4.20	3.67
Accessibility	4.13	3.85	4.28	3.89
Quality of Mobile Network	4.53	4.25	4.59	4.06
Quality of Internet Network	4.29	4.10	4.32	3.88

Conclusions

This study focused on the analysis of Guimarães ECC 2012 brand, in terms of its identity, object and market. Data gathered in the empirical work provided a range of results,

which reports the redefinition of the city's image, especially in view of ECC 2012 target audiences.

Regarding the identity (question Q1), the city invested in a brand identity based on its positive and consolidated image as historic city with a heritage recognized, as a way of giving meaning to the brand and ensuring identification by its audiences. Likewise, it is clear that brand identity-mix appeals to the involvement of the brand audience and sense of belonging to the place, as well as to the creative ability, innovation, art and culture. Thus, we can conclude that city's identity was defined based on its unique historical and cultural value, as well as its creative and innovative potential.

In order to enhance the city's identity, it was adopted a marketing-mix strategy (question Q2) based on projects of conservation and rehabilitation of city's heritage, new cultural and educational infrastructures that enable the creation of new cultural products and, at the same time, operate as new attractions of the city for students, residents, workers and visitors.

Finally, relatively to brand market (question Q3), the majority of the respondents developed a positive image of Guimarães. Regarding the indicators used to measure the city's image, the best rated are "heritage", "place to visit" and "beauty". On the other hand, perceptions about the "international visibility", "public transportation" and "health care service" have less positive evaluations. Despite the Guimarães' image as a cultural city isn't yet consolidated, there is already a positive perception of its cultural aspects.

To sum up, ECC 2012 event enabled to develop a strong, unique and distinct identity and renew the pride of its citizens. Simultaneously, the event permitted to add a new life to the city, which incited a visit of "old" and "new" visitors and create the bases in terms of infrastructures and knowledge to accomplish the goal of cultural city.

Limitations and Further research

The main limitation of this research is the representativeness of the results, since it isn't possible to generalize the findings of a case study. In the same way, it isn't possible to extrapolate the findings to the universe of the target audiences of the Guimarães ECC 2012 brand, because the study focused only on the perception of residents, workers, audiences of ECC events and potential visitors, leaving aside cultural institutions, partners, sponsors and European market.

Given the limitations of this study, further research might examine in greater depth the image of the city with a broader sample (e.g. sample per share) that would include all target audiences (local community, audience of the events, cultural institutions, partners, sponsors and European market). Another research direction would be to compare the results of this study with the results from future studies of other ECC, particularly in terms of the city's image.

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