

## Cultural heritage as an element of marketing strategy in European historic cities

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### Summary

*The issues discussed in this presentation concern the importance of cultural heritage in the development of a European historic city, as well as the influence that economic development can have on a city's cultural heritage. The significance of cultural heritage is shown from a perspective of the four main reasons for marketing a city: attraction of tourism, attraction of investment and development of industry and entrepreneurship, attraction of new residents and, finally, influence on the local community – internal marketing.*

### Introduction

City marketing is a relatively new field of scientific research. Some people see it only as a set of tools and methods serving the purpose of selling the unique product of a city. But city marketing goes beyond this notion; it involves, above all, the fashioning of the product and its image in such a way that its recipients will see it as we wish them to. Therefore, city marketing has an extremely important function to play, forming a kind of bridge between the potential represented by the city, and the use of this potential for the benefit of the local society, nation, and even in geographically and socially wider terms. With relation to European historic cities, this wide scale seems to be particularly relevant, as they usually fulfil two roles at the same time. On one hand, they form cultural centres with a strong local identity (People from Cracow, when asked 'Where are you from?', will probably answer 'I am from Cracow, Poland'; people from Granada will answer 'I am from Granada, Andalusia' (BAUTISTA, 1997). On the other hand, they possess a rather cosmopolitan character, not only through the reception of many incomers but also because they are alive in the minds of many people living far away from them, and of people who will probably never visit them (every child in Poland learns about Cracow, but only certain number of them will ever visit it). We all know of cities with great heritage potential which are poor and unsuccessful in their activities. A rationally composed and responsibly carried out marketing strategy of the city would in most cases help to overcome the gap between the cultural potential and the actual city image and activities (ASHWORTH, 1991).

In the following the importance of cultural heritage in the development of European historic cities is discussed but also the influence that economic development can have on cultural heritage in a city.

Why should we care about the marketing of a city? There are four main reasons, and each of them deserves separate treatment in the city's marketing strategy (KARMOWSKA, 1996):

- Attraction of tourists.
- Attraction of investment and development of industry and entrepreneurship.
- Attraction of new residents.
- Influence on the local community – internal marketing.

### Tourism

The most obvious connection will be with tourism, the biggest industry in the world and the main source of income for many countries and cities. In the case of European historic cities, rich in material and non-material heritage, tourism represents an important factor in their functioning and development. Europeans, forming a relatively rich and well-educated society, show the greatest tendency to travel with cultural and cognitive purposes, and European cities – with their long tradition, huge amount of collected, preserved and accessible traces of European culture and tradition, as well as relatively low cost and short time necessary for travel – are their natural choice.

But attracting as many tourists as possible to a city does not necessarily serve it well. It usually results in never-ending lines of coaches passing through the city, and with tourists in a hurry to run and take photos of the most popular monuments. These tourists are often lodged at other places (at the seaside, in the country) or stay in their coaches trying to visit as many sites as they can manage. They do not leave much money in our city; they only leave garbage and car exhaust from their means of transport. The entrance fees to overcrowded monuments are usually not high enough to cover their renovation costs, needed because of crowds of people trampling, touching and photographing everything that they find on their way. Their money will be spent somewhere else, in the places where they stay, eat and shop. Granada is a very good example here. Tourists, who usually stay at the seaside in Malaga or Marbella and spend their money there on accommodation and other attractions, come for a one-day organised tour to Alhambra, visit

and leave for supper in their hotels. Granada, which obviously has much more to offer, does not profit much from them (ORBASLI, 2000; JUNTA DE ANDALUCIA, 1993).

However, if the city is able to present its heritage in a specialised, focused way in order to attract people truly interested in the uniqueness of the city and somehow discourage others to come, there will probably be fewer tourists, but they will stay for a longer time, spending their funds in the city itself. Such tourists will be also 'cheaper' for the city in economic and social terms. While mass tourism deserves many adjustments in relation to infrastructure and other issues involved in the tourists' reception, lots of standardisation intervening deeply in the local way of life, in the local culture – the 'specialised' tourist will have more of a tendency to appreciate the unexpected, the things that differentiate the location from other tourist places. Such a tourist is likely to enjoy an old-fashioned pension, instead of modern standard hotels with big parking lots. Even old, deteriorating roads can be found romantic by the tourist who wants to look deeply into the cultural heritage of our European historic cities, but roads of this kind will obviously form a serious problem for mass tourism. Niche marketing strategies will be especially relevant in such cases, with precise customer segmentation, and a choice of specialised media as well as group leaders for image communication.

Effective marketing of the city's cultural heritage will also result in a more uniform distribution of tourists within the city. They will not only crowd onto the main tract but, knowing what to look for and being truly interested, they will disperse to enjoy more of the specialities of the city. In Cracow, for example, somebody interested in fortifications will not only go to see the Barbican, City Walls, and the Florian Gate, but will also go to the outskirts of Cracow to Podgórze, to Zielonki or Fort Kleparz to see the marvellous examples of fortification that are to be found there. As a result, the main monuments would be less crowded, thus assisting their preservation.

Cultural heritage is also an important factor in the competition between cities when organising conferences and congresses, which is one of the most important sources of income for many European historic cities. Every conference organiser needs people who would like to participate. The decision is obviously made on the basis of merit, but conference life does not only consist of sessions. There is also a social aspect to them, and the conference organisers usually look for a good location. European historic cities, with their rich cultural life and many places to visit, suit this purpose extremely well.

### **Investment and entrepreneurship**

Although not in as obvious a way as in the case of tourism, cultural heritage also plays a significant role in attracting capital investment and entrepreneurship to the city. This economical aspect is especially vital in industrial places, but also historic cities cannot resign from basing city development on industry, although for environmental reasons (for the preservation of material and non-material cultural heritage) they cannot be considered good locations for industry. This is not entirely true, however, because in some ways they can be very well-equipped for economic and industrial development. Rich in history and tradition, European historic cities with an accumulation of historic knowledge usually play the role of educational centres on a regional or – in most cases – European scale. This gives them the opportunity to be a location for a high-tech and knowledge industry. Combining a well-educated workforce with a pleasant environment and good living conditions, a European historic city is a perfect place for the development of Science and Technology Parks. It should not be forgotten that people making decisions on where to locate their business also have their private lives and families to consider, and tend to prefer places that offer a high quality of life.

A Science and Technology Park can be described as an industrial complex initiated and financed by public or, less commonly, private-sector bodies, a development of a certain area carried on in close co-operation with local research and educational institutions. Such co-operation should be based on the technology transfer between scientific and academic institutions and industrial plants. In this context, education also seems to be good business for such cities, especially as it simultaneously enriches the cultural life of the city, making it more vital – thanks to the young student population – and consciously taken care of thanks to the high level of education of its citizens (KARMOWSKA, 1996).

### **New residents**

The attraction of new immigrants leads to an increase of income from taxes and provides a necessary workforce for the local economy. Many European historic cities provide a high quality of life and are educational centres. Many young people go to them for education, and very often they prefer to settle down after graduation. Therefore, it is rare for such cities to conduct marketing for new immigrants. There are rather demarketing activities necessary to reduce overcrowding and unemployment (KOTLER, 1993). 'In the context of national identity, talking about a new (continually re-made) cultural heritage built from the historical traditions brought

by immigrants and from previously suppressed groups may seem controversial. However, if we assume the role of a city as an arena of public culture, the prospect of such diversity and cultural re-definition is less threatening. Cities have always absorbed new people and re-defined their culture through inclusion. Cities have always been understood to be diverse, local, having their own distinctive mixes' (BENDER, 1996). A demarketing strategy may include, for example, limitations to the development of new housing in or near the city centre. Instead, road, park-and-ride and public transport links would be improved between the historic core and neighbourhood cities, as well as suburbs and villages, so that its amenity value could be enjoyed and its visitor economy developed sustainably (SHAW, 1993). A marketing strategy, in this case, should be precisely synchronised with a development strategy for investment and entrepreneurship that would favour certain localities while restricting growth in others.

### Internal marketing

Internal marketing can be considered the most important part of the city marketing strategy. The long-term prosperity of the city will depend upon this factor. The local community, constituting the largest interest group in the city, should be considered its biggest value. It is the local community that benefits most from the results of city marketing, since they make decisions relating to a city's development, directly through election, as well as indirectly through the citizen's everyday public, professional and private activity. Without the wide compromise and co-operation of local citizens, even the most professional and carefully-prepared marketing strategy will have little chance of real success.

Indirectly, through its influence on tourism and capital attraction, the cultural heritage of a particular city is one of the most significant factors for the quality of life of its citizens. The infrastructure and other city improvements made for tourists and investors will serve the local community as well. What is more, the economic development caused by these two factors will increase the income of the local population by providing them with good places to work. Also, cultural and entertainment events organised for foreigners can usually be attended by local people. For developing cities that do not have at their disposal funds for renovation and improvement, changes made with foreigners in mind can add new value to their culture (e.g. Cracow ten years ago). But the crucial value of cultural heritage for internal marketing lies in its impact on the local identity and cohesion of the local community as a group. The consciousness of the common cultural heritage alters the approach

of people towards their city and co-habitants. They tend to care more about their surroundings and environment in a physical sense, and they also tend to express a more social behaviour towards each other, since they are proud of being participants in the community.

To conclude, the words of Thomas Bender should be quoted: Cities 'are not merely reactive agglomerations of market actors; they are complex and active local cultures at once formed by history and capable of making history' (BENDER, 1996).

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