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## THE ROLE OF EVENTS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF VISITORS EXPECTATIONS': A PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

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## Abstract

In the past recent years the territorial management as a brand using marketing tools till now used by companies has been gaining ground. In that sense, more people in charge of the territories have been proceeding to the destination branding in order to gain notoriety and differentiate themselves from their competitors. Although this importance has been increasing there are still gaps in the literature related to this matter, given that, the goal of this study is to understand what's the role of cultural events in the brand building, image and perceived quality of a destination, applied to the specific case of the event "Braga Romana" in the city of Braga. A qualitative and quantitative investigation was developed in order to understand what is the vision of those in charge for the areas under study, tourism and events and the perception of the event visitors. The results indicate that cultural events, more specifically the case study "Braga Romana" event in the destination of Braga plays a determining role in the territory. They act as a tool that advertises the territory, attract visitors and help to spread the destination brand image. The event perceived quality by the visitors help to promote the destination loyalty, contributing to the recommendation of the destination and its revisit. There is then a contribution of this study to different levels: literature contributes through relationship of variables already tested previously, marketing and tourism management contribute while destination management and touristic events support tool, it is also a contribute to the local development in the view of the object of study the event "Braga Romana".

**Keywords:** Image, Brand, Events, City Branding

## Introduction

Tourism emerges as an economic activity and therefore its concept should be defined to help its understanding and characterization. Over the years, there has been an increase in competition among tourism destinations (Cooper et al., 2000; Ferreira, Sousa & Gonçalves, 2018), Tourism, despite the economic and financial crisis of recent years, has been one of the most dynamic sectors in Portugal. The demand for country is increasing, so it is important that those responsible for tourist destinations find ways to position themselves in the market and to differentiate themselves from their competitors, thus increasing their chances of attracting more tourists (Sousa, Casais, Malheiro & Simões, 2017; Sousa & Vieira, 2018). Marketing tools are increasingly important in the management and promotion of a product, brand or destination, assuming its good use as a factor of success or failure of a company / tourist destination. In order to obtain competitive advantages over competing destinations, its managers tend in recent years to address the marketing principles commonly applied to goods and services, and brand management is an approach applied to tourist destinations. Indeed, research in tourism has been studying its various implications from a multitude of perspectives and with interdisciplinary insights (Echtner and Jamal, 1997).

The cultural aspect of cities has been a preponderant vector for the construction and reconstruction of the respective distinctive marks (Guerreiro, 2008). Thus, a tourism brand can be understood as a sign whose primary function is to identify, designate and assign a place as a tourist destination (Santos, Carvalho & Figueira, 2012). According to Kavartzis (2004), the city brand corresponds to all the means used to achieve competitive advantage, increase investment and tourism, develop community, strengthen local identity, encourage citizens to identify with their city and avoid exclusion social (Guerreiro, 2008).

Events can play a prominent role in brand creation, positioning and promotion of a destination (Dimanche, 2002). Their achievement for both government entities and companies is seen as beneficial since, besides being a way to improve the image of tourist destinations, they also generate profit (Marujo, 2015). The organization of cultural events has effects on notoriety and image, since these are an element of the marketing mix whose main function is to increase the attractiveness of the city (Guerreiro, 2008). Cultural events are considered as strategic tools in the management of territories, contributing to the construction of tourist destinations and, consequently, cultural, social and economic development, improving the tourist image of the territories (Santos, Carvalho and Figueira, 2012). Therefore, Ribeiro, Vareiro, Fabeiro and de Blas (2005) affirm that the celebration of these provide the creation of an image of the destination can have positive effects on the external and internal image of a territory.

The event Braga Romana - Reviver Bracara Augusta consists of the recreation of the city's daily life two thousand years ago, that is, to revive the customs and traditions of when it was founded by Caesar Augusto. This initiative is an integral part of the

strategy of restoring the History and Heritage of Bracara Augusta, enabling the dissemination of the valuable Roman heritage of the City. It is therefore a historical recreation carried out in the historical center of the city, with different initiatives: reproduction of a market of the time, food areas (with traditional taverns of the time), Roman processions, Roman wedding, spectacles of circus arts, theatre performances, military camp, pedagogical area and diverse street animation. According to Carvalho, Ferreira and Figueira (2011), the culture of the place, endogenous resources of the tourist destination, intangible resources and the role of the local community have contributed in a consensual and growing way to the construction of a differentiating image of the destinations. It is our understanding that the event under study, one of the most striking and iconic of the city of Braga, encompasses the aforementioned desideration's, referring to the times of the foundation of the city and its customs, habits and traditions, allowing community involvement in the development of the event.

Therefore, it is fundamental to make an exhaustive empirical study to base in theoretical terms the contribution of cultural events to the construction of the brand and image of a tourist destination and in the concrete practical case what role the image of the Braga Romana event in the definition of the brand of the City of Braga. With the case study we intend to respond to a specific objective: what contribution of the image and perceived quality of the cultural event "Braga Romana" for the construction of brand and image of the city of Braga.

### City marketing and events

According Ribeiro and Sousa (2016), the city marketing, or marketing of cities, is one of the areas of marketing where there has been a higher growth and more relevant for the development and growth of cities. While the need to differentiate and assert their individuality in various aspects, whether economic forum, social or political, is already a concern that dates back almost to the beginning of the governments and the cities of marketing have been used since the nineteenth century Kavaratzis (2004) was only in recent decades that cities began to employ more intensively, techniques derived from the marketing, since it was at this time that the competition for investment, tourism revenues and concern in attracting new residents intensified and they became an object of study in how cities should be managed. The growing business opportunity in the services sector, where cities are incorporated, and reinforces the similarities that this sector has with the business activity and the way some tools adapted to this new reality can be fundamental knowledge of how will the cities affected by any changes. Even with regard to this issue, the concepts of social marketing (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971), the nonprofit marketing (Kotler & Levy, 1969) and the notion that the image to which individuals associate a product with poorly contoured outlined, as the cities seen as a product are, they were also major drivers, since it showed that the marketing did not enjoy just to make a profit, but also creating initiatives that define the main objective of the common good (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993). There is a consensus among many

authors to classify the need to meet the needs of various types of consumers as essential, whether businessmen, tourists or residents, both current and potential, through social processes and management guidance policy (Ashworth & Voogd 1991; Almeida, 2004; Azevedo et al, 2010; Ribeiro & Sousa, 2016). Places have had, for quite some time, the need to differentiate from each other in order to claim their individuality and distinctive features in achieving economic, political or socio-psychological objectives (Vasconcelos & Sousa, 2016). Ashworth and Voogd (1994) state that the beginning of place promotion, by creating a favourable image of this to potential customers, investors or residents, appears in the eighth century when Leif Ericson started to look for new settlers to occupy their land "green" newly discovered. Although this is not yet marketing in its fullness, since promotion is just one of its tools, one begins now to show a concern to manage territories (Vasconcelos & Sousa, 2016).

Events hold great importance in the life of cities and therefore also a wide range of impacts on the cities hosting them. It then becomes crucial to understand the notion of perception so that we can classify an event as beneficial or not to the community that receives it, since it is through the perceptions that residents have and how exposed the influence of impacts on their lives (Getz, 2007). In this context, tourism is a phenomenon that moves millions of people around the world, taking as a major driver of the global economy. Events can be classified in several categories and there is a wide range of ways to define the different existing types. Every year, much due to the frequent changes in the tourism environment, fosters competition between and within tourist destinations (Ribeiro & Sousa, 2016). Events can be considered as a marketing strategy for the promotion of territory and competitiveness between cities (Umbelino, 2016). In recent years, competition between cities has increased to attract large events with an impact capacity, since they have the (Barrera-Fernández, Hernández-Escampa & Vázquez, 2017). In addition, it is important to note that Silva (2012) argues that events are a key instrument for the promotion of a territory since they are part of the communication strategy of the same. An event is a planned event that occurs on a particular date, at a certain predefined location, and at a previously announced time. But according to Richards (2015), events have gone from a mere temporary use of space to a tool that can create value through the use of the spatial and temporal qualities of the urban fabric, making it possible to make the city known globally, attention in different fields of activity for short periods of time. An event can be designated as an exceptional event, not included in the daily routine of people and organizations, causing impacts, providing unique experiences for both its organizers and its consumers and presupposes a concept, a plan (Cunha & Abrantes, 2013). Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2008) argue that the practice of marketing developed through certain phases over time, grouping them into three categories that do not follow a specific line of time, or a distinctive geographical area. In this context, you reach a targeted place marketing, with specific target audiences, and place branding is consolidated, emerging a concern with the image that the place transmits, rather than simple advertising.

For its part, territorial branding provides several advantages in terms of sustainable development of a region - stimulates exports, attracts tourism, investment and immigration, and creates positive perceptions and international attitudes (Fetscherin, 2010) - however, the focus of research of this dissertation it is the tourism sector, so it will be mentioned mainly the relationship of the latter with the branding of destinations (Vasconcelos & Sousa, 2016).

## Destination image

The tourism impact on destinations is largely associated with their image, with an increasing need for them to renew themselves, create new poles of interest and value their heritage (Ferreira, Aguiar & Pinto, 2012), since their survival, in an increasingly competitive market, is largely dependent on the creation of a differentiating image (Hanzaee & Saeedi, 2011). Tourism is one of the main industries at the global level, and it has grown the most over the years, playing an important role in the world economy and contributing positively to the development of several countries (Breda and Costa, 2010; Buhalis and Foerste, 2015; Ferreira, Sousa & Gonçalves, 2018). Despite the lack of a consensual definition of the concept of "image of destiny" as well as an instrument of measurement of the same, this is considered as an important tool of tourism marketing (Bigné, Sánchez & Sánchez, 2001; Pimentel et al. Tsotsou & Ratten, 2010; Sharif & Alimoradi, 2011), since it can help organizations achieve their goals and always plays a decisive role in the decision-making process of consumers affected by the image (Tinto Arandes, 2008). According to Tinto Arandes (2008), Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2006) refer to the importance of the image for the consumer as a link between the local brand and the local geography, always with its focus on the consumer. The image is what consumers / tourists keep from us, what we transmit to them as a product or tourist destination. It is the first idea / image that comes to the mind of a consumer when we talk about a certain product or destination, the perception he has of it. As Bigné et al. (2001), the image of a destination is, first and foremost, the subjective interpretation of reality by the tourist. Tinto Arandes (2008) defines, in generic terms, the image as a mental representation, the set of impressions that people relate to or associate with a given subject, be it an entity, organization or company. Regarding the image of a city, it affirms that a city is not a product and as such, its image results from impressions / perceptions and information, that is, the image of a city or region is the set of impressions and opinions that individuals form a place through the processing of information obtained over time in different sources (Pereira, dos Anjos & Añaña, 2014).

For Kavaratzis (2004), the image of a destination is formed individually and results from several, different and sometimes conflicting messages sent by the city, however, as Almeida, Miranda and Elias-Almeida (2012) refer, this is fundamental since is the mirror of the tourist offer of the place, being therefore a decisive factor in the time of the tourist's choice among the various mental representations. For these authors, perception assumes a more prominent role than reality itself. The image tourists have of



a tourist destination is extremely important, since this can influence the final choice for this place as a holiday destination and, on the other hand, according to Pimentel et al. (2006), allows the identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the destination in order to adapt the strategy.

This image can be positive or negative depending on the experience of each one or what is known to each place, that is, as Pereira et al. (2014), the image will have a positive or negative effect on consumer behavior and consequently condition the success or failure of the destination. Ritchie and Crouch (2010) argue that the image of a destination can take some time to modify, and a negative image will lead to improvements in the destination, that is, in order to change that negative image, its managers will have to make changes, and on the other hand a positive image will mitigate adverse effects such as crime or a higher cost of living. However, a strong and positive image held by destinations provides them with a competitive advantage over their competitors (Blair et al., 2014) and, on the other hand, a negative image based on negative attributes becomes a task (Crompton, 1979; Kotler & Gertner, 2002). This reasoning is shared by Almeida et al. (2012), arguing that although the image is one of the main components of promoting a destination, helping it to segment, it can also have the opposite effect when it is negative, thus reflecting a bad promotion of the destination and consequently in a local economic development. Accordingly, Tinto Arandes (2008) argues that the image of a city should be built through the elaboration of identity plans and that it should be congruent and faithful to its characteristics, both historical and current. This requires investment and long-range strategic plans involving the public and private sector in order to strengthen the identity of the place and thus ensure a lasting and consistent image in time. Azevedo et al (2011) mention that this construction happens through the combination of three elements: the functional image, the perceived image and the intentional image, and its management implies the formulation of a strategy where the goals to be achieved are clearly defined, the objectives and the means for their implementation. To get an idea of what the tourist has as an image of a destination is necessary to carry out questionnaires to those who have visited the destination, old tourists, to the current tourists but we cannot neglect the residents of the place, because the image of a destination is so positive for others as it is for the residents themselves. This will give way to a real image of destiny, which sometimes is neither the one that the responsible ones want to pass but that is, in fact, the reality.

### **“Braga Romana” – Reviver Bracara Augusta**

Tourism has played a very important role as a factor of regional and local development, through the cultural consumption of tourists in the destinations they visit. Areas in tourism research entail, for example, planning of tourism destinations, local development, environmental impact, territorial brand management and tourist loyalty (Getz, 1986; Ferreira, Sousa & Gonçalves, 2018). The field of tourism marketing, in



particular, has faced increasing challenges in capturing market dynamics, such as, market fragmentation and diversity. New habits, needs and trends in the global tourism arena create more sophisticated consumers who systematically look for different and specific experiences. Such context calls for new market approaches (Sousa and Simões, 2010; Cabiddu et al., 2013).

Braga has in the last years determined, or reinforced its bet, in some events that allow to give visibility to the destiny and therefore to attract tourists. One such event is the "Braga Romana", an event already marked by the city's annual life, which takes place in May (annually). Its purpose is to recreate the time when the city was part of the Roman Empire, then called Bracara Augusta, founded more than two thousand years ago by Caesar Augustus. Thus, through this recreation it is possible to make known all the valuable Roman heritage that the city possesses, being part of the strategy to recover the history and heritage of Bracara Augusta.

The event takes place annually in the city of Braga, usually between May and June, since 2003. This year, we were then in front of the XIV edition in which the city, dressed rigorously for recreate the daily life of the economic and social activities of the time through the creation of a Roman market. (Figure 1: Map of the event distribution)

The "Braga Romana 2017" program included a number of animation proposals, such as processions, shows, theater performances and the performance of street and circus artists, distributed as follows: Lyceus Romanus (Pedagogical Area) - Largo S. João do Souto; Platea Oficiorum (Arts and Crafts) - Largo S. João do Souto; Bestiarum Locus (Exhibition and demonstrations of falconry, horses, dogs) - Largo S. João do Souto; Spatium Ludicum (Playground for children and families) - S. João do Souto Basic School; Castra Leg. Vivictrix (Military Camp) - Largo do Paço; Villa Rustica - Roman Baths of Cividade; Tabernaculum Martis Venerisque (Tent of Mars and Venus) - Municipal Square; Mercatus Romanus (Roman Market with 115 craftsmen and merchants) - In several streets of the historic center; Domus Ciborum (Food Areas) - Largo das Carvalheiras, Largo de S. Paulo and Largo de S. Tiago. In short, over 80 hours of programming took place, with the participation of 115 merchants, 125 entities and 11 school groups with the purpose of, throughout the event, to surprise Bracarenses and visitors with dozens of characters inspired by the Roman mythology, arts and crafts (CMB, 2017).

## Method and preliminary results

The development of a study encompasses a set of interdependent steps, but with a central starting point, a relevant issue to which we wish to respond. The initial research question results from a problem that should have an importance that justifies the investigation and allows the elaboration of subjective test hypotheses in order to respond to the starting problem (Silvestre & Araújo, 2011). The conceptual model of Bigné et al. (2001) elaborated with the intention of perceiving the role played by the image in consumer buying behavior is composed of five variables: image, quality,

probability of revisiting, likelihood of recommending and satisfaction, with which nine hypotheses were tested. Phillimore and Goodson (2004) seek to seize the multidimensional character of the phenomena in its natural manifestation, as well as to capture the different meanings of a lived experience, helping to understand the individual in their context.

Nowadays there is a lot of discussion about the need for basic requirements to bring about a qualitative analysis, and most of the authors related to the subject consider that the experience of the researcher within the area, with the relevant literature and different forms of analyzing interview data, is a sine qua non condition to carry out an appropriate study, taking into arguments that he (researcher) is, in fact, his own instrument of work (Ferreira et al., 2018).

Since what we have proposed is to understand the role of cultural events in the brand image of a tourist destination, the model has been adapted so that it is possible to test and respond to the object of study. Therefore, the proposed model consists of six variables: visit factor, destination image, satisfaction, quality, probability of return and likelihood of recommending.

The present research was aimed at those responsible for tourism and culture in the city of Braga, since these are responsible for promoting the destination and the event under study. The interview script was applied. The analysis of the interviews carried out allows to obtain the vision and strategy defended for the destination by the responsible ones of the studied areas, the tourism and the cultural events. The choice for these interviewees was due to the fact that they were, at the time, responsible for the event and tourism of the city. Obtaining the opinion of management 2 (E2), as a councilor of culture, was essential, since it is her responsibility to develop and implement, among other activities, the event under study. In turn, for a more comprehensive view of what is defended for the destination Braga, the contribution of the vision of the person responsible for its promotion and dissemination, management 1 (E1), tourism councilor, has also proved essential for a vision more holistic. These, for the study in question, seemed to be the best people to answer the questions of departure. The city of Braga took the decision to create a destination brand and a joint work is taking place between the municipality and the Commercial Association of Braga that has listened to a diverse set of stakeholders in order to make a diagnosis and thus to realize what is really important or not to the city. The branding work of the destination has already been done, with the creation of a specific logo for the municipality, and is now more focused to bet on the tourist side and the international launch of the brand. There is a syntony with regard to the importance of events for the management of a territory, namely the importance of these events for the capture of visitors to the territory and a tool for defining or redefining the destination's brand image. Briefly, it was realized that there is in fact a vision of destiny as a brand, and at this moment an analysis of the strategy is being carried out so far, in order to define or redefine the strategy to adopt in the future for the destination branding.

## Conclusions and future research

The growing competitiveness between destinations, especially when tourism has proved to be one of the main engines of the economy, leads its managers to start looking at the marketing tools strategically as a means of management. Territorial marketing, namely city marketing and territorial branding are increasingly used concepts and a tool available to managers as a way to manage and promote destinations. Through the use of these tools there has been an effort to create different destinations, attractive and differentiating their competitors. One way to do this is through the use of events as a means of attracting tourists and / or visitors, allowing in many cases to build or redefine the image of the destination and at the same time combat the seasonality. The primary objective of this dissertation was to effectively assess the contribution of cultural events to the construction of the brand image of a destination, concretely through the case study of the city of Braga with the Braga Romana Event.

This would make it possible to see to what extent it would be really important for managers to embark on this aspect in the management of territories, the use of cultural events as a means of promoting, defining and managing the brand image of a territory. It was important to listen to the two aspects, the offer, through interviews with those responsible for culture and tourism in the city of Braga, and the search, through the implementation of questionnaires to visitors and tourists who were present at the Braga Romana Event. The literature review on the concepts discussed was important to deepen the knowledge on the subject and to confirm and give previous answers to the questions of departure, on the other part of the empirical study, qualitative and quantitative, was central to a sustained response to the questions raised.

Analyzing the qualitative tool, it can be seen that those responsible for the destination Braga are aware of the importance of managing it as a brand. Over the last years, it has been developing an extensive work of partnership and cooperation with different stakeholders in order to attract visitors and promote fate. Up to now, the city has generally acted with a logo and universal slogan in its communication, and is currently in the process of redefining its strategy with the intention of designing the brand internationally, more focused on the tourist aspect. Knowledge of the importance of the image and the tools used for its dissemination is verified, that is, those responsible for the destination know that the identity of the territory is at present the patrimony and as such the events are used, and more concretely the "Braga Romana", as a reflection of the image of the city. In this way, events act as generators of tourist flows to the city, as a tool for building an active and dynamic city, and afterwards, as a showcase of what the city is, of its endogenous culture as a means of encouraging the return to know a territory full of authenticity, diversity and beauty.

It is concluded, as regards the qualitative view, that those responsible for the destination see the cultural events, and concretely the "Braga Romana" event, as generators of the brand image of a destination and as a means of making it known, that is, the event "Braga Romana" allows to disseminate the city's brand image, Braga

associated with history, heritage and culture. The quantitative aspect of this project will allow to validate the seven previously formulated hypotheses, although one with more force than others. The events can be seen as a strategic tool in the creation, development and dissemination of the brand image of a territory by the responsible ones. They have a double action, act as a catalyst for the visit and as a means of promoting destiny. It can be seen that Braga benefits from the creation of cultural events, the "Braga Romana" event would be an impact on all study variables. It functioned as a factor of destination visit, had a positive impact on the brand image of the destination, the perceived quality influenced the satisfaction of the visitors, satisfaction with the event had an impact on the probability of revisiting and recommending the destination and the perceived quality of the event has a positive effect both on the probability of recommending the destination and on the one of revisiting. In a time when change is a constant, many of the existing studies on events focus primarily on the different impacts created by their realization, but these are no longer updated. In this way, the contribution of this research resides in a new approach, analyzing the role that the events play in the brand image of a tourist destination. With the development of this research it is suggested the extension of this theme to a more socioeconomic side, in order to verify the role of cultural events in the economic and social development in the cities, thus extending the study to a more national scope, not limiting it to the regional sphere.

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Figure 1

Map of the event distribution



Source: Braga Romana 2017 Program