

Promoting culture and heritage tourism in barcelona tourism essay



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When people go travelling, they buy a product that involves and includes people. It offers tourists an exciting chance to become -even if it's just for a little while- a part of another culture. This paper is looking at the importance of managing and marketing heritage and cultural tourism and to what extent it is used as a promotion strategy to boost tourism in Barcelona. Due to globalisation and increasing competition, many cities are experiencing a stage of regeneration. Especially since traditional industries like the textile industry are declining, a major priority is to attract foreign investment and become a high profile destination for tourists. To achieve that, culture and heritage are used as valuable assets for promoting a city.

Definition of cultural and heritage tourism

Culture and heritage have been elements in tourism since a long time. When looking at the role of cultural and heritage tourism, definitions need to be made. Culture can be defined in terms of shared norms, values, customs, artistic achievements by a group of people at a certain time (Beech&Chadwick, 2006: 486). McIntosh, Geoldner and Ritchie have recognized culture as a motivator for people to travel, identified by the desire to see and know more about other cultures. This includes to find out more about the natives of a country, their, lifestyle, music, art, folklore, dance etc (Cooper, et al 2008: 47). Heritage can be defined in terms of what is inherited by one generation from past generations, that can be i. e. a property or a tradition. All in all the National Trust's definition of cultural heritage tourism is explaining it very well: it is "traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of

the past and present. It includes historic, cultural and natural resources.”

(culturalheritagetourism. org)

Cultural tourism products

Developing successful tourism attractions involves an understanding of what tourism is and how it works. There are key principles, which makes tourists being attracted to a destination. The nature of tourism can be defined as a commercial activity which involves the consumption of experiences, in practice it is a business with the purpose for economic benefit of the tourist destination. The tourism industry enables tourists to consume experiences (McKercher& du Cros, 2002: 27) It is entertainment and a demand-driven activity which is not easy to control. Cultural heritage attractions are a part of tourism and not all cultural assets are cultural tourist attractions(McKercher& du Cros, 2002: 26).

Promoting Culture and Heritage Tourism in Barcelona: Marketing tools

Barcelona has inherited a prosperous cultural tradition, which is resulting from its superb position in the Mediterranean. It has over 2, 000 years of history and Barcelona experienced the Iberian, Roman, Arabic and Christian preceding civilizations. It has a distinctive personality as the capital of Catalonia, an area with its own Catalan language and culture (professional. barcelonaturisme. com). During the past decades, Barcelona proofed itself as a vibrant, innovative and imaginative city, which knows how to stay in the international spotlight. Worldwide 37% of trips are taken with the reason to experience culture., where Spain’s market share of cultural tourism is 8, 2%.

21% of all foreign tourists came with the purpose to explore culture, compared to 59% for leisure and holiday. Cultural tourism is the second biggest segment of international tourism in Spain with figures of 9 million tourists in 2003 (ectn. eu. com).

Barcelona has confidently established its position as one of Europe's leading city tourism destinations. With nearly 4 million overnights in 1990, 8 million in 2000 and 12 million overnights during 2008, Barcelona has experienced a massive growth over the past decade (turisme2015bcn. cat).

In 1993 the public-private " Turisme de Barcelona" Consortium was founded with the intention to promote the city itself as well as reshape the image. It can be seen as the as a continuance of the work from COOB after the Olympics, which was set up by the Chamber of Commerce and the City Council (professional. barcelonaturisme. com). Several strategies were created to achieve the new goals. One key strategy was set to promote cultural tourism: ' We will promote cultural tourism based on the city's identifying elements such as the Catalan language, its status as regional capital, unique architectural heritage and Catalan cuisine' (turisme2015bcn. cat).

The development of cultural services and projects are often used to support the marketing and tourism efforts. This could mean the creation and renewal of museums and art galleries and the hosting of art festivals. This aspect is often part of a comprehensive cultural tourism strategy (Page, S & Hall, CM, 2003: Chapter 8)

Every year Turisme de Barcelona is realising about 400 promotional activities, which are selected according to different market segmentations, tourist typologies and countries. These can be art and culture, shopping, sport, nightlife or leisure to name just a few. The traditional and established iconic landmarks such as Park Güell, La Ramblas or Gaudi's work as tourist attractions are giving the city a unique image. Barcelona is using several strategies to promote itself; with the most important strategy being destination branding, where the cultural and heritage aspect plays a leading role. Also, there is no doubt that 'cultural and heritage resources in particular play a key role in the development of urban tourism' (Page, S & Hall, CM, 2003: Chapter 3). The media in its worldwide spectrum is used to carry out the brand and to promote Barcelona as a tourist "place product" by using television, radio, press and internet (turisme2015bcn. cat).

Barcelona is known throughout the world as a cultural city with an important heritage and vibrant variety of cultural attractions. Barcelona has nine World Heritage Sites to offer (Palau de la Música Catalana, Park Güell, La Pedrera, Palau Güell, Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau, Sagrada Família, Casa Batlló, Casa Vicens and Cripta de la Colònia Güell (professional. barcelonaturisme. com).

During a five-year period, Barcelona enlarged its cultural attractions with new initiatives. In every year, a particular area has been devoted in a programme through the Universal Forum of Cultures 2004. In 2000 music was devoted, while 2001 was bestowed to art. In that year when the city hosted the triennial exhibition Experiences, Barcelona Art Report 2001 and the International Congress of Museums. In the year 2002, Barcelona
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strengthened its international position when it hosted the International Gaudí Year, which has put the city in the world culture of spotlight. In the year 2003, sport and design were the city's thematic events and received big media coverage (professional. barcelonaturisme. com).

In Barcelona has over 50 museums which are showcasing permanent collections by famous artists such as Picasso, Miró and Tàpies. The city also offers a wide choice of theatre and entertainments facilities, and hosts famous festivals such as the Summer " Grec" Festival, where theatre, music and dance come together. The city has two most important classical music venues, the Palau de la Música and L'Auditori, which both present top-quality programmes. Furthermore, the city's opera house, the Gran Teatre del Liceu, has one of Europe's most prominent opera seasons (professional. barcelonaturisme. com).

Barcelona offers different sightseeing tours to discover Culture and Heritage, where passengers get provided with any information they may require. They also give a voucher booklet which offers discounts at the main city attractions. This is a tool to promote the visit of Culture and Heritage sites.

The Barcelona Tourism Board introduced a few years ago the Barcelona Card , which ones purchased provides tourists with free travel on city transport and discounts and free offers at museums, leisure attractions, nightclubs, shops, restaurants, on entertainments and other services. Various Walking Tours, where the Gothic Quarter can be discovered, where they show the tourists through the historic and political heart of the city. With a Modernisme route, the Catalan art nouveau buildings by architects such as

Antoni Gaudí, Domènech I Montaner and Puig I Cadafalch are showed and explained. There is also a Gourmet route existing which goes through the old town and gives visitors the possibility to explore Barcelona's gastronomic culture. Barcelona also offers the " Articket", a ticket that allows tourists to visit the 7 leading museums in Barcelona (barcelonaturisme. com).

Critical View

Cultural tourism brings individuals and human communities into contact. It can encourage the revival of the traditions and the restoration of cultural sites and monuments. But unbridled tourism can have the opposite effect. On the one hand, cultural heritage can serve as a tourism attraction, and tourism can lead to the financial and political support for management of a heritage. On the other hand, there is also possible conflict insofar as tourism can damage cultural heritage, and therefore limits on visitation can damage tourism or rather hold back its expansion. What is clear is that tourism is growing and will have an increasing impact on cultural heritage. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) predicts that cultural tourism will be one key tourism market segments in the future, and notes that growth in this area will present an increasing challenge in terms of managing visitor flows to cultural sites. aa

how development cooperation in specific settings, industry organizations note that " the challenge is to manage the future growth of the industry so as to minimise its negative impacts on the environment and host communities

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whilst maximising the benefits it brings in terms of jobs, wealth and support for local culture and industry, and protection of the built and natural environment.”

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