

Urban rebranding



Prior to the 1950's the El Raval quarters of Barcelona housed the tanning industry, but as deindustrialisation took hold towards the end of the decade many of the factories were left empty, the majority of the local residents were left unemployed and as a result drug use, crime and prostitution increased hugely. As the area went into this spiral of decline El Raval became renowned for its poor image halting any tourism or immigration that had the potential to try and revive the area.

As a result the younger people of the area left in hope of finding a better quality of education and work, subsequently smaller, independent businesses vanished due to lack of investment and an ageing population. The areas image became dirty and many building became derelict, cheap hostels started to fill the streets, driving the prostitution and drug use. By the mid 1980's the government tried to crack down on the cheap hostels but with little success, meanwhile the worst of the derelict building were being demolished to create the La Rambla and the historical character that could be saved was incorporated into the improvements.

New developments included a Police Station and other public buildings, the Museum of Contemporary Arts, student accommodation, the 4 Star Barcelo Rambla Hotel and 100 new houses. Prior to visiting El Raval the sources I used to research the area included: The Times Online, La Rambla: from Spain's tourist haven to streets of shame. Geofile Online, A Case Study of Rebranding – El Raval, Barcelona. Paul Sheppard. Google Images/Flickr Deprivation Indices Google Maps The outcome of this created a very negative image but did give me an idea as to what sort of fieldwork to

complete. Fieldwork. – Age of residents (economically active) and difference in rate of rebranding in North and South El Raval.

Involved standing in four locations for both North and South El Raval for two minutes at a time. Age of people on the street was marked as either 0 -18 years, 19 – 60 years, 61 + years approximately. This was the only piece of data that I collected that gave me some indication as to the number of economically active however four streets was a small sample size, the data for each area was collected at different times of day and only on one day of a working week, all these factors together can provide an uneven representation of data.

Perception Survey –Effect rebranding has (or hasn't had) on the area. A rating of both positive and negative qualities for a 100m stretch of street chosen at random. Qualities include ' Attractive area' ' safe atmosphere' ' signs of vandalism' ' signs of unofficial services'. Rating ranges from ' overwhelming feeling' to ' not felt at all' Due to the amount of research I'd done prior to the fieldwork I felt my views were slightly bias when completing this survey. Also I only completed this survey twice for North and South El Raval.

Amenities Count – The effect rebranding has had on an area and the stage of redevelopment it is in. Whilst walking throughout El Raval to collect numerous other pieces of data a record of every public building was made to be compared between the North and South quarters. We kept no record of the time spent in each area nor the distance we covered so there is a very strong possibility that our investigation was unfair, however it is a very

effective method as it is easy to compare to data found online and previous census data to do a before and after flagship development comparison.

Price Comparison – The stage of rebranding (General trends tend to follow the further away from a flagship development the less outlet and cheaper the price) Starting at the Museum of Contemporary Arts the price of a can of Coca Cola and a standard Mars chocolate bar was recorded as we walked further from our starting point to South El Raval.

The price comparison test was really simple and easy to complete but apart from confirming our beliefs that the further from the more popular, busy areas of El Raval (that have come about thanks to flagship development projects,) the cheaper the price of items sold by individual retailer, I does not provide much more information to aid our investigation. Environmental Quality Survey – An idea into the appearance and quality of the area. Can give an idea as to how much disposable income residents have on keeping their land tidy and the effort local councils are making to promote more eco-friendly practises.

Pre-chosen qualities were rated from 1 to 7 whilst walking between North and South El Ravavl. Examples include ‘ city free from congestion’ ‘ evidence of recycling facilities’ and ‘ well maintained buildings’ Once again this part of the investigation was easy to complete, the majority of the work involved could be done before arriving in Barcelona, if anything the only down side was that it was a slightly more lengthy survey to complete than others.

Questionnaire – A gain in information as to how the Barcelo Hotel has helped improve or decrease the quality of living in El Raval. The questionnaire was written prior to visiting Barcelona and was completed by a member of staff
<https://assignbuster.com/urban-rebranding/>

at the hotel. This proved to be one of the most accurate pieces of data collected as all the figures came directly from hotel data. Following the visit to Barcelona the ‘sleazy’ name EL Raval has earned seems to be a little harsh, however this area of the city is far from the cleaner image that the councils are trying to instigate.

Instead trying to remove all unofficial trade it has just been swept into one street, enhancing the problem, and although some flagship development projects have opened, any further development seems to have been abandoned. It appears the area is still attracting the wrong ‘type’ of people (people data tally) and although the area is trying to attract tourists and students there appears no reason to remain in the area following that.

From a personal view the school in El Raval looked of pretty poor quality and although there are many students in the area the bars, cafes and clubs the council hoped would follow the student accommodation don’t appear to have been established. Simple things like government grants to help residents improve the appearance of their housing and supporting young people with setting up their own businesses could change all this, as could improvements to the schools.

Although the fieldwork gathered back in November appears to be accurate and is of great help to provide evidence for any points being made it is hard to come to many specific conclusions as to the success of the rebranding programme as we did not really know the true extent of the original problem. Should we have had data for the same investigations prior to any development projects it would have been very easy to decide on the success of the redevelopment in El Raval.