EXPERIENCING THE TOURIST CITY. THE EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE IN RE-DESIGNING CITY ROUTES

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ABSTRACT

Assuming that providing memorable experiences is the raison d'être of tourism industry, the city envisaged as a tourist destination should assume the tourist's perspective when designing the settings and the most significant activities of a visit.

Cities are facing new challenges, noticeably the globalisation of economies, the growing importance of the visual and the symbolic that define the current trends of consumption and the attractiveness of a place. Culture and events play a strategic role when designing innovative and appealing tourism experiences. The European Capital of Culture (ECoC) is an international event which represents a unique opportunity for the cities to stand out in this globalised and competitive scenario.

This paper focuses on the study of Pécs, European Capital of Culture 2010, and it aims to study the influence of this event on the design of city tourism routes. A survey by questionnaire was administered to tourists before and during ECoC in Pécs. Respondents indicated in open-ended questions the most outstanding points in their visit to the city, on which were designed the relevant circuits and routes during that tourist experience in Pécs. Data analysis was performed using the statistical software STAS.

Keywords: Cultural City, Tourism Experience, Event, European Capital of Culture

JEL Classification: M31, O18

1. INTRODUCTION

During the transition period between the 20th and 21st centuries, cities have turned to culture as a means to creatively differentiate themselves (Herrero et al, 2006) and to gain a competitive advantage (Griffiths, 2006). Indeed, cultural resources are one of the main pillars supporting the concept of a creative city (Landry, 2000) acknowledged as one of the engines driving contemporary city sustainability, with impacts on both their attractiveness for tourists (Richards and Palmer, 2010) and over a creative class of potential residents (Florida, 2002). There is also a growing interest among the cultural, touristic, political and academic sectors in understanding the role played by culture, arts, creativity and events on building the urban space.

Some studies suggest that tourists, nowadays, are more interested in culture than they were in the past, and one reason for that can be the higher level of education attained by a significant number of people (Valle et al, 2011) who are in better conditions 'to interpret and appreciate the culture'' (Richards, 2003:3). The new tourist is more informed, selective and demanding, looking for new places offering tourist products that include cultural attractions and events (Valle et al., 2011; Barbeitos et al, 2014). Cultural products are recognized

as strategic elements that add value to tourist destinations, and the decision makers are expected to consider them in strategic plans concerning the destination offer (Myerscough, 1988).

In a changing landscape underscored by hard challenges, the contemporary city has been confronted by a contingent need to adopt models and management approaches which are traditionally related to the business environment (Braun, 2008). Further to the adoption of competitive city management models (Kanter, 1995; Porter, 1995) and of total quality principles, the offer of creative and memorable (Landry, 2000; Richards and Palmer, 2010) experiences (Pine and Gilmore, 1999), aiming to attract and satisfy tourists, paved the way for the adoption of a public city management marketing perspective (Ashworth and Voogd, 1995; Braun, 2008; Kavaratzis, 2008; Kotler et al, 1999; Hankinson, 2001).

The adoption of policies that lead to an increase of a city's tourist attractiveness has in turn cleared a road for a surge in events that facilitated the offer of innovating and memorable experiences (Pine and Guilmore, 1999; Richards and Palmer, 2010), within landscapes denoted by a heavy usage of culture and arts in bringing about urban renewal projects (Ferreira, 2004; O'Callaghan and Linehan, 2007). Such events contribute to the creation of a festive ambiance in the cities, which then exerts an attraction over the contemporary consumers, regardless of their being residents or tourists.

In the society that emerged from the crisis in the early seventies, culture and tourism industries assumed a prominent role in the economic development of cities with impact on the construction and consolidation of their image. Rotterdam, Glasgow and Dublin are examples of cities that used events as a catalyst for their economies and to enhance their tourist attractiveness.

This paper addresses the impact of the ECoC in terms of its effectiveness in building the city tourist attractiveness based on cultural products. Field work took place at Pécs, ECoC 2010, a small university town formerly characterized by strong industrial dynamics based mainly on decorative artwork production. Beset by the decay of its industry, this Hungarian city took the ECoC hosting as a chance for assertion as a cultural city, strongly attractive for tourists particularly from the domestic market. The event allowed not only the edification of new cultural infrastructures but also the recovery and improvement of others, namely museological and former manufacturing facilities, whose purpose is to ensure the cultural dynamics beyond the event.

Based on a survey held among tourists at two distinct moments (before and after the ECoC event, respectively October 2009 and October 2010) it was possible not only to identify the more impressive locations and activities as reported by the tourists throughout their visit to Pécs, but also to draw the most relevant circuits and routes. From the comparison of these two moments emerges a picture of the domains in which the efficacy of the event may be seen as more relevant, as it left a deeper impression on the tourists.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

To Pizam (2010: 343) "creating memorable experiences is the essence and the *raison d'être* of the hospitality industry". Tourism experience is a concept that has been studied since the 1960's although as a research area it has been developed most of all during the 1970's. One of the most interesting publications stems from MacCannell (1973) concerning tourism experience as a ritual that is deeply attached to modern society. Tourists look for authenticity in their experiences and for the meaning of things. Cutler and Carmichael (2010) (based on Mannell and Iso-Ahola, 1987) identified three approaches on tourism

experience studies: the first one, developed in the last two decades, has contributed to the identification of the elements and the dimensions of tourism experience; the second, called "post-hoc satisfaction" (Cutler and Carmichael, 2010: 5), is focused on the study of the relationship between tourism experiences, motivations and psychological reactions, identifying satisfaction attributes with tourism experiences; the third is dedicated to the study of on time tourism experiences concerning a specific activity or place instead of the whole experience. Research about tourism experience encompasses also an approach focused on the understanding of the concept in an organizational and attractions management context. In these cases the research is centred on the study of consumer behaviour as well as in the study of the impact of product development on tourism experience improvement (Cutler and Carmichael; 2010).

As Andereck et al (2006) noted those studies have contributed to the knowledge about the dynamic nature of tourism experience. However they did not contribute to the understanding of their meaning. Cutler and Carmichael (2010) argue that more research is required about this, especially in the tourism sector. Also, there is a lack in researching the relationship between tourism experience and cultural events. This paper aims at contributing to a better understanding of events on the design of tourist circuits in cities.

2.1 Tourism experience and cultural events

The tourism experiences paradigm was first put forward by Pine and Gilmore (1999; Gilmore and Pine, 2002) aiming to enhance the performance of the organizations' services. This concept was then set in the agenda both by professionals and academics (Gilmore and Pine, 2002; Stamboulis and Skayannis, 2003). The research on this topic has been useful to clarify the nature (Crick-Furman and Prentice, 2000), formation process (Uriely, Yonay and Simchai, 2002; Prentice, Witt and Hamer, 1998) and diversity (Prentice, 2004) of tourism experiences. However, its study is limited in some particular situations, especially in the context of events.

Pine and Gilmore (1999: 12) defined tourism experience as a set of "events that engage individuals in a personal way" and it must be formulated "from a consumer perspective". This is something akin to "enjoyable, engaging, memorable encounters for those consuming these events" (Oh, Fiore and Jeoung 2007: 120). According to Tung and Ritchie (2011: 1371) "the motivation to design and stage memorable experiences stems from the focus that an experience is subjectively felt by an individual who is engaged with an event, on an emotional, physical, spiritual, and/or intellectual level".

It is accepted that tourism experience is, by definition, a subjective and personal construction (O'Dell, 2007; Frey, 1998, quoted by Cary, 2004; Lengkeek, 2001; Uriely et al, 2002; Feifer, 1985; Frazer, 1989) that takes place in a precise moment of time (Cary, 2004). "Everything tourists go through at a destination can be experience, be it behavioural or perceptual, cognitive or emotional, or expressed or implied" (Oh, Fiore and Jeoung, 2007: 120). According to Getz (2008), in the case of an event, the experience can be conceptualized in terms of three dimensions: what people are doing, their behaviour (the 'conative' dimension), their emotions, moods, or attitudes (the 'affective' dimension), and cognition (awareness, perception, understanding) (Getz, 2008). This approach will lead to a holistic approach to better understand the event experience (Ziakas & Boukas, 2013).

One of the fastest growing sectors is the consumption of experiences (Pine e Gilmore, 1999). Literature indicates that tourists are looking for unique and memorable experiences (Oh, Fiore and Jeoung, 2007). This trend is a challenge to organizations that are looking to design their offers along whatever might serve to create products and services that go beyond their functional quality. According to Pine and Gilmore (1999) from the tourism experiences perspective, the offer should be designed as a setting where the consumer must be involved.

According to Pine and Gilmore (1999) the central element of the tourism offer in the city is the setting where tourists will be engaged during their visit. Sternberg (1997: 952, 954), for example, argues that "tourism primarily sells a staged experience" and that its main activity "is the creation of the touristic experience". Each tourist as an individual, with his own personality, feelings and emotions, and the setting are the main performers. To Oh, Fiore and Jeoung (2007: 119) "what tourists primarily seek and consume at destinations is engaging experiences accompanied by the goods and/or service components of the destinations". Binkhorst and Den Dekker (2009: 313, based on Nijs and Peters, 2002 and on Ter Borg, 2003) argue that, during their trips, tourists "are in a quest for psychological needs such as inspiration, authenticity, belonging to a meaningful community, value and meaning in general".

The tourist experience is subjective and unique and is the result of the set of episodes that occur during a visit. Accordingly, O'Dell (2007) draws the attention to the elements positioned in the value chain of tourism industry pointing out that they are responsible for the "generation, staging and consumption of experiences through the manipulation of place and presentation of culture" (Cutler and Carmichael, 2010: 4). Where the offer is concerned, experience in the tourism field leads to the development of a process by which facilities and events are transformed in the offer of benefits and value to the tourist (Haas, Driver e Browns, 1980; Andersson, 2007).

Many authors agree that the tourism experience is a special one and it is distinct from other routine experiences (Cohen, 2004; Cutler and Carmichael, 2010). The tourism activity means a specific set of experiences, memories and emotions that are related to the visited sites and places (Noy, 2007). This perspective relates to Stamboulis and Skayannis' (2003) concept of tourism experience, which is a result of the interaction between the tourist and the tourism destination, be it a landscape, a site, or an event (Seamon, 1979; Tuan, 1993). The entertainment is just a specific component of an experience (Pine and Guilmore, 1999: 3), the place is the stage and the tourist is the actor. The memory is, according to Larsen (2007), the best predictor of the tourism experience itself.

The composite nature of tourism experience has stimulated a multidimensional approach on its study as well as it has been noted that the tourism experience is a process that encompasses some critical phases. For example, Highmore (2002) refers two different phases. The first one is the moment the experience takes place, and the second is its evaluation (that is, the process by which the tourist attaches a personal meaning to the events that occurred during the stay).

In the 1970's, authors (such as Cohen, 1972; Turner and Ash, 1975) recognized that tourism experience means a rupture with the routine and that the bizarre and the novelty are the key elements (Mendes and Guerreiro, 2010: 316). Binkhorst, Teun den Dekker and Melkert (2010: 42) argue "once the person has been through the travel decision-making process he or she will leave the daily experience environment for a holiday or a break and will return again to the home environment after travel". In such a scenario, "tourism is, by its nature, an industry of experiences" (Mendes and Guerreiro, 2010: 317) and the performance of events that "enable the tourist to feel and live the emotion of a place in a constant creative process of innovation" has grown into a consistent topic of research (Dalonsoa et al, 2014: 181). An event experience, according to Getz (2008: 414), means "people willingly travel to, or enter into an event-specific place for defined periods of time, to engage in activities that are out of the ordinary and to have experiences that transcend the ordinary-experiences only available to the traveler or the event-goer".

During a visit, what the tourist sees, learns, and the sources of entertainment that come along the way are factors to be taken into account when conceptualizing the settings wherein the experiences will occur. Van der Duim (2007, cit. in Binkhorst, Teun den Dekker and

Melkert, 2010: 42) designate this complex of actors and relationships as "tourismscape", comprising travel companions, agents and operators, carriers, lodging, tourist guides, activities provided throughout the stay, residents, natural or historical landscapes, attractions, events, museums, technology, and governmental or private entities that may be responsible for the offer on location.

To Getz (2009: 18) "events, by definition, have a beginning and an end. They are temporal phenomena, and with planned events the event programme or schedule is generally planned in detail and well publicized in advance (…). Planned events are also usually confined to particular places, although the space involved might be a specific facility, a very large open space, or many locations". Special events, to Ritchie (1984:2), are "major one-time or recurring events of limited duration, developed primarily to enhance the awareness, appeal and profitability of a tourism destination in the short and/or long term. Such events rely for their success on uniqueness, status, or timely significance to create interest and attract attention". Getz (1991, 2008) outlines the crucial role of events in the success of a tourism destination: ''much of the appeal of events is that they are never the same, and you have to 'be there' to enjoy the unique experience fully; if you miss it, it's a lost opportunity'' (Getz, 2008: 404).

Events such as World Exhibitions or European Capitals of Culture relate to "ways of cultural intervention resulting from the local mobilization and adaptation of pre-formatted international models" (Ferreira, 2004: 6). A cultural programme based on a permanent offer of events is a result of a broader concept of culture. To the notion of "high culture", traditionally correlated with fields that are more or less associated with the fine arts and with the model of the cultivated Man of the Enlightenment, other forms of popular culture are added. Economic, as well as cultural globalization, have affirmed local identities and specificities in a process that brought about recognition of the importance of cultural diversity. ECoC is, at its origin, justified by the need to recognize how richly, and how diversely, the cultural European scene is characterized (European Commission, 2012). Thus, expressions of popular culture (handicraft, gastronomy, language and immaterial heritage) attained a status of cultural expressions (UNESCO, 2012). Likewise, cultural industries (cinema, pop music, design, and entertainment, among others) were integrated in a plethora of products consumed by an ever broadening public.

Although their biggest expansion occurred from the 1960s, cities have made an instrumental use of large events as a way of revitalizing their economies, creating new infrastructure and obtaining gains in image, mostly from the 19th century (Getz, 1991).

A festive atmosphere and an experience in an environment of co-creation (experiences resulting from interaction between an individual and a certain event, at a given moment) turn events into special happenings (Binkhorst and Den Dekker, 2009). When participating in events, visitors do so as actors in the experience (Kotler et al, 1999; Pine and Gilmore, 1999). Although the experience of participating in an event is a onetime moment, it remains in the memory and can contribute to the process of image formation (Mendes, Valle and Guerreiro, 2011; Guerreiro, Valle and Mendes, 2013).

The city becomes the stage where events contribute to the creation of a festive environment (Deffner and Labrianidis, 2005; Richards and Palmer, 2010; Hughes, 1999). On the one hand, residents and visitors are receptive to entertainment consumption; and on the other hand, policy makers use the events as a mechanism through which they seek to revive the urban and social city environment, with an impact on their economic development.

Prentice and Andersen (2003: 8) refer cities in search of "contemporary cultural dynamics" in which creativity and innovation on a cultural level result in a permanent offer of events that bring dynamism and attractiveness to places. Cultural events add value to a city's traditional product and they provide an additional reason for a visit. Such events

are normally effective in generating first and second visits, although these do not imply, necessarily, the constitution of any city as a tourist destination (LAgroup and Interarts, 2005). Data available from the ECoC point to a significant increase in the quantity of tourists along the year when the event occurs, after which there is a return to the former average figures (LAgroup and Interarts, 2005).

2.2 Perceptions of a cultural city experience

The knowledge of the tourist experience from spontaneous reports must contemplate functional, directly observable and measurable characteristics (landscape, attractions, lodging, price, transportation or climate), abstract, intangible and psychological characteristics (hospitality, safety, expected quality, reputation and atmosphere) and also any attractions that differentiate the place (Echtner and Ritchie, 1991). While a functional impression consists in a mental map of the physical destination's characteristics, psychological impressions characterize the destination atmosphere.

The set of external stimuli or concrete consumption situations exert an influence on the formation of perceptions, or of images, about the destination. From this comes the formation of "a set of beliefs and attitudes about a given object, leading to general acceptance of its attributes" (Gartner, 1993: 193). From a cognitive point of view, the image of a destination consists of a set of beliefs or knowledge about the attributes of the location. These correspond to what resources or attractions are available there (Stabler, 1995) – landscape, activities, and unique experiences – which provide magnetism and seduce the tourists (Beerli e Martín, 2004b).

According to Echtner and Ritchie (1993: 39) the process of image formation is related with imagery that is defined "as a distinct way of processing and storing multisensory information in working memory" and "it can include any or all of the senses". Thus, the descriptions provided by tourists after a visit are no more than the memory of an experience. And so, the remarkable sequences of a tourist experience are pictured from discourses produced by the tourists and described in terms of "total impressions, auras and feelings" (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993: 40). This holistic approach includes "impressions that are based on combinations and interactions of attributes", directly observable or measurable characteristics (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993: 41) as well as others that can be "based on more abstract, intangible characteristics" (idem: 42). The uniqueness of the destination experience can be captured through the identification of "unique features and events (functional characteristics) or auras (psychological characteristics)" (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993: 43).

As Smith (2005:221) refers, strategies are efficient that reinforce existing images instead of introducing a revolution in this matter. The same authors sustain that this is about "communicating a coherent image to tourists, residents, and investors in order to promote, among the various public segments (current and potential), uniform associations. Hence, the official entities in charge of city management have been placing their efforts in strategies that explore the aesthetic aspects of places, centred in visual elements connected with public spaces (Lash and Urry, 1994; Zukin, 1998; Ooi, Håkanson and LaCava, 2014). According to Mair and Whitford (2013: 6) since the 1980s, "the potential for events to generate positive impacts" is recognized, playing a "significant role in the development of culture, arts, urban regeneration, education and tourism (Bowdin et al., 2011 cit. in Mair and Whitford (2013: 6).

2.3 The European Capital of Culture event

The ECoC can be a unique opportunity for the organizing cities to differentiate themselves, much by way of the international visibility, status and prestige conferred upon those, reinforcing their cultural identity and positioning them as cultural destinations on the

international scene (Smith, 2005; Hughes, Allen and Wasil, 2003; Richards and Wilson, 2006; Richards and Palmer, 2010; Ooi, Håkanson and LaCava, 2014). These cities become fashionable tourist destinations and real symbols with undeniable impact at the formation of the respective image (Ooi, LaCava & Hakanson, 2014; Vatter, 2014; Palmer, 2004).

ECoCs are considered "mega events" that (i) draw in important tourist flows, (ii) attract wide media coverage (iii) are prestigious and (iv) generate economical impacts on the local community (Getz, 1997; Deffner and Labrianidis, 2005; Ritchie, 1984). Taking into notice the specificities that characterize the ECoC, Herrero et al (2006: 47) prefer to assign it the designation of "macro festival" seen as a "set of events programmed throughout the year to celebrate the cultural capital, and so with a longer duration than that of typical cultural festivals" and events, in general. Their eclectic and multifarious character makes of this an event that, though being developed out of a pre-formatted model, allows a degree of flexibility in terms of conceptualization or in programmatic terms. By being so, it respects the uniqueness in every city and provides those responsible with the opportunity to select, develop and communicate a theme under which the concept of tourist destination is articulated.

Activities and locations offered in the city designated as ECoC are the result of an extensive cultural programming exercise that involves multiple areas, across performing arts, architecture, design, creative industries, monuments and other heritage buildings, and urbanism. Through this approach, those responsible for the ECoC cultural programs, are deeply anchored in objectives aiming urban renovation, in implementing a cultural calendar that is coherent and dynamic, and in projecting an image of cultural destination, strive to create and/or recover infrastructure and projects with a potential to stimulate experimentation of the cultural offer through routes as suggested by the organization or autonomously designed by those who come to visit the hosting city. The cultural policies adopted by the majority of cases aim to extend the impact of the event beyond its duration, sustaining – in the aftermath of the event – cultural dynamics that keep drawing tourists in. Take for example Glasgow where thanks to the ECoC project "with many positive after-effects on the creative scene and a radical boost to its international image, not only do cafes fill its streets on sunny days, but it is now considered a major cultural tourism destination" (European Commission Education and Culture, 2010: 5, quoted by Ooi, Håkanson & LaCava (2014: 422).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Setting

This research was conducted in the three ECoC in 2010: Pécs (Hungary), Istanbul (Turkey) and Ruhr (Germany). Data collection was carried out in 2009 and in 2010 (before and during the events). This paper is focused on the study of Pécs, European Capital of Culture 2010 and it aims to explore the influence of ECoC events on the design of city tourism routes.

Located in the southwest of Hungary, Pécs has around 162 000 inhabitants and its city centre is part of the World Heritage List. Pécs is a traditional stage for a whole range of cultural festivals (Creative Cities Project, 2011). History and culture are the main tourism products of this city and the tourists who visit Pécs are most of all motivated by cultural consumption. To be noted, in Pécs, is the existence of several museums and spaces dedicated to temporary exhibitions, mostly located along the well-known Museum Street. The 19th and 20th century collections can be seen on exhibition inside buildings of Renaissance, Baroque and Gothic architecture. Since the 1990s culture and the arts have been adopted as structural pillars of the city's economic and social development. The ECoC was a great

opportunity to Pécs as it enabled authorities to carry out a strategy placing culture at the centre of development and tourism aiming to explore the city's growth potential (Takáts, s.d., 37; Rampton et al, 2011).

3.2 Data Collection Instrument

Echtner e Ritchie (1991) consider that structured methodologies, namely through the use of scales, adequately serve the purpose of evaluating destinations in regard to relatively commonplace characteristics, being however inefficient when the goal is to seize holistic impressions and unique components, compatible with experience characterization based on the aura or atmosphere attributes of a destination. Echtner and Ritchie (1993) thus propose a series of three questions to determine the holistic and unique components of destination imagery by resorting to non structured methodologies, as they enable respondents to "use free form descriptions to measure image" (Boivin, 1986, quoted by Echtner and Ritchie, 1993: 44). In this manner, "unstructured methodologies are more conductive to measuring the holistic components of product image and also to capturing unique features and auras" (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993: 44). The authors propose three open-ended questions intended to address the appropriateness of identifying holistic impressions that integrate the imagery definition of a tourist destination. From the point of view of Stepchenkova and Li (2014: 47)" these open-ended questions were intended to be answered in a ''free-flow'' format, allowing respondents to describe their perceptions in their own words without restrictions.

1. What images or characteristics come to mind when you think of XXX as a vacation destination? This question endeavors to let the respondents think freely about the destination and to describe their impressions of the city. It aims to assess the more remarkable functional characteristic of a tourism experience.
2. How would you describe the atmosphere or mood that you would expect to experience while visiting XXX? This question was added to describe the atmosphere or mood of the destination in order to characterize its psychological profile based on the more remarkable memories.
3. Please list any distinctive or unique tourist attractions that you can think of in XXX? This question was chosen to capture distinctive or unique attractions of the city. According to Stepchenkova and Morrison (2008) based on the answers to this question it is possible to identify the most different attraction of each tourism destination and at the same time the most remarkable settings of each tourism experience.

In order to make the answers more operational and easy to analyse, respondents were "instructed to list the top three words that they associate" with the destination (Stepchenkova and Li 2014: 47).

This paper makes use of data collected by a self-administrated questionnaire that was conducted in two distinct moments: before the official launch of the event (October 2009) and during the final of ECoC (September 2010)[1]. The questionnaire had six sections as described below:

Section I: three open ended questions from Echtner and Ritchie (1991 and 1993);
Section II: list of general and local attributes useful to measure the cognitive image of each city (this list included a set of 17 cognitive attributes to evaluate the tourism image of cities and a set of 9 cognitive attributes concerning each city in appreciation);
Section III: affective image of tourism cities scales;
Section IV: global image scale;
Section V: visit profile and recommendation and return intentions;
Section VI: socio-demographic characterization.

[1] A data collection instrument was designed to apply to tourists who were visiting the city in two different moments: before and during de ECoC.

3.3 Sample and Data Analysis

The study population consisted of tourists visiting the city in two different moments: before ECoC (autumn of 2009) and during ECoC (autumn of 2010). Regarding the research objectives and the data collection process, the sampling method of clusters was used, which is adequate to assure the random selection of tourists to interview based on geographic criteria (Malhotra, 2004; Smith, 2010). The method of clusters requires that the places where tourists are to be interviewed have to be chosen randomly (we considered for this case the top tourism attractions in each city as they were mentioned in the main local tourist guides). Once the clusters were selected, every individual who was there during a set period of time was invited to complete the questionnaire: 170 (Before ECoC) and 411 (During ECoC).

Data was analysed with SPSS *Text Analytics for Surveys* software, 4.0. The outputs, based on frequency analysis, draw a set of relationships showing the associations between answers as well as the strength of their relationships. The dimension of the nodule represents the value of each frequency in every category. The thickness of each line between nodules shows the sharing answers (Sahin and Baloglu, 2011). Only the answers that were shared by, at least, 5% of respondents were selected for analysis (Reilly, 1990).

4. RESULTS

4.1 Sample Characterization

Table 1 summarizes the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents in the cities that were queried, both before and during the ECoC event. In a very broad sense, in Pécs our samples included more women than in Istanbul either before or during the ECoC. The mean age of respondents in Pécs was around 35 years with a standard deviation of approximately 13 before EcoC, a figure which has increased during the event. On the contrary, in Istanbul the mean age of the respondents to our questionnaire was lower during the ECoC (35 and 31 years old respectively). Pécs is a domestic tourism destination as we can conclude from the country of origin of our respondents in both moments: almost half of them are Hungarian tourists. Considering the marital status of our respondents their profile is also different when we analyse Pécs and Istanbul respondents: in the first city the great majority of tourists were married and in the second one we can observe a greater proportion of single tourists on both moments. In both cities the majority of tourists possessed at least one superior degree and the mean of stay in the cities increased during the ECoC event.

Table 1: Characteristics of the sample

Variables	Distribution of answers	
City of Pécs	Before ECoC	During ECoC
Gender	female: 59,4%; male: 40,6%	female: 60,4%; male: 39,6%
Age	mean: 34,6; standard deviation: 13,1	mean: 36,9; standard deviation: 17,3
Country of Origin	Hungary: 45,9%; Germany : 18,2%; Slovakia: 5,9%: Other: 30%	Hungary: 60,3%; Germany : 10,7%; Austria: 6,1%; Holland: 2,68 Other: 20,19%
Marital status	married: 60,6%; single: 34,7%; divorced: 1,8%; widow: 2,9%	married: 50,1%; single: 35%; divorced: 6,3%; widow: 8,5%
Educational qualification	elementary: 1,2%; secondary: 27,8%; college: 71.	elementary: 4,9%; secondary:43,3%; college: 51,8
Mean of Stay	4,6 days; standard deviation = 3,5	4,8 days; standard deviation = 4,3

4.2.The functional characteristics of a tourism experience and the influence of ECoC on it

When asked to answer spontaneously about the city of Pécs, respondents mentioned "cultural", "university" and "historic" city (26, 26 and 20 respondents respectively). According to the tourists who answered the questionnaire in 2009 they had already had a great awareness that this city would be "ECoC" in the next year and it was impacting their tourism experiences at Pécs. In fact, Pécs was an ECoC city to 31 respondents (in this small city a great bustle was visible in the years before the event due to the urban and architectural works that were taking place in the city). Tourists' experience at the city were also influenced by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) "heritage list" (16 respondents) and by the "festivals" that were performed at the city (16 respondents). Remarkable were also "Széchenyi Square" (15 respondents), "Dzami" (11 respondents), "Zsolnay" (11 respondents) and the "Cathedral of Pécs" (10 respondents). These functional attributes described by tourists are drawn in a web of relationships presented in figure 1. There we can identify 4 main perspectives: those who mentioned "cultural city", mentioned also "university city" and the "festivals"; those who mentioned specific monuments in the city mentioned "Dzsami", "Zsolnay" and "Széchenyi square"; those who mentioned "university" mentioned also "cultural", "historic" and "festival"; and, finally, those to whom the ECoC was since now a remarkable element influencing their description of the city mentioned also "university" and "UNESCO's heritage". Pécs is described as an interesting city most of all due to its historic and cultural background. It makes Pécs an attractive city to our respondents before ECoC.

Figure 1 - The most salient functional characteristics of Pécs (before ECoC)

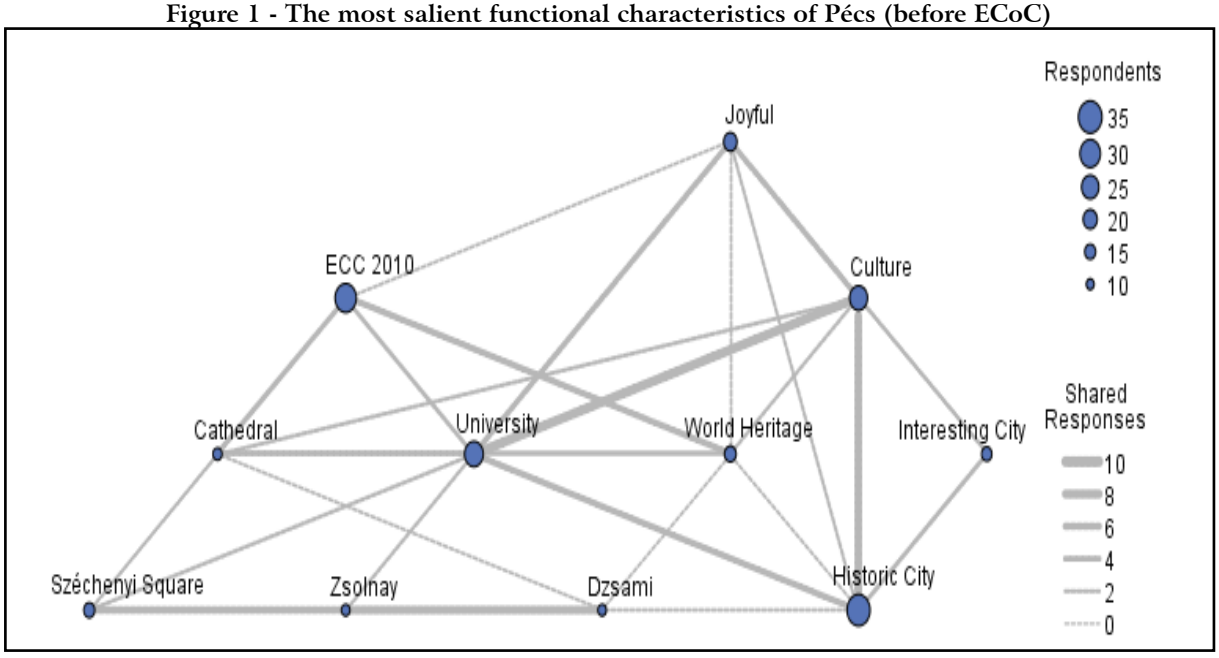
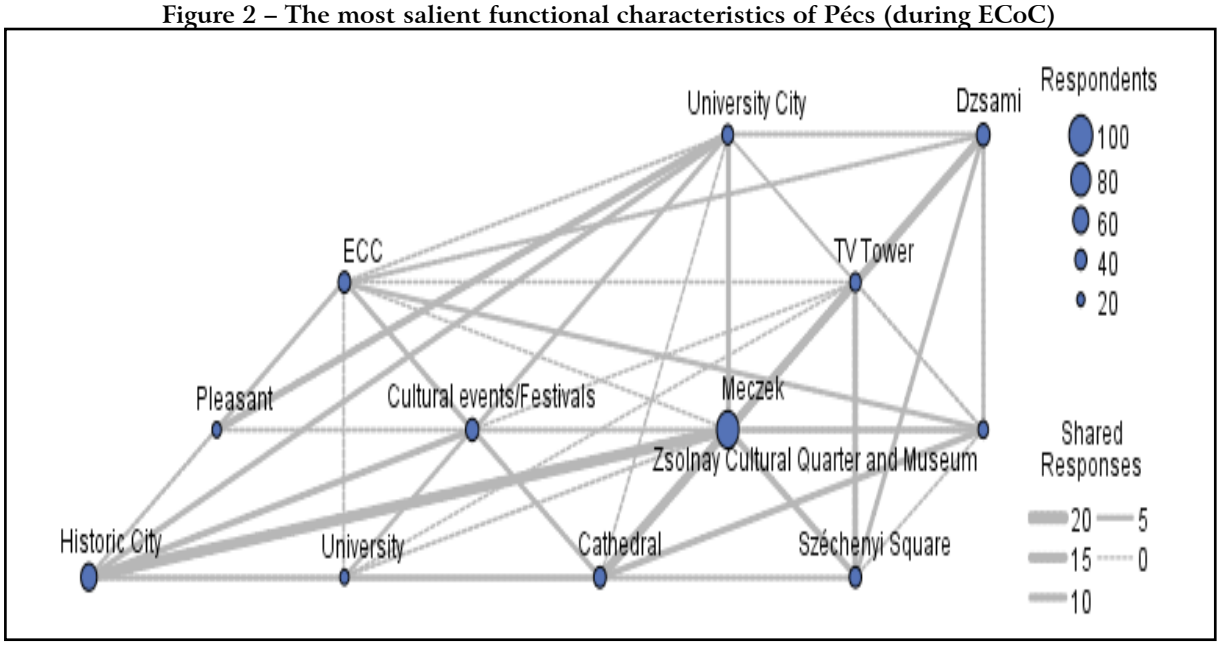


Figure 2 – The most salient functional characteristics of Pécs (during ECoC)



During the ECoC event other characteristics come to the tourist's mind when asked to answer spontaneously about it. Meczek Hills (89 respondents), "university" (48 respondents), "Dzsami" (48 respondents), "Széchenyi Square" (46 respondents), "Cathedral of Pécs" (45 respondents), "ECoC" (42 respondents), "TV Tower" (37 respondents), "Zsolnay" (35 respondents), "culture" (33 respondents), "history" (27 respondents) and "pleasant" (27 respondents) were the more mentioned characteristics of this city. Figure 2 shows the web of relationships drawn by the answers of tourists inquired in this period of time. Now the epicenter of this network is located at Meczek Hills, one of the scenarios of ECoC events. From here tourists pick some routes around the main attractions of the city: "Dzsami", "Cathedral", "Széchenyi Square", "TV Tower" and "Zsolnay" (one of the most important infra-structures of ECC). We can see also an especially strong relationship between those who mentioned "Széchenyi Square", "TV Tower", "pleasant city" and "university".

4.3 The psychological characteristics of a tourism experience and the influence of ECoC on it

When asked to describe the atmosphere of Pécs, tourists visiting the city used adjectives like "friendly" (58 respondents), "Mediterranean mood" (41 respondents), "historic" (34 respondents), "cultural" (28 respondents), "cheerful" (20 respondents), "with heritage" (9 respondents), "nice" and "beautiful" (9 respondents each). The "university" atmosphere is mentioned by 10 respondents. Figure 3 shows a clear network where the adjective "friendly" is the main epicenter from where arise other words like its "Mediterranean mood" and "history" which is specially connected with "culture". During the ECoC event, the psychological profile of the city is described as "cozy" (168 respondents), "pleasant" (91 respondents), "Mediterranean mood" (75 respondents), "young" (45 respondents), "restless" (45 respondents), "historic" (44 respondents), "beautiful" (23 respondents), "joyful" (22 respondents), "exciting" (21 respondents) and "cultural" (21 respondents). Figure 4 shows a denser web of relationships with a clearer epicenter this time focused on the adjective "cozy" strongly related with "pleasant".

Figure 3 - The most salient psychological characteristics of Pécs (before ECoC)

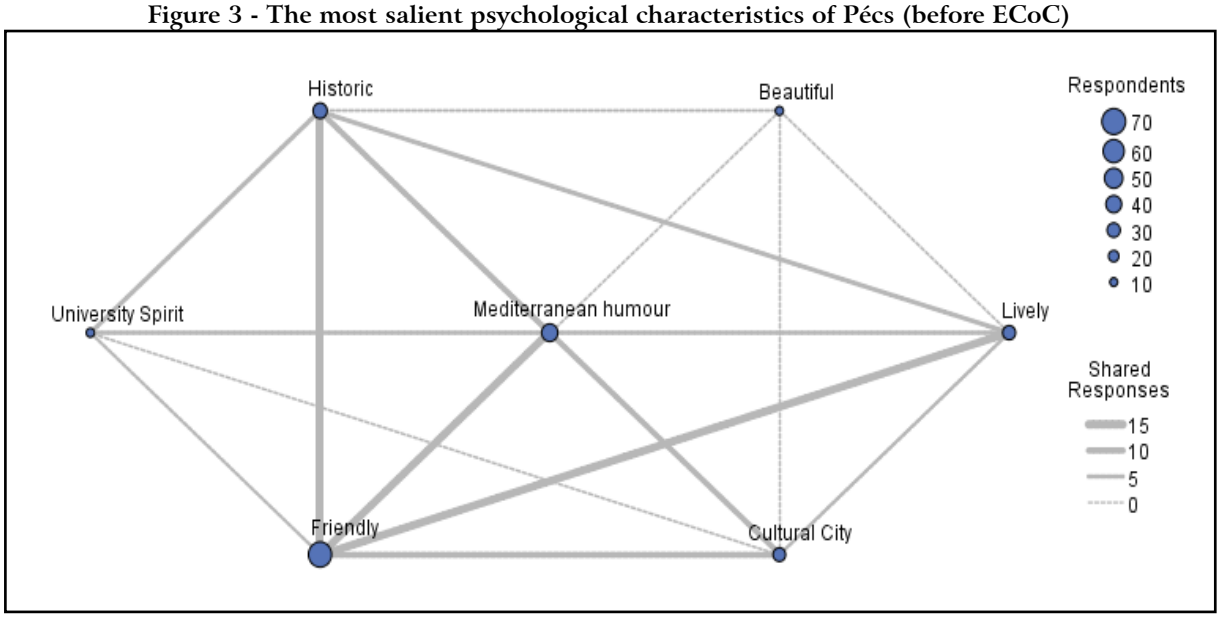
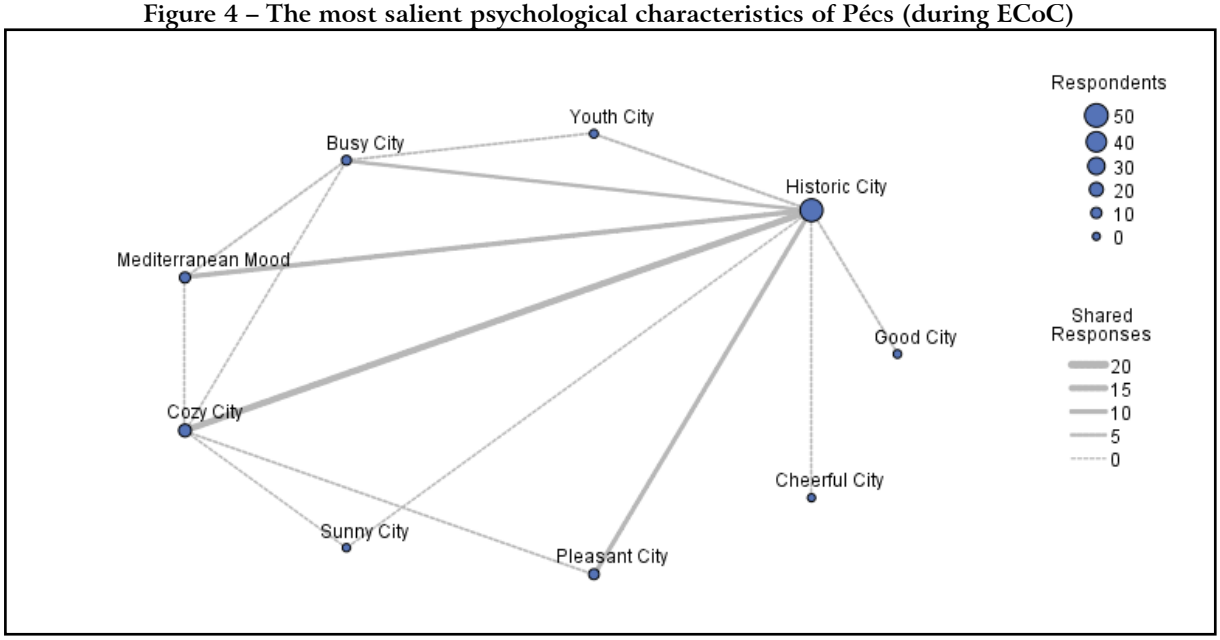


Figure 4 – The most salient psychological characteristics of Pécs (during ECoC)

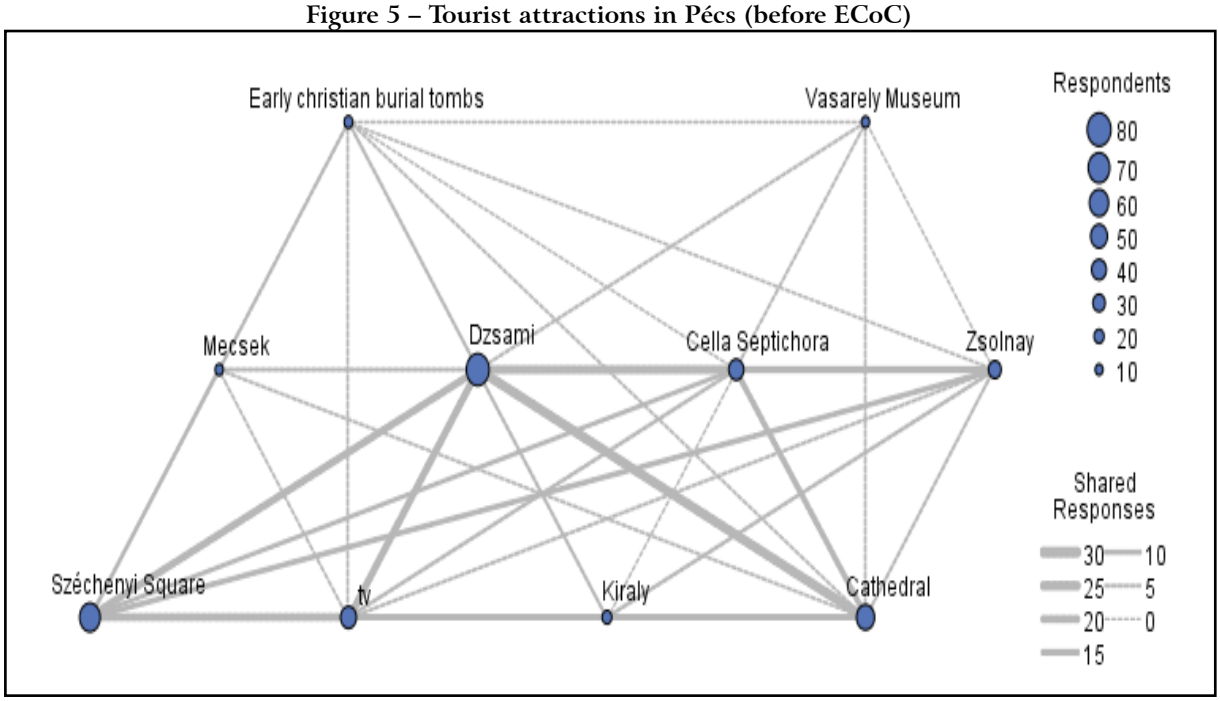


4.4 The distinctive or unique attractions that marked this tourism experience

Among the main tourist attractions in Pécs, we can find the most important Turkish mosque built during the 16th century, the "Dzsami" (73 respondents), the town's main square, "Széchenyi Square" (62 respondents), the "Cathedral of Pécs" (46 respondents), the "TV Tower" (45 respondents), the "Cella Septichora" (41 respondents), the "Szolnay" porcelain factory (30 respondents), the "Kiraly Street" (17 respondents), the "4th century Christian tombs" (12 respondents), "Mecsek Hills" (11 respondents) and the "Vasarely Museum" (11 respondents).

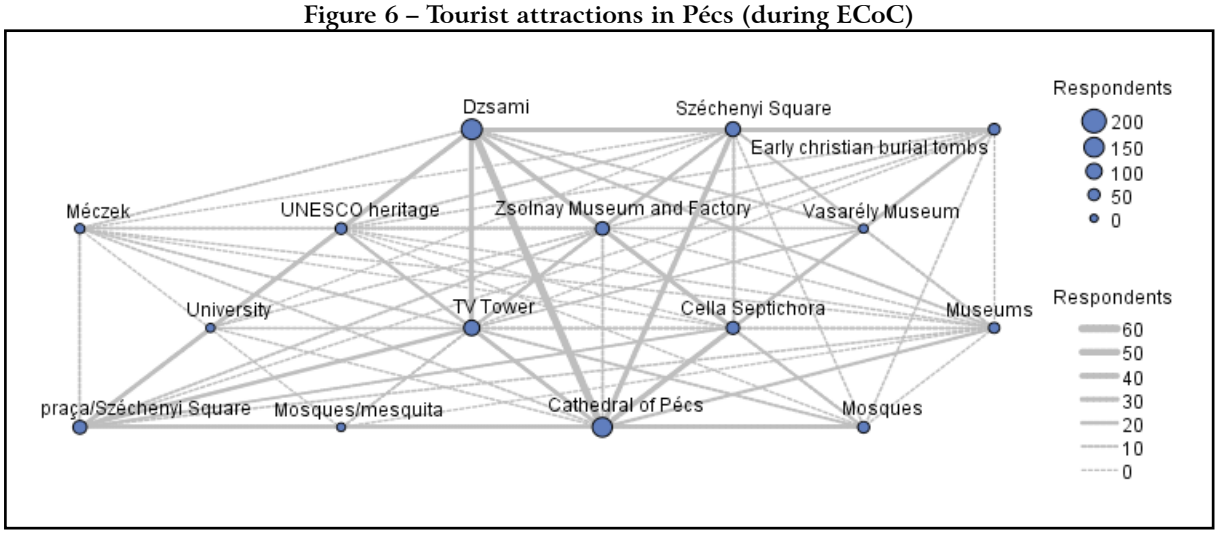
The relationships between every tourist attraction mentioned by the respondents are translated in figure 5. "Dzsami" plays the role of epicenter and is strongly related with the "Cathedral of Pécs", the "TV Tower" and the "Cella Septichora".

Figure 5 – Tourist attractions in Pécs (before ECoC)



According to the data obtained during the ECoC in Pécs, some of the projects that were object of intervention under the scope of this event have gained visibility as tourist attractions (figure 6). Respondents single out the Szolnay factory and museum (71), the museums along Museum Street (45) and the inclusion of the city's heritage on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Still, the Dzsami (by 211 respondents), the Main Square ("Széchenyi Square", 145), the Cathedral of Pécs (145), the TV Tower (91), the "Cella Septichora" (63) and the archaeological findings of the 4th century Christian tombs (43) were pointed out as well.

Figure 6 – Tourist attractions in Pécs (during ECoC)



The main web visible on figure 6 portrays a relationship set between both main monuments – the Dzsami and the Cathedral of Pécs. With the Dzsami for an epicenter, a route toward Széchnyi Square emerges, on to the Zsolnay factory and museum, and the Museum Street.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Intercity competition has become intensified, mainly, by economical globalization, an information society, and the growing significance of the symbolic as contributing factors to differentiate between cities, and so to sustain or increase their attractiveness. Large events have become important instruments whenever they were integrated with urban management strategies. They contribute to the creation of a festive atmosphere and to communicate the brand, on top of interfering in the way the tourists build their tourist experience.

In practical terms, the results of this investigation point out the following implications for the management of cities and events as tourist destinations:

The ECoC in Pécs allowed the city to develop, under a cohesive theme, new settings for the enactment of tourism experiences, which are herein characterized from functional and emotional points of view by identifying perceptions before and after the ECoC took place in this city. This event contributed to the inclusion in the list of this city's main tourist attractions of some projects that merited visibility due to the event programme, such as the Museum Street and the Zsolnay factory. Besides, the event showed a positive impact with the addition of innovative and creative notes in the development of new tourism experiences, namely in drawing tourist routes along the city and its outskirts.

Identifying psychological attributes through which tourists characterize their experience in Pécs contributes to define the city's atmosphere, based on which the brand positioning and its respective communication strategies will be defined, with due emphasis on the top contributing aspects that made this tourism experience a memorable one.

Developing new tourism experiences must, furthermore, assume as privileged settings all the distinctive and unique attractions in each city, from the tourists' perspective.

The suggestion of the impact of events on the tourism experience and on the image formation of cities as tourist destinations reinforces the importance of selecting the events as a way to provide continuity and consistency to the theme under which the tourist destination develops as experience.

The study of the impact of the ECoC on the perceptions of the tourism experience of cities as tourist destinations helps to strengthen the role of the event in the current scenario. By helping the cities to enhance their differentiating attributes the event contributes to increase their tourist attractiveness and bestows coherence to the tourists' experiences.

This analysis provides those responsible for the city while tourist destination, relevant information to the development of urban tourist routes and thematic experiences, as well as for its communication strategy.

The most relevant features of the atmosphere of the city, to the extent that encompass psychological attributes, allow characterizing the personality of Pécs as a tourist destination, vital information to the development of a brand strategy.

The results obtained within the framework of this research contribute to support the decision-making process of the professionals responsible for the management of the city and, in particular, the creation of urban tourist products.

The knowledge of the functional and psychological perceptions about the experience enables those responsible to develop and communicate the tourist town, while stage of experiences, enhancing the cognitive aspects in the memory of tourists and redesign the strategy of brand positioning of the city as a tourist destination.

In addition, this type of research has implications in the design of the events themselves, contributing to adjust cultural products to consumer expectations - tourists and residents, providing higher levels of satisfaction and memorization. The development of future events can and should benefit from all the work unfolded in the meantime.

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