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Evaluating the Guimarães 2012 European Capital of Culture: a tourist perception approach

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Abstract

Guimarães has hosted, during the year of 2012, one of the European Capital of Culture (ECOC). The evaluation of the event is needed as public, private and community funds are involved. The approach considers the tourists (domestic and international) as external and independent stakeholders who assessed the cultural activities developed during the event and the attributes of the city.

The results of the survey show that hosting the 2012 ECOC was a major contribution for attracting new visitors to the city, although many of them just for a short period of time. The main source of general information collected by tourists was the Internet, and the traditional media. Only a small amount of respondents demonstrated a specialized knowledge of the cultural program. The most cited and appreciated performances came from the areas of music, exhibitions, and theatre. According to the perceptions of tourists, the tangible assets were clearly detached from the set of attributes of Guimarães, including buildings, churches and chapels, whereas intangible assets were less noted. Overall, Guimarães received a very positive evaluation related to city image and stay and is highly recommended by tourists to friends and relatives.

Keywords: European Capital of Culture; Evaluation of Mega Events; Cultural Tourism; Guimarães.

Introduction

The evaluation of the European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) by external entities has become a requirement after the Decision n. ° 1622/2006/EC, dated from October 24, 2006, of the European Commission. Therefore, since the ECOC 2007 (Luxembourg and Sibiu), the European Commission publishes, in the official journal, synthetic ex-post evaluations of the events (ECOTEC 2009 and 2010; European Commission, 2009 and 2010).

Simultaneously, as festivals, fairs and international exhibitions and sporting mega events were taking an increasingly important role in the development of cities, regions and countries, the number of impact studies increased significantly (Fredline and Faulkner, 2000; Kim and Petrick, 2005; Ritchie, Shipway and Cleeve, 2009). Evaluation is a multidimensional concept that should include not only economic, but also social, environmental, and cultural impacts.

The approach used to assess the success of ECOC 2012 is the one of tourists, and their perception towards the city and the several realizations that take place during that year. Multiple studies have been made about the impact of mega events but fewer have focused on tourists as external and independent stakeholders, specifically on the evaluation of the activities of the European Capitals of Culture. The result of this research can be useful to managers interested in the planning and organization of future cultural events.

Considering the aims of the research, the paper begins with a brief review of the literature on impacts of hosting mega events, specifically cultural-related ones. The following section addresses the characteristics of Guimarães and the objectives underlying the organization of the 2012 ECOC. The third section describes the methodology used in the research. Section four presents the results of the analysis. The paper ends with some conclusions and the identification of a few limitations of the empirical research performed.

1 – The impact of megaevents

Hosting a mega event causes economic, social and environmental impacts. In most cases, the economic dimension is overvalued, comparing to the social and cultural ones. Kim and Petrick (2005), in the aim of their study about the FIFA World Cup 2002, that

took place in Seoul, Korea, presented three reasons why the organizers of the mega events tend to privilege economic analyzes and to ignore social and cultural impacts. These are: i) the social and environmental impacts are seen as "external" to the economic analysis; ii) the impacts are less tangible and difficult to measure; iii) the effects tend to be associated with negative factors and therefore their evaluation is not encouraged by the promoters of the events.

In what concerns the positive economic impacts, it is widely recognized that tax revenues, jobs and incomes tend to increase before, during and after hosting a mega event (Ritchie, Shipway and Cleeve, 2009). Deccio and Baloglu (2002), and Strauf and Scherer (2010), refer also greater opportunities for giving external visibility and promoting the city and the welcoming country, as well as investments in new infrastructure that residents and tourists can benefit from.

The hosting of a mega event can also be part of a larger program of urban regeneration, as it was the case of the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games, which were associated with the development of tourist attractions, shops and restaurants, as well as the improvement of transport infrastructure (Ritchie, Shipway and Cleeve, 2009).

As positive social impacts, we could point out: the increase of community pride of the hosting population; the improvement of their quality of life; the strengthening of cultural values; and the reinforcement of the regional or national identity (Hall, 1992; Deccio and Baloglu, 2002; Waitt, 2003, Kim and Petrick, 2005; Kim, Gursoy and Lee, 2006; Ritchie, Shipway and Cleeve, 2009). In fact, according to Gursoy and Kendall (2006), some researchers have concluded that, for residents of places hosting mega events, as it was the case of Calgary, with the 1988 Winter Olympics, and Atlanta, with the 1996 Olympics, these positive social impacts, in particular, community pride and international recognition, were as important or more than the positive economic impacts. Many years before, Hall (1992) had also emphasized that environmental, sociocultural and political impacts may be more important than economic ones. Similarly, Deccio and Baloglu (2002) have claimed that conducting a mega event may also contribute to preserve the environment and local heritage.

Besides the benefits associated with the implementation of a mega event, local communities may also experience negative impacts of economic, social and environmental nature. Some of the costs associated with hosting a mega event are: the increase of the prices of goods, services and properties; traffic congestion and parking

problems; increased crime and insecurity; and conflicts between residents and visitors (Deccio and Baloglu, 2002; Waitt, 2003). The environmental destruction and deterioration of cultural or historical resources are also damages that may arise from organizing mega events (Kim, Gursoy and Lee, 2006).

In a research about the measuring of the impacts of festivals and cultural events of large scale, as major impacts on the local and regional economies, Langen (2008) and Langen and Garcia (2009) reported the expenditures incurred by visitors (direct, indirect and induced). In addition to these expected effects, Baker Associates (2007), reporting the results of the Glastonbury festival (UK), mentioned trade opportunities that arose from non-profit organizations (security, monitoring, recycling), the positive image of the city (nationally and internationally), and the contribution to the formation of a local business culture.

It seems to be obvious that a European Capital of Culture, as any international mega event, causes positive and negative impacts, but it has some peculiarities that distinguish it from the ones of sports events. On the one hand, its scope is broader, as it focuses on various aspects of the cultural life of the city. On the other hand, it has a higher temporal duration, as follows uninterruptedly over a year. Finally, its effects are more diverse because they occur at economic, social, cultural, political, physical and environmental levels.

The first detailed economic impact assessment of an ECOC occurred in Glasgow, in 1990, but since 1985 this kind of cultural events have been held annually in various European cities. In 1994 it was published a report about the first ten years of the European Capitals of Culture (Myerscough, 1994), emphasizing the recognition of the citizens that the title conceded to the city was important. The same report also shows the positive effects experienced by host cities on several dimensions, such as coverage by the media, and the development of culture and tourism.

In 2004, the European Commission has ordered a study to evaluate the success of the second decade of the European Capitals of Culture (1995-2004). This study concludes that the organization of a ECOC benefits the city and the country (Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004). However, points out the lack of development of a policy of adopting the best practices (benchmarking), and the absence of a common framework and performance indicators.

The evaluation process of each of the ECOC was required by Decision n. ° 1622/2006/EC, of October 24, 2006, and on December 22, 2009 [COM (2009) 689 final], was published the first ex-post evaluations: the 2007 (Luxembourg and Sibiu), and the 2008 (Liverpool and Stavanger) ones. In the following year, it was published the ex-post analysis of the 2009 ECOC (Linz and Vilnius) [COM (2010) 762 final, December 17]. The evaluation framework includes the following dimensions: relevance of the action; relevance to the city that hosts the mega event; management efficiency of the organization; effectiveness of ECC mechanisms at EU level; the effectiveness in the development of cultural activities; the effectiveness in promoting European dimension through culture; effectiveness in achieving social, economic, urban development and tourism; and sustainability of the event (European Commission, 2009 and 2010). Thus, the European Capitals of Culture can contribute to the promotion of local culture, supporting the development of artistic and cultural activities of local organizations and facilitating access to and citizen participation in these activities (Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004; LGR, 2008; ECOTEC, 2009).

Previously to Guimarães, Portugal had hosted two ECOC. The first was in Lisbon, in 1994, which contributed to the developing of projects of rehabilitation and reform of cultural buildings. The second one occurred in Oporto, in 2001, resulting in the construction of the Music House (Casa da Música), and the rehabilitation of the National Auditorium Carlos Alberto (Auditório Nacional Carlos Alberto).

The perception of the benefits or costs associated with a mega event, as well as its success or failure, may have impacts on the image of the destination (Ritchie, Shipway and Cleeve, 2009; Strauf and Scherer, 2010). When the tourist's perception of the negative attributes outweighs the positive ones, the image of the city image can be damaged. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that perceptions of tourists can be monitored.

2 – Guimarães ECOC 2012

The European Capital of Culture initiative is funded by the European Union Culture Program and promotes Europe's cultural diversity. The initiative aims are to highlight the richness, diversity and shared characteristics of European culture and promote understanding among citizens. The title has a long-term impact, not only on culture but

also in social and economic terms, both for the city and for the surrounding region. Guimarães shared the 2012 title with the city of Maribor, in Slovenia.

Guimarães is considered the birthplace of the Portuguese nation, the site where Portugal was founded, in the 9th century, by King D. Afonso Henriques. He played an important role in many of the events that led to the independence of the country in 1143. Located in the northern region of Minho, Guimarães, with its distinctive 10th-century castle, was classified a world heritage site by UNESCO, in 2001. The city also prides itself on its architecture, including many traditional buildings from the 15th to the 19th century.

It was the first time that a Portuguese medium city hosted such a mega-event and the residents saw it as an opportunity to reinforce their pride and attract new visitors to the city. A second challenge associated with the hosting of the 2012 ECOC refers to enhancing the tourism industry, viewed by local authorities as a major driver for regional growth. A third challenge was the unique opportunity that the 2012 ECOC presented for Guimarães to reinforce the image of the city as a cultural destination, both, within the country and internationally.

The goals of the 2012 ECOC, in Guimarães, according to the institution in charge of the organization and promotion of the event were: i) empowering the local community with new human resources and professional expertise, by encouraging their proactive involvement; ii) transforming the city's economy, which historically is endowed of an manufacture economic basis, into an internationally competitive and creative economy; iii) transforming a space that passively preserves memory into one that constantly offers new and surprising cultural experiences.

The program focus on four themes: city; community; thought and arts; and the cultural program, which included music, cinema, photography, fine arts, architecture, literature, thought, theatre, dance, and street art. Besides the opening and closing ceremonies, which attracted many people, during 2012 there were approximately 600 different cultural events.

3- Methodology

The methodology was quantitative in nature and used a survey research design as a common method to investigate the tourists' perceptions of the ECOC. The design of the questionnaire was based on previous studies and on the literature review about the evaluation of other ECOC, as mentioned before in section 1. After the design of the

questionnaire (both in Portuguese and English), a pre-test was performed to assure internal and external consistency of the questions to be raised to tourists.

The final questionnaire included three parts. The first part of the questionnaire dealt with the visit to Guimarães and contained six questions. The questions try to know the cities that tourists enjoyed the most in the North part of the country or in the country, the number of times the city was visited by the respondent, how many days he/she wanted to stay, in what city and type of hotel slept, and the reasons for choosing Guimarães. The second part explored tourists' perceptions regarding the 2012 ECOC. The questions included if the tourist previously knew the event and how he/she received the information, what was the main motive of the visit, if he/she wanted to participate in some of the events and the level of satisfaction with the events taking place. Other questions tried to understand the level of knowledge about the program of the 2012 ECOC, the interest of the tourist and if the program was coherent with the profile of the city. One question was dedicated to the most strong or weak attributes of Guimarães. The last questions of this part asked the tourist if he/she wanted to return to the city, how he/she evaluated the stay, what was the impression that retained and if he/she would recommend the visit to Guimarães to a friend.

The third part covered the demographic characteristics of the respondents (such as sex, age, education, income).

The final structured questionnaire was applied between August and September 2012, allowing for the collection of 390 completed and provided usable questionnaires. The questionnaire was administered in some symbolic sites, such as the castle of Guimarães and the "Duques de Bragança" palace (Paço dos Duques de Bragança) following the criteria of nationality to attain a random stratified sample. The source was the two Guimarães tourism offices and the tourists' data registered, by nationality, in 2011. The twelve main countries of origin identified in 2011 were: Spain (28.6%); Portugal (21.8%); France (14.0%); Brazil (4.9%); Italy (3.3%); German (2.5%); England (2.9%); Netherlands (3.0%); U.S.A. (1.0%); Japan (1.0%); Belgium (1.1%); and Canada (0.7%). The remaining 15.2% corresponded to other nationalities not specified.

To assess the perceptions of tourists (Portuguese and foreign) related to the activities developed during the 2012 ECOC and the attributes of Guimarães, some statistical tests were performed.

4- Tourist's evaluation of the 2012 ECOC: a survey

Table 1 presents the profile of the survey respondents. The origin of the tourists is almost foreign (around 80%) and Portuguese (20%), which significantly corresponds to the data registered at the two tourism offices of Guimarães. The characteristics of tourists that visited Guimarães show no significant differences between gender, but they are relatively young, with nearly half of the sample under 46 years old (56.0%). They are well educated (74.2 percent possess a university degree) and mostly are married. Most of the tourists are employed and relatively wealthy, declaring incomes above €2500 (48.2%) on a monthly basis.

The level of education is one of the characteristics that Silberberg (1995) identified as being part of the heritage tourist profile. On the contrary, significant differences were found between the age cohort of tourists visiting Guimarães (mostly under 46 years old) and the Silberberg (1995) study (relatively older). However, Perez (2009: 126, citing Richards, 1996 and 1997) refers that the profile of cultural tourists is increasingly younger.

Table 1 - Sample characteristics

Characteristics	N (390)	%
Country of residence (Nationality)		
Portugal	81 (106)	20.8 (27.2)
Spain	117 (116)	30.0 (29.7)
France	61 (52)	15.6 (13.3)
Brazil	21 (21)	5.4 (5.4)
Italy	20 (20)	5.1 (5.1)
Germany	17 (16)	4.4 (4.1)
England	12 (12)	3.1 (3.1)
Netherlands	13 (13)	3.3 (3.3)
United States	9 (5)	2.3 (1.3)
Japan	4 (4)	1.0 (1.0)
Belgium	4 (4)	1.0 (1.0)
Canada	3 (3)	0.8 (0.8)
Others	28 (16)	7.3 (4.6)
Age		
16 – 25 years	37	9.5
26-45 years	181	46.5
46-65 years	141	36.2
More than 65 years	30	7.7
Gender		
Male	184	47.2
Female	206	52.8
Marital Status		
Single	140	36.2
Married	222	57.4
Divorced/Widow	25	6.5
Education		
Basic/Secondary	100	25.8
University	166	42.8
Master/PhD	122	31.4

Professional situation		
Employee	299	76.9
Unemployed	19	4.9
Student	26	6.7
Retired	40	10.3
Work at home	5	1.3
Income		
Less than €501	13	3.6
Between €501 and €1000	36	10.1
Between €1001 and €2500	136	38.1
More than €2500	172	48.2

Source: authors` own survey data.

These different age profiles could be explained by the context (country, region, heritage site type) and time (year, seasonality) where these studies have been performed. Given the nature of our sample (composition and size), no further considerations will be made regarding a definitive and specific typology of heritage tourists.

The results presented in Table 2 suggest that touring around the region is very important for cities such as Guimarães, which depends on the capacity of attraction of other middle cities located in the region. When considered as a set of cities (Guimarães, Braga, Viana do Castelo, and Douro), its total attraction capacity improves significantly. However, Porto still is the main “entry door” (30.1 percent) to the northern part of Portugal.

This occurs, first, because it is endowed with an international airport, a network of public transports (railways, buses, underground) and it is the place of departure for boats that travel to Douro. A second reason for the attracting role played by Porto metropolitan area has to do with its critical dimension, that enhances accommodation supply, both, in terms of quality (different star hotels) and quantity (number of beds). Finally, a wider range of attractions and experiences is available to different typologies of tourists in the metropolitan area, such as beaches, museums, Porto wine caves, and shopping.

Besides the importance of Porto as a tourism destination, it is very important that all the cities belonging to the northern region could benefit from tourism. The creation of thematic itineraries (such as religious and wines routes), linking different towns and rural communities outside the Porto metropolitan area, is one strategy to increase the potential contribution of those places to regional development. However, as mentioned before, a major constrain persists, which is the tourism seasonality. Different strategies have been implemented to attenuate this phenomenon, which includes attracting

selected typologies of tourists (such as seniors), organization of special events, academic conferences, professional seminars, among others.

Table 2 – Other cities visited by tourists

Cities	N	%
Braga	247	24.4
Porto	305	30.1
Viana do Castelo	157	15.5
Douro	112	11.1
Others	192	18.9
Total (a)	1014	100,0

Note: (a) Multiple response question.

Source: authors` own survey data.

As shown in table 3, hosting a mega event such the 2012 ECOC seems to give a major contribution for attracting new visitors, as 71.5% of the respondents were visiting the city for the first time, and only 10% were returning visitors (more than 3 times). If one of the major objectives of the European Union when creating the ECOC was to give awareness to less known cities, we may conclude that the goal was reached in this particular case.

Table 3 – Tourists' intentions and accommodation

Questions	N	%
Have you visited the city before?		
First time	279	71.5
One time	35	9.0
Two/three times	37	9.5
More than three times	39	10.0
Total	390	100
How many days do you intend to stay in Guimarães?		
Less than a day		
One day	211	54.1
Two/three days	101	25.9
Four to six days	50	12.8
More than seven days	18	4.6
Total	10	2.6
	390	100
City where do you stay?		
Guimarães	112	32.0
Porto	97	27.7
Braga	29	8.3
Viana do Castelo	14	4.0
Others	98	28.0
Total	350	100
Type of accommodation		
Hotel	187	53.0
Hostel	44	12.5
Apartment	12	3.4
Family and friends	60	17.0
Camping	24	6.8
Others	25	7.4
Total	353	100

Source: authors` own survey data.

A clear weakness of the Guimarães destination was the short time of stay, with 80.0% of the respondents declaring that they would stay only one day (25.9%) or less (54.1%). Probably due to the large number of emigrants that each year use to visit their home country, 17% of the respondents declared to be accommodated at family and friends houses. The short time of stay has a negative impact on the accommodation chosen by tourists, as only 32% of visitors stayed in Guimarães, which loosed attraction for other neighbor cities (Braga, Viana do Castelo) or even larger cities, such as Porto. One possible explanation is the accommodation capacity (number of beds) of Guimarães, particularly in times of strong demand, as by the time some major events of the ECOC took place.

Table 4 – Evaluation of Guimarães the 2012 ECOC

Questions	N	%
Knowledge of the event (Yes= 235)		
Friends and family	30	12.9
UNESCO site	2	0.9
Internet	78	33.2
Magazines/Newspapers	26	11.2
Radio/TV	57	24.3
Tour guide	18	7.7
Other	21	9.9
NR	3	1.3
Total	235	100
Knowledge of the program (yes = 70)		
Level of matching with expectations		
100%	30	23.8
75%	36	28.6
50%	32	25.4
25%	22	17.5
0%	6	4.8
Total	126	100
Attendance to cultural activities (Yes = 76)		
Music	47	37.0
Theatre	13	10.2
Exhibitions	33	26.0
Photography	10	7.9
Fairs	4	3.1
Workshop	3	2.4
Cinema	5	3.9
Dance	2	1.6
Pop up	4	3.1
Debates and conferences	2	1.6
Other	4	3.1
Total	127	100
Attendee level of satisfaction regarding particular events of the ECOC		
Very satisfied	2	8.7
Satisfied	10	43.5
Reasonable satisfied	11	47.8
Less satisfied	0	0.0
Nothing satisfied	0	0.0
Total	23	100

Source: authors` own survey data.

Table 4 indicates a wide variety of sources of information about the 2012 ECOC. The Internet was the main source (33.2%) used by tourists to access the general information about the event, followed by the traditional media, such as radio/TV (24.3%), and magazines and newspapers (11.2). However, the information sources that probably could be more useful in making decisions in terms of relevance for tourists were friends and family (12.9%), and the tour guides (7.7%). This assertion is partially confirmed by the people that demonstrated real interest on the event (only 70 tourists out of 235), by knowing the entire program (23.8%) or part of it (71.5%). The level of depth knowledge of the program was very weak as only 25 tourists had an accurate and favorable opinion about the adequate match between the profile of the city and the cultural activities developed within the city during the survey.

The program included a wide range of cultural activities, but only 76 out of 235 (32.3%) of the tourists attended some of the venues. The cultural activities most cited by the tourists were related with music (37%), exhibitions (26%) and theatre (10.2%), which was the part of the program oriented towards general audiences. The number of attendees surveyed that effectively assisted to a particular cultural venue (23 out of 235) were satisfied with the performance.

The image we have towards a region has a strong impact on how we view it as a tourism destination, a place to invest in, or a place to live. One of the main outcomes that could be obtained with the organization of the 2012 ECOC was to determine which elements of Guimarães were included by tourists in their destination image. These elements are an integral part of the region's identity that has been proactively distilled, interpreted, internalized, and projected externally in order to gain recognition and to construct a favorable image. A regional destination image represents a set of beliefs and perceptions that people have about a given region, such as cultural heritage, landscape, nature, art, music, gastronomy, citizens, events and a diverse package of variables and auxiliary factors.

Table 5 presents the perceptions of all respondents regarding the different attributes of Guimarães in the broadest sense. As can be seen, in the top of the more salient attributes of the image of Guimarães stands the material heritage patrimony and include buildings and historic sites (3.08), and churches and chapels (2.28), which are closely related to the World Heritage status of the city. Below the score of 2 (mean), there are a wide

range of items that deserved the mention of several respondents, but lack relevancy in the perception of the majority of respondents.

Table 5 – Most valued attributes of Guimarães during the 2012 ECOC

Attributes	All (a)		Portuguese		Foreigner		t-test (b)
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
Folk music	1.22	0.861	1.5	1.252	1.11	0.63	3.045*
Other kind of music	1.09	0.538	1.22	0.805	1.05	0.387	2.101**
Festivals and events	1.19	0.774	1.50	1.229	1.07	0.463	3.508*
Cultural life	1.46	1.179	1.85	1.529	1.31	0.982	3.379*
Writers	1.04	0.387	1.03	0.291	1.05	0.417	-0.476
Painting and sculpture	1.09	0.533	1.16	0.678	1.07	0.467	1.308
Craftsmanship	1.28	0.92	1.59	1.256	1.17	0.729	3.287*
Dance	1.03	0.281	1.06	0.41	1.02	0.214	0.933
Football	1.11	0.59	1.2	0.761	1.08	0.509	1.467
Other outdoor sports	1.02	0.253	1.04	0.389	1.01	0.178	0.944
Other indoor sports	1.03	0.307	1.10	0.584	1.00	0.0	1.828
Quality of the environment	1.81	1.496	1.69	1.39	1.85	1.534	-1.004
Buildings and historical sites	3.08	1.86	3.27	1.88	3.01	1.851	1.226
Museums	1.83	1.496	2.58	1.799	1.55	1.259	5.418*
Churches and chapels	2.28	1.712	2.95	1.848	2.02	1.589	4.577*
University and scientific knowledge	1.12	0.629	1.2	0.821	1.08	0.538	1.322

Notes: (a) Five-point interval scale, corresponding to 5 (very strong), 4 (strong), 3 (moderate), 2 (weak), 1 (very weak). (b) T-test for equality of means, assuming equal variances. (*) Significant at $p < 0.01$. (**) Significant at $p < 0.05$.

Source: Authors' own survey data.

A synthesis of the most salient attributes of Guimarães shows that it was perceived overall by tourists as a heritage and cultural city, encompassing buildings and historical sites, churches and chapels. These tangible assets are all physical and visible for tourists, facilitating the retention of some remarkable signs that shape the image of the city. These physical attributes are remembered later by tourists in photos and personal movies shown to family and friends. In a landscape full of images, it seems that physical attributes still do matter. The declaration of Guimarães as a UNESCO world heritage site, in 2001, has also brought awareness to the city.

On the contrary, the exposure to intangible assets stimulus was more passively received by the tourists and more easily forgotten. Nevertheless, the hosting of a mega cultural event, as the 2012 ECOC, should be viewed as a long term investment that need to be maintained if the city wants to be relevant in the competitive international market of tourism destinations.

There were no significant differences of perception between Portuguese and foreign tourists with respect to the attributes of “writers”, “painting and sculpture”, “dance”, “football”, “other outdoor sports”, “quality of the environment”, “buildings and

historical sites”, and “university”. The major differences ($p < 0.01$) were found in “cultural life”, “folk music”, “festivals”, “craftsmanship”, “museums”, and “chapels and churches”. That is, Portuguese tourists were more likely to value the cultural life (music, festivals, museums, chapels and churches) of Guimarães than the foreign ones.

The perceived attributes of Guimarães were factor analyzed to see if there were any common factors that drove tourists. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and the Bartlett’s test of sphericity were computed to assess the appropriateness of factor analysis to the data. The KMO value was 0.684, and Bartlett’s test was significant at the 0.00 level. Both results demonstrate the factorability of the matrices being considered (Hair *et al.*, 1995).

Principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was used to identify the underlying dimensions. After inspection of factors content for tourist’s attribute perceptions of Guimarães, three items were deleted, two corresponding to a factor with a Cronbach’s alpha less than 0.2 and further, and one that was isolated. A final four factor model was estimated with 13 items. The factor solution accounted for approximately 53.5% of the total variance explained, with all communalities ranging from 0.322 to 0.760. Although factors 3 and 4 have low reliability alpha, considering the interest for analysis, were retained.

The results of that factor analysis are listed in table 6. The factors represent the overall perception of all respondents regarding the attributes of Guimarães and were labeled: “material heritage”, “intangible heritage”, “cultural performance”, and “sport and education”. Factor 1 is related to the basic material characteristics of the city, and it is responsible for explaining 21.41% of the total variance found, with a reliability coefficient of 0.67. It is followed by Factor 2 (11.52% of total variance and Cronbach’s alpha level of 0.56), which comprises items related to arts and cultural life. Factor 3, labeled “cultural performance”, contains dance and music (10.74% of total variance explained with the alpha level of 0.38). The final factor “sport and education”, represents 9.82% of the statistical variance and had a reliability alpha of 0.43. This factor is associated with the university campus, football and other outdoor sports.

Considering the internal consistency of the items within each dimension measured by examining the Cronbach reliability alphas, these show a high level for factors 1 and 2 but lower for factor 3 and 4. In fact, Nunnally (1978) suggests that reliability alphas close to 0.70 indicate a high level of internal consistency between the individual scale

items and the related factors.

As said, the results indicate that tourists' perceptions can be described in four dimensions. The dimensions were found to be reliable and valid, with "material heritage" as the main factor.

Table 6 - Factor analysis results with varimax rotation of tourist's attributes perceptions of Guimarães during the 2012 ECOC

Components	Factor Loading ^a	Item means	Standard deviation	Eigenvalues	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Reliability Alpha
Factor 1: Material heritage		2.249		2.780	21.411	21.411	0.672
Churches and chapels	0.790	2.28	1.712				
Buildings and historical sites	0.771	3.08	1.860				
Museums	0.658	1.83	1.496				
Quality of the environment	0.540	1.81	1.496				
Factor 2: Intangible heritage		1.219		1.498	11.523	32.934	0.559
Painting and sculpture	0.805	1.09	0.533				
Writers	0.702	1.04	0.387				
Handicraft	0.534	1.28	0.920				
Cultural life	0.515	1.46	1.179				
Factor 3: Cultural performance		1.060		1.396	10.735	43.669	0.383
Dance	0.869	1.03	0.281				
Other kind of music	0.537	1.09	0.538				
Factor 4: Sport and education		1.082		1.277	9.820	53.489	0.431
Football	0.713	1.11	0.590				
University and scientific knowledge	0.659	1.02	0.253				
Other outdoor sports	0.650	1.12	0.630				

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis; Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization; KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy) = 0.684; Bartlett's test of sphericity : $p=0.000$.

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

The dimensions "material heritage" and "intangible heritage" aggregate the main attributes that tourists perceived as unique and clearly distinctive of Guimarães. Each tourist has an image of all destinations where he/she has been to, but only remembers some of them if that image is truly remarkable. From the tourists' perspective, Guimarães has a historical build heritage, a quality of environment and a cultural life distinctive and easily accessed by people. These factors should support a differentiation strategy aiming to position the city as a set of historical attributes (tangible and intangible), beliefs, ideas and impressions that people associate with the birth of Portugal (Crompton, 1979; Kotler, Haider and Rein, 1993). The European Capital of Culture that took place during 2012 was an excellent opportunity to reinforce this niche, positioning and shaping the image of Guimarães.

In brief, the four factor solution offered by the analysis include a major factor of differentiation that surpasses all the other three, that is, the historical heritage of the city and the quality of its environment. These attributes should be the central elements of the city image, positioning and communication-mix.

One way of capturing the general impression caused by a tourism destination is asking to the tourist/visitor if he/she would recommend the city to a friend/relative or if he/she intends to return to the city. In the first case the results are very positive, with a mean of 4.85 regarding the recommendation to relatives and friends, but smaller in average terms in what regards the intention to return to Guimarães (mean of 3.58), which probably should be interpreted as an enjoyable city for a first time visit but not an enough exciting place for a new cultural experience. The evaluation of the stay and the city image are both quite impressive (means of 4.3 and 4.48) and denote a very good general impression of the tourists about the people and the city.

Table 7 – Recommendation of Guimarães

Questions	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
Intention to return to Guimarães (a)	62	24	59	114	130	3.58	1.413
Recommendation of Guimarães (a)	1	0	7	40	334	4.85	.444
Evaluation of the stay in Guimarães (b)	0	0	10	212	109	4.30	.520
Evaluation of the image of Guimarães (c)	0	0	4	181	175	4.48	.522

Notes: (a) 1 – No, 2 – Probably no, 3 – I don't know, 4 Probably yes, 5 – Absolutely sure; (b) 1 – Very bad, 2 – Bad, 3 – Normal, 4 – Good, 5 – Excellent; (c) 1 – Very unfavorable, 2 – Unfavorable, 3 – Indifferent, 4 – Favorable, 5 – Very favorable.

Source: Authors` own survey data.

Conclusions

During 2012 Guimarães has hosted one of the European Capitals of Culture. An attempt to evaluate the main outcomes of the cultural program was made in the peak of the program (August and September of 2012). The tourists' perceptions related to the ECO program and the main attributes of Guimarães were captured by a survey research design.

The results indicate that touring around the region is very important for cities such as Guimarães, which depends on the capacity of attraction of other middle cities located in the region (Guimarães, Braga, Viana do Castelo, and Douro). Still, Porto is the main “entry door” to the northern part of Portugal.

Hosting a mega event such the 2012 ECOC seems to have been a major contribution for attracting new visitors, as the majority of tourists visited the city for the first time, and only a small portion were returning visitors. A clear weakness of the Guimarães destination was the short time of stay, which has a negative impact on the accommodation chosen by tourists, that stayed in other neighbor cities (Braga, Viana do Castelo) or even larger cities, such as Porto.

A wide variety of sources of information was used by tourists to know more about the 2012 ECOC. The Internet was the main information channel used, followed by the traditional media (Radio/TV, and magazines and newspapers).

There are only a small amount of respondents that demonstrated real interest on the event, by knowing the entire program or part of it. The level of depth knowledge of the program was very weak as only 25 tourists had an accurate and favorable opinion about the adequate match between the profile of the city and the cultural activities developed within the city during the survey. The program included a wide range of cultural activities, but the music, exhibitions, and theatre were the most cited ones and those that attended them effectively have shown appreciation with the performances.

The most salient attributes of Guimarães perceived by tourists were tangible assets, such as buildings, churches and chapels. The declaration of Guimarães as a UNESCO world heritage site, in 2001, has given the city domestic and international awareness. The saliency of intangible assets was less noted by tourist, even during the mega cultural event of the 2012 ECOC.

The differences between Portuguese and foreigner tourists are more acute when we considered the following attributes: museums, festivals and events, churches and chapels, craftsmanship, cultural life, folk music, other kind of music, football, and other indoor sports.

Overall, Guimarães was positively evaluated by tourists regarding the city image and was highly recommended by tourists to friends and relatives. The least positive indicator of satisfaction was the intention to return to Guimarães, which scores an average value, probably because it was taken as an enjoyable city for a first time visit but not an enough exciting place for a returning cultural experience.

The present study is a snapshot assessing tourist perceptions in a particular time (August to September 2012), location (Guimarães) and a certain historical context (the hosting of the ECOC 2012). More studies are needed to cover more points in time and other

locations around the country in order to compare for differences and similarities between the perceptions of heritage destinations sites (such as the Douro and Évora).

The increasing number of flights of low cost companies to/from Porto and the significant growth in tourists that came to Porto to stay for a weekend (short breaks) and the tourism attributes they are endowed with denote the potential of a few cities/territories of the northern Portugal as tourism destinations. In the particular case of Guimarães, a considerable strength is the favorable image that tourists retain about the city, while a strong weakness is the lack of critical size to be considered by its own cultural dimension. From this, it is taken, mostly, as part of one journey historical itinerary that includes neighbor cities.

The tourism reality of Guimarães needs more in-depth analysis in order to better capture the characteristics of visitors and the type of holiday's activity they envisage to have. Of particular importance is the knowledge of tourists' typologies (country of origin, demographics, social and economic status), visit patterns (itineraries, duration, information sources, etc.), motivations to visit different cities and image perceptions.

The results of these studies are critical for local tourism organizations (such as hotels, travel operators, politicians) to design consistent strategies to improve the movements of tourists around the entire region. Otherwise, even culturally motivated tourists interested in exploring new places and diversify experiences will tend to remain in places better served in terms of access and facilities, and that have a longer established image.

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