ECONSTOR
Make Your Publications Visible.

A Service of
ZBW
Leibniz-Informationszentrum Wirtschaft
Leibniz Information Centre for Economics

Fink, Lucija

Conference Paper

City and Town Branding – A Case Study of the Slovenj Gradec Brand

Provided in Cooperation with:
IRENET - Society for Advancing Innovation and Research in Economy, Zagreb

Suggested Citation: Fink, Lucija (2020) : City and Town Branding – A Case Study of the Slovenj Gradec Brand, In: Proceedings of the ENTRENOVA - ENTerprise REsearch InNOVAtion Conference, Virtual Conference, 10-12 September 2020, IRENET - Society for Advancing Innovation and Research in Economy, Zagreb, pp. 430-440, https://proceedings.entrenova.org/entrenova/article/view/344

This Version is available at:
https://hdl.handle.net/10419/224709

Standard-Nutzungsbedingungen:

Die Dokumente auf EconStor dürfen zu eigenen wissenschaftlichen Zwecken und zum Privatgebrauch gespeichert und kopiert werden.

Sie dürfen die Dokumente nicht für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, öffentlich zugänglich machen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Sofern die Verfasser die Dokumente unter Open-Content-Lizenzen (insbesondere CC-Lizenzen) zur Verfügung gestellt haben sollten, gelten abweichend von diesen Nutzungsbedingungen die in der dort genannten Lizenz gewährten Nutzungsrechte.

Terms of use:

Documents in EconStor may be saved and copied for your personal and scholarly purposes.

You are not to copy documents for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the documents publicly, to make them publicly available on the internet, or to distribute or otherwise use the documents in public.

If the documents have been made available under an Open Content Licence (especially Creative Commons Licences), you may exercise further usage rights as specified in the indicated licence.

https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

WWW.ECONSTOR.EU

Mitglied der Leibniz-Gemeinschaft

City and Town Branding – A Case Study of the Slovenj Gradec Brand

Lucija Fink
Faculty of Commercial and Bussines Science Celje, Slovenia

Abstract

The research deals with a relatively young and complex area of branding, i.e. the branding of cities and towns, on the example of Slovenj Gradec brand. The empirical part consists of two approaches to the town's brand recognisability. First, an analysis of in-depth interviews of professional representatives of the six areas or shareholder groups (economy, health care, tourism, culture, education and sport) is presented. Second, an analysis of the survey research is presented with the results in the following areas: the key qualitative elements of the professional public, noticeable characteristics and values (noticeable profile) of the town of Slovenj Gradec, the core of the town's brand (focus), the criteria of urbanism that influence the perception of the town.

Keywords: city branding, recognisability, quality criteria of brand and urbanism, shareholders, Slovenj Gradec

JEL classification: M31

Paper type: Research article
Received: Apr 21, 2020
Accepted: Jun 4, 2020

Introduction

City and town branding is a relatively new phenomenon that has only been explored by branding experts for over a decade and is also associated with the concepts of destination branding and city or town marketing. The foundation of the city branding theory can be found at the intersection of corporate branding and city elements: city identity, products and services of a city brand, city values, city brand shareholders, city marketing, and decisive elements for the success of a city brand. The more unique these elements are and the higher the quality, the more valuable the brand is. Alongside its name and graphic image, the brand communicates and personifies the identity traits of a city or a town.

City and town managers are recognising the importance of branding marketing laws that build a strong identity, creating brand value and competitive advantage. They are aware that the perception of shareholders is strongly influenced by the reputation the cities and towns create with their urban, natural and living environment (work, culture, sports, education). Studies of different branding areas offer a starting point for exploring the traits of city branding, which I have further investigated through the existing Slovenj Gradec town brand. This study explores the current state of perception and the reasons behind it while offering guiding points for the development or shaping of the Slovenj Gradec brand that, at the time of preparing the study, seems undefined as well as poorly and incorrectly perceived.

The study of the Slovenj Gradec brand was made by researching which values and attributes the residents and users of the town services perceive and attach to the brand. At the same time, I have researched the recognisability of Slovenj Gradec by interviewing professional representatives of different institutions that shape the products and services of the town as well as its identity traits. I researched the perception of Slovenj Gradec is a unique town with a high quality of living projected through the minds of its residents, entrepreneurs, investors, tourists, representatives of the state, and municipal institutions. Thus, the study employs qualitative urbanism criteria that influence the perception of quality through certain important elements: living, mobility, green spaces, appearance, conformity of diversity, and ease of orientation (Pompe, 2015).

This article is a summary of my Master's thesis. The study is based on the research encompassing five Slovenian cities (Ljubljana, Maribor, Celje, Koper, and Novo mesto) conducted and authored by Andrej Pompe (2015) in the first Slovenian monograph of this kind, Znamka mesta (City brand), where he used the brand perception study (BPS), a research tool for perceptual studies of marketing brands.

Urbanism and branding

A city brand is also an expression of its uniqueness. It is understood as the means both for achieving competitive advantage in order to increase inward investment and tourism and also for achieving community development, reinforcing local identity and identification of the citizens with their city and activating all social forces to avoid social exclusion and unrest (Kavaratzis, 2004).

Urbanism and branding share two common aspects affecting the quality of urban life and its attractiveness: sociological (human contact) and marketing (managing a city). The sociological aspect is often in conflict with the understanding of planning and managing urban spaces that promote the city image and encourage consumer activities and economic growth (Hanafi et al., 2013).

Table 1
Correlation between qualitative urbanism criteria and qualitative brand criteria

Qualitative brand criteria	Qualitative urbanism criteria
Number of brand associations (memes)	Context, wealth, readability
Number and quality of touchpoints	Variety, wealth
Memorisation speed	Visual adequacy, readability, variety
Recall and recognition speed	Visual adequacy, readability, variety
Number of meanings to the shareholder	Accessibility, context, adaptability

Source: Pompe (2013)

Qualitative criteria of urbanism consist of (Pompe, 2015):

1. Context: Creates associations related to a city brand and influences the image of the city. It is about connecting types of constructions, shapes, architecture, local interpretations and functioning into a uniform urban organism.
2. Accessibility: Physical access to urban structures influences the brand and gives a sense of accessibility to city products. Appropriate transport infrastructure with an emphasis on pedestrians, cyclists and public transport.
3. Diversity: Urban diversity is the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the city, as well as the brand of the city. It refers to the diversity of shapes, uses and meanings of space.
4. Readability: Relates to user orientation through points of reference provided by architectural and design solutions. It influences space speed command and mental perception of the city.
5. Adaptability: The degree to which urban structures satisfy the needs of city shareholders: accessibility from open areas to buildings, space lightning, and movement flow (on one hand enabling social life, but on the other also have quiet spaces for leisure and rest).
6. Visual adequacy: The degree to which users are aware of what is at their disposal in urban space; visual adequacy of a brand promotes users to shortlist it for their final selection between competitors.
7. Variety: Refers to the architectural expression of buildings and design solutions, visual satisfaction and aesthetic wealth.

Slovenj Gradec

The Slovenj Gradec, municipality, which is part of the Koroška statistical region, measures approximately 174 km^2; this ranks it 29th among Slovene municipalities. Latest statistical data for 2018 reveal that about 16,580 people live in the municipality (27th among Slovene municipalities), with a population density of 95 people per square kilometre. The mean age of people in Slovenj Gradec (43.1 years) is lower than the national average (43.3). Among working-age population, about 64% were persons in employment, which is less than the national average (65%). Average monthly gross earnings per person employed by legal persons were about 7% lower than the annual average of monthly earnings for Slovenia (Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, 2018).

Slovenj Gradec is the seat of the only town municipality in the Slovenian statistical region of Koroška, as well as the legal, economic, banking, school, information, health, supply and transport centre of the Mislinja Valley and the wider Koroška area. Slovenj Gradec is an ancient town based in a basin between Pohorje and Uršlja gora. It is also a Slovenian synonym for a cultural centre where the rich tradition of the past goes hand in hand with the modern vibe (http://www.turizem-slovenjgradec.si/slovenj-gradec/predstavitev).

Methodology

The study aims to provide comprehensive research on the perception of the Slovenj Gradec town brand and establish recommendations for its brand design and positioning strategy. For this purpose, I have examined and interpreted:

- Qualitative elements in six areas: tourism, culture, health, education, sports and the economy;
- Perceived profile of the Slovenj Gradec brand;
- The focus of the Slovenj Gradec brand;
- Qualitative urbanism criteria that influence the perception of Slovenj Gradec.

I analysed the primary data obtained by conducting on-line surveys through quantitative research. The on-line survey was conducted on a sample of 272 respondents, some of them living in the Slovenj Gradec municipality, others not. Qualitative research was conducted through in-depth interviews with six representatives of the expert community of Slovenj Gradec. The questions were as follows:

1. What are the key qualitative elements (attributes and values) that the expert's associates with the recognisability of Slovenj Gradec?
2. What are the perceived characteristics and values (the perceived profile) of Slovenj Gradec?
3. What is the core (focus) of the Slovenj Gradec brand?
4. What are the most significant urbanism criteria that influence the perception of Slovenj Gradec?

Special attention was paid to the research of seven qualitative urbanism criteria, which reflect the perception of the city brand:

Hypothesis 1 (Context): Agreeing with the statement that "modern spatial solutions and old architecture do not work together" depends on the age of the respondent and increases with the age of the respondent.

Hypothesis 2 (Accessibility): The statement "I want to make the most urgent purchases by foot (from home, from work, from a hotel)" is most common among the city or town-centre residents.

Hypothesis 3 (Diversity): Slovenian residents strongly agree that they are impressed by unique spatial solutions.

Hypothesis 4 (Readability): Slovenian residents memorise "parts of the city or town by typical buildings, squares, parks, monuments, bridges, etc."; women more than men.

Hypothesis 5 (Adaptability): Agreeing with the statement "a city or a town lacking ramps for people with disabilities is inhumane and outdated" is largely attributable to city or town-centre residents.

Hypothesis 6 (Visual adequacy): Of all the statements that define the category of visual adequacy, the respondents most often agree with "poorly maintained buildings pollute the image of the city or town".

Hypothesis 7 (Variety): Agreeing with the statement "many cafés in the city or town offer good possibilities for socialising" depends on the age of the respondent and is inversely proportional to the age of the respondent.

Through in-depth interviews, I have researched the recognisability of the town of Slovenj Gradec with the professional representatives of different institutions. These institutions represent important shareholders who shape the products, services and identity traits of the town. The conducted at the respondents' posts, i.e., the headquarters of their respective institutions. Research areas include economy,

health, tourism, education, culture, and sports. The questions were divided into four thematic sections: past causes for the present state, the current state of affairs, key attributes the town has to offer in individual areas, and recommendations. With this, I wished to gain some insight into the attitude of respondents and their perception of the Slovenj Gradec brand through their professional activity in each area.

In the second research approach, I used a survey with a questionnaire consisting of three parts: demographics, city perception, and qualitative urbanism criteria. The survey uses the BPS method and is based on the study of the brand perception of five Slovenian cities conducted and published by Andrej Pompe in his book Znamka mesta (Pompe, 2015), and BPS method.

The online survey was conducted through the Enka website, from 3 March to 30 June 2018. The link to the survey was provided via email, as well as through two social networking sites, Facebook and LinkedIn. A total of 272 respondents completed the survey (173 women, 99 men). The most represented demographic category defined by age was 36–45 years of age, followed by 26–34 and 46–55 years of age. Educational levels with highest percentages: university BA/Bologna MA (28.8%) and high school diploma (28.4%). As many as 77% of respondents identified their employment status as active. The micro-locations of the respondents' residences are particularly interesting: the countryside (41%), outskirts (33.9%), and the town centre (25.1%). When asked whether the respondents live in the Municipality of Slovenj Gradec, 34.3% answered in the affirmative, and 65.7% answered in the negative.

Results

Analysis: Expert opinions

Findings of the first part of the survey are the key qualitative elements (attributes and values) that the experts associate with Slovenj Gradec.

From a visitor's perspective, the town is rich in cultural heritage, especially considering the aspect of architecture in the town centre, which makes a good first impression with its safety, artistic orientation, historical charisma, peacefulness, cleanliness, and responsibility. From an economic point of view, the town is self-sufficient to carry out activities, but it must provide greater accessibility to land, more reasonable costs of public infrastructure for businesses, as well as adequate support (including financial support with production incubators), which may ensure the success of start-ups and stimulate greater research activity conducted by companies and educational institutions. Slovenj Gradec is recognised as a town with several potentials: medical tourism due to a recognised and high-quality hospital; forest-timber industry due of its proximity to raw material (forests); and development of education tailored to evolving activities with expanding programs to Masters' and PhD levels. Increased perception of the cultural and artistic orientation of the town requires more promotion and bigger events with international attendance. Due to inherently present sports, like handball, judo and athletics, sports tourism with hiking and cycling is predominant in and around the town. To utilise this crucial connection between the sports and tourism industries, and the establishment of better infrastructure for larger groups and events (gym, cycling tracks, adequate accommodation) is required. It should be mentioned that the majority of the interviewees believe that (1) the investments in the promotion of events are too scarce; (2) there is no comprehensive cooperation or coordination between different institutions; (3) the brand of the town is unrecognisable; and (4) the identity of the town is lost due to the lack of vision of the Slovenj Gradec Municipality.

The analysis of expert opinions shows there are some common starting points and important discrepancies, which could be the result of disjointed, isolated activities and the disconnection between the institutions and the town administration. The factor here is the lack of knowledge or lack of strategic direction in terms of joint construction of the Slovenj Gradec brand.

Analysis: Perceived profile of the Slovenj Gradec brand

The perceived profile of the Slovenj Gradec brand is determined by and composed of attributed values and characteristics. The questionnaire employed 50 positives and 10 negative values and attributes, thus offering the respondents a better insight into the meaning and purpose of the survey, while at the same time achieving a greater likelihood of realistic results. Respondents were given the choice of answering with yes or no.

Table 2
The perceived profile of Slovenj Gradec

Values		Properties	
Dirty (no)	91.8%	Hospital in the town centre	96.0%
Dangerous (no)	91.3%	*Variety in nightlife (no)*	93.8%
Beautiful	90.7%	*No cars in the town centre (no)*	91.9%
Cultural	88.0%	*The town is empty in the evenings*	90.8 %
Conflicting (no)	87.4 %	People are kind	90.2 %
Clean	86.7%	Walking at night is safe	89.8%
Freedom	86.1%	Town newspaper	89.0%
Bold (no)	86.0%	Bad air quality (no)	86.4%
Noisy (no)	85.7%	Too few fountains and statues (no)	82.4 %
Relaxed	83.8%	Public health infrastructure is close to residential areas	82.4%
Peaceful and quiet	82.9%	Easy access to important town activities on foot	82.3%

Source: Author

Analysis: Focus of the Slovenj Gradec brand

The results of the analysis show that the respondents attribute the highest percentage to the following eleven traits (between 82% and 92% of positive opinions): the town is (1) not dirty, (2) not dangerous, (3) not noisy, (4) not bold; it is (5) beautiful, (6) cultural, (7) non-conflicting (8) clean, (9) free, (10) relaxed, (11) peaceful and quiet. Of all 50 attributes, as many as 40% of negative attributes were assigned to Slovenj Gradec. The ten most recognised attributes where the respondents were most unified (between 82% and 92%) are: (1) Hospital in the town centre; (2) Variety in nightlife (no); (3) Cars in the town centre; (4) The town is empty in the evenings; (5) People are kind; (6) Town newspaper; (7) Bad air quality (no); (8) Too few fountains and statues (no); (9) Public health infrastructure is close to residential areas; and (10) Easy access to important town activities on foot. Thus, the recognition of the town is co-created by as many as three high-ranking negative attributes. The brand focus is its identity, clearly defined at the brand's core, and tells us how well the respondents perceive it. Slovenj Gradec does not have a clear focus and ranks below average in the perception of its traits and values in comparison with Ljubljana, Maribor, Celje, Koper, and Nova Gorica. On the one hand, this is due to the high percentage of positive and negative values and attributes, and on the

other, a large number of attributes that could be understood as both positive and negative. This suggests that the attributes are not properly positioned and, in addition to repositioning the most prominent negative attributes and values, those that are not well understood should be evaluated.

Analysis: Influence of urbanism on the perception of the Slovenj Gradec brand

The study also identifies seven hypotheses based on the qualitative urbanism criteria, which offer insight into the perception of a town's brand through the aspect of urbanism.

The first hypothesis establishes a context, in which the three most recognisable statements are: (1) The heritage of the past gives character to the town; (2) Harmonious town buildings express respect for residents; and (3) A town that blends with nature is ecological. I have also noted the dependence between the perception regarding the placement of modern spatial solutions in the old architectural layout of Slovenj Gradec and the age of the respondent. A much larger number of younger respondents in comparison with the older respondents think that cafés in the town do not enable socialising. Thus, we can conclude that modern spatial solutions among the old architecture are not perceived as a disturbance.

The second hypothesis explores accessibility. The highest-ranking statements are: (1) If I access the services on foot, I do something for my health; (2) A modern city or town should enable car-free mobility, and (3) Public transportation is key to accessing important city or town points. Access to essential daily tasks, as well as shopping, is mainly sought after by the city or town centre residents, who are also more likely to perform day-to-day purchases (purchases when needed rather than on stock); car transportation is pointless (minimal distance, moving the car and parking represents greater time effort than walking, etc.).

I have also identified the recognisability of the town from the aspect of diversity, as defined by the third hypothesis. The highest-ranking statements are: (1) A city or a town without special features is a city or a town without a soul; (2) An unusual building gives character to a certain area of the city or town, and (3) Unique spatial solutions are impressive. I researched the latter – the perception of the importance of placing unique or distinctive urban solutions – and found that people are not excited by the prospect. I conclude that the respondents expressed the importance of moderation when it comes to placing architectural curiosities within the town, i.e., do not interpret this diversity through the prism of urbanism.

One of the brand recognition components is readability, comprised of special features, landmarks and distinctive points of interest that make the town more memorable. The three most important statements that can be attributed to Slovenj Gradec are: (1) I memorise parts of the town by typical buildings, squares, etc.; (2) I feel safe knowing where I am at all times; and (3) When I am trying to direct a stranger, I prefer guiding them through the crossroads. In the fourth hypothesis, I wanted to research the perception of outstanding landmarks and urban features in men and women. As the survey found no statistically significant difference, I can conclude that the perception of urban features of Slovenj Gradec is similar in both sexes.

The fifth hypothesis establishes the town's adaptability to its shareholders. The respondents chose three most important statements as follows: (1) A city or a town lacking ramps for people with disabilities is inhumane and outdated; (2) Public lighting in parks enables me to be active and safe in the evenings, and (3) Future

cities and towns are cycling cities and towns. I have researched the attitude towards Slovenj Gradec becoming a wheelchair-friendly town, also in terms of satisfying the necessary criteria to obtain the official title of a wheelchair-friendly town. In this, I have focused on the town-centre residents who access institutions, shops and other buildings on foot daily, making more use of the town's infrastructure. The findings have shown that the town-centre residents do not attribute inhumanity or obsolescence to the town in respect to the lack of wheelchair ramps; therefore, I conclude that the town infrastructure already eliminates this problem to some degree.

The sixth hypothesis examines the visual adequacy that characterises the homogeneity of the town image. As the most important statements, the respondents selected: (1) Poorly maintained buildings pollute the image of the town; (2) Urban amenities should not be covered with posters; and (3) Colour-coordinated buildings create a feeling of better town aesthetics. The survey shows that the respondents are most bothered by the negative fact that poorly maintained buildings of Slovenj Gradec are the biggest pollutant of the town's image.

The last hypothesis analyses the perception of the town's variety. I have focused on the statement that many cafés in the town offer good possibilities for socialising, as I believe the town centre is unjustly devoid of visitors despite offering a variety of such establishments. The results offer interesting insight, as they show a clear interdependence between a respondent's age and their answer: the higher the age, the higher the percentage of negative responses. This shows that the older population does not perceive cafés as good socialising possibilities to the same extent as the younger respondents do. The three highest-ranked statements are: (1) A vibrant town centre invites people to its streets, squares, embankments and parks; (2) Street furniture (benches, waste containers, street lamps, etc.) co-create the image of the town; and (3) Interesting events make town squares and parks come to life.

The most recognised activity of Slovenj Gradec

In contrast, the results of interviews and the survey on the recognisability of Slovenj Gradec by its activities offer a completely different picture. Most of the interviewees attributed the highest recognition to healthcare, whereas the survey respondents on average opted for tourism. The perception of the expert community is thus in conflict with the perception of the surveyed general public (residents and non-residents).

The most recognisable landmark

Some landmarks gained international recognition in the past (e.g., United Nations Peace Messenger City, the artist Karel Pečko), while others are now coming to the fore, such as the Rottenturn Manor or the composer Hugo Wolf, possibly because the exquisitely renovated house of Hugo Wolf and Rottenturn Manor have received new content, events and promotion that increase their recognisability.

Discussion

The guidelines for the development of recognisability of the Slovenj Gradec brand are the result of qualitative and quantitative research and are recommendations for further action in designing the steps for brand positioning.

Slovenj Gradec is, therefore, a nice and clean town, it is not polluted and it is not a dangerous place. The town is perceived as a cultural town, not bold, conflicting or noisy, the residents and visitors find peace, relaxation and freedom. There are three major problem areas, namely:

- nightlife offer and concert events, including the conclusion that the town is ageing,
- tourist offer, also focusing on the promotion of indigenous dishes and
- establishing a better transport infrastructure.

The researched qualities of Slovenj Gradec are, on average, not adequately positioned, and in addition to repositioning the most prominent negative qualities and values, the focus should be on the positive ones that are not well understood.

Based on these findings, I recommend the preparation of a strategic document for the design of the Slovenj Gradec brand. The plan should include all major shareholder groups and institutions that, together with the town government, will work on the desired recognisability and the branding administrator, who will control, manage and direct the planned process and ensure the effective promotion of the town.

Conclusion

Concise thinking about the comprehensive package of the perception of Slovenj Gradec consists of individual criteria of urbanism that have an impact on the perception of the town's brand. The seven criteria examined are a snapshot of the situation and represent the most important average perception and dictate the development guidelines for branding strategy designers:

- the heritage of the past gives character to the town, symmetrical town buildings show respect to the residents, the town blending with nature is ecological;
- if I access a service on foot, I do something positive for my health, a modern town should allow for mobility without a car, and public transport is crucial to access important points of the town;
- a town without special features is a town without a soul, an unusual building gives a mark to a certain area of the town, unique spatial solutions impress;
- I memorise the parts of the town by typical buildings, squares ... I feel safe knowing at all times where I am, when explaining the route to a stranger, I prefer to direct him or her through intersections;
- a town without ramps for the disabled is inhumane and outdated, the enlightened parks allow me to safely relax even in the evening, a cycling town is the town of the future;
- poorly maintained buildings ruin the image of the town, posters must not overlap the townscape, colour-coordinated buildings create an aesthetic place;
- the vibrant town centre invites people to the streets, squares, embankments and parks, street furniture (benches, trash cans, lamps ...) co-create the image of the town, markets and parks come alive with interesting events.

The survey showed that the residents of Slovenj Gradec and those outside the municipality perceive tourism as the most recognisable activity, which is contrary to the opinion of the experts who attribute it to health. In analysing the opinions of the experts, there are some common starting points and some important differences, such as the isolated operation in their activity, disconnection between the institutions themselves and the town administration. A key factor is also the lack of knowledge or lack of strategic direction in terms of joint construction of the town's brand. Steps to improve the recognisability of the town's brand:

1. Preparation of a strategic document for the design of the Slovenj Gradec brand. The plan should include all major shareholder groups and institutions

that, together with the town administration, will work on the desired recognition and the brand execution manager, who will control and guide the planned process and ensure the effective promotion of the town.

2. Preparation of a strategic document on economic development (a medium-term and a long-term plan) with an emphasis on attracting investors to new production capacities (favourable acquisition of land, rapid acquisition of permits and changes to the spatial plan).
3. Promoting innovation and development through research laboratories by offering production incubators to achieve higher added value in products and services.
4. Greater integration of higher education and the economy (responding to the needs of the economy and supplying highly educated staff, promoting the institution-oriented research orientation with a real opportunity to implement knowledge and innovation).
5. The well-developed hospital activity offers opportunities for medical tourism and a tailored marketing approach, adequate accommodation near Slovenj Gradec General Hospital and the need for a well-educated medical workforce for such care.
6. Due to demographic changes and longer life expectancy, there is a need for adequate care for the elderly, through programmes of leisure activities in the third age, care for the elderly at home, medical care as well as an adequate supply of adequate accommodation (secure housing).
7. Preparation of strategic tourism development (a medium-term and a long-term plan) in the Municipality of Slovenj Gradec, emphasizing the creation of the destination brand of Slovenj Gradec and inclusion in the regional tourist offer.
8. Slovenj Gradec is not interesting for several days to stay except for sports tourism; therefore, it is necessary to increase the potential by arranging attractive cycling trails, recreational areas, adventure and relaxation activities and nightlife offer.
9. The town's recognisability is most projected from the cultural point of view by offering renowned exhibitions at the KGLU (Koroška Gallery of Fine Arts) and reviving the birthplace of composer Hugo Wolf and recognisable projects by amateur culture societies. There is a lack of major cultural events and modern touch in the wide range, e.g. film production with alternative content, theatrical program, contemporary music and visual arts; therefore, greater investment in the promotion of these events is needed, coordination between institutions and providers of cultural events.
10. The high recognisability of the town is noticed in the field of sports, wherewith the help of professional coaches significant results are achieved and at the same time the development of several sports (not too much due to the loss of quality and selection of athletes); handball, judo and athletics as well as related major events are the ones that stand out. Adequate infrastructure (additional stadium and sports hall) must be provided, including accommodation for larger visiting teams visiting the town for a few days of training and preparation or attending a sports event in the town.
11. Encouraging all types of companies to raise funds through national and European projects, which are now mostly funded by municipal funds (larger projects, international events, the higher quality required).

Guidelines for building a brand are also landmarks and personalities that are already in place in the town and beyond. Today we associate this with the Rottenturn Manor, the Venetian Horse (a statue in the town's centre) and Karl Peček, an academic painter with typical depictions of Uršlja gora (Mount St. Ursula). At the same time, these findings are useful as a starting point for designing a corporate graphical image, especially for designing a logo and slogan that Slovenj Gradec does not yet have.

References

1. Hanafi, I., El Araby, M., Al-Hagla, K. S., El Sayary, S. (2013), "Human social behavour in public urban spaces: towards higher quality cities", Spaces & Flows: An International Journal of Urban & Extra Urban Studies, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 23-35.
2. Kavaratzis, M. (2004), "From city marketing to city – towards a theoretical framework for developing brands", Place branding, Vol. 1, No, 1, pp. 58-73.
3. Mestna občina Slovenj Gradec. (2015), „Predstavitev" (Presentation), available at: http://www.turizem-slovenjgradec.si/slovenj-gradec/predstavitev/ (12 August 2018)
4. Pompe, A. (2013), "Primerjalna analiza kvalitativnih kriterijev urbanizma s kvalitativnimi kriteriji tržne znamke" (Comparative analysis of qualitative urbanism criteria with qualitative branding criteria), Evropska pravna fakulteta, Nova Gorica.
5. Pompe, A. (2015), "Znamka mesta. Pomemben ustvarjalec pozicije mesta v konkurenčnem prostoru" (City brand. Important creator of the city's position in the competitive space), Urbanistični inštitut Republike Slovenije, Ljubljana.
6. Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia. (2018), "Prebivalstvo po naseljih, podrobni podatki, Slovenija, 1 January 2017" (Population by settlements, detailed data, Slovenia, 1 January 2017), available at: http://www.stat.si/StatWeb/News/Index/6697/ (6 May 2018)

About the author

Lucija Fink is Master of Business Studies (MBS), completed her studies at the Faculty of Commercial and Business Sciences in Celje, Slovenia. In her master's thesis, she explained extensively city branding and the application of branding through the prism of urban criteria in the case of the small town in Slovenia. She developed her professional career in the marketing business environment as a marketing manager in the advertising and tourism industry, for many years she perfected her marketing and branding skills in her advertising & marketing agency Media Lumina, then as director of the Business Center Radlje (Slovenia) and finally as Head of the Cabinet of the Minister of Culture RS. The author can be contacted at **lucija.fink@gmail.com**.