

The Role Of Cultural Mega Events In The Enhancement Of City's Image Attributes: Differences Between Engaged And Attendee Participants

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ABSTRACT

In a time of fierce competition between regions, an image serve as a basis to develop a strong sense of community, which fosters trust and cooperation that can be mobilized for regional growth. A positive image and reputation could be used in the promotional activities of the region benefiting all the stakeholders as a whole. Mega cultural events are frequently used to attract tourists and investments to a region, but also to enhance the city's image.

This study adopts a marketing/communication perspective of city's image, and intends to explain how the image of the city is perceived by their residents. Specifically, we intend to compare the perceptions of residents that effectively participated in the Guimarães European Capital of Culture (ECOC) 2012 (engaged residents), and the residents that only assisted to the event (attendees). Several significant findings are reported and their implications for event managers and public policy administrators presented, along with the limitations of the study.

Keywords: City's Image; Engaged and Attendee Residents; ECOC 2012; Event-Induced Tourism; Guimarães; Portugal

1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural mega events have been taking an increasingly important role on the development of cities and regions. These events act as a magnet to attract people from outside and within the region and spend money on accommodation, food and leisure activities in the location. A cultural event featuring music, dance, food, shopping, art or any other cultural activities can be supportive for the community pride, improving its identity, image and reputation into the minds of residents, tourists, investors and other stakeholders. A cultural mega event, such as the European Capital of Culture (ECOC), is composed by a set of small and medium cultural events that take place during a year in the selected city. The quantity and diversity of these events is so large that could be appealing to residents and tourists having different cultural interests and tastes. If efficiently managed, this kind of event will contribute to change a city's image.

The effect of events on the elected city's image depends substantially on the media coverage of the activities developed during the event (reach and frequency). However, there are arguments that events can hamper the destinations image if not paired well with the city's emotions, beliefs and feelings.

Although significant progress has been made in the image destination research stream mainly in the tourism literature (e.g. San Martin and Rodriguez, 2008; Agapito, Mendes and Valle, 2010; Aksoy and Kiyici, 2011; Lopes, 2011), the research to date is limited in four important respects. First, it is frequently forgotten that the region's

image should include residents' perceived attributes (attitudes, feelings, impressions) where the event takes place and not only by tourists (domestic or international), as residents' awareness of their city is made up of cognitive evaluation of experiences and learning.

Second, when we use the term image we are referring to the internal collective state of mind (residents' point of view) that underlies the region communication efforts. Third, current research has focused much more heavily on brand (e.g. Murphy, Moscardo and Benckendorff, 2007; Moilanen and Rainisto, 2009; Cai, Gartner and Munar, 2009; Paganoni, 2012) than on city's image. Finally, there seems to be a missing link between the role of mega cultural events and their impact on the city's image salient attributes. The evaluation of the impacts of a mega cultural event at the region level are of particular interest, inasmuch as most of the benefits/costs are centered on tangible (physical, financial, technological) rather than intangible resources (identity, image, reputation) (Langen and Garcia, 2009).

The purpose of this study is to improve our understanding of long term cultural events (mega events), and their positive (or negative) effects on the image of a city, before and after hosting a mega cultural event, such as an ECOC. We propose that mega cultural events influence the residents' perceptions of the city's image. To attain that purpose the image of the city of Guimarães will be evaluated in two different periods of time: before (2011) and after (2013) hosting the mega cultural event. Three hypotheses will be developed and tested to answer the following research question: what has been the nature of the changes in the image of Guimarães, between 2011 and 2013, among engaged participants and attendees?. The research adopts a quantitative approach, and uses a survey as the data collection technique. For that purpose two questionnaires were developed and administered to a sample of residents (snowball sampling) that expected to be engaged, attend or not attend the Guimarães ECOC 2012, before and after the event. The questions contained in the questionnaire are founded in the literature and serve as a basis to test the research hypotheses. The two questionnaires were similar, although a slightly difference between them has to be pointed out: the first (before the event) asked about an event that would take place in the near future; the second asked about the event in a retrospective way.

The remainder of this paper is organized in the following sections: in the first section, we translate the concept of image from the corporate and marketing literature to a regional perspective, and examine the role of cultural mega events on image enhancement; in the second section, a brief literature review provides an inventory of potential impacts of cultural mega events, and particularly of previous European Capitals of Culture, on city's image; section third presents Guimarães, the city where the cultural mega event took place and the cultural activities developing during the year 2012; the following section, identifies the research design used in the study; the last section is dedicated to the analysis of results. The paper ends with the discussion of results and the management and public policy implications.

2. ROLE OF MEGA CULTURAL EVENTS ON IMAGE ENHANCEMENT

Identity, image and reputation are interrelated concepts (Fombrun and van Riel, 1997; Bromley, 1993; Balmer and Greyser, 2003; Barnett, Jermier and Lafferty, 2006) that could be imported from the research focused on corporate communication to a regional logic. However, there are similarities and differences between a region and a company (Passow, Fehlmann and Grahlow, 2005). A region is like a company because exists and operates within a competitive set, is dependent on resources and supportive behavior, has to follow a financial logic, has to appeal to an audience, has a vision and a strategic concept, among other similarities. A region is different from a company because in a democracy the government is elected by voters, the image of the region can hardly be modified in a top down approach, and cannot choose its internal audience (Passow, Fehlmann and Grahlow, 2005). Therefore, in the adaptation of the concepts to a regional context the image should be regarded as the perception that persons inside the region (residents, political power, internal stakeholders) hold of the nature of their region. It indicates how the region presents itself to the internal community and the way residents perceived its city. As many regions offer similar resources and competencies (territory, infrastructure, educated people, and system of governance) they tend to compete with each other on a domestic and global scale. To stand out from the crowd and capture the awareness of tourists, investors, residents and political power the regional image has become an essential construct to condense the region's qualities (landscape, nature, cultural heritage, regional products, regional gastronomy, traditional quality products, etc.) (Messely, Dessein, and Lauwers, 2010). The promotional tools frequently used to increase the value

of the region's image includes all place marketing activities that increase the attractiveness of an area as a place for working, living and spending free time (Kotler, Haiden and Rein, 1993; van Ham, 2001). If the region has a distinctive image in the mind sets of residents, tourists and stakeholders, it will help to increase regional competitiveness (Maessen et al., 2008).

A mega event is a large scale event (Liu, 2012), that occurs sporadically and within a short period of time (less than a year) (Ritchie, 1984; Roche, 2000). By its nature, mega events have long term consequences in the future of the city (Roche, 1994), as they attract foreign and domestic investments, retain existing economic activities in the area, attract tourists, visitors and shoppers, and maintain in a more lasting manner permanent residents (students, elderly, etc.) (Freitas Santos et al., 2011). Cities and regions have always competed with each other for hosting mega events (Bramwell, 1997). The competition is even fiercer when the event has a global impact and the expected returns on identity, image and reputation are significant. Liu and Chen (2007) suggest that holding festivals or special events is an effective approach to enhance the image of the city. The same applies to mega cultural events, in particular when they have a significant economic impact on a region or city. These events enhance the community pride (identity), create positive impressions (image), and improve the region's reputation. As the number of cultural events grows, destination marketers need to bulk them into their marketing strategies, taking tactical advantages when planning the destination's communication campaigns. Every possible precaution should be taken while pairing the events with the destination, so that the strong image of the event may not hamper the destination image. The core focus should be consistency with the benefits to the destination (Kim and Petrick, 2005).

In a comprehensive review of literature about the measurement of the impacts of large scale cultural events, Langen and Garcia (2009) conclude that the impacts are not always necessarily positive, but can be negative as well. The potential positive effects include economic, social, cultural, political, physical and environmental impacts. The potential negative effects include the increased cost of living (prices of goods, services and properties), environmental damage, cultural inconsistency, and traffic congestion (Kim and Petrick, 2005; Herrero et al., 2006; Langen and Garcia, 2009; Ritchie, Shipway and Cleeve, 2009; Freitas Santos et al., 2011).

One of the first studies about the effects of mega events on host region awareness and image enhancement has been developed by Ritchie and Smith (1991). Using the 1989 Calgary Olympic Winter Games, the authors report the findings of a five year study monitoring and assessing the impact of that mega event on the international image of the host city. The results indicate that the event increased the levels of awareness and substantially modified the image of Calgary. However, there is also strong evidence that cities must anticipate a significant rate of awareness and image decay in the following years after the mega event (Ritchie and Smith, 1991). Therefore, if tourism authorities seek to use events to reinforce the identity, and build the image and reputation of a region, they must mix smaller events with high profile events in order to extend the positive effects throughout the years (Ritchie and Smith, 1991; Jago et al., 2003).

The most relevant studies about the European Capitals of Culture were made by Myerscough (1994) until the year of 1994, Cogliandro (2001) for 2000, and Palmer/Rae Associates (2004) and Palmer and Richards (2007) for Glasgow (1990) and Brussels (2000), respectively. To some extent, the research about the ECOCs between 1991 and 2005, has attracted lesser attention (European Parliament, 2013). The first extensive research about the potential effects of ECOCs among different audiences (residents, neighborhood, tourists, firms, etc.) was made available by Liverpool ECOC 2008 [Bond, 2008; ENRS, 2010a); 2010b); Garcia et al., 2010; McEvoy, 2010]. After this period the process of systematic evaluation by an external and independent entity, the evaluation became mandatory by the European Commission (Decision n.º 1622/2006/EC). In 2009, was published for the first time an ex-post evaluation of ECOCs hosted by Luxemburg and Sibiu (2007), and Liverpool and Stavanger (2008) [COM (2009) 689 final]. In the following year, it was the time of Linz and Vilnius regarding the ECOC 2009 [COM (2010) 762 final]. Besides these synthetic evaluations published on the Official Journal of European Union, more detailed reports were made available by the European Commission regarding 2010 (Essen for the Ruhr, Pecs and Istanbul), 2011 (Tallin and Turku), and 2012 (Guimarães and Maribor) ECOCs (Ecorys, 2011, 2012, 2013).

Overall, these evaluations focused on the ex post period and have adopted the same methodology and themes. A study by the Directorate-General for Internal Policies – Culture and Education of the European Parliament evaluated the long-term effects of the European Capitals of Culture (European Parliament, 2013). One of

the investigated areas was “culture and image impacts” and one of the themes was “image and sense of place”. The sub-themes included: “the (re)positioning of the host city before and after becoming ECOC; changing meanings associated with the city by its diverse local communities; and changing perceptions of the city by regional/national visitors and overseas tourists; it also assessed variations in the sense of identity and self-confidence of local communities before and after hosting the ECOC” (European Parliament, 2013, p. 23). The study reviews the available literature from academia and the host city title, concluding that “there is some good evidence that ECOC hosts with a low profile before the event have experienced positive changes in terms of both internal perceptions and external responses, leading on to long-term improvement of their national and international ranking as top cultural and/or cultural destinations” (European Parliament, 2013, p. 113).

Regarding the academic literature, Richards and Wilson (2004) studied the impact of the Cultural Capital of Europe 2001 on the image of Rotterdam. The results show that the image of the city as a cultural destination improved, but the physical and tangible elements of the city’s image (modern architecture, water) and its character as the working city of the Netherlands continued to dominate (Richards and Wilson, 2004). Another study (Jordanova-Krasteva, Wickens and Bakir, 2010) focusing on another European Capital of Culture (Linz 2009) captured on an online survey some of the main relevant dimensions of the city’s image after the event. The ancient origin, the cultural and historical heritage, the steel industry, the architecture and the old town has been pointed out by tourists. However, a negative perception about the Nazi’s period of the city (birthplace of Hitler) still remained (Jordanova-Krasteva, Wickens and Bakir, 2010).

A study evaluating the socio-cultural impacts of Liverpool 2008 European Capital of Culture, on the socially marginalized communities, pointed out the enhancement of quality of life, including participation and interest in cultural activities, accessibility and inclusion effect of the cultural event, and social outcomes in terms of the enhancement of the sense of place and local identity (Liu, 2014).

3. GUIMARÃES AND THE ORGANIZATION OF THE 2012 EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE

The city of Guimarães has an area of 241.3 Km², and is located in the district of Braga in northern Portugal. The city is divided in 69 parishes with a total population of 158.124 inhabitants (INE, 2012). Guimarães has good road access, a railway connection with Porto, and is close to the Porto and Vigo airports, and the Leixões, Viana do Castelo and Vigo seaports. Porto is the main city of the northern region of Portugal, and Vigo an important Spanish city located next to the Portuguese border. In the past years, Guimarães has suffered a small decline in the population (between 2008 and 2011 the population has decreased 2.8%), and the older population (aged 65 and more) increased (from 7.9% in 1991 to 13.7% in 2011). The low qualification rates of the Guimarães population are an obstacle to the socioeconomic development of the territory and its access to culture (Universidade do Minho, 2013, pp. 16-17).

Guimarães is located in a dynamic and entrepreneurial region, with a vast and exporting tradition. Its productive specialization is based in traditional sectors (textile, clothing and footwear), and most corporate entities are micro, small and medium sized companies (Universidade do Minho, 2013, p. 17). In recent years, as many others regions in Europe, the northern region of Portugal, including Guimarães, experience a gradual process of deindustrialization. To face this challenge, the political authorities of Guimarães have been emphasizing the importance of tourism as a driver to growth. This strategy is based on the historic heritage of Guimarães, as the city is considered the birthplace of Portugal (place of birth of the first king of Portugal), with its medieval castle and its longstanding cultural traditions (popular festivities, erudite events, archaeological museum, cultural centre, etc.). The richness of the historical and cultural heritage of Guimarães was recognized by UNESCO in 2001. The Guimarães European Capital of Culture 2012 was part of the strategy followed by the local authorities to strength the awareness of the city and attract new type of tourists (cultural tourists), from different regions of Portugal, but also from Spain (mostly) and other European countries.

The European Capital of Culture program celebrated in 2012 its 27th edition. During the years it became one of the most coveted initiatives hosted by European cities envisaging the revitalization and diversification of their economies through culture. In the last years the hosting of the ECOC has been seen by cities as an opportunity to: i) improve their image, boost their local economy and increase their tourist flow; and ii) strengthen their cultural life and cultural infrastructures (European Parliament, 2013).

The organizing committee of the Guimarães European Capital of Culture had a budget of nearly 36.5 million of Euros, 22.5 million of which were devoted to the implementation of the cultural program. The remaining 14 million Euros were divided between marketing and communication expenses and functioning expenses (Universidade do Minho, 2013, p. 26). The slogan used to promote the Guimarães ECOC 2012 was “you are a part of it” build from the proposed strategic positioning for the event and the idea that Guimarães, being the birthplace of the nation, is a place where all Portuguese are part of it. The heart was the chosen logo used as a simplified communication element. The advertising and communication campaign started in July 2010 and had as a motto “It all happens in Guimarães”. The communication strategy was directed to four target audiences; local community; institutions, partners and sponsors; event audience; and Europe. The cultural programming was organized in four axes, corresponding to four programming areas: Community, City, Thought and Art. The last one was divided in cinema and audiovisual, performing arts, music, art and architecture. The cultural year was divided in four periods: a time for encounters, a time for creation, free time, a time for rebirth (Universidade do Minho, 2013, pp. 30-33).

During 2012, about 1.300 cultural events took place in the municipality of Guimarães. Music, cinema and theatre together contributed with half of these events (respectively, 27.1%, 14.5%, and 8.0%). There were also a high number of exhibits and publications (8.2%), and conferences and seminars (6.8%). The cultural events took place in the different parishes of the municipality, but the cultural centre hosted the majority of the events (18.9%) and many others occurred at indoor venues (ASA factory, etc.). The number of events that took place in the public space and historic buildings was relatively low (6.5% and 3.2%, respectively) (Universidade do Minho, 2013, pp. 34-36).

4. RESEARCH DESIGN

To evaluate the impact of ECOC 2012 on the identity of the city of Guimarães a retrospective causal comparative analysis is most appropriate. First, this type of design requires that a researcher begins investigating a particular question when the effects have already occurred. Then, the researcher must attempt to determine whether or not one particular event could have influenced another variable, that is: how city’s identity attributes were perceived by its residents after the event. Third, experimental research has been extensively recommended in business (Thomke, 2003; Davenport, 2009; Anderson and Simester, 2011) because “outcomes are simple to analyze, the data are easily interpreted, and causality is usually clear” (Anderson and Simester, 2011, p. 99). Finally, the city of Guimarães is a suitable example of a city that recently hosted a mega cultural event, specifically because it has a small-medium size (by European standards) and it is geographically located in a semi-urban type of territory.

In this type of experimental design the researcher investigates a particular question in two moments in time: one, when the effects of the event have not yet occurred; and the other when the effects have already occurred. The research process followed several steps (Lodico et al., 2006).

The first step was to identify the variables of the study, which in this case were the seventeen attributes of the identity of Guimarães (folk music, other type of music, festivals and events, cultural life, writers, painting and sculpture, handcraft, dance, football, other open air sports, indoor sports, environmental quality, buildings and historical sites, museums, churches and chapels, university and scientific knowledge, residents’ participation in the safeguard of the city and its patrimony). These attributes were included in a questionnaire and the residents gave their opinion about each one in a five category scale (where 1 is weak and 5 strong).

The second step envisaged to develop the following research hypotheses:

- H1: When considering different groups of residents (engaged participants and attendees), before and after the event, there are significant differences in the city’s image attributes derived from the ECOC 2012;
- H2: Residents that have been engaged in the activities of ECOC 2012 perceived image attributes with greater strength after the event than before;
- H3: Residents that only attended the activities of ECOC 2012 perceived image attributes with greater strength after the event than before.

The next step was to select the participants. Based on the purpose of this study, the students of 10th to 12th learning levels of four public secondary schools and one professional school located in the municipality were used for taking the questionnaires home and bringing them filled in by three members of his family (brothers, parents, uncles and grandparents). This sampling technique assured the geographical coverage of the sample and the representation of three generations of inhabitants (15–24-year-olds, 25–64-year-olds and the 65 or more years old residents) in our two samples.

In the pre-period (during October and December 2011) 1000 questionnaires were distributed and 510 were returned, of which only 471 were completely filled in which corresponds to a response rate of 51%. In the post period (April and May 2013) 1400 questionnaires were distributed and 896 were returned, of which only 551 were used in the present study, corresponding to a response rate of 64%.

The difference in the number of surveys returned between the *ex-ante* and the *ex-post* period derives from two reasons: i) in late 2011, the quantity of questionnaires applied in public secondary schools related to the 2012 ECOC overloaded the school capacity and hindered the implementation of our questionnaire; ii) this problem affected the process of delivering, collecting and returning the questionnaires from their families. For these reasons, in the *ex-post* evaluation we have opted by insisting with school teachers and students to take back the questionnaires filled in by their families.

The fourth step was to select instruments to measure variables and collecting data. Data for this study were collected using a self-administered questionnaire that was applied in two different moments in time (2011 and 2013) to local residents of Guimarães. The first questionnaire was launched before the event, and in the present study it is used as a benchmark (2011). The second questionnaire was administered after the event (2013). During 2012, the ECOC offered a cultural program to the city containing cultural activities of different kinds (dance, music, exhibitions, etc.). Also, the visitor's behaviors during the event (traffic congestion, noise) were expected to affect the way residents saw themselves. Finally, a lot of symbols have been used (logos, brands, heroes, etc.) that could impact on the image of Guimarães residents. The change in the image attributes of the city after the event is expected to reflect residents' assessment of the city's image.

The questionnaire was divided in three parts. The first one was related to the intention to attend/participate (*ex-ante* period), and attend/participate effectively (*ex-post* period) in the mega event (six questions). The second part was associated with the perceptions of residents' on the impacts of 2012 ECOC (two questions). The third part, identify the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents (e.g., age, sex, marital status, level of education, parish of residence).

For the purpose of the present study we have concentrated our attention on the second and third part of the questionnaire. Specifically, on the question about the residents' perceptions about the relevant attributes of the city of Guimarães before and after the event. A total of 17 attributes was given to be rated by residents in a 5 point measurement scale, where 5 was a strong attribute and 1 was a weak attribute of the city. The last step included the analysis and interpretation of the data. For comparative purposes the residents were divided in two groups: i) residents that expected to be engaged and effectively have been engaged in the event; ii) residents that expressed (before and after) the intention to attend the event. However, the respondents were not exactly the same in the two periods of time, which can be considered a limitation to the present study. Typically, factorial analysis and inferential statistics are used to determine whether the mean for the groups are significantly different from each other.

5. RESULTS

The presentation of the results begins with the demographic characteristics of the samples. A total of 471 and 551 residents were surveyed before and after the mega cultural event, respectively. In the end, approximately 58% of the residents were female, 96.5% had fewer than 65 years, 6.8% had a university degree, and 92.7% had incomes less than €2500. Before testing the hypotheses, responses to the attributes of Guimarães before the event were factor analysed using principal component analysis with varimax rotation.

Table 1 - Factor analysis for attributes of Guimarães, before the ECOC

Attributes of Guimarães factors (Reliability alpha)	Loading	Eigen-values	Explained variance	Mean
1: Heritage and Environment (0.804)		4.822	28.366	3.952
Churches and chapels	0.792			
Museums	0.741			
Buildings and historical sites	0.692			
University and scientific knowledge	0.675			
Environmental quality	0.587			
Residents' protection of its patrimony and heritage	0.574			
2: Arts (0.680)		1.923	11.311	3.026
Writers	0.849			
Painting and sculpture	0.789			
Dance	0.459			
3: Sports (0.738)		1.772	10.422	3.636
Other outdoor sports	0.847			
Indoor sports	0.770			
Football	0.693			
4: Performances (0.667)		1.062	6.246	3.449
Festivals and events	0.851			
Other categories of music	0.720			
Cultural life	0.523			
5: Local arts (0.396)		1.004	5.903	3.501
Folk music	0.778			
Craftwork	0.502			
Total variance explained		62.249		

Source: Authors' own survey data. Notes: Extraction method – Principal component analysis; Rotation method – Varimax with Kaiser normalization; KMO=0.814; Bartlett's test of sphericity: $p=0.00$.

The results are shown in Table 1. The analysis found five factors with eigenvalues greater than one which, together, explained 62% of the variance in the data and these were initially retained for further analysis. An examination of the factor loadings suggests that factor 1 was related to respondents' perceptions about the importance of "Heritage and Environment" to the identity of their city. Most of the items were related with tangible resources such as churches and chapels, museums, buildings and historical sites with higher scores implying greater saliency of the attribute.

Factor 2 measured respondents' perceptions about the saliency of the attribute "Arts", which includes writers, painting and sculpture, and dance. Factor 3 measured respondents' perceptions about the importance of the attribute "Sports" in the identity of their city, which includes indoor and outdoor sports and football, a popular sport in the city. Factor 4 was related to respondents' perceptions about the impact of festivals and events, music and cultural life on the identity of the city. The factor was termed "Performances". Factor 5 was related to respondents' perceptions about the relevance of folk music and craftwork to the identity of Guimarães. The factor was termed "Local Arts". Coefficient alpha was computed for each of the five obtained attribute factors. As can be seen from Table 1, these coefficients ranged from 0.667 to 0.804 for the first four factors, suggesting high reliability. The coefficient for factor 5 was 0.396, suggesting only moderate reliability. The mean scores for the five reliable factors were higher than 3. Consequently, these five factors and their items will be used as a baseline to compare for the differences between the identity of Guimarães before and after the ECOC2012.

The first hypothesis states that when considering different groups of residents (engaged participants and attendees), before and after the event, there were significant differences on the city's identity attributes derived from ECOC 2012. A comparison between the two groups of residents, before the cultural mega event, showed that the mean scores were significantly different only to "heritage and environment". Churches and chapels, university and scientific knowledge, and residents' protection of its patrimony and heritage were the items where the differences were more salient

Table 2 – Inter-group differences between engaged participants and attendees, before and after the ECOC

Attributes	Before				After			
	Group I (n=68)	Group II (n=351)	One-way Anova (a)	Differences between groups (b)	Group I (n=38)	Group II (n=320)	One-way Anova (a)	Differences between groups (b)
Heritage and Environment	4.21	3.95	F =12.953	Yes	4.00	3.88	F =5.956	No
Arts	3.24	3.05	F =12.078	No	3.63	3.32	F =6.504	Yes
Sports	3.81	3.62	F =2.201	No	3.85	3.81	F =4.783	No
Performances	3.60	3.47	F =8.975	No	3.81	3.43	F =7.666	Yes
Local arts	3.70	3.52	F =6.571	No	3.70	3.65	F =4.408	No

Source: Authors’ own survey data. Notes: (a) One way ANOVA for differences between three groups (group I: engaged participants; group II: attendees; group III: non- attendees). Results are shown only for group I and II. (b) $p < 0.05$.

After the event, the changes in residents’ perceptions about its city’s image included arts and performances. The factor “arts” showed significant differences in the way engaged participants positively perceived this particular kind of attribute regarding attendees. All the items of the dimension “performances”, except the item cultural life, showed significant differences between engaged participants and attendees after the event. The factor “local arts” showed no significant differences for engaged participants and attendees.

The results suggest that residents of Guimarães have changed their attribute perception between the two periods of time and this evidence can be associated with the organization of the cultural mega event ECOC 2012. Therefore, the hypothesis 1 is not confirmed as different groups of residents (engaged participants and attendees), showed minor differences on the city’s image attributes derived from ECOC 2012.

The second hypothesis states that residents that have been engaged in the activities of ECOC 2012 perceived image attributes in greater strength after the event than before (Table 3). The results suggest that the attribute “heritage and environment”, “sports”, “performances” and “local arts” and the related items have not been influenced by the event. Only the factor “arts” and respective items reveal significant differences, with mean scores increasing supposedly by the activities developed during the event. Therefore, the hypothesis 2 was not confirmed, as before and after the event only arts increased significantly the attributes of city’s image on engaged participants.

Table 3 – Intra-group differences between engaged participants and attendees, before and after the event

Attributes	Engaged Participants			Attendees		
	Mean		t-value	Mean		t-value
	Before (n= 68)	After (n= 38)		Before (n=351)	After (n=320)	
Heritage and Environment	4.21	4.00	-1.289	3.95	3.88	-1.488
Arts	3.24	3.63	2.662*	3.05	3.32	5.110*
Sports	3.81	3.85	0.281	3.62	3.81	3.152*
Performances	3.60	3.81	1.494	3.47	3.43	-0.845
Local arts	3.70	3.70	-0.007	3.52	3.65	2.082*

Source: Authors’ own survey data. Note: (*) $p < 0.05$

The third hypothesis states that residents that only attended the activities of ECOC 2012 should perceive city’s image attributes in greater strength after the event than before. The inspection of the data revealed that factor “arts”, “sports” and “local arts” increased significantly due to the event. From table 3, we can infer that the ECOC has not impacted significantly on the heritage and environment factor among attendees, as mean score decreased after the event, although without statistical significance. Contrary to expectations the factor “performances” indicates that attendees were negatively influenced by the event probably because they were not entirely satisfy with the shows. The factor “sports” exhibits a positive increase between the two periods of time suggesting that the event was important to enhance the city’s image. In relation to the factor “local arts”, the mean scores showed an increase on all the items, although only the item “craftwork” revealed a statistical difference before and after the event. Hence, the hypothesis 3 was only partially confirmed.

6. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The present study attempted to examine the impact of one particular mega event (the Guimarães ECOC 2012) on the perceived image of the residents. Contrary to the initial expectations, the factor “heritage and environment” and their items had not increased with the event among the city’s engaged participants, but only among attendees. However, the mean values for the six items were relatively high (above 4 in a five point scale), suggesting that this dimension was relevant in the identity of the city, but reveals mixed feelings among residents about the consequences of the mega event for the preservation of historical buildings and the general quality of the environment. As the results were not statistically significant we could infer that perceptions about the image of the city have not changed significantly, maintaining its relevancy among the other dimensions. This is consistent with the richness of the historical and cultural heritage of the city recognized by UNESCO in 2001. On the other hand, the perceptions about the tangible cultural heritage of the city has not changed significantly as the majority of the activities have been developed during the event were outside the public space and historic buildings (Universidade do Minho, 2013, pp. 34-36). This is in line with the findings of Richards and Wilson (2004) who found that the image of Rotterdam (after ECOC 2001) as a cultural destination improved, but the physical and tangible elements of the city’s image continued to dominate. Iordanova-Krasteva, Wickens and Bakir (2010) reinforce this idea based on the evaluation of Linz ECOC 2009.

The “Arts” dimension reflects a critical aspect of Guimarães ECOC 2012, as one of the axes of the programming area was art, which for the purposes of the event, has been divided in cinema and audiovisual, performing arts, music, and art and architecture. Overall, this programming area accounted for half of the events (49.6%) approximately. The results show a consensus among all residents, about the positive effects of Guimarães ECOC 2012 on the attitudes of their residents towards arts. This might be explained by the significant amount of events (music, cinema, theatre) that took place during the ECOC that increased the awareness of residents for arts. Previous research has indicated that the image of a city as a cultural destination could be improved by mega cultural events (Ritchie and Smith, 1991; Richards and Wilson, 2004; Freitas Santos et al., 2011; European Parliament, 2013; Liu, 2014).

In relation to the sports dimension, statistical significant differences were observed among attendees. The present evidence suggests that the contribution of sports activities in shaping the city’s image was limited to some segments of residents. As a matter of fact, sports activities were not chosen to be directly associated with the Guimarães ECOC 2012 by the organization due to some prejudice of cultural agents regarding sports. However, as noted by Ritchie and Smith (1991) regarding the Olympic Winter Games, the levels of awareness and the image of the city could be substantially improved if more activities have been promoted in this area. Nonetheless, the organization sponsored the main football team, but other sports received minor attention.

In relation to the dimension “performances”, during the Guimarães ECOC 2012, the cultural life of the city has been intensified along the implementation of almost 1.300 cultural events. Interestingly, no significant differences were observed among the two groups. A feasible explanation could be related with the huge number of events that took place during the mega event which conferred dynamism to the cultural life of the city and could be easily felt by both groups. The findings of the study commissioned by the European Parliament (2013, p. 113) show that “impacts upon the host city’s existing cultural system and future plans for cultural activity are the most prolific areas of reported beneficial impact from ECOCs”. With respect to local arts, only attendees showed statistical significant differences caused by the impact of the mega event, with an increase in the awareness of this dimension.

Regarding the legacy for the future of Guimarães, if local tourism authorities deserve to extend the positive effects of ECOC beyond 2012, the marketing strategy should be to maintain the level of cultural activities, mixing smaller events with high profile events as stated by Ritchie and Smith (1991), Jago et al. (2003), and the recommendations made to European Parliament (2013).

These results generate valuable implications for both event managers and public policy administrators. Firstly, the study provides an evaluation before and after the mega cultural event that reflects the impact on the main attributes of city’s identity. This provides managers and administrators with a clearer set of attributes to analyze the effects of cultural activities on future event performance. Therefore, it can be used as a guide to manage more

efficiently the dimensions of the city's identity and planning future cultural events. Secondly, in a fierce competition for tourists, investments and residents the creation of dynamic competitive advantages by cities must be based on soft attributes (quality of life, security, culture, urban lifestyle, etc.) rather than hard factors (infrastructures, transportation, etc.). The improvement of city's soft attributes after the mega event offer policy makers an opportunity to competitively differentiate the city's personality both domestically and internationally.

Thirdly, the results allow the policy makers and managers to align economic, cultural and tourism development with city's identity elements, image and positioning. As many cities are beginning to compete on branding, there is a need to raise their profile, and create a differentiated identity and image. However, managers must be aware of the difficulties of the process, as city's identity and image is the outcome of a diversity of regional perceptions that are often associated with the action of different political entities.

Finally, the city's image is composed of multiple pieces that must be connected with the interests of different people. Our findings indicate how different types of residents (attendees and non-attendees) have been involved in the ECOC2012, providing guidance to an adequate planning of future events. A bottom-up approach is recommended to managers in order to collect useful information by previously ascertain whether different audiences expected to participate.

The evidence reported requires acknowledging the limitations of the current study that might inhibit the generalization of the results. The first limitation concerns the samples used in the study: they are non-probabilistic; differ in terms of size (non-proportionate); and the sampling unit and the unit about which the information was gathered may be different. However, no significant differences with regard to sampling characteristics (gender, age, education, income) exist, offering less concern about the representativity of the sample. Additionally, the results of a causal-comparative research should be interpreted with caution, as not only the mega event might have caused the observed effects, but also different categories of extraneous variables (history, maturation, mortality) may have influenced the changes occurred between the two periods of time and the differences of perception found among the groups of residents (Malhotra, 2007).

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