



Good Practice Summary

A BRANDING INITIATIVE FOCUSED ON CULTURAL TOURISM **From concept to implementation and impact**

The problem and proposed solutions

In 2007 Alba Iulia was a forgotten place. People used to link the name of the city only to the glorious moment of the Unification of Romania 2018. The fortress Alba Carolina Citadel was a forbidden place, that no one could visit and in which the municipality could not invest for rehabilitation since it was in the custody of the army. Alba Iulia, also known as *The City Of The Union* - is probably the most interesting place you've never heard of. It is a unique city for Romanians *precisely* through its cultural heritage and symbolic weight but also because it combines the history with modern times.

The challenge was to restore the fortress, to include it in a touristic circuit and to regain the glorious moments of visibility of being the other capital of a modern time for 6 times during the history.

Timeframe, dates, important milestones

Until 2008 the citadel was still under the administration of the Ministry of defense. When the municipality gained the administration of the entire citadel of 110 hectares (the largest citadel in Romania) the things started to change.

In 2007-2014 Alba Iulia Municipality managed to attract more than 60 million euros for the rehabilitation of the citadel, from restoration of the entrenchments, to the access infrastructure, public lightning, water and sewage. From 2010 to present Alba Iulia started also in parallel with the rehabilitation works to focus on the branding strategy to turn Alba Iulia into a visited city, attractive for tourists, for investors and for citizens. Nowadays Alba Iulia has a professional branding strategy, being the first city in Romania to create a tool for city marketing in a integrated approach.

The link to the specific strategy (with key themes, subthemes, actions)

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The Integrated Urban Development Strategy for 2020: Alba Iulia Municipality has an Integrated Urban Development Strategy for 2020 which covers as well the cultural management of the city and the cultural development at short, medium and long term. In this Strategy Alba Iulia is projected to become a city for tourists, a city for citizens and a city for investors in 2020.

The cultural strategy realized for the candidature of the City of Alba Iulia to the title of the European Capital of Culture 2021 ECoC2021: Alba Iulia was among the 14th cities applying for the title but unfortunately it did not succeed to reach the short list. Even if the city didn't reach the short list, it is included in the European Cities Program of the Ministry of Culture, which is going to include the cities which were not selected for the ECoC2021. In this respect, the Ministry of culture will support (partially financial but with human resources one action included in the Bid book for ECoC2021). A collaboration agreement was signed between Alba Iulia and the Ministry of Culture, and an official commitment between the two institutions was made.

Local Action Plan focused on City Marketing: During the implementation of the CityLOGO project financed through URBACT II program (<http://urbact.eu/citylogo>), Alba Iulia Municipality realized a Local Action Plan focused on City Marketing, in accordance with the other strategic documents of the city. Most of the actions in the Local Action Plan are focused on tourism development, culture preservation and promotion and one of the main action was about Regaining the statute of a capital, Alba Iulia being the place where in 1918 the Unification of Romania was signed. Also, Alba Iulia started from now on to have a very specific narrative in completing the marketing kit, also focused on the contemporary strengths of the city.

The prioritization of the investment projects of Alba Iulia Municipality for 2020: the document is another relevant strategy realized by the World Bank where the cultural dimension and marketing are also taken into consideration as main pillar for development.

The main outputs for achieving objective, innovative elements

Alba Iulia, also known as *The City Of The Union* - is probably the most interesting place you've never heard of. It is a unique city for Romanians *precisely* through its cultural heritage and symbolic weight but also because it combines the history with modern times.

Alba Iulia is **authentic**. It doesn't dress something else only to receive tourists, it does so to rediscover itself, to exploit its potential and to redevelop. The internal dynamics of the changes lies just in the heart of the city that beats to the rhythm of modernization, unity and freedom of "all human thoughts".

Somehow Alba Iulia always managed to be different:

- Probably the most important thing about the city marketing project launched by Alba Iulia is that it represents a milestone: it is the first city in Romania to

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- have a professionally made brand strategy and brand identity.
- A small town from the European 'no-man's-land' proved that it doesn't matter that you're the small place no one heard of, what matters is if you find your unique voice.
- Alba Iulia can be an example and a positive case study for the thousands of small and medium-sized cities in the EU, who might not know that city marketing can put them on the map.
- The success of the city marketing program helped Alba Iulia receive the title of 'the first Smart City in Romania' from the Romanian government, which brought to the city the most important technology companies in the world, such as Siemens, Microsoft, Google and Orange.
- Another important result of the project is the integration of digital tools in the day to day life of the city: social media platforms for citizens, for tourists and for technology investors, e-democracy app for citizens, proximity marketing tool for tourists, website for tourists. All these tools are successfully using the visual identity of the city.
- Alba Iulia is now in the process of becoming the first city in Europe that will approach city marketing and smart city technologies in an integrated way, setting a new model of integrating marketing and technology in a creative way, which opens new ways for citizens to interact with their city.
- The city logo was embraced by the local companies - the major companies now use the city logo on their products, enjoy the endorsement of the city brand and endorse the city brand as well.
- The citizens and the local media have instantly adopted the new brand positioning ("The other capital of Romania"), that validated the role of the city as a symbol for all Romanians and made the locals proud of being part of a story bigger than themselves; an important learning for other cities that want to get their citizens excited about their city's marketing initiatives.

Results achieved, monitoring

The investments in the last few years in tourism, had a real impact on increased number of visitors of Alba Carolina Citadel:

- Visitors at the museum 2013: 91608;
- Visitors at the museum 2014: 128958;
- Visitors at the museum 2015: 154700;
- Visitors at the museum 2016: 167200;
- Overnights in 2011: 59510;
- Overnights 2014: 78336;
- Overnights 2015 : 111446;
- Accomodation capacity in 2009: 612;
- Accomodation capacity in 2014: 941;
- Accomodation capacity in 2015: 1186;
- 18 travel agencies;
- 68 accommodation units;
- More then 41 restaurants.

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ALBA IULIA



MUNICIPALITY



These are all official statistics from relevant stakeholders such as the museum but also from the National statistics Institute.

Potential for re-use and improvement

Why does EU need efficient tools to be more visible from the member state level in order to promote common values? The impact of EU enlargement, easier travel, and a rediscovery of regional identity and cultures is intensifying competition among European cities for a share of international tourism, trade and investment. How successfully these cities project their assets and attractions is fundamental to their future success. How well cities use branding to exploit their assets is often mirrored in the number of visitors.

The Saffron European City Brand Barometer shows that some cities, much like undervalued stocks, seem to have a reality (city asset strength) that is more attractive and of higher quality than is currently accounted for in their brand (city brand strength). Moreover there is a limited understanding of branding within the network of stakeholders of a city. Marketing in general, and branding in particular, is foreign to many public sector stakeholder organizations and individuals, who occasionally reject it as too commercial.

Based on the expertise developed by the city of Alba Iulia, the city now has the tools and the knowledge that can be transferred to other small and medium cities in Europe. Knowledge such as: how to connect people and the city management in smarter ways, how to use city marketing and smart city technologies to get companies to be interested in your city, how to use mobile and web technologies to help tourists and citizens interact with the city, how to raise the visibility of your city through marketing communication aligned to the brand strategy of your city, how to create integrated marketing campaigns, how to use social media to link communities together, how to stimulate startups to start new projects in your city and how to get companies to endorse your city through their products and services.

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