

First CityLogo key study visit to Barcelona

Last February 6th, an international URBACT-CityLogo delegation comprised of almost thirty practitioners were visiting Barcelona fulfilling a compact working agenda. The visit was seeking relevant experiences in the field of city branding and marketing to confront and discuss on-site about them. Themes of particular interest for the visitor group were governance and organizational models in place branding, involvement of the private sector, and range of communication channels and initiatives.

In early nineties and in parallel with the 1992 Olympic games, Barcelona experimented a big transformation as a city in many aspects: regeneration of many deprived areas, waterfront re-development, conscious policy aimed at upgrading public spaces and promoting good quality urban design, new cultural facilities, effective strategic planning including a pioneering experience, Europe-wide, on metropolitan governance, airport accessibility, and an efficient communication policy targeting the local population. As a result, city's attractiveness started to skyrocket for many target groups: visitors of any kind, creative class and business. Today, the context is quite different, but the city keeps its magnetism at global scale and a distinctive identity, easily recognizable, even without an explicit policy on integrated city branding.

Even so, integrated city branding is now a work in progress in Barcelona, since a major challenge that is currently being tackled by the City is a new organizational model with a more unifying capacity of better aligning different sector-focused branding & marketing efforts, most of them successful. That is why according to Miguel Rivas, lead expert for CityLogo, testing this *momentum* in Barcelona can be useful for many CityLogo partners trying to organize more systematic and effective integrated city branding; but also useful for those just looking for inspiring practices on how to interact with specific target groups, as in the cases of Barcelona as tourist destination, logistic centre or as one of the capitals of design. Moreover, Barcelona 22@ is a pioneering technological urban district in Europe, still in progress, with a successful communication strategy, and thanks to Fira de Barcelona's work, the city has climbed to a top world position in the MICE sector.

The URBACT delegation was particularly impressed on how Barcelona makes the most of the organization of big events, and in particular the experience with the Mobile World Congress. Since winning in 2011 the yearly organization of the most relevant world business fair in that industry (figures for the 2013 edition were 72,000 visitors from 200 countries and 1,500 exhibitors), the city has been working promoting an ecology of different initiatives around the concept of mobility related to research, living lab, entrepreneurship, cluster development,

visitor centre, existing events (like SONAR, a world-class festival in electronic music), etc. This evolution, in a short period of time, from a unique big event to a cross-cutting theme expanded through a variety of activities in the city has finally resulted in a new attribute or value for the city brand, “Barcelona as mobile world capital” <http://mobileworldcapital.com/>. Such strategy has been consciously promoted and conducted by a specific entity established for that mission, the Mobile World Capital Foundation which includes the three levels of administration (local, regional, national), Fira de Barcelona and GSMA as promoter of the Mobile World Congress.

Other interesting moment was the meeting with Barcelona Global <http://www.barcelonaglobal.com/>, an association of local business leaders and professionals that was recently born with the idea of playing an active role communicating the city as business place. Although its impulse is to be found in the public-led initiative of Barcelona’s strategic metropolitan plan of 2010, the association lays on a model of individual/corporate fee-based membership. Being a member of Barcelona Global (currently around 250 between individuals and firms) is considered a gesture of commitment to the city and of corporate social responsibility.

The agenda for the study visit laid on a close collaboration between CityLogo’s lead expert and Barcelona Activa, the local economic development agency, so not a body specifically dedicated to marketing, albeit playing a central role on the city’s strategic communication and specifically on branding the city as business place. They brought together a number of entities and persons with a relevant role on how Barcelona is branding and marketing herself to the world, now and in the near future.

http://issuu.com/grupotaso/docs/studyvisit_bcn_finalagenda





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