

# Brand City and Geomarketing: How to Promote a Destination in the Global Tourist Competition

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## Abstract

*The emerging competition between tourist destinations has highlighted the need to emphasize communication strategies, in order to create added value for the potential intangible customer-designed to create a favorable image of the spaces that are intended to promote, through the design communication actions with goals that go beyond mere promotional or informational interest. In this sense, both sites that conceive tourism as an economic diversification solution (emerging destinations) and geographical locations that already have a certain hearth in relation to its tourist tradition (mature destinations), join forces in order to consolidate territorial identity in line with its potential for tourism. This paper attempts to provide a better understanding of the brand city and geomarketing strategies in the urban tourism through a successful case study, Barcelona. To that effect, using a methodology based on the compilation, filtration and proper organization of information, it presents an analysis of the actions different administrations have taken to better the positioning of Barcelona in the global tourism industry. The analysis focuses on two aspects of the rise of Barcelona as a successful tourist attraction: the first, the different strategies employed to refine the tourist product, promotion, commercialization, planning, marketing, quality and sustainability; and second, the strengthening of the transport infrastructure that added dynamism to this Spanish city. Through this analysis, the paper complements existing literature on the topic by adding to our knowledge of the tourist industry.*

**Keywords:** Urban tourism, branding city, geomarketing, promotion mechanisms, transport infrastructures, Barcelona (Spain).

## 1. Introduction

We live in a context of global competitiveness in which world cities struggle to rise at the top of the urban hierarchy. Until recently, the main objective was based on attracting the maximum number of flows and economic investments to catapult cities. However, at present, the new urban strategies based on the *Brand city* and *Geomarketing* affect the symbolic value to stand out cities from another perspective, the cultural perspective.

Authors such as Jameson (1985), Harvey (1989), Robertson (1992), Bauman (2003, 2007a, 2007b) and Friedman (2006) assign culture and identity as two factors against the homogenizer mold of postmodernism. In this context, tourism plays a crucial peculiarity role in the today's logic of cultural consumption industry (Corrigan, 1997; Baudrillard, 2000; Ritzer, 2001; Tomlinson, 2003)

Tourism has been conceptualised in many different ways within the discipline of social science. In contemporary society, tourism represents through its content and role, “a distinctive domain of activity, an essential component of the economical and social life for a growing number of world countries, countries that see in their own touring potential a real wealth generator” (Popescu and Corbus, 2010).

Tourism is considered first of all a “recreation form besides other activities and formulas of spending the leisure time” (Holloway, 1994). According to this author, tourism is a “complex activity, with a multitude of fronts, with significant economical loading, positioned at the intersection of more branches and sectors of economy; all these find their reflection in the variety of points of view regarding the content of tourism concept and the adjacent concepts” (Holloway, 1994).

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The global world in which we are inserted has greatly facilitated the movement of the people and, consequently, of tourists who see now, better than never, the possibility of being able to discover the idiosyncrasy and specificity of the cities that populate the world. That is, here, there, everywhere, tourism is a well-established urban reality (Dachary and Burne, 2004; Stanciulescu, 2009).

Today, urban tourism has become a decisive factor in the rebirth of cities. Therefore, urban development, patrimonial, architectural and functional recovery of urban entities has become the focal point of many development efforts. That is why it is said that urban tourism, if correctly planned, developed and managed, “may create advantages and benefits both to urban communities and overall society” (Iordache and Cebuc, 2009). In others words, tourism, in general, but especially the urban kind, constitutes an important backbone and a revitalizing tool of our cities to rise at the top of the urban hierarchy from a cultural perspective.

The most recent trends and forecasting studies by the World Trade Organization (WTO) indicate that cities will continue to be in high demand by tourists of all sorts, and the problems associated with the handling of these tourists will have to be more systematically tackled by all parties concerned.

Therefore, cities face a double challenge, described by the Conference on “Tourism and the City: The challenge of Sustainability” as: Firstly, they have to be able to respond to the expectations and needs of the growing number of tourists who are attracted to their rich and varied array of cultural, business, entertainment, shopping, sports and other attractions; furthermore, they need to continuously renovate and improve such facilities in order to maintain their share in the competitive tourism market and the benefits resulting from it.

Secondly, cities have to ensure that tourism is developed and managed in such a way that it benefits the resident population, does not contribute to the deterioration of the urban environment but rather to its enhancement, and does not become a financial burden to the local authority”. (Conference on “Tourism and the City: The challenge of Sustainability” Madrid, 1999)

In this reality, the different Spanish Administrations play a crucial role since with the State of the Autonomies, tourist matters are decentralized thus allowing the Autonomous Communities and other administrative states to adopt responsibilities related to tourism.

Precisely, it is in these moments when the Autonomous Spanish Communities are executing an important strategic planning of tourism with the aim of increasing the number of tourists, the duration of their stay and the total amount of money spent. At the same time, the Communities are promoting only those touristic experiences that will result in repeated visits to the city.

For this reason, in a tourist city, while cultural heritage is an important part of the product offered to tourists it cannot be the only one. As Moragas has indicated, “selling the past in its different forms is one of the principal claims of tourist marketing” (Romero Moragas, 2004). Nevertheless, as we will see later, an important current idea is to consciously “place a value” on all this material and immaterial patrimony.

It is within this dynamic context that the following sections address the actions and promotional mechanisms undertaken by several administrations to better position Barcelona within the tourist industry.

## ***2. What the tourism in Barcelona means***

Tourist activity in Barcelona right now constitutes one of the fundamental pillars of the economic, social and cultural progress of the city. The tourist growth in Barcelona has followed a truly ascending rate since the celebration of the Olympic Games in 1992, specializing and diversifying more and more its supply and demand. Barcelona’s importance lies not only in its plentiful monumental and artistic heritage, but also in the rest of the characteristics of the city that come together to form the tourist product (infrastructure, accommodation, catering, shops, recreational areas...).

Its diversified offerings in other areas such as business, shopping, gastronomy and golf, in addition to its excellent position in the world tourist system as well as its image as a tourist destination and its international projection, have turned Barcelona, the Catalanian capital, into one of the biggest tourist metropolis in the south of Europe. According to the Strategic Tourism Plan of the city of Barcelona for 2010-2015, tourism represents about 13 % of the GDP in the economy of the city nowadays, which gives an idea of its enormous relevancy.

However, its impact on the socio-economic situation of Barcelona is enormous given that the multi-directional relations so typical of this economic segment lead it to include many other sectors -either in a major or minor way- such as trade, transport, agricultural industries, construction, culture, craftwork and a wide set of services (Strategic Plan, 2008).

The excellent positioning of the city in the tourist world system as well as, the strategic importance of this segment in the economy and employment of Barcelona are a reality. The celebration of big events such as Universal Exposition 1888 and 1929, Olympic Games 1992 and Universal Forum of Cultures 2004 are further evidence of prior statement.

The spectacular growth registered in this sector takes place because of the tourist industry that represents Barcelona: alive, agile, competitive and with a clear projection of the future. Hence, many authors agree in affirming that we are in the presence of “one of the principal tourist destinations of the world” (Garay and Canoves, 2012)

Its competitiveness in the domestic and international markets is based on an image and on a name universally known and recognized for centuries by the singular character of its celebrations and heritage, which marks an authentic reference to many other cities that they try to accede to positions of privilege as the one that Barcelona enjoys.

On this solid base, over the last decade, a structure of the tourist product that is very effective and of high quality, in the services, in the housings and in the variety of the tourist offer has been constructed. But besides all this, “tourism has a transcendental incident in an intangible factor as important as it is the image of the city, its exterior projection and, as a result, its positioning in the world system of big cities” (Town Council Barcelona, 2008).

### **3. Courses of action in tourist geomarketing**

Such is the importance of tourist activity for the city of Barcelona that the administration of the city has continued to invest in it. However, because of the drive to make Barcelona’s tourism industry more competitive and the sustained focus on modernizing it, an ongoing adjustment process as a result of the increasing demand for tourism related services and infrastructure continues in the city.

#### **3.1. Diversification of the offer**

Barcelona owns an important tourist binomial: monumental heritage plus traditional culture. Two principal attractions identify the city: the Gaudí’s cathedral (Sagrada Familia) and Park Güell, Monastery Pedralbes, Casa Mila, Tibidabo, the palaces and buildings of government, its churches and basilicas; and on the other, the Holy Week, the Saint Jordi Festival, the sardana, etc ... Nevertheless, the city has been able to adapt to the needs of the 21st century by diversifying its tourist offering as consumer interests evolve.

*Business tourism.* Integrated into the network of the Spanish Conventions Bureau, Barcelona offers the venues necessary to host major meetings and high-level conferences. The *Fira*, Barcelona trade fair organizes a lot of congresses, exhibitions, fairs, symposiums and professional meetings, thus making Barcelona one of the principal destinations of business tourism in Spain and Europe ([www.firabcn.es](http://www.firabcn.es)).

*Gastronomic tourism.* The gastronomic tourism, in constant growth in Spain, also leaves its mark on the city of Barcelona. Without a doubt, its gastronomy is one of the richest in Spanish food, characterized by its variety and its quality. Its popularity has grown considerably because the Catalan cuisine has been recognized by international prizes such as The Restaurant magazine. Its gastronomy is defined by *la escudella i carn d’olla*, *faves a la catalane* or *arroz a la cazuela*. But the most recognized products are the *crema catalane* (dessert) and the *cavas del Penedes* (sparkling wine). In Barcelona, eating is not only an act it is a cultural ritual.

The Association of Hotel and Catering Business, with the motto “Quality guarantee”, undertakes the marketing of restaurants of Barcelona and hotels in a continuous process of adjustment to new demands, the inclusion of new cultures, desires and needs of its clients. At every moment, these establishments offer the best culinary elaborations and ensure quality in the products and the food used, as well as perfect service and friendly treatment, all at very competitive prices (<http://www.barcelonaturisme.com/Donde-comer>).

*Shopping tourism.* Barcelona has turned into an important fashion center in the past few years and boasts local tailors of the calibre of Custo Barcelona or Josep Font, as well as with important thematic institutions as the Barcelona Moda Centre.

In addition, the city offers traditional establishments where tourists can buy anything from crafts and collectibles in local shops to sophisticated designer items in malls. The variety of establishments create an atmosphere of possibilities available to the visitor who can choose from a articles from Old Town (barrio Gótico and Arrabal), Antoni Comerc (modernist style) and the Shopping Line, the most popular shopping area in Barcelona, where the malls, duty-free shops, and the first signatures of fashion reside ([www.barcelonaturisme.com](http://www.barcelonaturisme.com)).

*Cruise tourism.* The city of Barcelona and the Port of Barcelona complement each other. It is one of the biggest ports that exists in Spain, with terminuses, moor and wharves all along the way, in the very heart of Barcelona, up to the terminus of cruises and sports ports. Because of the tourist attractions of Barcelona, the Port of the city has turned into regular port-of-call for cruises that each year choose as a preferential destination, either because of its maritime routes or as an entryway into the city. The boom of this activity and the development of the Pier/ Wharf with the new system of cruises further promote the integration of the Port in the City of Barcelona resulting in increases tourist activity ([www.portdebarcelona.cat/es](http://www.portdebarcelona.cat/es)).

*Tourism of Golf.* Barcelona is the place chosen by increasingly visitors to practise this tourist activity. The number and variety of the golfing facilities, the privileged climate and the reputation and prestige of its courses have turned Catalonia into a destination for first-class golf.

In this context, Barcelona enjoys one of Europe's best courses, The Royal Club of Golf of Barcelona, headquarters of different national and international competitions. Designed by Spanish golfer Jose Maria Olazábal, it presents a demanding tour very valued by professional players and amateurs. In addition, the Club has unsurpassed facilities that greatly enrich its sports opportunities and turn it into a suitable place for the enjoyment of family leisure. (<http://www.golfdebarcelona.com/club>).

*Idiomatic tourism (as a subsegment of cultural tourism).* The Spanish language is a tourist resource with enormous potential. It is positioned as the second most used language of international communication and the fourth most often spoken around the world (Institute Cervantes, 2010). Hence, interest in Spanish as a second language continues to increase in numerous countries of the old and the new world. The importance of the Spanish language as a touristic resource and its enormous potential in Spain is already a reality as exemplified by the increasing number of students of Spanish, as well as the burgeoning offer of Spanish classes and schools.

Nevertheless, language tourists not only decide what course to study, but in which destination to do so. It is in this decision process that culture of Barcelona plays a crucial role since many of these students decide to come to the city for the important material and immaterial legacy that exists inside the metropolis. In this sense, the synergies between the tourist and linguistic polities position Barcelona as one of the principal destinations in which to learn the language of Cervantes in Spain.

### 3.2. Adequacy of the tourist product

- Tourist urban signposting. The town council, with the aim to facilitate walking around the city as well as to pinpoint the location of the principal tourist attractions of the city has decided to undertake actions to improve pedestrian tourist signposting with standardized directing panels with information in different languages.
- Pedestrianization of the historical centre. Since 2000s, the city has been partaking in these types of works in the streets bordering the downtown area. The aim is to minimize the impact of traffick in the tourist zone and to reinforce the role of the tourist.
- Renovation of the Office of Attention to the Tourist and establishment of new Offices of Information throughout the whole city to address any incident that could arise: necessary information, defense of the tourist, etc. In addition, they have tried to change the orientation programs offered by these centers from simply an "information leaflet" to the inclusion of audio-visual technologies to permit the tourist to interpret Barcelona reality. Therefore, the offices were redesigned and the contents of orientation materials were improved.

- Lighting enclave and monumental sets. For the adequacy and embellishment of the tourist product, the Town Council has developed measures for strategic lighting on and around the principal monumental elements. The aim is the praise/extolment and embellishment of the principal milestones during the night of Barcelona.
- Putting in value of resources and tourist routes. From the Town Council of Barcelona, the restoration of different tourist itineraries has been supported by the city for the accomplishment and development of the touristic practice. Among the most interesting, the following stand out: *Ruta romana, modernista, contemporanea, Gaudí, Picasso, etc.*
- New cultural heritage on a symbolic and emblematic scale as a *branding tool (Branding city)*. In order to accentuate the uniqueness and identity of the city in the Spanish and European tourist context, the construction of one-of-a-kind buildings that identify the city had been commissioned to renowned architects, among them: Gaudí's Sagrada Familia, Calatrava's telecommunications tower or Jean Nouvel's ultramodern skyscraper.



Tourist urban  
Signposting



Renovation Office of  
Attention to the  
Tourist



Vanguardist  
architecture.  
Renowned  
architects.



Lighting enclave and  
monumental sets.

**Figure 1: Adequacy of the tourist product. Source: Town Council of Barcelona**

### 3.3. Creation of new products.

Apart from the different measures undertaken by the Town Council in search of the adequation of the touristic product, Barcelona has modernized and become more competitive through an offering of new products, among which stand out the following:

- Tourism information website. It is a question of a platform of tourist information in different languages (Spanish, English, French, Catala). Its website is [www.barcelonaturisme.com](http://www.barcelonaturisme.com). In it, it is possible to visualize a complete gridiron of programming integrated by different tourist sections.
- Barcelona Card. A new municipal mechanism to stimulate tourist activity, this card allows the tourist to discover the city and to save money through benefits such as: free access to the majority of museums and monuments of the city, unlimited use of the public transportation, etc. (<http://barcelonacard.neoturismo.com/>).
- Articket Barcelona. A single ticket that allows you to visit the 6 leading museums in Barcelona, among which you can find art galleries, Gaudí's work, and painting and contemporaneous museums in Barcelona. (<http://www.articketbcn.org/>)
- MP3 Audio guide. It lasts more than an hour about the historic industrial quarter of Poble Nou, which you can download to the mobile phone or mp3 player. Its motto: "Choose the landmarks you are most interested in and organize your own route through the innovation district" (<http://www.conocerbarcelona.com/audiguia>).



### **3.4. Development of joint programs (NETWORKS).**

The integration in networks constitutes a management instrument of increasing importance as well as an area for the generation of shared knowledge and an efficient route of international projection. Among others, Barcelona takes part in the following networks of cities, linked directly or indirectly to tourist activity:

- Network of cities "Spain Convention Bureau". Their fundamental aim is to promote the exchange of experiences and information of the tourist sector among the municipalities that form the section as well as to realize actions directed at the joint national and international promotion of the cities that compose it ([www.scb.es](http://www.scb.es)).
- Network of "cathedral cities". This is characterized by acting together in the promotion and defense of urban development, historical and cultural heritage of the municipalities that shape it, as well as to establish policies of exchanges to facilitate joint planning of image diffusion ([www.ciudadescatedralicias.org](http://www.ciudadescatedralicias.org)).
- Network of "Smart cities". Its aim is to share experiences and work together in order to develop a model of sustainable management and improve the quality of life of citizens, focusing on aspects such as energy saving, sustainable mobility, eGovernment and attention to people or security, among others. The most outstanding example is 22@, an innovative neighborhood in the capital.
- Network of "cities AVE". It facilitates and propitiates fruitful collaboration for the development and touristic promotion of destinations integrated through the perspective of cities connected by high speed train. Its slogan: "Nine cities waiting to meet you. Follow a route constructed for the 21st century (that will carry you from Andalucía to Cataluña, passing through Castilla-La Mancha, Madrid and Aragón). Discover the variety, the taste and the excellence. Welcome to the AVE cities. Now we are closer to you" ([www.redciudadesave.es](http://www.redciudadesave.es)).
- Network of cities "EUROCITIES". This network was born with the will to take part actively in the construction of the united Europe and, to this end, it acts as an advocate in European institutions and takes part in the decision process in the areas that directly affect the cities ([www.eurocities.eu](http://www.eurocities.eu)).
- Network of cities "Heritage of Humanity". This is a network that operates in the defense of the historical and cultural heritage of the declared Heritage of Humanity cities. The case of Barcelona is unusual because not the whole city is declared as Heritage of the Humanity, but eight of its big symbols are: Parque Guell, Palacio Guell, Casa Milá, Casa Vicens, Fachada de la Natividad y cripta de la Sagrada Familia, Casa Batlló, Palacio de la Musica Catalana y Hospital de San Pablo. ([www.ciudadespatrimonio.org](http://www.ciudadespatrimonio.org)).

### **3.5. Promotion and commercialization of the tourist product.**

Barcelona projects a clear, consolidated brand image recognized globally and associated with a particular type of positive and vivacious way of life. In addition, it has experience orchestrating the organization and management of big, prestigious cultural, sports and artistic events, recognized not only inside Spanish borders, but also internationally (Strategic Tourism Plan of the city of Barcelona for 2010-2015).

#### **3.5.1. Cultural activities**

- Liceo Great Theatre Opera House and the Auditorium Symphony Orchestra. These are two of the most relevant cultural events of the Catalan capital. Of recognized and valued prestige inside and out of our borders, they have been given awards on many occasions.
- Celebration of festivals of national and international relevance, Among them, the following ones stand out:
  - International Jazz Festival Barcelona
  - International Comedy Festival Barcelona
  - International Documentary Film Festival
  - International Festival of Advanced Music and New Media Art
  - International Poetry Festival Barcelona

- The meeting place for the development of fairs on different subject matter:
  - International Tourism Show of Catalonia
  - Mobile World Congress;
  - International Book Fair
  - International Swimming Pool Show
  - International Motor Show
  - International Logistics Show
  - International Boat Show of Barcelona
- Major holidays. The main one is “Festes de la Mercè”. This social, crowded and popular event is full of music, art and tradition all over the city, turning Barcelona into a festival of festivals in 2011 brought together nearly 2 million people. The official program of La Mercè is wide and varied and includes outdoor concerts, fireworks displays and audiovisual, street theater, circus performances, children's games, sports competitions, open days in public buildings, not to mention more traditional activities "els castellers" or "els correfocs".

### **3.5.2. Audio-visual projects - cinema and advertising-**

One of the more representative lines of action constitutes the announcement of the city that it will begin a campaign to attract audio-visual producers, that is, to create in Barcelona the material support for full-length films, short films, advertising and other mechanisms that will spread the image of the Catalan capital. In this sense, Barcelona-Catalonia Film Commission was inaugurated with the intention of promoting the audio-visual sector in the city and of turning Barcelona into a suitable set to film. Recently, its film branding has grown hugely thanks to the movie “Vicky, Cristina, Barcelona” by Woody Allen. The importance of the audio-visual sector for tourism justifies itself according to the president of the association, “because an image in a movie is equivalent to a costly and extensive advertising campaign and can be a sight for an average of 70 million people” ([www.spainfilmcommission.org](http://www.spainfilmcommission.org)).

### **3.5.3. Accomplishment of promotional material**

With the aim of facilitating the compression of the touristic practice, as well as to insist on the promotion of the city on the touristic context, the Town Council constantly undertakes the design and edition of leaflets, tourist guides and tourist catalogues distributed across the offices of tourist information, and other entities linked with the sector.

### **3.6. Quality guarantee**

Quality constitutes one of the big challenges for the city. The advances that have been achieved over the past few years has been significant, but the city of Barcelona, and in general Spain as a tourist destination, need to become competitive via pricing, an issue that little by little will be changing, always with an eye toward integral quality and with a special attention to the formation in the sector.

Among the emblems that guarantee this touristic quality are the ISO measures or "Q from Quality", standards that, when achieved, guarantee the prestige, differentiation, reliability and rigor of the certified touristic establishments. These standards have been certified by the Institute for the Tourist Spanish Quality (ICTE) in different establishments linked with the tourist sector.

In Barcelona, we can estimate over 100 establishments that possess this distinctive badge such as travel agencies, hotels, offices of tourist information and restaurants (ICTE, 2013).

### **3.7. Creation of the Tourist Observatory of Catalonia.**

The regional government created the Tourist Observatory of the Catalan region in 2005, which shows a major concern for the statistical sectorial analysis related to tourism ([www20.gencat.cat](http://www20.gencat.cat)).

Studies and investigations are conducted about the demand, epochs of the year, foreign and national markets, types of tourists, housings used (commercial according to types and categories and non-commercial), duration of the stay, systems of commercialization used, and the strata of age and status, in order to canalize the demands for the city's compatible offer.

### **3.8. Capture of new tourist segments**

- The first one of them is the segment of the handicapped persons. They try to promote the city of Barcelona as a tourist destination totally accessible for the persons with physical disability. Because of this, the Town Council has created a specific website for this type of people under the motto “Barcelona, open to everyone” ([www.barcelona-access.com/?idioma=2](http://www.barcelona-access.com/?idioma=2)). It gathers establishments (hotels, restaurants, cinemas and theatres), parks and gardens, itineraries, parking reserved to persons with disability who have the European parking card and other types of services accessible and practicable (tourist bus, buses and eurotaxi), being indicated by a specific pictogram those that have information in Braille for blind persons.
- The second one of the major social segments is the homosexual populations. The Council has overseen during the last years the accomplishment of different activities related to this social group, among which stands out the creation of a website for population: [www.guiagaybarcelona.es](http://www.guiagaybarcelona.es), where appears all kinds of facilities orientated to this tourists' sector: from housings, saunas, gay bars and restaurants, as well as exhibitions and other cultural events of interest.

### **3.9. Wealth and well-being in the visits.**

A very important issue that also must be present in the construction of the urban tourist model is the evaluation of tourist policies and their influence on translating tourist visits into wealth and well-being for the city's residents in addition to simple quantitative information of received tourists. This way, though most of the actions go to the tourist attractions, it is necessary to analyze intense form of aspects such as loyalty, deseasonality, and the increase of the expense or of the duration of the stay, all of them key for the maximization of the benefits obtained by every visit received.

### **3.10. The touristic visit from other perspectives**

- Tourist Bus “Barcelona Bus Tourist”. A global brand that integrates the best operators of panoramic tours around the world under a corporate image that assures the traveller a route of quality and excellence by tourist bus (<http://www.barcelonabusturistic.cat>).
- Panoramic Big Wheel in Tibidabo, which will be reinagurated in summer 2013 after being closed in 2010 because of its deterioration. Its slow pace allows the observation of the city from a different perspective, since it is the highest point from which it is possible to see the whole city ([www.tibidabo.cat](http://www.tibidabo.cat)).
- Cable car Montjuïc. An unforgettable way up to the castle of Montjuïc. The cable car links the city to the top of the mountain of Montjuïc. To make this possible, glazed up booths along the 750 meter journey to save the 84.5 meters of altitude. This ascent shows all the plain of Barcelona from Collserola mountain to the sea (<http://www.tmb.cat/es/teleferic-de-montjuic>).

## ***4. The transport in Barcelona: accessibility and sustainability***

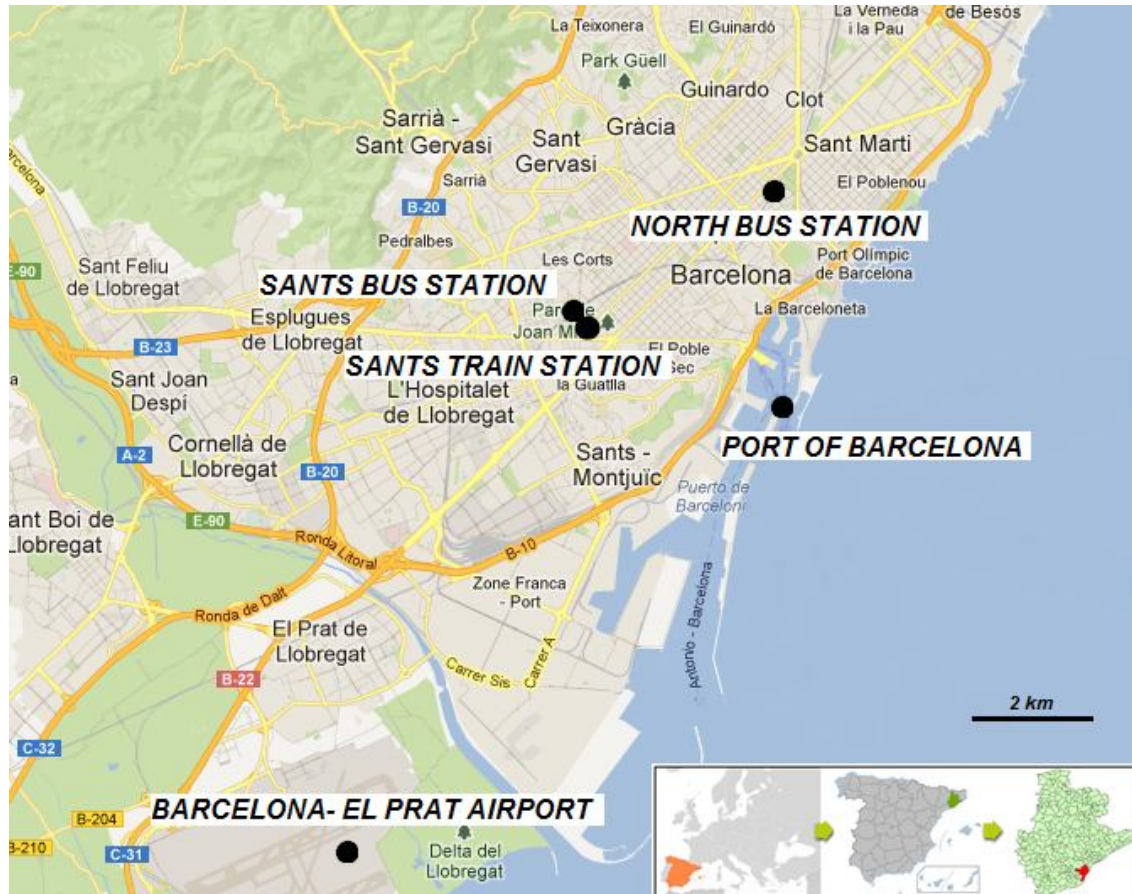
Any city that wants to obtain a relevant positioning in tourism must adopt a few levels of accessibility according to the needs of the demand. In this context, Barcelona, one of the big European cities, in which the urban dimension coexists with rural comforts, is today one of the best connected cities in Spain.

Characterized by very varied and efficient accessibility, Barcelona has turned not only into a point of touristic destination but also into the best port of Catalonia, since it is one of the few Spanish cities communicated efficiently by land, sea, railroad and air.

- Road. The network of highways of regional scope, as well as a renewed system of accesses to the city, with rapid bypasses, connect accurately all the neuralgic points of the city and its surroundings. This way, Barcelona turns into one of the Spanish cities better communicated by road, linked for highway with all the Catalanian capitals, as well as with Madrid and Mediterranean coast. The services are completed with the bus stations of Nord and Sans.
- Railroad. The construction of a new rail network has been fundamental to clear a historical centre previously completely asphyxiated by the dizzy growth of traffic. The railroad station of Sans constitutes an important knot of connections between the Catalanian capital and the rest of the Autonomous Community, Spain and Europe. High Speed' s system is formed nowadays by two products: AVE and Talgo 200, which have been placed at the centre of Barcelona less than two and a half hours from Madrid and only one and a half from Zaragoza.



- Plane. El Prat Airport is located only 15 km from the downtown. It was specially designed to receive up to fifty million passengers per year and it offers regular flights to/from the principal European and Spanish capitals. In the last few years, it has experienced a considerable growth as consequence of the implantation of low-cost airlines and the inauguration of Terminal 2.
- Ship. The port of Barcelona supports heavy traffic, either tourist cruises or regular lines of goods. The peak of this activity and the enhancement of Pier further promote the integration of the Port in the City of Barcelona, which has significantly multiplied its accessibility.



**Figure 2. Accessibility to Barcelona city**

**Source: Own elaboration**

But besides accessibility, the Barcelona Town Council continues to invest in transport in order to incorporate in the city a real tourism policy of sustainable mobility based on the promotion of non-motorized transport (pedestrian and bicycle) and public transport.

With the objective of reducing the use of private vehicles, the reduction of the surrounding traffic and the development of a network of bike lanes have been carried out throughout the city by the Historic Centre of pedestrianization. According to the Barcelona Strategic Plan 2015, each time more touristic activity is planned, not only are economic goals to be taken into account, but also ecological and environmental ones.

There are four main projects related to intra-urban sustainable transport that the city has undertaken in recent years:

- Tram Barcelona: Opened four years ago, it provides transportation to non-resident or passers-by tourists by means of the environment of pedestrian-friendly streets of downtown Barcelona. With this, the interest shown by the city of Barcelona for sustainable transport is shown, opting for a less polluting public transport that cares about the sustainability of the city ([www.tram.cat](http://www.tram.cat)).
- Metro Barcelona: In search of green transport, the city of Barcelona established an electric train that runs through the centre of the city. With this, a more ecologically effective transport has been achieved, contributing, in turn to the pedestrianization of the historical centre ([www.metrobarcelona.es](http://www.metrobarcelona.es)).

- Blobject. Segway Barcelona: With the same background of sustainability as in the previous case, the city opted for a new form of tourism and sightseeing. Under the slogan “New ways to make and to see the city” the company offers a unique and fun experience through a Segway, an electric scooter easily controlled by body movements ([www.barcelonasegwayfun.com](http://www.barcelonasegwayfun.com)).
- Ciclotour: A company from Barcelona that is active in the sector of leisure and tourism, using quads and bikes. Barcelona is a very bike friendly city with more than a 158km of cycle lanes. Visitors to Barcelona discover so much more by bike in 3.5 hours than in 3 days on foot or from the seat of a tourist bus. The Barcelona Ciclo Tour team of trained guides are well versed in the history and the workings of the city and with fascinating anecdotes and memorable stories they show the authentic truth and uncover the secrets to Barcelona, while visitors ride relaxed and free around the city by bike. (<http://www.barcelonaciclotour.com>)
- Trixi-bike Barcelona. The smoothest and swiftest way to get around the city in an environmentally kindly and eco-efficient way in a two-seater 100% electric vehicle. Explore the city at your leisure both day and night. (<http://www.trixi.com/barcelona/>)

## 5. Conclusions

The Strategic Tourism Plan of the city of Barcelona for 2010-2015 has been an important step in addressing the major challenges of tourism in Barcelona, since all the actions proposed have led to a breakthrough in terms of shaping the city as a major new tourist destination in the international urban tourism circuit. Increased competition in this mode is constant, since it is expected that an increasing number of cities will gain a position of importance in urban tourism. That is why it is necessary to continue implementing actions aimed at achieving a competitive and differentiated product, looking for original ways to depart from the standardization of products and services. *Branding city* and *Geomarketing* are the strategies that Barcelona is carrying out. The result is really outstanding since the tourist growth in Barcelona has followed a truly ascending rate since the celebration of the Olympic Games in 1992, specializing and diversifying more and more its supply and demand. Its beauty, its magnificent weather, the superb infrastructure and the available communication network suggest that the city should continue working toward the integration of all its tourism resources. All of these opportunities, if the city knows how to use them, will produce excellent results and therefore allow Barcelona to assume a privileged place in the great cities of national and international tourist geomarketing.

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- Town Council of Barcelona: [www.bcn.cat/es](http://www.bcn.cat/es)  
European Union (tourism): <http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism>  
World Tourism Organization: [www.unwto.org](http://www.unwto.org)  
Institute for the Tourist Spanish Quality: [www.icte.org](http://www.icte.org)  
Cervantes Institute: [www.cervantes.es](http://www.cervantes.es)

#### **b) Networks**

- Network of cities "Spain Convention Bureau": [www.scb.es](http://www.scb.es)  
Network of "cathedral cities": [www.ciudadescatedralicias.org](http://www.ciudadescatedralicias.org)  
Network of "cities AVE": [www.redciudadesave.es](http://www.redciudadesave.es)  
Network of cities "EUROCITIES": [www.eurocities.eu](http://www.eurocities.eu)  
Network of cities "Heritage of Humanity": [www.ciudadespatrimonio.org](http://www.ciudadespatrimonio.org)

#### **c) Transportation**

- Tram of Barcelona: [www.tram.cat](http://www.tram.cat)  
Metro: [www.metrobarcelona.es](http://www.metrobarcelona.es)  
Tourist Bus: <http://www.barcelonabusturistic.cat>  
Port of Barcelona: [www.portdebarcelona.cat/es](http://www.portdebarcelona.cat/es)  
Ciclo tour: <http://www.barcelonaciclotour.com>  
Trixi Bike: <http://www.trixi.com/barcelona>  
Bobject. Segway Barcelona: [www.barcelonasegwayfun.com](http://www.barcelonasegwayfun.com)  
Cable car: <http://www.tmb.cat/es/teleferic-de-montjuic>

#### **d) Others**

- Catalan Observatory: [www20.gencat.cat](http://www20.gencat.cat)  
Exhibitions and Congresses Palace Barcelona: [www.firabcn.es](http://www.firabcn.es)  
Gastronomic tourism in Barcelona: <http://www.barcelonaturisme.com/Donde-comer>  
Tourism of golf in Barcelona: <http://www.golfdebarcelona.com/club>  
Barcelona Card: <http://barcelonacard.neoturismo.com>  
Spain Film Office: [www.spainfilmcommission.org](http://www.spainfilmcommission.org)  
Panoramic Treadmill: [www.tibidabo.cat](http://www.tibidabo.cat)  
MP3 Audiguie: [www.conocerbarcelona.com/audiguia](http://www.conocerbarcelona.com/audiguia)