

A PHOTOGRAPH OF THE URBAN MARKETING STRATEGY STRUCTURE OF THE BUCHAREST MUNICIPALITY

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ABSTRACT

This paper focused on presenting the capital of Romania, Bucharest, and the current situation from the perspective of tourism promotion through the steps taken in the direction of a marketing strategy. There were presented the measures taken by local authorities in the promotion activity as well as the city promotion campaigns initiated by the private sector. The road to a strong brand is long and often tedious, and although the concept of urban marketing is somewhat new to Romania, we can see a number of steps to implement it. The effects of these steps were presented through tables and graphs built from the perspective of the number of tourists who actually visited the city.

KEYWORDS: *Promotion, Strategic Vision, Urban Marketing.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The city of Bucharest is categorized as a regional metropolis with limited international influence, with few third-party metropolitan services and less developed international functions, similar to Athens and Lisbon, but with the possibility to prepare for the transition to the upper category of a regional metropolis with strong international influence, with poorly-structured activities such as Rome, Madrid or Bern.

The capital of Romania is still looking for its own identity. If we bring the city brand into question, it is at an early stage and can play two roles: it can be an element for the country's brand, the city becoming a component included in the nationally promoted list of values, or a benchmark to define and, subsequently, to improve the country's brand. The untapped potential must be capitalized in the future with the help of urban branding and urban marketing adapted to the specificity of the city (Popescu, 2009).

So far, there is a lack of a marketing strategy and a clear and defined brand. According to a report of the City Hall of Bucharest (PMB, 2016a), starting with 2017, an agency was set up to promote the capital. The main directions for promoting the city are the effervescent life of the city, especially in the Old Centre, the influence of communism, the architecture of the city and the presence of the largest building in Europe, as well as the presence of parts of authentic Romanian.

What is clear so far is that Bucharest, after the fall of communism, had no vision, at least in the medium term, although urban development plans were and are still numerous. However, most actions for urban development, including the city brand, came from private sector initiatives (Nae & Turnock, 2011).

In recent years, we have witnessed a wave of projects from the private sector, the aim of which is to reposition the target audience's perception of the Romanian capital's potential and history. Thus, several PR campaigns (events, lectures, exhibitions) along with urban promotional campaigns initiated by various entrepreneurs sought to present the good part of the city, presenting the capital as a destination worthy of those passionate about authentic, culture, be it old or contemporary.

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Thus, the objective of this paper is outlined, to explore the ways in which the city is strategically promoted both from the perspective of local authorities and from the perspective of the private sector.

2. SHORT LITERATURE REVIEW ON URBAN MARKETING

Urban marketing is the most adaptable and productive approach to the problems faced by communities. Urban marketing has become an extremely important economic activity and, in some cases, the main source of welfare.

The first decade of the 21st century has been characterized by increasing economic, social and political challenges that municipalities have to manage according to the interests of the main parties. The present configuration of Europe transforms the old competition among nations, where the main actors are the cities, which is becoming more and more difficult. Cities and states have entered a difficult transition from an industrial economy that dominates the world markets to a rapidly changing, highly informational economy subject to a strong global competition (Zamfir & Corboş, 2015). Local authorities cannot force the market to react as they please, but they have to respond positively to the trends and forces that govern market evolution. Policies and response measures to stop the forces failed, while cities collaborated with private firms in various ingenious ways, considering market forces. As part of this learning process, the authorities' response is behind market changes and the policies applied have not adapted sufficiently quickly to changes in the structure of the business sectors. Marketing should not be an exclusive advantage of the private sector, with the possibility for local communities to be promoted as efficiently as the goods and services of a company.

Analyzing several papers wrote by urban marketing specialists, one can see that there are several explanations underlying its development. Once the authorities have shown interest in starting up development projects to support and revive the declining economy, there is a marked increase in practical marketing rather than in theory (Van Den Berg, 2017; Kim, 2018). Other specialists (Cadenas et al., 2016; Lopez & Hernandez, 2017) argue that the expansion of the local market at national level in Europe, and even internationally, has led to the emergence of marketing techniques. Others believe that urban market has developed due to the mix of effects resulting from the reduction of the financial obligations for the development of the autonomy of the local administration. In addition, the feeling of dissatisfaction with the territorial planning of the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the inability of policies to cope with changes in the economic and political sphere, lead to the need to change these policies with other territorial planning tools (Kavaratzis, 2004). The interest in marketing can be seen in the 1990s, when St. Petersburg authorities wishing to promote the city, appealed to a press agent. These practices also existed in the cities of the United Kingdom, Italy, or Northern Europe. However, it cannot be said that these policies represent totally actions of urban marketing.

Due to the transition to a cultural society, local governments have rising responsibilities and cities have to develop financial independence, being pressed by central governments in this respect. In addition, it is very important for local authorities to engage effectively in activities that are not familiar to them like producing additional income for the development of the city (Corsico, 1994).

3. CONTEXT

There are some factors that could explain the lack of a clear marketing strategy for Bucharest. These are among the gaps that the Romanian capital has in all four fundamental dimensions of the city regarded as a product (Kotler et al., 1999): (1) a place regarded as a character: the spirit of the place, its fundamental values; (2) a place with quality public services; (3) a place for recreation and entertainment; (4) a place equipped with interconnected infrastructure.

However, there is a factor in which Bucharest can show some progress in building its brand, and this is the side of recreation and entertainment, whether and only if we refer to the Old City Centre and we do not consider the lack of parking and the untidy look of the streets (Popescu & Corboș, 2010; Pînzaru, 2012).

Bucharest is not in Index City Brands by Simon Anholt and Gfk Roper Public Affair & Media. The reasons for this absence are multiple: Bucharest is not perceived as an urban brand, there is no uniform and clearly defined image. The capital of Romania is part of the category of unjustified cities by its own citizens, its image being undermined by the lack of will and administrative initiative, the lack of involvement of civil society and the inability of the marketing activity to create a sense of pride and belonging. Bucharest offers a complex, fascinating story as historical and cultural evolution, but this story has not yet been transformed into a marketable product.

As regards Bucharest's position in The Saffron European City Brand Barometer (Hildreth, 2008), it gained the following score: in terms of urban brand strength it had a score of 61 points, ranked 36 out of 72, in terms of capital force had 44 points being ranked 42, and 73% brand usage, occupying the 47th position. Thus, the capital was on the middle of the chart, but remarkable was the under-usage of the urban brand due to the absence of an appropriate urban marketing activity.

The absence of Bucharest on the Global Cities List is explained by its poor performance. Incapability to promote was translated by the episodic role of the capital on the international scene and the lack of attractiveness for researchers and students. The only element that Bucharest could include on this list is the cultural field, in the conditions of an efficient improvement of the architectural, historical and cultural heritage, as well as the organization of events with international echo.

However, the capital of Romania hosted, in recent years, a series of campaigns that had a common message, a true appeal to the pride of being a resident of the capital. All these actions brought to light a common theme, the story of Bucharest, yesterday and today, regardless of the type of campaign and advertising:

- City promotion campaigns initiated by public cultural institutions and various NGOs, especially photo exhibitions organized in unconventional spaces.
- City promotion campaigns initiated and announced by commercial brands that sponsored the rehabilitation of urban development monuments and projects in Bucharest.

4. ACTIONS INITIATED FOR THE PROMOTION OF BUCHAREST

4.1 Actions undertaken by local authorities

In addition to the numerous promotional campaigns of Bucharest, initiated by actors from the private sector, local authorities have taken steps to do this, working with NGOs and private businesses.

Thus, an important step comes from the conclusion of a contract by the National Authority for Tourism to buy co-production services alongside the National Geographic Channel, in order to achieve some short films and a film promoting the capital of Romania. The making of these films is part of a project initiated by the TV station in order to promote so-called "smart cities". The main tourist attractions of Bucharest will be presented and will be promoted as an ideal destination for city-break. In addition, the city's history, artistic and cultural life, and the education sector will be presented, and will be broadcast in several countries including Germany, France, Italy, the UK and Russia.

In addition, another television from the US, TV Rick Steve's Europe, was interested in making a documentary film about Romania, to present North American citizens with tourist attractions and to encourage them to visit the country. To support this move, the Bucharest City Hall provided several locations in Bucharest to make the film. In addition to broadcasting through public television, the documentary will be available on YouTube (PMB, 2016b).

Between 2014 and 2015, the project "The Cultural Strategy of the City of Bucharest 2016-2026" was initiated in the context of the capital that has applied for the title of European Capital of Culture. Thus, the vision about the role of culture in city life should correspond to the directions of the project "Bucharest - European Cultural Capital 2021". The project was carried out by the ARCUB - Cultural Projects Centre of the City Hall of Bucharest together with a team of independent counsellors under the coordination of the Association of the Postmodernism Museum, the ORICUM Association and the Association of Cultural Operators. Besides these, several teams of sociologists and cultural and creative experts have contributed to the first long-term strategy for culture. Through this project, the authorities aim to promote culture as an engine for economic development and social cohesion. The strategy involved analyzing the local cultural environment and proposing action directions for a period of 10 years (Radu, 2016).

Another initiative to promote the capital was initiated by the Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with CREART City Hall in March 2018, being represented by the Light Bridge Romania - China event. This event corresponded to the Lampion Festival in China, and consisted in running of video projections on the building of the *I.L. Caragiale* National Theater in Bucharest, with a theme corresponding to the EU Tourism Year 2018, by teams of artists who received awards following the organization of the *iMapp* Festival in Bucharest. The event aimed to promote the capital, along with other cities in Europe.

Also, in 2017 the municipality of the capital decided that the city of Bucharest should adopt a new logo and a new image, starting a competition for this purpose.

Following this event, the Bucharest City Hall decided to nominate the second-place proposal in the competition for the development of the new logo. It is a graphic representation of the city's multiple values, namely four representative buildings, suggesting the city's road and its progress: the CEC Palace, the Athenaeum, the Arc de Triomphe and the National Arena football stadium (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Bucharest logo
Source: Neagu, 2017

In addition to these efforts, the City Hall of Bucharest financed the creation of an interactive site - #SEEBUCHAREST - made by Rusu and Borçun (2017) marketing and branding specialists. The site contains information about the city-hosted events, as well as information about the main tourist attractions, transport, accommodation, restaurants and information on the history, architecture and personalities of the city of Bucharest.

4.2 Actions undertaken by the private sector

Probably the most important private promotion campaign was in fact a commercial one, the *Timișoreana* brand campaign - "Rediscovering Bucharest as it once was" in 2009. This campaign was the most visible at that time and made it possible to install of vintage watches in the historic

areas of the city, as well as the organization of outdoor exhibitions with content related to the history of the traditional places of the 19th century and Romania of the 20th century.

Another important campaign, with impact on residents and foreign tourists, is "Bucharest not Budapest". This campaign initiated by the ROM brand aims to eliminate the many confusions made between the city of Bucharest and the capital of Hungary, Budapest. The campaign has been a resounding success, capturing other companies such as Howard Johnson and Guide Bucharest. With the help of these, the confusion between the two cities was eliminated and the tourists attracted by this approach benefited from a welcome package in Bucharest, as well as free city tours.

Also, another private initiative to promote Bucharest came from CNN Travel. They described nine reasons why tourists need to visit the city, calling it a forgotten jewel:

- ✓ The old rejuvenated city - Bucharest is the place where traders met with travelers and the place that survived the dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. After the fall of communism, the old city buildings were slowly restored. Cobbled and deserted streets have been transformed into Europe's liveliest night spots, and libraries, theatres, restaurants and cafes add even more charm.
- ✓ The legend of Count Dracula - The old Royal Court was the residence of the Wallachian princes, including Vlad Țepeș, ruler who inspired Bram Stoker to write the legend of Dracula. This is where the successors of the Romanian princes were crowned. The Court's old museum exhibits ceramic objects and artefacts found among its ruins.
- ✓ Parliament Palace - this colossal building has gained many titles over the years, for example the world's toughest building, the largest building in Europe and the world's second largest administrative building, after the Pentagon.
- ✓ Concerts in the Romanian Athenaeum - means enjoying George Enescu's Romanian Philharmonic in one of the most impressive buildings of the 19th century. It is like an ancient Greek temple, with a 41-meter-long dome, marble balconies and wide stairs. In the concert hall, a 70-meter-long fresco, presenting the history of Romania, will compete with the performance of the Philharmonic.
- ✓ *Stavropoleos* Church - built in the eighteenth century by the Greek monk Ioanikie Stratonikeas, the church is small, quiet and beautiful.
- ✓ The pieces of "Little Paris" - Bucharest was once known as Little Paris, a capital that flourished under King Carol, who brought French architects to design the city's buildings (*Cantacuzino* Palace, Arc de Triomphe). Much of this work has been disfigured by the architecture of socialist style.
- ✓ Open-air museums - the authentic Romanian village with peasant houses, barns, churches and mills can be visited at the National Village Museum Dimitrie Gusti.
- ✓ Parks - the city has many parks, including the oldest, designed in the middle of the nineteenth century, the Cismigiu Garden. Next to it is the 400-hectare Herăstrău Park with an open-air theatre, as well as public recreation areas and the Carol Park with an open-air theatre in Roman style - the Roman Arenas.
- ✓ The most beautiful bookstore in Europe - located in a beautifully restored 19th-century building, *Cărturești Carusel* is considered one of the most amazing bookstores in the world.

The most important project to promote the capital of Romania in 2017 was Experience Bucharest, a project initiated by several young volunteers with experience in tourism. The aim of the project was to promote Bucharest in Eastern Europe through influential people in the field of tourism. Many journalists, bloggers, Instagram and Twitter users, vloggers, and people followed on social media platforms by over 10 million people around the world attended the conference. The initiators of this project aimed to promote the city through the so-called halo technique. Gradually, companies such as Uber, Wizz Air, Aqua Carpatica, Toyota and Garanti Bank joined the campaign. Among the events that took place within the project were a conference to identify best practices of marketing, city tours and social events, stretched over a week.

5. EFFECTS OF PROMOTION CAMPAIGNS

Table 1 compares the number of arrivals and overnights in Bucharest in January 2017 with the number of arrivals and overnights in January 2018, by category of tourists. We can note that both the number of Romanian tourists and that of foreign tourists followed an ascending trend according to the comparison of the number of tourists in January of 2017 and 2018 respectively.

Table 1. Arrivals and overnights by category of tourists

Category of tourists	Arrivals		Overnights			
	January	January	January	January	January	January
	2017 -thousands-	2018 -thousands-	2018 Compared to January 2017 -%-	2017 - thousands-	2018 - thousands-	2018 Compared to January 2017 -%-
Romanian tourists	523,5	573,1	9,5	975,1	1062,8	9,0
Foreign tourists out of which:	135,5	149,0	10,0	267,1	298,8	11,9
Europe	103,0	109,9	6,7	205,7	222,1	8,0
European Union	80,3	88,0	9,6	150,5	168,1	11,7
Asia	19,5	23,5	20,5	39,3	48,8	24,2
North America	7,5	8,0	6,7	12,4	13,7	10,5
South America	1,2	1,4	16,7	1,9	2,4	26,3
Africa	1,2	1,2	0	2,2	2,2	0
Total	659,0	722,1	9,6	1242,2	1361,6	9,6

Source: author, adapted from INS (2018)

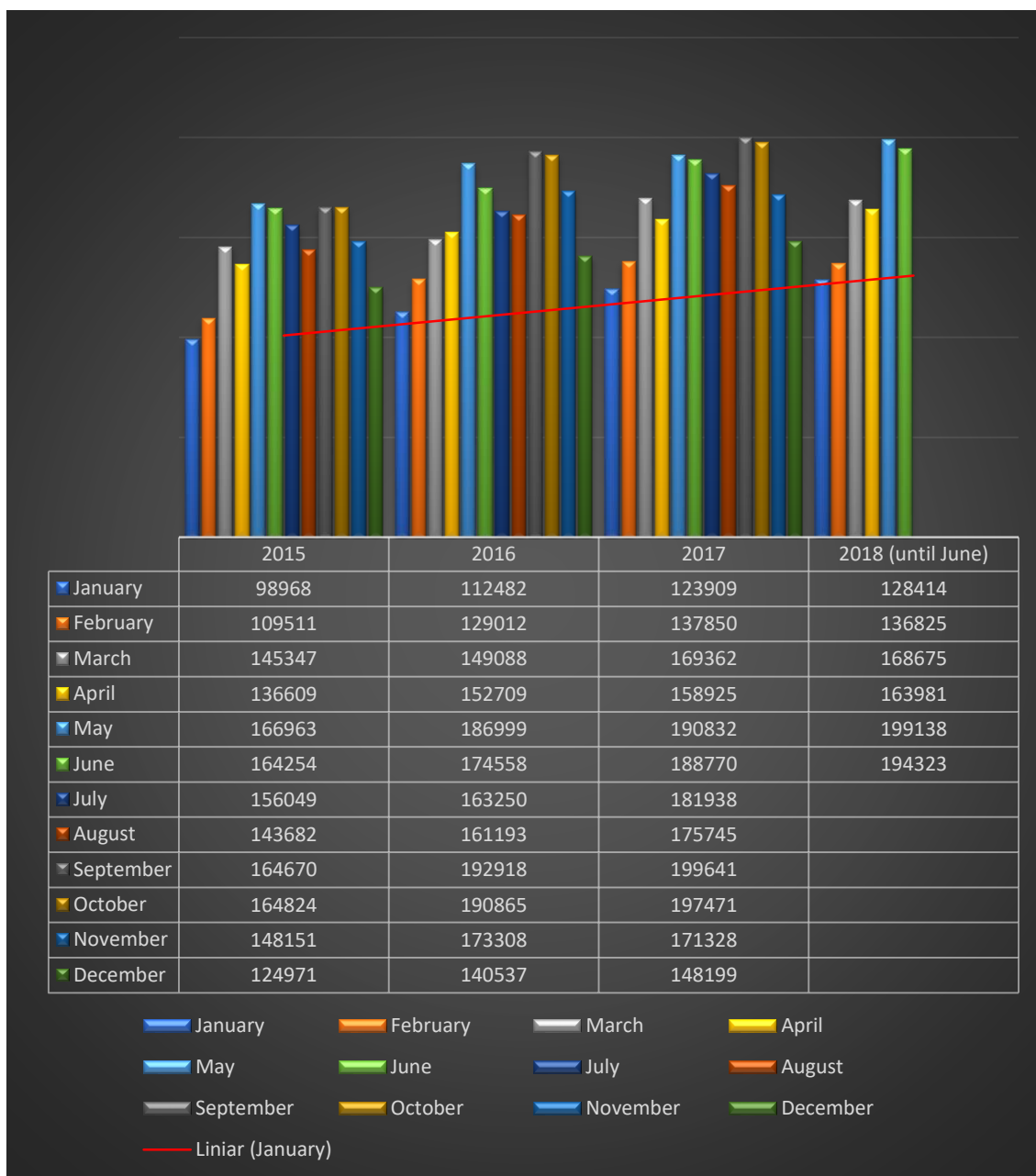


Figure 2. Evolution of the number of tourists 2015-2018 (June)
 Source: author own computation based on INS (2018)

As we can see from Figure 2, Bucharest benefits from an upward trend in the number of tourists it receives each year. We can assume that this is largely due to promotional campaigns initiated by both local and private authorities. For the year 2018 data was only available for the first six months of the year, so to highlight the upward trend of the number of tourists we can see the trendline on the graph, which indicates the linear evolution for January of each analyzed year. Tourism in the capital has grown at a rapid pace since 2009, the number of tourists in 2017 rising by 6.07% compared to 2016 and by 18.6% as compared to 2015, the preferred months being May, June, September and October.

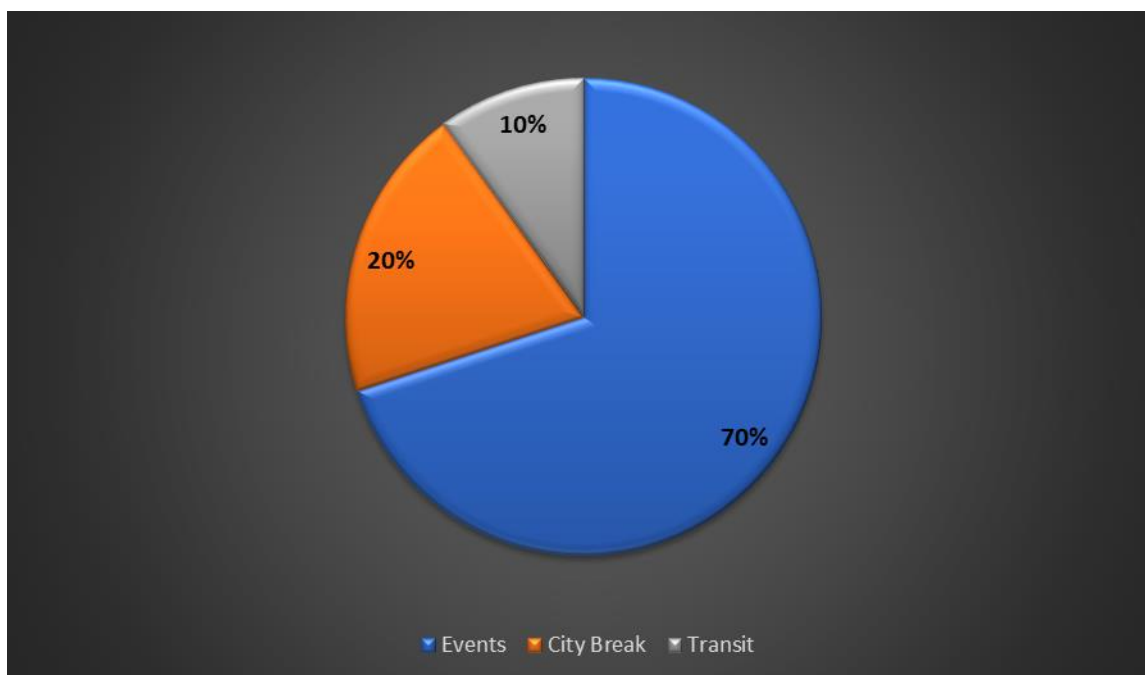


Figure 3. Reasons for visiting Bucharest

Source: author, adapted from INS (2018)

As can be seen in Figure 3, most tourists come to the capital to participate in various types of events (sports, cultural, music festivals). Only 20% visit Bucharest through city-breaks and 10% transit through the capital, as part of a country circuit.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Of course, in order to sell the capital of Romania, it needs to be presented in an appropriate manner, in a beautiful packaging, to attract as many as possible, whether tourists or investors, residents or potential residents. It is also clear that efforts are being made in this regard both by local authorities and by the private sector. The actions taken by the two actors mentioned above reflect the construction of a particular urban image addressed both at European and global level. Of course, this urban image must create positive perceptions, this being its main objective, but decision-makers have to consider the fact that the city also creates a series of negative perceptions. Thus, in the process of shaping the marketing strategy, both the positive and the negative ones can be used - the first ones representing the foundation, the basis on which they can build, and the others can be used as tools for a proactive strategic thinking, contributing to the shaping of an offensive attitude.

Given that there is no universally valid way to build a successful urban strategy and brand, Bucharest must first make a self-evaluation to identify and exploit its strengths in order to diminish its weaknesses, to deal with threats and to take advantage of the opportunities they identify. In order to begin the approach of a marketing strategy, the city must ensure that it has correctly identified the spirit of the place, its core values, if it is a place with quality public services, if it has enough places for recreation and entertainment and if it is a city equipped with interconnected infrastructure. In other words, the product, in our case, the capital city of Bucharest, should be good from the prospects listed above to support a positive image attributed to the city and for it to be properly promoted in order to obtain the expected economic results. Thus, the process can be considered complete when the impact of marketing strategy, of a sustainable urban image of the city will translate into meeting the needs of tourists, residents and the business environment.

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