

## **THE CONSTRUCTION AND PERCEPTION OF CULTURAL TOURISM IMAGES AND BRANDS. A CASE STUDY FROM TOLEDO (SPAIN)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Cities are now up for sale. They are a commercial product, each with its own distinct brand and image. Urban centres have been transformed into tourism destinations that compete with each other. It is essential for cultural tourism cities to construct a prestigious brand and a public image that shows them in the best possible light. These are the elements that attract visitors. Tourists choose the places to visit mainly on the basis of their perception of each destination's image and brand. However, these representations of cultural tourism are ultimately stereotypical images, based on a partial and subjective selection of history and heritage. In this article, we study the process of construction of cultural tourism images in one of the Iberian Peninsula's main destinations – Toledo. The article also analyses visitors' perception of this public image and its influence when it comes to choosing a destination. The methodology used, after a literature review and compilation of information on Toledo's promotional image, is based on empirical analysis of surveys. The article demonstrates that Toledo has a stereotypical image and brand, based on a partial view of its history and the picturesque dimension of its heritage. It is this representation that attracts the vast majority of visitors to the city. On the other hand, the real city is disappearing, in terms of both the promotional image of Toledo, and in the perceptions of tourists and visitors. The stereotypical image and commercialisation of the city as a cultural tourism destination is now the prevailing force.

### **KEYWORDS**

Cultural tourism; geography of tourism; heritage; tourism brand; Toledo; tourist image

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## **A CONSTRUÇÃO E PERCEÇÃO DAS IMAGENS E MARCAS DO TURISMO CULTURAL. UM ESTUDO DE CASO DE TOLEDO (ESPANHA)**

### **RESUMO**

As cidades hoje estão à venda. Elas são um produto comercial com uma marca e uma imagem. Os centros urbanos são destinos turísticos que competem entre si. Nesta matéria, ter uma imagem pública tão favorável quanto possível e ter uma marca de prestígio são questões essenciais para as cidades turísticas culturais. Elas atraem visitantes. Estes escolhem os seus lugares de viagem principalmente através da percepção que têm da imagem e da marca dos destinos. No entanto, essas representações do turismo cultural são estereótipos baseados numa seleção parcial e interessada da história e do património. Neste artigo, estudamos o processo de construção de imagens turísticas culturais num dos principais destinos da Península Ibérica, Toledo. Da mesma forma, analisa-se a percepção dos visitantes dessa imagem pública e a sua influência na escolha de destino. A metodologia utilizada, após uma revisão da literatura e uma compilação de informações sobre a imagem promocional de Toledo, baseia-se num trabalho empírico através de inquéritos. Descobrir-se-á que Toledo tem uma imagem estereotipada e uma marca baseadas numa visão parcial da sua história e no carácter pitoresco do seu património. É essa representação que atrai a grande maioria dos seus visitantes. Em contrapartida, a cidade real

desaparece, tanto da imagem promocional de Toledo, como da perceção dos seus turistas e visitantes. Impõem-se o estereótipo e a comercialização da cidade como destino turístico cultural.

#### PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Geografia do turismo; imagem turística; marca de turismo; património; Toledo; turismo cultural

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“The image has a more substantive effect than reality – it is “hyper-real””  
(Baudrillard, 1983)

“Memory is redundant: it repeats signs so that the city can begin to exist”  
(Calvino, 1998)

The image precedes the city and also mediates the relationship between the city and local residents and visitors (Amendola, 2000, p. 167). Images shape identities of tourists, hosts, and tourism destinations and attractions. An image can be understood as the sum of a person’s beliefs, ideas and impressions of a destination (Crompton, 1979). The image has been widely recognised as an important motivational and decision-making factor for holiday travel (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Images represent a fundamental element of the tourist decision-making process (Beerli & Martin, 2004). For this reason, cities provide an extremely simplified presentation of the spaces they promote, in order to attract tourism flows (Benach, 2016, p. 89).

Culture has been promoted as a tourist attraction for increasingly economic reasons, due to revenues generated by cultural tourists when visiting destinations. Cultural tourism, as well as other forms of tourism, generates economic growth, investment and employment, and is therefore a major market activity which can generate economic benefits for a destination (Gratton 2005, p. 65). This has led to commodification of culture, heritage and urban zones. Benach (2016) describes how cities are sold in the tourist market and how a superficial sense of place is created. Román (2005, p. 47) suggests that the system of spectacle-based tourism has transformed cities into caricatures of themselves. Only the shining, monumental aspects are shown, giving rise to a simulated city. Grey areas are avoided or hidden, which means they cannot be understood. History and cultural heritage are factors that determine the image of places (Jansen-Verbeke & Lievois, 1999, p. 88). They give rise to stereotypical images that are used by cultural tourism destinations. Urry (1990) explained the process by which the tourist needs to find the stereotypical views that tourism offers to him. Images *culturalise* tourism and tourist experiences, while *touristifying* the cultures of the host destinations.

Numerous studies have analysed the images of tourism destinations - for example of states, regions and cities (Beerli & Martín, 2004; Gartner, 1989; Jenkins, 1999). Pike (2002) reviews the literature on the image of tourism destinations; Gertner (2011) on

the marketing of destinations and Almeyda and George (2017) on the construction of tourism destination brands. These works are a sub-field within the general research into images in the field of the Social Sciences (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, p. 4). The main objective of this article is to study cultural tourism via the discourses and images produced in this respect. In previous works, the author analysed the role and relevance of the image in tourism (Escudero, 2005) and the process of creating a public promotional and media image (Escudero, 2013). In the latter research project, which referred to the case of Santiago de Compostela, analysed the creation of a stereotypical image based on cultural and patrimonial values, which shows the city in the best possible light and ignores most of the city's functions and realities. In previous studies, similar conclusions have been drawn about Valencia, where a partial, selective and biased public image has been created, focused on the city centre (Boira & Crespo, 1989); and about Girona, where the promotional image is a premeditated and specific selection of images of the city (Galí, 2005, p. 23); and about Seville, where analysis has been made of how the image is constructed on the basis of its historical buildings (López, 2003) and finally Barcelona, where the construction of an imaginary universe capable of capturing the visitor's attention hides the social reality experienced by the majority of the local population (Cócola Gant, 2011). Muñoz (2010, p. 50) talks about "landscapes reduced to only one of the layers of information that configure them, the most immediate and superficial: the image". González Bracco (2017, p. 745) affirms that the perception proposed by the tourist image is picturesque, and necessarily fragmentary, deceptive and staged.

The main question posed in this article is the following: does the cultural tourism image, which is promotional and stereotypical, determine visitors' decision to choose the destination? On this basis, the article analyses the construction of images and brands of cultural tourism destinations and their perception by tourists and the way that these perceptions influence the motivation to choose specific destinations.

To conduct this research on an empirical basis, it was necessary to choose a specific field of study. Qualitative case-study analysis is a research approach that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within a specific context, using a variety of data sources (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This method makes it possible to answer the research questions presented (Piva, Cerruti, Prats & Raj, 2017, p. 100). The case study chosen for this purpose is Toledo, a medium-sized city with 83.741 inhabitants in 2017 (National Statistics Institute, 2018) and an important cultural tourism destination in the Iberian Peninsula. The structure of the article responds to the research question and its associated objectives. After this introduction, a theoretical framework has been developed to enable a better understanding of the construction process of the images and brands of cultural tourism and their respective importance. The results of the research process are then disclosed, with a section dedicated to Toledo's public image and promotional image and a second section with empirical analysis of visitors' perceptions. The final section is dedicated to the conclusion, followed by the bibliographical references.

This article contributes to the cultural tourism literature focused on the analysis of the images and brands of tourism destinations.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the mid-twentieth century, Boulding (1956) explained the importance of the image for any type of behaviour, i.e. related to the individual's subjective knowledge about the world and about himself. In a market context, the image of a product plays a fundamental role in the buying process. Perceptions, rather than reality, will determine whether or not consumers make a purchase decision (Gallarza, Gil & Calderón, 2002). Specifically, images determine the decision to visit a tourism destination (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). Today, there are more and more locations developed for tourism purpose, and the offer is constantly expanding. Tourists have to choose between a growing variety of destinations. Sellers face a complex, global and competitive market, in which influencing consumer decision-making is absolutely critical. A tourism destination can be favourably differentiated in this competition, if it is positively positioned in the minds of potential tourists (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, p. 2). One of the keys to achieving such positive differentiation is to appeal to a favourable and distinctive perception, or image, of the tourism destination (Calantone, Di Benetto, Hakam & Bojanic, 1989). Thus, a positive image of the destination will provide an important competitive advantage (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). The image of the destination influences tourists' behaviour (Hunt, 1975). The best images are those that are considered in the decision-making process for choosing a destination (Woodside & Lysonski, 1989). Images play a key role in the field of tourism (Chon, 1990). They constitute a key factor for tourism development (Hunt, 1975), since they determine the choice of destinations (Um & Crompton, 1990). For this reason, images have been considered to be important for decades, by bodies such as the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, 1980).

Formation of an image is the result of a mental construction based on a limited number of impressions chosen from multiple information sources (Reynolds, 1965). In the case of images of tourism destinations, these various references derive from different sources, including tourism promotion, mass media and the opinion of others, such as relatives, friends, travel agents, etc. A recent study by the European Commission (2016) showed that a key source of information for European tourists used to decide between destinations came from the media – both from conventional media (newspapers, magazines, radio, television and travel guides), used by 33% of tourists and from the internet (corporate sites and social networks), used by 63%. European tourists also recognised the importance of recommendations made by friends and family, with 51% taking them into account. However, the representations that can be received in this direct social relationship with friends and family are mediated, in turn, by the public and promotional image that these travel advisers have previously perceived. Subsequently, this image can be modified by the experience acquired by the tourist after his trip (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, p. 3). However, the visitor prefers the thrill of finding what he already expects to see, and generate his own experience (Cócola Gant, 2011). The perception of the tourist trip and the behaviour of the tourist in the destination are therefore deeply mediated by the stereotypical image that he or she already shares when departing for the destination.

In summary, there are three categories of perceived images: the *a priori* perception (the mental construction that an individual makes of a place without having any physical connection with it), the *in situ* perception (the subject's observation between what he imagined and reality) and the *a posteriori* perception (the idealised image that he retrieves from the places) (Galí & Donaire, 2006, p. 124). In the first phase of the process of choosing a new tourism destination, indirect sources are the main sources of information. Thus, the promotional and media image determines the perception of tourism potential (Escudero, 2005). For this reason, the construction of tourist images is artificially carried out, using principles and practices derived from marketing (Asworth & Goodall, 1980, Avraham & Ketter, 2008), both for their initial formation (Gartner, 1993) and for their subsequent possible modifications or improvements (Chon, 1991). This research focuses on city marketing (Elizagarate, 2003; Paddison, 1993). DMOs<sup>1</sup>, the institutions responsible for tourism promotion, are the main architects of the construction of tourist images, using marketing techniques, and they are responsible for increasing the competitiveness of the destination (Blain, Levy & Ritchie, 2005; Pike & Page, 2014). In these institutions, political issues have been superseded by the need to commercialise cities (Cócola Gant, 2011).

The image constructed by DMOs via the media and via tourism promotion creates a stereotypical image, a repeated and partial representation of the actual space (Escudero, 2013). Each individual has a unique mental image (Downs & Stea, 1977) of the destination, but there is also a common public mental image of that destination, or a stereotypical image (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, p. 7). In these public images, the attributes vary according to the destinations and types of tourism activity, but the most favourable representation is always sought, in order to persuade the visitor to travel to the corresponding destination. They create a holistic impression, constituted by tangible functional characteristics and other characteristics of a psychological nature with more intangible aspects (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, p. 8). However, it is essential to highlight a single functional aspect as the principal component of the image of a destination (Pearce, 1988).

In the case of cultural tourism and in the places that participate in this modality, culture, history and heritage constitute the raw material to obtain this excellent functionality and to make a stereotypical image sufficiently competitive in order to ensure that people choose the corresponding destination. In the field of tourism, history must be represented via images and, therefore, historical prestige is concretised via monuments (Cócola Gant, 2011). Cultural tourism creates highly stereotypical images of heritage, as revealed in the case study of Santiago de Compostela (Escudero, 2013). Culture is used as an instrument for the *spectacularisation* of the urban image (Fessler & Berenstein, 2006). In fact, culture is necessarily reduced to the lowest common denominator (Fishman, 2004, p. 44). Culture is used as a strategy of consumption, production and image creation (Fessler & Berenstein, 2006). In cultural tourism destinations, a standard

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<sup>1</sup> DMO is an English acronym for Destination Marketing Organization (Sheehan, Vargas-Sánchez, Presenza & Abbate, 2016)

representation of an attractive historical city is strongly promoted via the media (Jansen-Verbeke & Lievois, 1999, p. 92). Stereotypical views of a city of culture are built in these urban sites (Evans, 2006). They are images of cultural tourism.

Moreover, there is now a globalisation of heritage, based on a superficial representation of history (Walsh, 1991). An idealised, sanitised past is presented, in a universal manner. There is a common tendency to highlight certain parts of the past that emphasise positive events and people and exclude elements that are unpleasant and socially unacceptable (Timothy & Boyd, 2003, p. 244). In general, only the “noble past” is portrayed, at the expense of real history (Hardy, 1988). Not all aspects of the past may be documented, interpreted, and marketed to heritage consumers (Timothy, 2011, p. 127). The complexity and richness of urban history are reduced to simple, recognisable and marketable features (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 1990). History is simplified, stereotypical and launched on the market as a suggestive and easily consumed product (Cócola Gant, 2011).

On the other hand, tourism destinations resort to brand building using the same standard marketing techniques applied in the vast majority of consumer products (Gnoth, 1998). This is achieved by countries, regions and cities (Kotler, Heider & Rein, 1993), with a high degree of complexity (Pike, 2005). A destination brand is a name, symbol, logo, word or graphic marker, that identifies and differentiates it from others. It also conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is exclusively associated with the brand’s designation. It also consolidates and reinforces the collection of pleasant memories from the experience of the destination (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1998). Among the main values that a city brand can harbour is culture, as demonstrated by Cócola Gant (2011) for the city of Barcelona, or González and Martínez (2013) for Cuenca.

The image of a destination is integrated within that of the brand and constitutes a unique and final perception (Qu, Kim & Im, 2011). There is a confusion between the brand and the image (Tasci & Kozak, 2016). Tourists have a perception or image of the brand in their memory (Almeyda & George, 2017, p. 11). The brand acts as a promotional tool used by countries, regions and cities (Zeybeck & Gül, 2016, p. 26). Brands are relevant when it comes to choosing a destination to which they confer a specific identity (Tasci & Kozak, 2006). For this reason, territories develop specific branding strategies to improve their reputation (Morgan, Pritchard & Pride, 2011), differentiate themselves in the market (Blain et al., 2005; Moilinen & Rainisto, 2009) and become more competitive (Anholt, 2007). The destination brand serves to create an image that positively influences the consumer’s travel choices (Blain et al., 2005, p. 337).

In this manner, city names become brands, represented by logos (Arnaud, 2016, p. 23). Urban centres strive to achieve a “label” and an image that differentiates them and can satisfy tourists (Evans, 2006). We are now faced with the construction of city branding, which is actually part of city marketing strategies for the creation of urban images (Patteeuw, 2002). Marketing and branding have become not only common but essential activities for urban centres (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005). As a result, some cities become brands in their own right, acquisition objects to which people travel, offering experiences or monuments as urban consumer icons (Muñiz & Cervantes, 2010, 142).

Heritage thus becomes a brand and a promotional emblem of cultural tourism (Timothy, 2011, p. 275).

In fact, the commercialisation of nostalgia for tradition (Alsayyad, 2001), for the past (Rowan & Baram, 2004), for the value of antiquity (Cócola Gant, 2011), for authenticity (Lovell & Bull, 2017) and for education and entertainment through the use of cultural and heritage resources, has been used to activate tourism as a stimulus to the urban economy and an added value for urban life. Cities are thereby transformed into a product (Ward, 1998), into a commodity-place, into spaces of pleasure and consumables (Diaz, 2016, p. 217). Cócola (2011) states that urban nuclei are a commodity, just like all other tangible things or non-tangible things. They are cities built for their visitors (Esinger, 2000). Heritage resources are transformed into tourism products (Jansen-Verbeke & Lievois, 1999, p. 82). Culture is exploited by those whom Zukin (1991) calls new producers. This corresponds to the current spectacle-based marketing of cities (Fessler & Berenstein, 2006). In this context, cultural heritage is a vital form of capital because it can provide a flow of products and may generate beneficial resources (Throsby, 2011). With heritage assets, business is conducted via the marketing practices of the tourism industry (Harvey, 2013, p. 140). The consequence is that historical centres are profoundly transformed into theme parks, made available to mass tourism, while renouncing their traditional social and functional complexity (Troitiño Vinuesa & Troitiño Torralba, 2010, p. 103).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The present research project adopts the model of a single explanatory case study (Yin, 2003). This article is based first and foremost on a review of the scientific literature on the subject. After this first and important step, multiple information has been collected on the tourist promotional image of Toledo, again using prior bibliographical references, or analysis of the contents of promotional brochures. However, the main empirical methodology was associated to analysis of the perceptions of the images of the destination shared by visitors to Toledo and research into whether these images influenced their travel decision. For this purpose, it was decided to conduct a survey.

The study of the image of tourism destinations was conducted using structured and unstructured survey methodologies. In the first case, content analysis and various classification and categorisation techniques were used to determine the dimensions of the image. By contrast, unstructured survey methodologies are more conducive to measuring the holistic components of the product's image and to capture unique characteristics (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, p. 9). They are an alternative mode of measurement used in research into images. They use descriptions obtained freely to measure the image (Boivin, 1986). For this article, it was decided to carry out empirical research based on questionnaires using an unstructured survey methodology. Under this approach, the attributes of the image are not specified, and respondents are allowed to report their impressions more freely. Given the outlined research questions and objectives, this was considered to be the most appropriate method.

Like Reilly (1990), open-ended questions were used in order to enable respondents to describe the images in their own words and to gain a holistic impression thereof. By allowing the respondent to give open-ended answers, their responses are not conditioned, and one can more objectively evaluate whether the image has been influenced by the stereotypical image of Toledo. Using this methodology, a more global image and its unique components are achieved. This is not possible with the use of conditioned responses, associated with commonly-used techniques, such as the semantic differential, or the Likert scale (the method used, for example, by Park & Petrick, 2006). Researchers who measure the images of tourism destinations tend to favour structured survey methodologies (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, p. 9) but in this research it was decided to use an open questionnaire, that best fits the objectives pursued in this study.

<b>VISITORS</b>	
Population universe	±2.000.000
Sample size (n)	510
Confidence level	95%
Sample error (where p=q=50%)	±4,31%
Technique	Face-to-face personal questionnaire
Field work	November 2014 and November 2017
Computer programme	Microsoft Excel 2016

Table 1: Technical summary of the study

The research was conducted in two stages, with a three-year interval between them, in November 2014 and November 2017. The main research question was to identify the reasons that led the respondents to choose Toledo as destination. Basic personal data, age, sex, as well as the time when the city was visited were also obtained, in order to distinguish between overnight tourists and day-trippers. In this article, we did not use the results of other questions asked in the questionnaire. A total of 510 questionnaires were applied in the streets of the historic centre, the main zone in the city of visited by tourists (Troitiño Vinuesa & Troitiño Torralba, 2009), in a random manner and using a face-to-face personal questionnaire. Analysis of the responses was conducted using calculation of percentage responses and qualitative analysis of the contents.

## **RESULTS**

### **THE PUBLIC CULTURAL TOURISM IMAGE OF TOLEDO**

Toledo is a city whose historical centre and cultural landscapes were declared as a World Heritage site by Unesco in 1986. It is estimated that the city receives two million visitors a year (Troitiño Vinuesa, García & Street, 2003). The city's cultural, historical and heritage values are its main attractions, which make it an important destination for cultural tourism in the Iberian Peninsula (Escudero, in press) and, of course, the main

destination of the region (Esteban Talaya et al., 2011). The city's public image has been built on the basis of these heritage resources. The Toledo DMOs has made major efforts to consolidate a strong and positive image for the destination. This has been achieved, primarily by the Municipal Tourist Board ("Patronato Municipal de Turismo")<sup>2</sup>, whose main focus is to promote tourism to the city and strengthen the Toledo brand. This is achieved, for example, via its presence in major tourism fairs, such as FITUR (International Tourism Fair) in Madrid or ITB (International Tourism Börse) in Berlin, or through maintenance of its digital portal and social networks (Toledo Municipal Tourism Board, 2018).

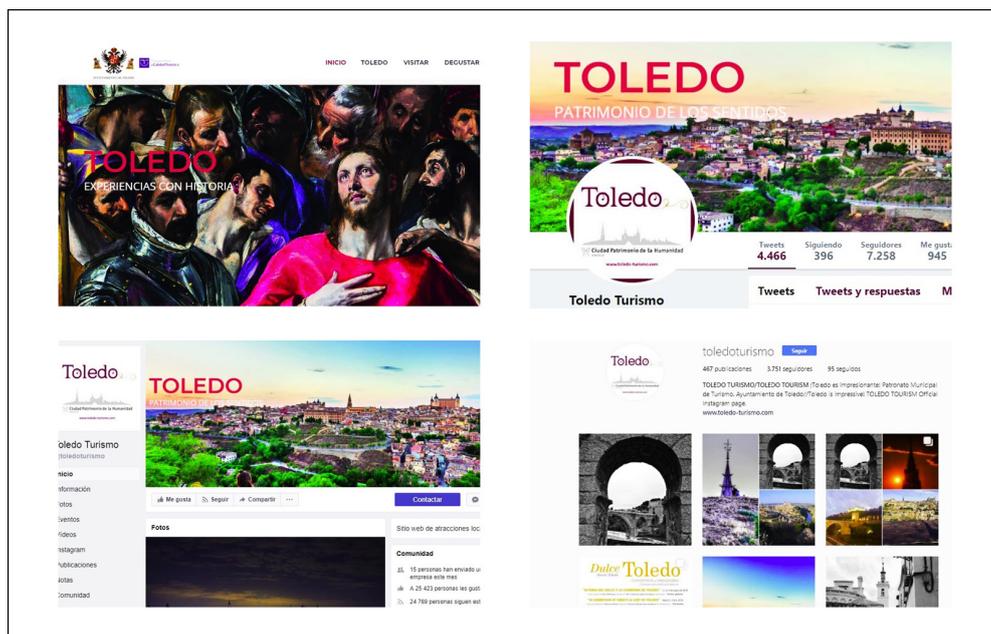


Figure 1: Promotion of Toledo in the internet site of Toledo's Municipal Tourist Board: encompasses its website, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram

Source: <https://turismo.toledo.es/>

In Toledo, a stereotypical image has been created in order to transform the city into a unique cultural destination (see Figure 1). It is a public representation that shows the city in the best possible light, even though it is far removed from other realities and urban functions that are not related to heritage and culture. The city's cultural landscapes, monuments, history and art constitute the elements of the promotional image of Toledo. At the same time, a brand is created using slogans, such as "Toledo, experiences with history" or "Toledo, heritage of the senses", using the same principles based on the cultural and heritage values of the city's historical centre. This is a limited and stereotypical public image, as used in other important cultural tourism destinations in the Iberian

<sup>2</sup> A public law entity created in 1990 by Toledo Municipal Council, with legal personality and its own assets, independent of the municipality, which manages the organisation and administration of municipal activity in the field of tourism, via a decentralised system even though this does not imply separation from the Municipal Council. In fact, the president of the Tourism Board is the mayor.

Peninsula, such as Santiago de Compostela (Escudero, 2013). In addition, as in the case of the Santiago de Compostela, visitors to the city of Toledo acquire this public image of the destination through promotion and the media (Castilla-La Mancha Tourist Research System, 2009).

For the construction of its urban image, of a promotional and tourist nature, Toledo has selected its historical and cultural heritage. In this manner, it has resorted to exaltation of a glorious, selectively evoked past through which it has defined its definitive and ideal image to face the future (Martínez, 2007, p. 121). Thus, the theme of tolerance and medieval coexistence between Christians, Jews and Muslims (García Fitz, 2002) stands out in the city, via one of the best-known facets of Toledo, as the “city of three cultures”. The identity of Toledo based on an idea of idyllic tolerance and harmonious coexistence in the Middle Ages, via the brand “the city of three cultures” is also repeated in academic articles (Rico, Parra & Beltrán, 2018, p. 149) in current affairs magazines, such as National Geographic (González Ferriz, 2012), in cultural tourism products<sup>3</sup>, internet blogs (Toledo medieval, la ciudad de las tres culturas, 2012), in documentaries and news reports about Toledo (Canal Documentales, 2016) and even the in the Internet’s main collaborative encyclopaedia<sup>4</sup>. With regard to the city’s actual past, however, it is misleading to think about a peaceful time, free from contradictions. For example, actual historical episodes include the expulsion of the Jews and establishment of the Inquisition, or the Communities War and the problems of coexistence that affected converted Jews and their descendants, which reveals that Toledo’s true past includes a violent and shadowy history (Almarcha, Díez de Baldeón, Peris & Sanchez, 2011, p. 9).

This image of Toledo is based on an idealised past that, on the other hand, contrasts with the present period of dormancy. It has been disseminated throughout the world by many authors who have written works located in Toledo or who have referred to the city, since the era of Romanticism<sup>5</sup> until the present day. Travellers, writers, photographers, painters, historians, and journalists have all repeated and extensively referred to this image (Almarcha et al., 2011, p. 322). It is a representation based on an idealised vision of the past and a picturesque city (García Martínez, 2011). Toledo is shown as a sort of panopticon, a museum or archive of Spanish history and art, an idea already clearly expressed by several 19th century writers (García Álvarez, 2007, p. 198). Since the 19th century, Toledo was one of the preferred destinations of romantic travellers and the focus of an incipient form of tourism, that was intensified from the early decades of the 20th century (Soto & Perla, 2017). While in 1909 Toledo was only visited by a few thousand tourists, in 1913 the number had increased to 40,000 and tourism became an important factor in the city (Storm, 2013, p. 351). At that time, local figures such as the conservative councillor Manuel Cano Gutiérrez were already paying attention to the economic interest that tourism could assume and insisted that the city should emphasise its Jewish and Arab heritage and use this heritage to attract visitors (Storm, 2013, p. 373).

<sup>3</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.toledo3culturas.com/quienes-somos/>

<sup>4</sup> Information retrieved from <https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toledo>

<sup>5</sup> Literature contributed greatly to create the images of cultural tourism and those provided by Romanticism are among the most valuable (García Martínez, 2011, p. 437).

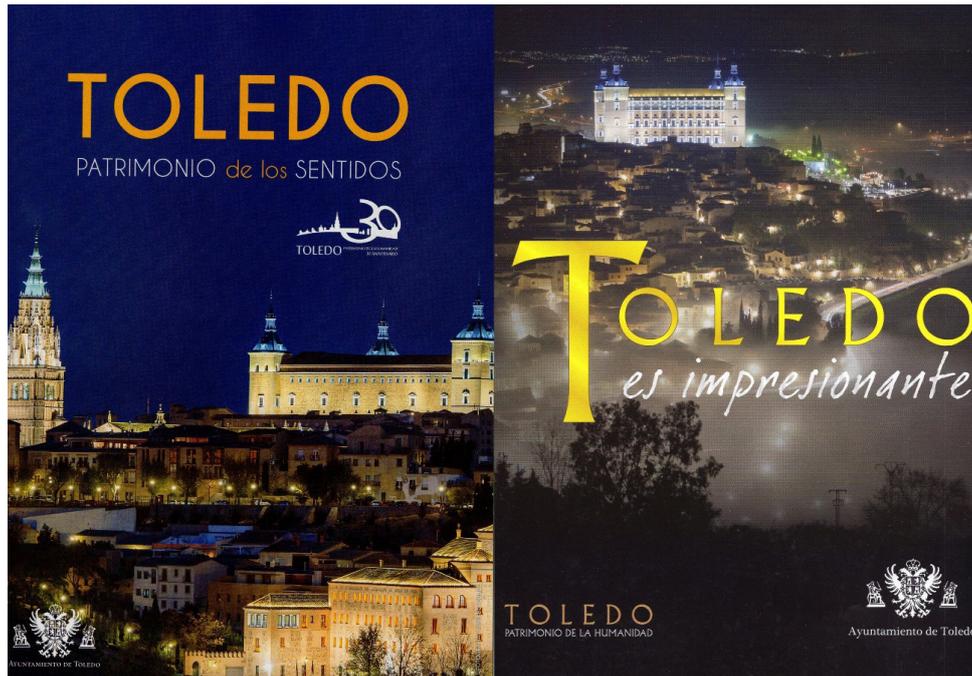


Figure 2: Promotional images of Toledo

Source: Toledo City Council

Today, romantic images of Toledo are used for the tourist market and, especially, for the segment dedicated to cultural consumption (García Martínez, 2011, p. 451). Toledo now has a public tourism image based on fragmented, selected and idealised representations of its heritage, rooted in its historical centre. It is an image of the city as a tourist and heritage destination, emphasising its monuments, festivities considered to be an international tourist product (Semana Santa [Holy Week] and Corpus Christi), its leading artistic and literary figures, heritage routes and curiosities about its history or legends (Rico, Parra & Beltrán, 2018, p. 157). This stereotypical image is based on an idealised and selective past and its heritage legacy is conveyed via landscapes formed by the ancient city of Toledo and its monuments. These are the photographs that are repeatedly used in the city's promotional image (see Figure 2).

This stereotypical image is further reinforced through the creation of a Toledo brand. For example, the different appeals and advertising slogans<sup>6</sup> that accompany the heritage and cultural images. This appeals to an affective image of the tourism destination, corresponding to the emotions that Toledo will generate in the tourist, by virtue of its cultural, historical and heritage resources.

It is a public image of Toledo that shows the city in the best possible light. A stereotypical image that determines not only visitors' travel decisions, but also their behaviour

<sup>6</sup> In a burst of creativity, a single promotional brochure of Toledo includes the following slogans that share the prefixes "in" or "im" in all the adjectives used: "Toledo is ... unforgettable (inesquecível)", "Toledo is ... inexhaustible", "Toledo is... unmissable (imprescindível)", "Toledo is ... incomparable", "Toledo is ... impeccable", "Toledo is ... unstoppable (imparável)", "Toledo is ... unequalled (inigualável)", "Toledo is ... tireless (infatigável)", "Toledo is ... incomparable", "Toledo is ... unconquerable (inconquistável)", "Toledo is ... unimaginable (inimaginável)" and "Toledo is ... impressive".

in the destination and their final evaluation. Thus, on a scale of 0 to 10, overnight tourists and day trippers to Toledo gave an 8.4 score in relation to the overall image of the city (SITdCLM, 2009).

In the early 2010s, a structured survey was published that revealed that culture and heritage was the main motivation that attracted 92.4% of overnight tourists and day trippers to Toledo (SITdCLM, 2010). This study has already shown a perception of visitors based on an image of the destination as a cultural and heritage city. However, given that the structured survey produced closed responses, it did not reveal the specific components underlying that image. Respondents were asked to choose between a limited number of closed responses – such as “World Heritage City”, “Cathedral”, “El Greco”, etc. to explain their motivation for making the trip. This fact strongly influenced their responses to the stereotypical issues previously defined by the researchers. For this reason, a new research has now been conducted using an unstructured survey methodology.

#### **VISITORS’ PERCEPTION OF THE PROMOTIONAL IMAGE OF TOLEDO AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE DECISION TO VISIT THE DESTINATION**

In November 2014 and November 2017, a face-to-face survey was conducted with 510 visitors to the city. The open-ended questions asked the respondents why they had chosen to visit Toledo. The questionnaires were performed randomly in the city’s main tourist area – the historic centre. Interviews were conducted with overnight tourists (n = 275) and day-trippers (n = 235), of Spanish (n = 310) or foreign (n = 190) origin, and male (n = 250) and female (n = 260).

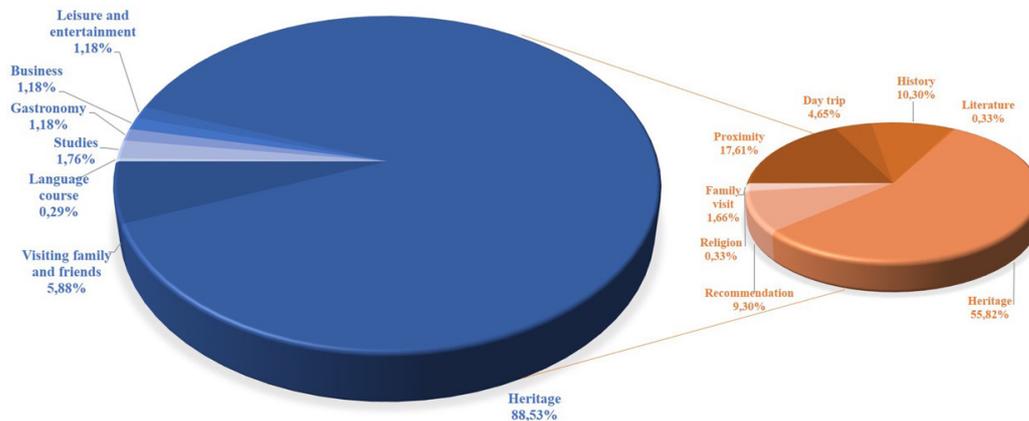
Following analysis of the questionnaires, a synthesis of the answers was made, with considerable variation because they were open-ended questions, creating a series of main items indicated as the main reason for visiting Toledo<sup>7</sup> (see Graph 1).

Eighty-eight point fifty-three percent of the respondents came to Toledo attracted by its heritage sites. This was by far the main reason, and with a considerable gap in relation to the other main reasons cited for visiting the city – which was to see relatives and friends (5,88%), studies (1,76%), gastronomy, business and leisure/entertainment (1,18% in each of the three latter items). The first conclusion obtained is that the vast majority of the visitors to the city responded to the call of the image of cultural tourism associated to an urban centre with heritage value. In other words, they were motivated by the Toledo brand.

Among those who responded that heritage was the main cause of their visit, certain assessments, or secondary reasons, were revealed in their answers. Thus, several respondents added that Toledo is a historical city (10,3%). Exceptionally, one respondent indicated that he was attracted to the Jewish religion and another to literature. All these aspects fit the public, promotional and tourist image of Toledo. In 9,3% of the answers,

<sup>7</sup> Specifically, the following reasons were identified: language courses, gastronomy, business, leisure and entertainment, heritage and visits to family and friends. At the same time, among the respondents who indicated the city’s heritage as the main cause of their visit, it was possible to identify the following secondary motivations: proximity, excursion, history, literature, recommendation, religion and family trip.

the respondents stated that this representation reached them in an indirect way, through a recommendation to visit the city. A minimum percentage of respondents – 1,66% – combined a family visit with a cultural tourism activity and were attracted by the city's heritage.



Graph 1: Reasons for choosing Toledo, as cited by its visitors

Finally, it is also of note that some respondents (17,6%) explicitly indicated that the reason to visit Toledo was proximity to the point of origin of their trip, or to the site of an overnight stay during a tourist trip, while others (4,65%) stated that the visit was included in a closed tour. Both phenomena are related, in most cases, to Toledo's proximity to Madrid, the Spanish capital. This major metropolitan area, the biggest urban tourism destination in the Iberian Peninsula, is the origin of a large number of visitors who make a day trip to Toledo for a few hours without an overnight. This is a phenomenon – day-tripping – that the author studied in another research (Escudero, in press) and is now reflected on a residual basis in the research of this study.

Analysing the data obtained in the questionnaires in function of the specific profiles of the visitors to the city, we did not obtain a significant difference in relation to the totals presented above (see Table 2). Hence, for overnight tourists (84,15%) as well as for day-trippers (93,63%), heritage was cited as the main reason for the trip. The main difference between these two categories was that for overnight tourists there was an increase in the reference to other causes to visit the city. Another distinction, predictable, was a much higher percentage of day-trippers (31,97%) who stated that the reason for visiting the city was the proximity of Toledo to their point of origin or overnight destination – above all Madrid.

MOTIVATIONS	TOTALS	VISITORS, BY LENGTH OF STAY		VISITORS, BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN		VISITORS, BY GENDER	
	% totals (n=510)	% overnight tourists (n=275)	% day-trippers (n=235)	% Spanish (n=320)	% foreigners (n=190)	% men (n=250)	% women (n=260)
Language course	0,26	0,00	0,64	0,00	0,79	0,60	0,00
Studies	1,76	2,73	0,64	0,47	3,94	1,80	1,73
Gastronomy	1,15	1,64	0,64	1,88	0,00	1,20	1,16
Business	1,18	2,19	0,00	1,41	0,79	2,40	0,00
Leisure and entertainment	1,18	1,64	0,64	1,88	0,00	1,80	0,58
Heritage	88,53	84,15	93,63	87,32	90,55	86,83	90,17
Heritage-proximity	17,61	3,90	31,97	15,05	21,74	16,55	18,59
Heritage-day trip	4,65	3,90	5,44	4,84	4,35	2,76	6,41
Heritage-history	10,30	12,34	8,16	7,53	14,78	10,34	10,26
Heritage-literature	0,33	0,00	0,68	0,54	0,00	0,00	0,64
Heritage-recommendation	9,30	10,39	8,16	7,53	12,17	11,03	7,69
Heritage-religion	0,33	0,65	0,00	0,00	0,87	0,69	0,00
Heritage-family visit	1,66	3,25	0,00	2,69	0,00	2,07	1,28
Visiting family and friends	5,88	7,65	3,82	7,04	3,94	5,39	6,36

Table 2: Reasons for choosing the destination. Total amounts and broken down by length of stay, country of origin and gender

In relation to the point of origin, it was once again Toledo's characteristic as a heritage site that motivated the trip, both for Spanish visitors (87,32%), and foreign visitors (90,55%). For visitors who travelled from other locations in Spain, the number who were visiting family and friends (7,04%) was higher than for visitors in general. Amongst foreign visitors we also encounter some small differences: there is a higher proportion of those who indicate proximity as the main reason for the visit, again primarily referring to a trip made from Madrid; the percentage of visitors who came for study purposes is also higher (3,94%) and no response indicated gastronomy or leisure/entertainment as the main reason. It is also interesting to note that, among people coming from other countries, history has a higher importance for choosing Toledo (14,78% of the responses related to heritage, specifically identify the importance of the city's history).

Finally, if we consider the gender of the visitors to the city, heritage is again the main reason for traveling, both for men (86,83%) and women (90,17%), with a slightly higher prevalence amongst women. Among other reasons, it should be noted that all respondents who stated that they were travelling on a business trip were men. Among the women, there was a higher percentage of visits to family and friends. Comparing the more specific motivations within the general area of heritage, men recorded an above-average proportion of visitors travelling to the city due to a personal recommendation. Women recorded a higher percentage of responses that they were visiting Toledo on a tour.

After synthetic qualitative analysis of the content of the open-ended answers provided by the respondents, the perception of the city's image becomes clearer. Key aspects include the references to the beauty of Toledo, using adjectives such as *bela* (beautiful) or, above all, *bonita* (beautiful/attractive). There were also many references to the city's importance and international renown. On the other hand, its cultural, monumental and heritage character was repeatedly mentioned. The adjective, "historical", frequently appears in the answers. Sometimes explicit references are made to city landmarks, such as the cathedral, or to the painter El Greco as a historical figure attached to Toledo. In summary, a synecdoche is created between historic Toledo and modern-day Toledo, the part for the whole, as also happens in other medium-sized cities with historic centres, such as Girona (Galí, 2005).

This image of a historical and heritage city is also repeated in the open-ended answers of people who visited Toledo due to a recommendation. Thus, for example, a 32-year-old foreign tourist replied that she visited Toledo "because this city is full of culture and my cousin recommended it to me". A 43-year-old foreign day-tripper said: "I was in Madrid and wanted to spend a day in this city, it's beautiful, it's historic, it has culture and religion".

Troitiño Vinuesa and Troitiño Torralba (2009, p. 239) suggest that one of the main weaknesses of Toledo's tourist activity is the persistence of its image as a classic cultural destination. Undoubtedly, the survey showed that the stereotypical image of the city as a beautiful, important, historical and heritage site is the image perceived by visitors arriving in Toledo. This perception fits the promotional and tourist representation of the city. There is a coincidence between the *constructed* and *perceived* cultural image. In this sense, visitors are less interested in seeing the real Toledo than in visiting *Toledoland*. In other words, we are faced with a fragmented vision, based on selected and idealised historical and heritage milestones. That is what the visitor is looking for. It is also what people expect to find and what they do find and receive. People then recommend this same image to other people to visit this destination. In terms of satisfaction, we also found in the survey people who returned to Toledo because they had "liked the city" in a previous trip.

## CONCLUSION

In this article, the following question was raised: does the stereotypical promotional image of cultural tourism determine the decision of visitors to a destination? The answer obtained in the empirical research carried out in Toledo completely corroborates this idea. In the case under study, an image and a brand of cultural tourism have been built, based on the heritage of the historic centre of Toledo and the choice of certain historical landmarks and characters from the past to create a stereotypical image, showing the city in the best possible light, that attracts tourists. The cultural, historical, heritage and picturesque Toledo, the "impressive Toledo", and its brand as "the city of three cultures" correspond to the product that has been constructed to circulate in the market,

via which the city is commercialised. This image and cultural tourist brand form the public representation of Toledo. Of course, it is a fragmented and idealised vision of a commercial nature. This is the image perceived by visitors to the city. They visited Toledo because of this image.

Idealisation and stereotyping of Toledo's historical and cultural heritage distorts the city's true identity. A city is always a more complex reality than a space for tourism. In the cultural tourist image of the city, the social reality of Toledo is hidden. In fact, most of the surface of the city, where almost all its residents live, disappears, as well as its urban functions, except for cultural tourism.

Finally, critically and opening further possible discussion, this research suggests to the brand and image builders of tourism destinations a greater responsibility to preserve the urban essence and not only to create stereotypical images that have been idealised to commercialise the city and attract visitors. It is necessary to situate tourism under its own terms. It is crucial to think about cities visited by tourists rather than touristic cities. Otherwise, many cultural tourism destinations will eventually become enclaves of a tourist monoculture, with exaggerated functional tourism standardisation, if this hasn't already taken place. This will leave the city in a vulnerable position, at the mercy of markets and passing trends, i.e. at the disposal of outwardly uncontrolled external forces.

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