

**SIBIU BETWEEN EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE AND BREXIT:
CITY BRAND PERSPECTIVE ON CITIZENS****Gabriela Virginia POPESCU***National University of Political Studies and Public Administration,
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popescugabriela534@yahoo.com***Abstract**

City branding represents a particular category of commercial branding, aiming at attracting resources to the city in a way that ensures the wellbeing of the citizen. Sibiu has embraced the EU cultural challenge and transformed European Capital of Culture (ECoC) into a success city brand by culture strategy, certainly improving the liveability of the city. Ten years later, Sibiu, as a small-medium sized cultural city with strongly proved European valences might be facing a similar challenge. Its reaction is totally different. This paper sheds the lights of the city on the citizens, as stakeholders, publics or consumer of the city, revealing a possible explanation of this different behaviour of Sibiu. The research is based on in-depth interviews conducted in the summer of 2016, aiming at identifying the attitudes, opinions and reactions to BREXIT. The main conclusion is that the interviewed persons favourably reacted to the city development by culture as an expression of history, identity, personal achievement, while politics is the attribute of just some part of the city. The interviewed persons oscillated very much between the European feeling and the traditional paradigm of less important country in the EU or in the geopolitical context.

Key words: citizens, city branding, stakeholders, ECoC, BREXIT**JEL Classification:** M30, O18**I. INTRODUCTION. BREXIT – START LINE FOR CITY BRANDING COMPETITION**

The most recent political event – BREXIT – may overturn the tranquility and balance of the whole half of the century construction – European Union, yet offering new challenges to the cities.

United Kingdom is one the largest economies. Before the BREXIT, in 2012, it ranked on the sixth global position, behind USA, China, Japan, Germany and France, but before Brazil, Russia and India (The Economist 2015, 24). United Kingdom registered in 2012 a GDP/capita of 38920 USD, almost 25% of the Monaco's and Lichtenstein's, about half of Switzerland's, not far behind Germany (42625 USD/capita), almost equal to France (39722 USD/capita) and at least with 75% higher than the GDP of Slovenia's, which registered the highest value among the recently ex-communist integrated states (The Economist 2015, 26). Almost half of its export is oriented to EU27 (Germany, Netherland and France equal almost 26% of it) and slightly less than half of the imports are coming from the same sources (The Economist 2015, 209). United Kingdom has been ranked the first investors in Europe and one of the first three on the global markets; leaving the EU single market would negatively influence the economic results, as predicted by the IMF, OECD, Bank of England and other prestigious economic institutions (Clark 2016a). Even more, Clark noted that international investing businesses in the UK "as a gateway to EU single market with zero-tariff, 500 million people and free movement of labor and capital" have already expressed "their preference for the UK to remain in the EU" (2016a).

Further to BREXIT, some of the European cities, in a visionary and strategic way, have understood the opportunity of opening new business lines, and are willingly to grab the advantages of the situation. Berlin, for instance, already told "London-based tech start-ups to <keep calm and move to Berlin>, as well as "Paris, Frankfurt, Luxemburg and Dublin are promoting their attractions for financial services and headquarters functions for the EU market; Estonia is being typically tech-savvy by offering e-residency for British digital entrepreneurs" (Clark 2016b). France has the same proactive reaction, as its Prime-Minister, Manuelle Valls, has announced "We want to build the financial capital of the future [...] now is the time to come to France" (Turak 2016). This may become a rather serious problem to UK, since the financial services comprise 8% of the UK's GDP (Turak 2016).

Sibiu is a model for city branding by culture, as a first step in the complex city branding construct. We are expecting a similar proactive response to this new challenge for European cities, as a sign of expressing its brand orientation. Still BREXIT is in its early debate, at the moment when the research was conducted, July – August 2016, the attitude of Sibiu about this event is significantly different than its reaction ten years ago.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW. "CITIZENS" – UNDER THE CITY BRANDING LIGHTS

2007 is not only the year of Sibiu European Capital of Culture, but much more: is the year in which the urban population became a majority. From that year on, cities will have an increasingly role in the global picture, irrespective of what and how we relate to it: economically, socially, culturally, etc.

Generally speaking, place brand strategy, including city branding, represents the adaptation of commercial (product, corporate) branding to places (cities, countries, regions) (Dinnie, 2011, p. 3). The objectives of a commercial brand are very simple, obvious, and concrete – the profit for their owners – the shareholders. Cities do not have objectives or goals, they have "purpose", and even this "purpose" is not single nor unified (Anholt, 2003, p. 213). In the marketing, branding and new public management or new governance, the inhabitants have been transformed into stakeholders, publics, consumers, target-markets.

The city brand does not have an owner. Aitken and Campelo (2011) in (Hanna & Rowley, 2013, p. 1788) argue that place brand "by nature belongs to the place and its people", which is a rather abstract definition of the ownership. We believe that in place branding we should refer to a "custodian" of the brand, the relationship with its stakeholders being based on social contract (Anholt, 2003, p. 213).

Cities are unlimited in time, we may say, although the history has proved that many people, countries, cultures and civilizations have had their period of emergence, maximum flourishing and decadence. That's why above all the other concerns about the city, the "ultimate goal" is "to create the preference and loyalty" for its various stakeholders (Insch, 2011, p. 9). Govers, van t'Klooster and Van Keken (2015) consider that the "ideal" goal of a city branding should be the building of "an overall perceived image", even without prioritizing their objectives if it is about attracting tourism, investments, exports and talent.

Regardless how the goals are defined and established, in place brand theory and practice, the utmost importance should be given to those this strategy is addressing to: stakeholders, publics or consumers / customers. Stakeholders was first mentioned in 1963 by the Stanford Research Institute, as "those groups without whose support the organization would cease to exist" (Friedman & Miles, 2006, p. 5) in (Pricopie, 2010, p. 70).

Considering the specific of the places, we would rather refer to stakeholders as "any group of individuals that can be affected by the achievements of the objectives of the organization" (Sautter & Leisen, 1999) in (Hanna & Rowley, 2013, p. 1787).

Further, management and responsibility have become more closed, since the beginning of the last century (Pricopie, 2010, p. 71). The new public management and new governance (Paunescu, 2008) propose corporate approach of the city and a partnership relations among the entities involved in its administration.

If considering city marketing and branding, Virgo & de Chernatony (2006) operate their city brand model with "a multiple and complex variety of stakeholders", arguing that city branding "involves complexities beyond those of product and service branding" (Esmann Andersen & Neilsen, 2009, p. 308). Also, Truemann, Klemm and Giroud (2004), refer to stakeholder management when mentioning the "conflicting objectives of stakeholder groups as a basic reason for a complex brand structure dealing with multiple identities" (Esmann Andersen & Neilsen, 2009, p. 308).

There are several criteria in identifying the stakeholders of an organization, some of them having power as a common element: power and interest (Freeman, 1984), power, legitimacy and urgency (Mitchell, R.K. et al., 1997), and Winstanley et al. (1995) refer to power from the two dimensions: the criteria power and the operational power (Gomes, 2004, p. 37). The criteria power assesses the stakeholder's power to influence issues about planning definition (objectives, performance, etc.) while the operational power refers to the stakeholder's power to influence the service delivery process, which is more closed to cities (Gomes, 2004, p. 37).

Considering the process of decision-making at the local level, Gomes (2004, p. 49) depicts a "stakeholder's map" according to their "ability to influence the decision-making" emphasizing the necessity of "employment of different strategies" when managing relationships with them, "because all of them assume different roles in decision-making and have different degrees of importance for the process".

One comment: generally, people, individuals, any kind of entity belong to an organization in a conscious, deliberate or intentional way, based on any formal way of acceptance of this association between the two parties (organization and those entities). In city branding, the relationship between the city and all these entities involved in the city existence is not always conscious, deliberate nor intentional. In most cases, we do not decide where to be born, or spend our childhood, and sometimes, even the whole life. Quantitatively speaking, these entities – the inhabitants of the city, people, and citizens – are overwhelming, and their will is firmly expressed every four year, at the local elections. Zenker, Knubben and Beckmann (2010), Zenker and Beckmann (2013) refer to the people living in cities as target groups and they highlight these target groups' different perception about cities. Braun, Kavaratzis and Zenker (2010) go further with the analyze of these target groups, mentioning that the citizens are "the most neglected role of residents in place branding". Since we are discussing about the place brand based on a social contract, that exactly the citizens that should be firstly considered in any city branding. This is why this market orientation should be completed with a mild ingredient – the public relations

and communication. Mainly in the present days, when social media have so largely invaded our life offering huge opportunities to express ourselves and freely and cheaply communicate to each other.

There are authors that consider “stakeholder as the synonym of public”, based on the association of the management and public responsibility (Pricopie, 2010, pg. 69-71). From the public relations perspective, Watson and Hill (2006) consider publics as “groups that are or could be of interest for organization and to become the receptors or the organization’s message”, whereas the “stakeholders do have a direct interest in the organization” (Pricopie, 2010, p. 71).

Pricopie (2010) mentions three perspectives of defining the public. From the normative perspective, “public consists of individuals well informed, responsible, and devoted to public causes, pursuing the identification and achieving of a common goal” (p. 67). The operational perspectives consider public as a “collectivity of individuals that are able to express, at a certain moment, an opinion related to a topic”, leading to the idea of public mobility according to certain interests (p. 67). The functional perspective refers to public as a “receptive entity to what take place in the society, able to interfere when its interested are affected” (pg. 67-68). In defining the public, Glynn and Jeong (2003) focus on three main characteristics of the public: the public is a group of persons which are confronted with a problem, issue alternative ideas, sometimes competing each other, regarding the way the problem should be dealt with and may catalyze a public discussion about this problem” (Pricopie, 2010, p. 68). Iacob, Cismaru and Pricopie (2011, pg. 116-118) describe few typologies of publics that fit the city, as a complex entity. The mass public is characterized by the community of interests. In this category we may largely introduce the residents of the city, their common interest being the general welfare of the city. According to concentration, there are homogenous publics and heterogeneous publics. According to the institutionalization degree of the source of the message, there are organized publics and unorganized publics, or institutionalized and non-institutionalized publics. According to the belonging relationship with the city, there are internal publics and external publics. The traditional and the future publics are very important for the strategy of the city. The children and teenagers of the city represent the future publics, while their parents are the traditional publics. Very important are the followers, the opponents and the neutral publics. Grunig (1983) focusing on social communication and public relations, research the “correlations that might exist between some public interest topics and the publics behavior” (Iacob, Cismaru, & Pricopie, 2011, p. 119) and identify four categories: all-issue publics, apathetic publics, single-issue publics, hot-issue publics.

Trueman, Cornelius, Baig and Liddle (2010) and Insch and Florek (2010) admit the contribution of community to city branding, creating a more participatory form of branding, even if the local authorities are not willing to credit them so much, mainly in a multi-ethnic community.

Considering the place marketing and branding theory and the common aspects between product / service branding and city branding, we may also argue that cities may be consumed. Slocum (2004) argues that we all are consumers of our cities in certain conditions. Consumer politics draw the attention of the publics and governments about “the need for regulation and oversight” (Parker, 1999) in (Slocum, 2004, p. 766). Citizens as consumers increase the “responsive” attitude of the government toward people (Graham & Phillips, 1998) in (Slocum, 2004, pg. 766-767), placing the consumer politics among many other city private and/or public sector activities. From the consumer perspective, the city consumers are more informed, conscious about rights, “empowered by choice and radical agents of change” (Slocum, 2004, p. 767).

From the marketing point of view, Kotler, Haider and Rein (2001), mention four approaches of the city development related to citizens. The community development is focused on the creation of the quality environment for the people living and working in the community (Kotler, et al., 2001, p. 81). This orientation is centered on the role of public institutions on the community quality of life: good education system, public safety, medical care. This is a static orientation, more internal oriented, not related to the very dynamic environment of the resources of the city (p. 82). It is true, a city will always have a market – its inhabitants – meaning the abstract place where the city supply meets the inhabitants’ demand. But, on long-term, maybe longer than in corporate marketing, the balance between supply and demand may be altered. And then, the flow of migration of the labor force, of the young people, and other categories of inhabitants and stakeholders will seek other cities. Another orientation is focused on urban design – architecture, open space and quality of the environment. The urban designers emphasize the importance of the quality of the material environment, which may represent a favorable and natural evolution of the quality of life (p. 83). This is another internal oriented point of view, its weaknesses being the fact that the community may have divergent opinions and face a lack of resources for the built landscape (p. 83). The urban planners are more functional oriented, having in consideration mainly the land use, the density of the buildings or the traffic control. They are also internal oriented, and sometime, wasting too much time on the bureaucratic work of analyzing proposals and projects (pg. 83-84). The forth orientation is the economic development of the city. Kotler et al. (2001, p. 84) mark the difference between growth and development. Growth is more quantitatively determined: more productions, more jobs, more crowd and pollution, unlikely the development, which involves not only quantitative aspects (more production), but also new types of production, resources used more efficiently and innovation. The final objective of economic development is to put in accordance the local economy with the dynamic national, international and global

economic environment, because “any community must export in order to survive” (Kotler, et al., 2001, p. 84). This market orientation is much more in accordance to the present day global context, not excluding the others.

Starting with the ‘90s, places, cities included, are focused on the self-development as a “product” and on the identification of the “competitive niche” (Kotler, et al., 2001, p. 88). This period is characterized by the retaining and extension of the existing companies, the active stimulation of the local business and investments initiatives, selective recruiting of business from other places, more active public – private partnerships, with direct impact on competitive costs, intellectual capital and human resources more adaptable to future changes, high quality of life, mainly emphasized the cultural and intellectual development (p. 87).

Taking into consideration the political, social and economic background of Romania and its profound transformations in the early ‘90s and after, we may say that this is the general picture where Sibiu should be viewed at the beginning of 2000s, when it was designated European Capital of Culture, together with Luxemburg, Grand Region.

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The research aims to identify the way Sibiu, as already acknowledged the mechanism and the favorable impact of city brand strategy, behaves in the case of BREXIT – an opportunity for attracting new and varied resources to the city, as already proved by other cities, Sibiu might be in competition with.

The interview guide consists in questions about the general impact of ECoC 2007 after ten years, and specifically its impact on the citizens and how they relate to the strategy: stakeholders with certain interests, publics for city projects, the final target groups of this strategy. It also included questions about their satisfaction with the results of the city brand strategy, their perception about BREXIT, as a European event, and about the potential opportunities for European countries and cities, namely Sibiu, eventually a comparison with ECoC. The interviews were conducted face to face and lasted about three quarters of an hour.

The topic is introduced by the presentation of Sibiu’s European vocation as cultural and touristic brand. Further, the research, conducted in Sibiu, in July-August 2016, is based on qualitative method of half-structured interviews. The interviewed persons have lived in Sibiu for more than ten years (they were participants in ECoC, or at least they are familiar with it), with ages between 25 – 55 years, high school graduated or with a university degree. They are employees in public (6) or private sector (5) or entrepreneurs (4), in tourism, cultural, education or service sectors and they belong to different ethnic groups.

IV. FINDINGS

Results of the cultural component of the city branding

Sibiu has successfully transformed an European Union cultural project into the cultural component of city brand strategy and is playing now an important role in the “niche” (Iohannis, 2014, p. 129) of cultural cities and tourism destinations, at least at European level. According to the Ex-Post Evaluation of 2007 and 2008 European Capitals of Culture (ECOTEC, 2009, pg. A41-A45), Sibiu has significantly marked its European cultural way: 50% of audiences considered Sibiu a cultural center and a multi-cultural “European city”, the partnership with European cultural operators increased 30% in 2008, 27% of foreign visitors ranked Sibiu among top five cultural destinations, and a sustainable platform for international cooperation was established. Culture, as the single objective of this strategy, has impacted the tourism and transformed Sibiu in “a tourist destination” (Rotariu, 2007, p. 29). Only in the first semester of 2007, the number of tourists in accommodation unites increased by 125.5% (Rotariu, 2007, p. 36). From the point of view of Sibiu residents, it had promoted between 2007 and 2009 from the seventh cultural tourism destination to the fifth, after London, Rome, Athens and Paris, surpassing Vienna and Venice (Richards & Rotariu, 2011, p. 50). On the international rank, its position is still modest, as the twenty-seventh out of thirty cities (Richards & Rotariu, 2011, p. 51). Of course, this gap between external and internal image may be considered as an improvement of self-esteem.

The investments are indirectly impacted by this cultural brand. The estimated investment in 2007 amounted to 50.05 mil. Euro, reported to an almost 90 mil. Euro local budget that year, it itself being 15% higher than in 2006, which was almost two times more the budget of 2004, the year of the launching the ECoC project (Luca, 2009, p. 174). At the national level, tourism increased in 2007 with 20%, no doubt some of it due to Sibiu. Its benefits still remain positive even on a long-term analysis. Richards and Rotariu (Richards & Rotariu, 2011) conducted an overall research in 2011, and the benefits of the project still has remained positive, even on a long-term period. The research is mainly oriented to culture and tourist, which, obviously, flourished at that time. Fortunately, they conducted a qualitative research based on interviews with “major stakeholders” that expressed their point of view about the ECoC. But even those stakeholders were mostly from cultural and tourism business environment, so there were plenty of positive opinions. Yet, there are few “remaining challenges” (Richards & Rotariu, 2011, pg. 62-63) of this project: increased prices, loss of tranquility of the city, long-term problems as

increased taxes for residents to cover the local credits contracting by the authorities, the gap between the different parts of the city and central part which benefited from heavily infrastructure improvements, etc. This is not a criticism of the project, but these challenges reflect the fact that this is just the cultural component of the city brand strategy, namely the component addressed to a restrictive type of stakeholders, not taking into consideration the others, that are not involved in culture and tourism. The particularity of city brand strategy, compared to any other branding, is that this brand should equally and objectively address to each and every resident, public or stakeholder of the city. The ECoC offered Sibiu, at the first glance, a rather simplified goal: to organize the ECoC event in Sibiu. After removing the upper layer, the project proved itself to be more complex and to involve more partial or tactical objectives, phases, participant parties – naming here stakeholders, publics and consumers – as well as attracting resources.

Sibiu has set its main development strategic directions for the next ten years in Sibiu Development Guide 2014 – 2024. This document provides four main directions: as city of culture and sports, as innovative and prosperous city, green and responsible city and as a city of communities (www.sibiu.ro, 2014)

Interview results

All the interviewed persons have appreciative responses about European Capital of Culture and how Sibiu has developed since then. They still have fresh memories (R1, R4, R5) about the event which was part of their youth (R2, R3, R7) or has significantly influenced their life offering them the professional (R6, R7, R8, R9) or personal (R2, R3, R10) opportunities. Some changes in their carriers had occurred during those years, but these were normal in a lifetime (R11, R14). Unanimously, they admitted that they had friend, relatives, member of their families with an oscillating professional and personal lives because “this event was just touristic, and if you do not work in tourism, we do not make too much money” (R11).

The ECoC was a successful strategy because it offered them a new perspective over the city, themselves and development: the cultural perspective, total different from the economic and political discourses and projects they had been delivered up to then (R7, R12, R13, R14, R15). They appreciated the project because it was not entirely too intellectual or elitist (R1, R2, R5, R6), but it proved that culture may be affordable and approachable (R4, R13, R14). The success of the Sibiu since 2007 is due to their Mayor – Klaus Iohannis (R1, R4, R5, R8) and they expressed, in a variable degree, the precaution about the future evolution of the city, during the new Mayor mandate (the former Mayor Klaus Iohannis is the President of Romania).

The interviewed persons are aware of “the citizen’s role in the city” and they proved it during the ECoC (R12, R14, R15). They prove their citizenship sense every four years, during the elections. They are, or, at least, should be more active in the city life, not only at the elections (R5, R6, R9) which represent the only occasions when they are “important” to the city (R3, R8, R10).

They are in doubt about considering themselves stakeholders or publics. The stakeholder position is related to the “official contacts with the local authorities” (R9, R13). They are “public” (not publics) to the city events (R4, R7, R8).

They admit that “theoretically” the city (included the brand strategy) should address each and every citizens in such a way that the citizen may correctly and full perceive it (R13), but, in practice, the situation is different sometimes feeling that they are the least important (R5). This is not contrary to the community feeling, which is quite strong, irrespective of its multi-ethnic character. They all are aware about their double role of the main target of the brand strategy as well as the role of the main resources for the city brand (R2, R15), even if it was not so clearly expressed. Their explanation was based on the mutual belonging relation: “we belong to the city and the city belongs to us” (R7). They related the consumption of the city with the infrastructure, pollution, cleaning the streets (R5).

BREXIT is “breaking news” topic (R11, R12, R13) but “it is far from us” (R3, R5, R10). It is considered “unpredictable and impossible” (R11, R14), “an endless negotiation” (R15), and “not our business” (R1). They interviewees unanimously agreed that the impact of BREXIT upon Romania would be minim because we do not have too many economic contracts with UK (R10, R15). The only affected persons will be those working in UK and their families (R4, R6).

Regarding the Sibiu positioning about BREXIT, R1, R3 mentioned “Sibiu hasn’t had too many British tourists, they are more German, Italian, French”, so, this event would not impact their lives too much. The majority of the interviewees do not consider BREXIT an economic opportunity of Sibiu, under the cultural, respectively, touristic field. None of them noted any official position of Romania, other than the political statements of the politicians. This kind of statements are considered “neutral” and “totally unengaging Romania” (R14, R15). There is no organization, entity, State representative to take the lead of “promoting Romania to the UK potential investors, as Luxemburg did ten years ago” (R7).

They did not see “any correlation between what the English people do in their country and what we do here, in ours” (R3), because “the street cultural and touristic events are not enough to recommend us as economic or production center” (R7). Only one of the interviewees hardly identified “vaguely possibility” to

attract the companies that might leave UK if the BREXIT continues (R4), but this person emphasizes the State role: “What is the State doing? What are the ministers doing?” because without an institutionalized context nothing is possible.

V. CONCLUSIONS

As the analyses of statistics, reports, other papers and publications on Sibiu economic evolution after ECoC, there is no doubt that it is launched on the trajectory of the city branding practice. Even more, Sibiu has established a ten-year program, similar to Barcelona, after becoming an icon of city branding (Belloso, 2011). It emphasizes the fully understanding of city brand as a long term strategy, with consecutive stages, periodical assessment, resources allocation and result orientation.

The interviews were meant to reveal the attitude of Sibiu inhabitants related to another major EU event in order to disclose how this event is reflected in their behavior, considering them as component of the brand strategy.

The knowledge – at least at the interviewed persons level, none of them being specialist in marketing or branding - about city branding is still restrictive. Firstly, they consider city branding synonym with cultural brand. Sibiu has achieved its objectives, from this point of view and it seems its mission has been completed. But the 2014 – 2024 Development Guide provides new objectives, and Sibiu will be able to reach them only through a complex brand strategy. Secondly, city branding is not perceived as a competition between cities in attracting resources. What happened ten years ago, when Sibiu was granted the ECoC title, is just an exception. Sibiu benefited from the invitation of the Grand Ducat of Luxembourg, which itself was in a special position and proposed an extended concept of the event. This non-competitive attitude is exhibited today, with BREXIT occasion. Thirdly, not exactly in this order, ECoC in 2007 was an event of national pride: just when acceding to the EU, Sibiu was granted this title and the whole Europe was watching it. It was not only one year of cultural events, but the proof that Romania had finally reached the position it would have had long time before. At that time, the citizens of Sibiu considered themselves a community effectively contributing in the project.

This attitude toward BREXIT has another explanation, too. ECoC was and still is a well-defined EU project, with procedures, objectives, success stories. When Sibiu was granted the title, other cities had already been ECoC. At that time, Sibiu was playing on a stable ground and transmitted this stability to the community. BREXIT is something new for Sibiu, Romania and entire European Union. Nobody would have ever predicted such an outcome of the European communitarian project. Even at the national level, there is a cautious attitude about these new developments. The place brand is an instrument of self-sustaining of cities on the large arena of global market and cities, irrespective of their size, should confidently make use of its attributes.

Frequently, when asked about their participation in ECoC, they mentioned the unpredicted dimension: one year of cultural events under the lens of all the tourists, special and honor guests, EU authorities, etc., a year successfully ended due to their efforts, behavior, and contribution. When it comes to assume the leading element of the city brand strategy, they are very reluctant.

Although the exhibited during the interview a certain feeling of local / national pride about the cultural heritage, when it comes to discuss about the economic / business opportunity potentially offered by BREXIT, the interviewees immediately refer to the modest ranking of Romania among the EU countries, about all the other fragilities of our present situation.

The interviewed persons express their significant feeling as citizens, rather than stakeholders. They associate this concept to the local authorities and their institutional collaborators, or to the public – private sector. In all circumstances, citizens are involved and influenced by the city actions, so they are stakeholders. They should not consider themselves as an apathetic public and let them be considered less important. Still, they are aware of their double role of final target of the brand strategy and the main resources of the city: they nurture and they consume the brand at the same time. But they refer as themselves as consumers of the city only from the natural or physical environment point of view.

Resuming, the interviews reveal certain progress registered by Sibiu in developing a city brand strategy even if it is based on the cultural component. The city brand stakeholders have played an important role in this strategy and still are a significant part to play. The most important thing is to cover the gap between citizens and stakeholders and to continue to participate in the city brand-building process, as they did ten years ago.

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