

# CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL HERITAGE – – AN ASSET FOR CITY BRANDING

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*Achieving wider recognition is part of the development agenda of contemporary cities, which are all confronted with the need to stand out and compete against one another. City branding reads as and plays an important role in this struggle for recognition. The identity of a city is generated over a long period, as it undergoes historical change, resulting in cultural diversity as the product of a specific environment.*

*This paper discusses the possibility of using the cultural and historical heritage of Trebinje and its identity as an asset to create its city brand. Trebinje is a small city situated in the vicinity of Dubrovnik, a major tourist destination with a rich cultural and historical heritage and an excellent city brand. Dubrovnik may be seen as jeopardising the development of Trebinje's authentic identity; on the other hand, the strong historical ties between the two cities can actually be used as an asset to develop Trebinje's city brand.*

*The material and non-material heritage which helped the formation of Trebinje's identity, is analysed. The Mediterranean region in which it is located, its rich history, authentic architecture and different cultural influences, including the national poet Jovan Dučić, have all helped create Trebinje's *genius loci*. The same factors may be used to communicate its new image.*

*After that, the paper outlines models of the possible use of the recognised assets to brand the city and emphasise the importance of the effective presentation of these assets for creating a recognisable city image. It also proposes specific actions and interventions that may contribute to branding the city.*

**Key words:** *identity, brand image, city branding, Trebinje, asset, *genius loci*, cultural and historical heritage.*

## INTRODUCTION

The average man living in the information age receives and sends a lot more information than the one living a century ago. It is based on such information that one decides where to live or spend holidays. For any city in the contemporary world, it is very important to be special and easily recognisable. It is a way to more easily attract investors and tourists and be a better place of residence.

City identity is the result of longtime processes which usually have a historical background and contain elements of cultural and historical heritage, mentality and *genius loci*. On the other hand, city image is a very important aspect of city presentation. It may be the

outcome of a successfully developed strategy under a selected motto; the subject of this paper explores what the steps of this process should be. In developing such a strategy all recognisable assets can and should be exploited. Among them cultural and historical heritage, prominent artists, and other elements of non-material culture are of major significance.

Trebinje is a small city very close to the Adriatic Littoral. It is only 30 km away from Dubrovnik. Although the two cities have quite distinct histories, throughout time they established special ties. The architecture and culture of Trebinje has been significantly influenced by the Mediterranean. Also, oriental influences were very strong during the Ottoman period. All these elements contributed to the creation of a specific *genus loci* and citizen mentality, both of which have helped preserve a very strong city identity. Despite this strong

identity, its image remains underdeveloped.

An asset is a resource strongly connected with an entity (place) and is the result of past events. Assets are relied on to create future economic benefits for entities. Historical and cultural heritage (material and non-material), identity and specific *genius loci* are recognised as assets in creating a strategy for city branding. This paper is a case study which attempts to answer the following questions:

1. Can Trebinje's strong identity be used as an asset for its city branding?
2. How can specific material and non-material cultural and historical heritage be used to create the city brand of Trebinje?

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Also, this paper examines what has been done to date in the branding process and if this can be used as a successful branding strategy. The official web site of the city boasts a slogan which claims Trebinje to be a city of culture<sup>2</sup>, which has the strength and clarity of a branding motto.

## HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF TREBINJE

Like very few places in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Trebinje is a city with a very rich history. The existence of habitations in the territory of Trebinje goes back as far as the Roman period. Korać supposes that a Roman military fortification once stood at the site of what is today the Old Town. Ante Figurić presumes the location of a military camp in the area of today's neighbourhood of *Police* along the bank of the River Trebišnjica. His claims about the existence of a Roman camp are supported by the assumption that the word Travunia comes from the Latin word *tribunus*, which means a military commander (Guzijan, 2009).

The first written information about the city after the arrival of the Slavs came in the mid-10th century from Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, a Byzantine emperor and writer. According to him, there were 5 settlements in the Travunia region, including Trebinje. During the Middle Ages, it belonged to some Serbian noble families. In 1186, Trebinje was conquered by the Serbian ruler Stefan Nemanja, after which it was annexed to the Kingdom of Raška (Serbia), remaining in it for the next two centuries. The city cherishes the memory of Queen Helen of Anjou<sup>3</sup>, who ruled this area for over 40 years, and remains the region's longest continuously ruling sovereign (Guzijan, 2009).

The Ottoman conquest of the Serbian territories completely changed the course of Trebinje's development, which became a major Turkish border fortress and a support place for Dubrovnik in its trade and economic activities. The position of Trebinje on a major trade route, which connected Dubrovnik with the hinterland, helped strengthen the ties between the two cities. The Trebinje fortress, known as Banvir, was built in 1706 by Osman-pasha *Resulbegović*. The merchant city quarters *Gornja Čaršija* and *Krš*, the first to be built beyond the city walls originated in the Ottoman period (Guzijan and Cvijić, 2009). According to the existent records, the city assumed an oriental form, although Mediterranean

influences remained very strong in terms of the city's architecture (Guzijan and Cvijić, 2010).

The transformation of the city began under Austro-Hungarian rule (1878). Military camps were built in the city, along with defensive fortresses on the surrounding hills. The city began to develop along the city walls in an organised manner. Public buildings were grouped in the city centre with squares and parks, and rural dwellings rose in the suburban area. Commercial facilities were built along the important roads to Dubrovnik and Bićeća. Many of today's parks, streets, and places were built in the 19th century (Guzijan and Cvijić, 2009).

There were no significant construction projects in the Interbellum. After World War II, the city started to sprawl on vacant land. New residential developments were built between the 1960s and the 1980s, but the city neither grew nor developed significantly or in important manners. In 2012, Trebinje was officially granted city status.

## ASSETS FOR TREBINJE BRANDING

As mentioned above, an asset is a previously created value which may be used through certain procedures and activities for the benefit of individuals and communities. If we think of culture as a created legacy which may be used to attract tourists and thus help boost local economic growth, then categories such as cultural and historical heritage, identity, and *genius loci* may become assets to be used for city branding.

A successful strategy for the city branding of Trebinje would have to rely on creating a link with the city's historical identity. The identity of a city may be preserved only by taking account of the following: the preservation of its cultural heritage, the status of the artists living in the city, cultural animation and spiritual life, cultural diffusion, and cultural and spiritual meanings (Kaladžurđević, 2011). As a matter of fact, anything that is somehow special in a city may attract tourists. Related literature distinguishes between 3 main categories of contributions, the built environment, hallmark events, and famous personalities (Dinnie, 2011). Visitors to a city are interested in particular sites such as a famous cathedral or a beautiful landscape. As of recently, the modern architecture of New Belgrade has been recognised as an asset for city branding (Manić and Backović, 2010). Tourists visit cities which are associated with famous personalities, e.g. painters, musicians and writers. The impact of hallmark events on the local image of a city may also be substantial. Some well-known recurring events are the annual Cannes Film Festival, or the Salzburg Festival (Dinnie, 2011). Trebinje

meets all the three criteria. The text below lists and expounds the most prominent assets of Trebinje.



Figure 1. Plane-tree park



Figure 2. City square

Even though the listed elements are mentioned separately for the purpose of analysis of Trebinje's assets for branding, they should be considered integrally when building a recognisable city image of Trebinje.

### Built environment

According to Lynch, whose views accrued based on empirical research, most individuals perceive the city as a set of built objects. In particular, five physical elements play a role in constituting people's image of a city: paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks (Dinnie, 2011).

The natural resources of Trebinje, Mount Orijen and Mount Leotar, River Trebišnjica and the city park, are supplemented by its built environment, comprising the Old City, the city square and the *Krš* neighbourhood, which all constitute a recognisable image of the city's vistas and cityscape. Also, there are many buildings in Trebinje which count towards the city's immovable cultural and historical heritage. Undeniably worth mentioning is the Old City, which has for the most part been preserved in its original cultural and historical form and is reminiscent of the fortified towns of the Mediterranean. The town is made of stone and consists of a wall and towers that were once used for defence; it dominates the city, a fact which makes it functionally advantageous and should

<sup>2</sup> The original motto in Serbian reads "Trebinje – grad kulture".

<sup>3</sup> Helen of Anjou (in Serbian, Jelena Anžuska), Queen consort of Serbia, wife of Stephen Uros I and mother of Kings Stephen Dragutin and Stephen Milutin.

allow it to be the hub of cultural activities.

Within the Old City there are buildings that are also cultural goods and naturally belong in this cultural and historical ensemble. Within its walls are Osman-pasha Resulbegović's Mosque, the Emperor's Mosque, the Clock Tower and the Museum of Herzegovina (previously the building of the city grammar school/gymnasium). The Museum of Herzegovina is an important institution of culture whose activities are directed towards the collecting, preservation and presentation of the city's movable cultural heritage. Among its most important exhibitions are the Dučić Legacy, an ethnological collection, the Milena Šotra Legacy, and the Memorial Painting Exhibition "Atanasije Popović". One must not forget the Orthodox Christian Church, the Roman Catholic Cathedral, the Resulbegović House (demolished in the 1990s) and the Arslanagić Bridge, a major cultural monument relocated during the construction of the water power plant on the River Trebišnjica (Gužijan, 2010).

An urban ensemble developed at the turn of the 20th century in the area beyond the Old City walls, which today comprises the city market, Liberty Square, an area planted with plane trees, the city park and streets built under Austro-Hungarian administration. King Peter the Liberator Street, built in the fashion of European towns with elements of Mediterranean architecture, resembles the pedestrian street of Stradun in Dubrovnik (Gužijan, 2010).

Another special urban ensemble is the quarter Krš, whose narrow streets, staircases and stone houses have been unjustly neglected. A part of the quarter was demolished in the 1960s for urbanisation purposes. There are several medieval monasteries in the vicinity of the city (Tvrdoš, Zavala, St. Peter and Paul's Monastery), and the Branković Tower, a fort also dating back to the Middle Ages.

The Herzegovina Gračanica Monastery has an open-air amphitheatre used by Trebinje's citizens as a gathering place. The flat top of Crkvina Hill is one of the city's prominent spots, with the most



*Figure 3. Monument to Jovan Dučić at the entrance to the city park*

beautiful views of the city. Also, there are several towers nearby built during the Austro-Hungarian period, which are equally important as landmarks. One of them is presumed to have been designed by Richard Neutra.

There is an ample collection of artefacts which Jovan Dučić brought from around the world. He also brought plants and sculptures to be put in the city park. Among other things, he had a monument built to honour the great poet Petar Petrović Njegoš.

### **Famous personalities**

Many cities are identified with the famous historical people or artists who were born or worked in them. Popularity and enhanced recognisability mean better chances of branding a city effectively. Figueras, a small town in Spain, became internationally famous thanks to Salvador Dali, who was born, lived and worked there until he died. The town boasts a museum dedicated to the painter, which is visited by hosts of tourists every year.

Quite a few famous people are related to Trebinje. The list is too long for each name to be mentioned in this paper. On this occasion, we will only mention those whose work made an indelible mark on the city's identity and whose names may be used to build its city brand. The connection between Trebinje and Jovan Dučić is certainly the strongest one.

Trebinje is directly affiliated with the famous Serbian poet Jovan Dučić, who was a native of Trebinje. During his lifetime he built a successful diplomatic career and became one of the most popular Serbian poets of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He died in the United States in 1943. In 2000, his body was reburied in the Herzegovina Gračanica Church on Crkvina Hill. Two poetry events, "Dučić Day" and the Trebinje Summer Festival, take place in his honour. Besides Jovan Dučić, Trebinje's recent history is marked by the story of the heroic death of Srđan Aleksić, killed in the latest war. A film has been made about the young man's tragic killing. Srđan Aleksić was a member of the Trebinje Theatre "Slovo", who on 28<sup>th</sup> December 2008 performed a memorial play entitled "Epilogue" showing the young man's life.

Helen of Anjou, the Queen of Raška (Serbia), was also mentioned above. The memory of her life is vivid in Trebinje's identity. A statue of Helen of Anjou decorates the city walls, and Trebinje youth visit it and pray to the queen, who has been sanctified, to bless them with luck in love. They bring flowers, especially oleander, some of which are believed to have been naturalised to the Trebinje area by the queen.

The life and work of the painter Milena Šotra is

also related to Herzegovina, thereby to Trebinje as well. The artist had two solo exhibitions, and the above-mentioned collection of her works, the artist's legacy to the Museum of Herzegovina, is irrefutable proof of her ties with Trebinje.

St. Vasily of Ostrog was an important figure in the history of Trebinje. He was born in the village of Mrkonjić in the carstic plain of Popovo near Trebinje. His family house has been reconstructed, along with his mother's grave, and is a pilgrimage destination for Orthodox Christians. His name is also linked to Tvrdoš Monastery, where he lived for a while. The ties between St. Vasily and Trebinje are very important for the growth of religious and cultural tourism.



*Figure 4. Herzegovina Gračanica Church and park*

### **Hallmark events**

There are quite a few towns and small cities across the world known for big events. One to be mentioned is Bayreuth, with its annual festival during which operas composed by the famous German composer Richard Wagner are performed. Dubrovnik is also famous for its Dubrovnik Summer Festival, which brings together artists from around the world and mainly stages theatre plays, dance and music performances.

The greatest cultural event held in Trebinje is the previously mentioned Trebinje Summer Festival, which is traditional and comprises a number of events. It ends with the "Dučić Evenings of Poetry" as the major event. Equally important is the "Dučić Day".

Furthermore, an art colony named Lastva International Art Colony has been taking place in Trebinje for years now. It is also part of the Trebinje Summer Festival. It was named after the village of Lastva, located on the shore of Lake Lastva, 12 km away from Trebinje. The village is a magnet for anglers and lovers of nature alike. It has beautiful natural and manmade swimming pools. Lastva was first mentioned in written records in the 11th century. Apart from Lastva, the colony takes place in Jazina, another village of exceptionally

beautiful scenery. Both villages have been recognised as potential tourist destinations.

More events are worth mentioning, among which the annual concert of the Tribunia City Choir, Trebinje Wine Festival (“Trebinje’s Days of Wine”), the annual exhibition of graduates of the Academy of Art, and St. Sava Festivities, which is organized by the community of the Serbian Orthodox Church and is dedicated to Serbia’s first archbishop, who ruled the Zahumlje county for a while.

## A POSSIBLE BRANDING MODEL

Before drawing up a possible strategy for the city branding of Trebinje, an explanation of the term “city brand” and of the idea of branding a city (place) is in order. A place brand is the totality of thoughts, feelings and expectations that people hold about a location. It is the reputation and enduring essence of a place and represents its distinctive promise of value, providing it with a competitive edge (Baker, 2012).

City branding should be seen as an instrument of urban marketing, which is a relatively new discipline. It is not uniformly used in European countries. It is almost unknown in some developed countries. Other countries make great efforts in using different cultural and other occasions for promoting their cities. Communication is an essential component of urban marketing because action must have the consensus of all stakeholders (Šimunović, 2007). For city branding to be successful, it is necessary for its stakeholder organisations to come together in partnership. This is a formal or informal body in which the key stakeholders jointly develop, create and lead on the implementation of the brand of the place under shared responsibilities (Dinnie, 2011).

Place (city) branding is a complex process which provides a framework for studies, strategies and activities. It must be based on truth and reality. Although there is no universal rule for city branding, some common steps of the branding process may be outlined. Baker offers seven steps of the destination branding process, which he calls 7A’s (Assessment and Audit; Analysis and Advantage; Alignment; Articulation; Activation; Adoption and Attitudes; and Action and Afterward). He emphasises that those are the critical questions that must be answered (Baker, 2011). Eran Ketter in his branding strategy recognises three stages of the branding process. They are analysis, planning and execution.

There is a strong economic aspect to culture, provided it is planned properly from the beginning. It may trigger the urban renewal and create an image of a city, where it should not

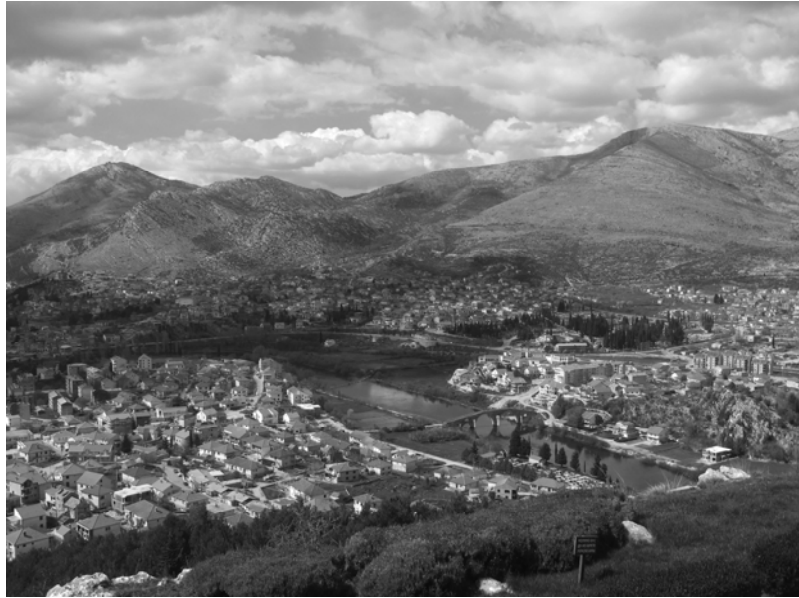


Figure 5. Panoramic view of Trebinje and the Arslanagić Bridge

be used as a temporary instrument – as goods aimed at external needs, but as the internal strength and a long-term potential that will be the recognisable symbol of an urban centre (Vulić *et al.*, 2012). Whilst the aim of this paper is not to develop a full-fledged strategy for the city branding of Trebinje, we will see how some specific features of Trebinje can be used purposefully in the branding process. As this paper discusses the possibilities of using cultural and historical heritage as an asset to create a competitive brand image of Trebinje, the most significant assets which can be used in the branding strategy are the Old City, the townscape of the main street and the city square, Helen of Anjou and legends connected to her life, Jovan Dučić and the Trebinje Summer Festival, and St. Vasily of Ostrog.

Although the Trebinje Summer Festival is a well-known regional cultural event, it should be extended to include a series of events which should all serve the purpose of Trebinje’s promotion as a city of culture.

The Trebinje quarter Krš, rather neglected and derelict, could be transformed into a bohemian area, with restaurants offering national cuisine, galleries and studios of Trebinje artists, and into the venue of minor cultural events, which could be staged at the small neighbourhood plazas.

Very little has been done to increase the reputation and visibility of Trebinje as a culture hub. The Development Strategy for Trebinje 2009–2017 presents a vision of the future development of the city that proposes three goals. The first goal is promoting Trebinje as the most desirable small city in Southeastern Europe. It proposes that Trebinje build an

image of a creative place and environment, as Dučić’s town, and emphasises the metaphor of Trebinje as a “lyrical poet-city” among similar cities. The second goal is harmonising the spiritual and the secular, cultural heritage and natural heritage, the Mediterranean and the continental, the urban and the rural, the old and the new. Trebinje ought to invigorate its recognisable identity with a new young creative community. The third goal involves the production of clean energy, healthy food, quality life, excellent wine and a most attractive tourist destination. Even though the goals do not constitute a brand strategy, they do contain elements for branding (Miovčić *et al.*, 2008).

Trebinje’s nature, recognisable cityscape, *genius loci*, and cultural and historical heritage may be used as the key elements in its city branding. The process must begin with a comprehensive analysis of the physical, social and cultural potential of the city and anticipate possible lines of action. Urban renewal which will take into consideration the historical and cultural context of this or any other city is certainly an unavoidable step in the branding process.

It must be borne in mind that the proximity of Dubrovnik as an international culture centre will be an aggravating circumstance for branding Trebinje as a city of culture. This will definitely impact the efforts to position Trebinje as a regional centre of culture, but there is also a possibility to connect the two cities, since the ties binding them go a long way. Programmes of events and happenings should be planned as to be compatible with the programme of the Dubrovnik Summer Festival. In that sense, it will be possible to increase the city’s recognisability by promoting the ideas and concepts rooted in

Herzegovina's local traditions and the fame of the poet Jovan Dučić.

It is crucial to involve all stakeholders in the branding process. Along with the local administration and authorities, this also means the private sector and local community, as well as tourist organisations. Creating a successful brand essentially depends on joint and coordinated activities of all stakeholders. Branding cannot be the doing of one man or a closed group of experts. It must be reconfirmed in the field, along with the results of the activities.

The branding process ought to create conditions to recognise the value of the city's cultural and historical heritage, sights and *genius loci*, and incorporate them in the development strategy, not neglect them or let them fall into ruin. Town planning should also take part in the city branding. The value and elements of Trebinje's building heritage ought to play an important role in the city image; also, new venues for cultural events should be placed on the map of the city. Urban renewal is only one step of a range of all-encompassing activities demanding full coordination. The planning documents developed thus far have failed to recognise this qualities and potential of the city of Trebinje.

## CONCLUSION

Trebinje has a lot of potential which is neither presented nor promoted adequately. Despite all its worth as a city, Trebinje has always been but a stopover en route to Dubrovnik, a town whose tourist potential was never duly invested in. There has been a growing interest to develop this potential in the last few years, which has already produced some results (Gužijan and Cvijić, 2009). However, given the city's resources, this is definitely not enough. Undoubtedly, Trebinje is the economic and cultural centre of Eastern and Old Herzegovina. As mentioned above, the slogan "Trebinje – A City of Culture" stands on the official web page of the city. A range of annual or sporadic events that take place in Trebinje partly justify the slogan, but grounding the city branding strategy in culture as its main resource commands that the city adopts a definite cultural policy as a strategic planning document bringing together a variety of stakeholders and cultural workers, in order to protect and promote the city's cultural assets. Given the cultural potential of the city, which incorporates such elements as an ensemble of cultural and historical heritage, history, legends, famous people and cultural events, it may be concluded it would be possible to turn

Trebinje into a regional cultural metropolis; however, the strategy behind the cultural policy regarding this city would have to put a strong focus on the special characteristics of Trebinje's cultural domain.

Although branding takes account of the interests of all stakeholders, especially the local community, it is not aimed at internal target groups but rather at external ones. The goal of branding and creating a recognisable image of the city is to attract new tourists and visitors to it, which will eventually bring those willing to invest in the city. For branding to be successful, the conduct should change in three respects: from reactive to creative; from industrial to entrepreneurial; and from bureaucratic to project-oriented (Miović *et al.*, 2008).

The fact that Trebinje has been officially granted city status may lead to branding it as a city of culture. Following the possible analyses and strategies discussed in this paper, we are hopeful that we may soon see it become a city of culture with a solid and recognisable image.

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