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# **City Marketing: The Representation of Ghent in Travel Guides of the neighbouring Countries**

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## **PREFACE**

After my master in Germanic Languages I did not want to quit studying yet. I had Multilingual Business Communication already in mind before I started studying Germanic Languages. I wanted to know something more about economics, marketing and communication and the programme offered these courses. Multilingual Business Communication extended my knowledge of economics, marketing, accountancy and improved my business communication skills in both English and French. The practical elements of the programme were crucial in taking the decision to study Multilingual Business Communication. The most important one of these is the traineeship of at least five weeks at the end of the academic year.

When we received the information about the internship, several companies attracted my attention. I sent cover letters to ANDRES, De Persgroep, Provinciebestuur Oost-Vlaanderen, Vlerick Management School and the Tourist Office of the City of Ghent. One of the companies that were prepared to accept me as a trainee was the Tourist Office of the City of Ghent.

At the beginning of February I had an interview with Kurt Van Belle who explained the research topic of the traineeship. The inventory and research of Ghent in travel magazines and travel guides in the neighbouring countries interested me. Ghent has been my second home for five years, so I know the city quite well and I love travelling. The traineeship would combine these two elements and I could not wait to immerse myself in travelling guides in different languages to investigate the image of Ghent presented in it.

Moreover, I would be able to conduct this study all by myself. Working independently is always a very rewarding experience in the end. Another important aspect for accepting the internship was that I would be able to work at a public sector organisation.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This dissertation consists of three major parts and a conclusion.

In the first part I present the City of Ghent and more specific the Tourist Office. I start with an overview of the whole structure of the City of Ghent. I will discuss the mission, main tasks, products, competitors and target groups of the Tourist Office of Ghent. To conclude this part I made a SWOT-analysis of both the City of Ghent and the Tourist Office.

In the second chapter, the theoretical concept of city marketing is explained. Here the focus is on the following elements: what is city marketing?, what are the stages of the city marketing process?, why is it so important for a city? And what are its most important target groups? Furthermore, I describe the 7 P's of city marketing and have a closer look at the city marketing of Ghent and the relationship between the City of Ghent and Ghent University.

The third and final section deals with my internship at the Tourist Office. In this part I describe the research I carried out. I will describe what my methodology for this research was, the several stages in the process and give some conclusions.

In the final conclusion I will give more information about what I have learned from the MTB programme on both a professional and a personal level and which aspects of the programme were useful for my internship.

## **PART I: PRESENTATION OF THE COMPANY**

### **1. The City of Ghent**

#### *1.1 Facts and Figures*

On January the 1<sup>st</sup> 2008, 4.813 employees were working at the City of Ghent for a population of 234.857 inhabitants (January 2007). Approximately 55% of the employees are administrative personnel: managers, consultants, administrative staff etc. Around 34% are technical personnel: engineers, inspectors, gardeners, carpenters, cleaning personnel etc. Over 11% belongs to the operational fire brigade.

Men and women are approximately equally divided at the City of Ghent: 48.41% men opposite to 51.59% women. The staff members are spread over 145 locations in Ghent.<sup>1</sup>

#### *1.2 Structure*

The mayor of Ghent is Daniël Termont and there are 11 aldermen: Sas van Rouveroij (First Alderman and Alderman of the Port and Innovation), Karin Temmerman (Alderman of City development, Mobility and Living), Christophe Peeters (Alderman of Finance, Facility Management and Sports), Martine De Regge (Alderman of Public works, City houses and Rational use of Energy), Mathias De Clercq (Alderman of Economics, Youth, Employment and Trades people), Lieven Decaluwe (Alderman of Culture, Tourism and Festivities), Rita Uyttendaele (Alderman of Population, protocol and official of the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages), Rudy Coddens (Alderman of Education and upbringing), Tom Balthazar (Alderman of Environment and Social Services), Fatma Pehlivan (Alderman of Personnel Management, Information Technology and Administrative Simplification) and Geert Versnick (Alderman of the intermunicipal companies and Chairman of the OCMW).

The city council has 39 councillors and is the legislative administrative organ; the bench of aldermen is the executive administrative system. The highest official is the

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<sup>1</sup> Identiteitskaart Stad Gent Personeelscijfers – 1 januari 2008

secretary of the city, he forms the link between the city council and the several departments and services.

The secretary of the city, the adjunct-secretary of the city and the heads of the departments together form the management team. The management team is an advising and coordinating body that meets every two weeks and reports to the bench of aldermen through the secretary of the city.

Appendix 1 is the organisation chart of the City of Ghent. The City of Ghent comprises 12 departments. The individual departments consist of several services. A short description of each of these departments will be given.

As can be seen on the organisation chart a distinction needs to be made between the three supporting departments and the other external-oriented departments.

These are the three supporting departments:

- Department of Finance

This department contributes to a financially stable organisation, through an optimal planning and management of the available resources, so that the city authorities could realize their social objectives.

The Department of Finance is responsible for the following tasks: accounting, drawing up the annual account, collecting taxes, budgeting, financing, payments etc.

- Department of Personnel and Organisation

This department supports staff members and services in the area of personnel and organisation in order for them to reach their objectives.

This department selects and recruits personnel, is responsible for the wages administration, coordinates reorganisations etc.

- Department of Facility Management

This department's mission is to create added value for their customers through effectively controlling the delivery process of general and technical services, in order for them to reach their goals.

The housing of the city services, providing equipment for the services (including vehicles), the maintenance of this equipment, maintenance of patrimony, strategic management of real estate, delivering cleaning services etc. are its main duties.

The following departments are external-oriented:

- Department of Population and Well-being

The mission of this department is to make the civil rights of all individuals and/or groups effective.

This department is responsible for guaranteeing individual and collective basic rights to all inhabitants of Ghent. It wants to offer services as efficiently and accessible as possible. Some service-related activities are aimed at very specific target groups such as youth, senior citizens, ethnic-cultural minorities, the disabled etc. Other forms of services are related to a certain theme such as housing, marriages, deaths etc. Other services work territorial oriented, for example community work. The department solves structural problems related to well-being or report these to the entitled authorities. It wants to be a leader in developing a local social policy for Ghent. This is realized through a consultative body with other partners in the field of well-being such as the OCMW.

- Department of Culture

The Department of culture's mission is to create a favourable atmosphere for the strengthening of Ghent as an alert, critical and open-minded city and as a centre of research, knowledge and culture, accessible for everyone through the own services as well as through an auxiliary operation.

Its duties are to trace and remove the gaps present in the cultural assortment, to strengthen Ghent as an ambitious city of creation, to preserve the patrimony

meticulously and to make it accessible for a large audience, to turn Ghent into a centre of education in arts and culture and to maximize the participation of the inhabitants in the cultural life.

- Department of Environment, Green and Health

To realize a qualitative environment in the development of a sustainable city is the Department of Environment, Green and Health's mission.

The management of public parks and gardens and the open space, to protect the inhabitants' health, to draw up a policy for animals and to set a good example of environmental awareness are some of the department's main duties.

- Department of Education and Upbringing

For the Department of Education and Upbringing quality predominates. Everyone is welcome in the day nurseries and schools in the city, where the motto is: diversity enriches. A safe, pleasant and challenging atmosphere offers maximal chances to develop oneself. Dynamics and participating in renewal guarantee commitment.

This department has the following tasks: providing education and training for all ages according to different formulas with a large choice between pedagogical concepts, to guide children and youngsters, to encourage parents and students to participate in the school life and decision-making.

- Department of Planning, Mobility and Public Domain

Their assignment is twofold: on the one hand, they organise space in a balanced way and let it function durably; on the other hand they develop a global mobility and parking policy and organise the parking space in relation to the infrastructure. There needs to be a balance between flexibility and legal certainty for this.

To work out and implement environmental planning, urban development, mobility and parking and managing the public domain is the department's main focus.

- Department of City promotion and Sports

The Department of City promotion and Sports wants to enlarge the appeal of Ghent as a place to live, start a company and to relax by improving the city's image and achieving a qualitative supply of leisure facilities.

In relation to tourism they want to develop Ghent as an excellent cultural-historic destination. With regard to events they want to attract as many people as possible to come to the qualitative events in the city. Concerning sports they have to convince the inhabitants of Ghent to do sports in their spare time.

- Department of Employment and Economics

The Department of Employment and Economics helps to achieve an enduring economic growth and qualitative employment for everyone.

Its tasks are to offer services for companies, shops, hotels, restaurants and cafés; to attract new investments and realise the renewal of the city; to support and aim at 'Gent, stad in werking' ('Ghent, working city'); to create jobs for minorities; organising fairs etc.

- Department of Staff Services

This department's mission is to pursue an optimal and durable urban policy.

Some of its main duties are: coordinating the urban policy in relation with prevention, equal opportunities, asylum policy; coordinating, evaluating and executing the external communication policy of the City of Ghent; stimulating the urban policy by supporting and advising the administration, management, departments and city services.

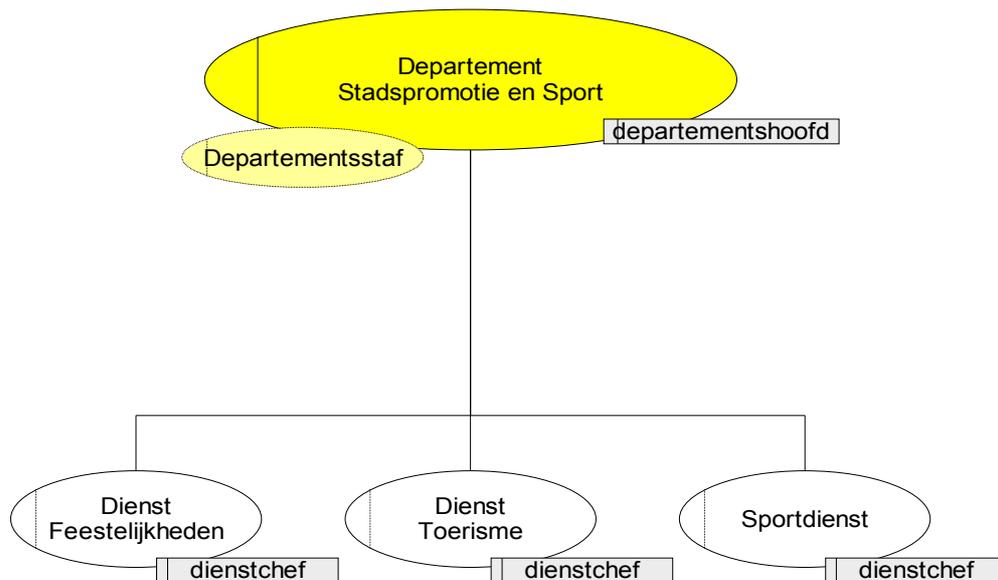
- Department of the Fire Brigade

The Fire Brigade is a transparent safety organisation that minimises – both preventive and curative – threats for man, environment and patrimony in an adequate and customer-friendly way. Its core tasks are fire interventions (extinguishing fire); technical assistance; urgent medical aid; fire prevention;

chemical, nuclear and biological pollution; help in case of flood; logistics; assistance by order of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. The Tourist Office of Ghent

### 2.1 *Department of City Promotion and Sports*



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Bron : Stad Gent - Dienst Organisatieontwikkeling - januari 2007

The organisation chart above shows the structure of the Department of City promotion and Sports. The department consists of three services: Festivities Service, Tourist Office and Sports Service. The mission of this department is to enlarge the appeal of Ghent as a place to live, to start a company and to relax by improving the city's image and achieving a qualitative supply of leisure facilities. To realise this mission, the three services have to work closely together.

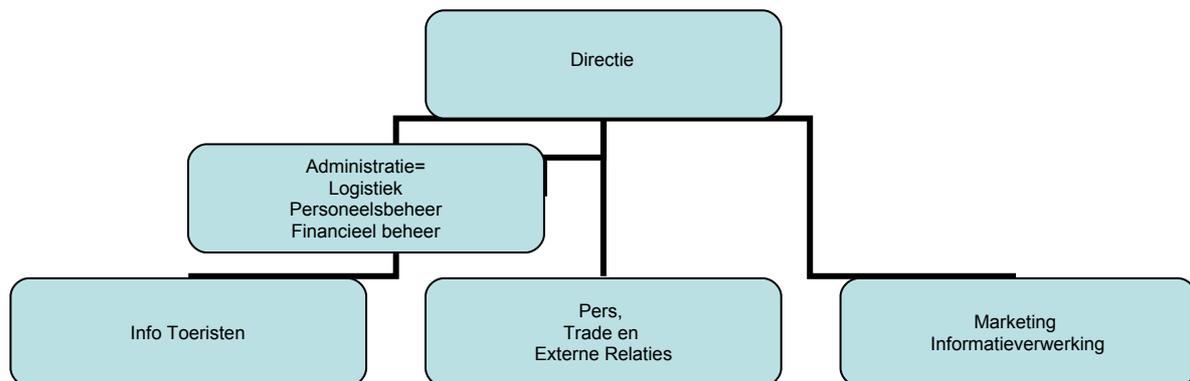
The department of City Promotion and Sports is responsible for the city marketing of Ghent. This is discussed in greater detail in Part II, 10. City marketing of Ghent (page 41)

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<sup>2</sup> Stad Gent, Nieuwsbrief 39 (oktober 2005): *De Stad Gent: Interne organisatie van de stad Gent in Beeld.*

## 2.2 Structure

In 2006, the Tourist Office was reorganised; this is the new organisation chart:



The Tourist Office has 30 staff members. Erwin Van de Wiele is the head of the Tourist Office. As can be seen on the chart, the Tourist Office is subdivided in three parts. The 'Tourist Info' consists of a call centre and the Information Office for tourists which is based in the belfry. The employees who work there provide information for visitors and tourists. The products developed by the Tourist Office are available at the Information Office. The call centre answers questions about tourist information by phone. The Trade, Press and External relations division is responsible for press relations, advertisements etc. The final division, 'Marketing and Data Processing' is responsible for the marketing and IT of the Tourist Office. I did my internship at this last division.

Next to these three divisions there is an administration department. The people who work there are responsible for logistics, personnel management and financial management (accountancy). And finally, there is a secretary's office as well.

## 2.3 Corporate identity

### 2.3.1 Mission statement

In the agreement of the administration of Ghent for 2007-2012 the following mission statement for the City of Ghent as a whole was formulated:

“Gent, een scheppende stad, die door een doorgedreven bundeling van alle creatieve krachten een voortrekkersrol speelt bij de ontwikkeling van een duurzame, solidaire en open samenleving.” (“Ghent is a creative city, that does pioneering work through an intensive cooperation of all creative powers in order to develop an enduring, solidary and open society”)

The mission of the Tourist Office is twofold, the Tourist Office wants:

“zoveel mogelijk mensen naar Gent brengen en eenmaal de toerist in Gent is, hem zo goed mogelijk ontvangen en wegwijs maken.” (“To bring as many people as possible to Ghent and once the visitor is in Ghent, to host him as well as possible and to familiarise him with the city.”)

### 2.3.2 Assignments

One of the main tasks of the Tourist Office is to promote Ghent. This is realized through several means, these elements form the marketing mix of the Tourist Office:

- Informing anyone interested about monuments, places of interest, attractions, events, accommodation etc.;
- Mediation for accommodation reservations;
- Hosting professionals from the travelling business (journalists, organisers, tour operators, travelling agents and coach companies);
- Being present at the most important tourist fairs and professional workshops;
- Developing and editing brochures;
- Promotional support of tourist events;
- Being present in the media and keeping the press informed about what happens in Ghent in relation to tourism and to invite professionals from the travelling business;
- Developing niche markets such as water tourism and cycle tourism. (At the moment of writing, the Marketing division of the Tourist Office is developing new cycle routes in Ghent and surroundings)<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Beleidsnota toerisme 2008

### 2.3.3 Strategy

For the development of the tourist policy in Ghent, the strategy consists of four concrete pillars. These four elements are made concrete in projects and actions. These are projects in relation to:

- Tourist supply;
- Tourist demand;
- Comfort of visitors;
- Organisation.

### 2.3.4 Vision

The importance of tourism for Ghent is proven by the following aspects:

- It is a source of revenues;
- It initiates investments in the city and the image of the city, the inhabitants of Ghent profit from this as well;
- It creates familiarity with the name of Ghent;
- Something that is attractive does actually attract.

Tourism has become one of the major economic booming activities in Ghent. Research has shown that tourism brings in at least 133 million euros a year. A flourishing tourist business is not only lucrative for the hotels, restaurants and shops but it indirectly affects (through taxes) the general prosperity of the city as well. Moreover, tourism is important for the employment in the city. It is a labour-intensive industry which deploys both semi- and unskilled employers as well.

The more tourists visit Ghent and the more the tourists spend when they are in Ghent, the better for the economy of the city. In order to realise this, it is necessary to stimulate tourist stays next to day trips. Ghent does not want to attract as much tourists as possible, but the optimal number of visitors.

From what has been said above we could formulate the vision of the City of Ghent on tourism as follows:

“the city seeks to attract external persons/companies/organisations as part of recreational and business related day tourism and tourist stays.”

This implies the City of Ghent's goal to extend and further develop an attractive, durable, qualitative and well accessible tourist offer, especially on the cultural historical level, both within the city and in combination with its surroundings. In order to do this, the City of Ghent will structure the supply, strengthen it and make it known to the target groups in a professional way.

How could Ghent position itself as unique in the tourist field? And how can the city distinguish itself from the other art cities in Flanders? There is an extra dimension that is added to the cultural profile of Ghent because of the biggest student population of Belgium in the city. There is a young, innovative and lively atmosphere in the city because of the students. Moreover, the cultural participants are very dynamic. This mix is quite different from the other art cities and has helped to determine the image of the city. Most tourists come to Ghent to see the historic buildings, monuments and museums. Next to these there are a lot of people (both Belgians and foreigners) who come to Ghent for other reasons: for the cultural and other events, for the sports facilities, for concerts, exhibitions, gastronomy, shopping etc.

Now what will be the role of the Tourist Office of Ghent in the future? In a highly competitive world, the Tourist Office needs to evolve further, from a service responsible for welcoming visitors into a service that works pro-actively and with an important function with regard to projects. In this way the Tourist Office of Ghent will develop its tourist developmental function. In the framework of the policy plan, the following functions have been set out for the Tourist Office:

- Crossroads: the Tourist Office is the link between the tourist industry and the civil services but also between private and public sector with regard to tourism.
- Centre of knowledge: the Tourist Office needs to be a centre of knowledge that helps to prepare the industry for the future. The market intelligence of the Tourist Office needs to be the showpiece.

- Actor: A Tourist Office is much more than just a link in a chain. It needs to be a participant and needs to think about marketing and sales on the one hand but also about concepts and forms of cooperation on the other hand.

This could be translated into four main functions:

- Defending the interests with relation to tourism for the global urban policy;
- Welcoming tourists;
- International promotion of Ghent as a destination;
- Catalyst between the tourist industry and tourism and the other domains of the policy.

For each of these pillars projects will be defined.<sup>4</sup>

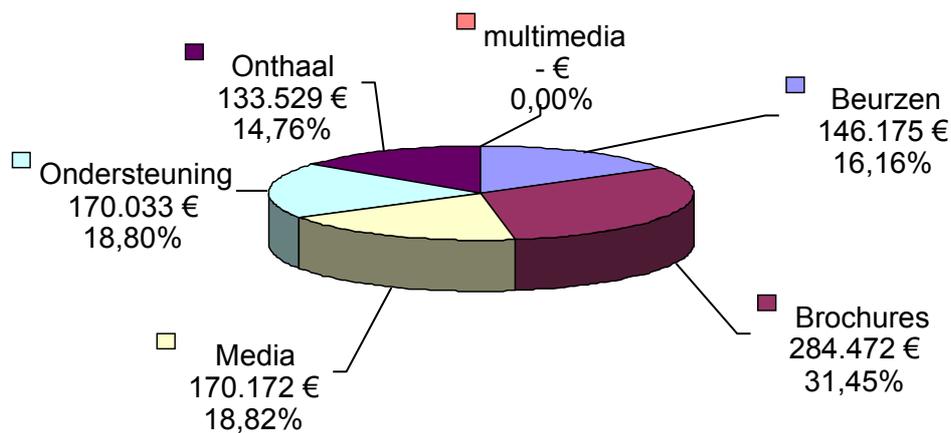
## 2.4 Budget

The importance of tourism for Ghent has been estimated with the following results. Tourists that stay are yearly good for approximately 74 million euros profit, while day trips bring in 59 million euros. The economic importance of tourism in Ghent is minimal 133 million euros on a yearly basis. This estimation excludes business visitors who are not staying. The most important revenues come from Belgian day trippers (46.5 million euros), business people who stay in the city (36.5 million euros) and recreational people who stay in Ghent (32 million euros).

The budget for promotion and marketing at the Tourist Office was divided in the following way for 2007:

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<sup>4</sup> Beleidsnota toerisme 2008



Bron: takenbegroting 2007 – tool2020

In 2007, the following division of the budget for media promotion abroad was made: the Netherlands (15 000 euros), France (25 000 euros), Germany (25 000 euros), Spain (15 000 euros), UK (20 000 euros).<sup>5</sup>

## 2.5 Products

### 2.5.1 Publications

Brochures and leaflets are an important communication tool of the Tourist Office. These are the publications provided by the Tourist Office of Ghent:

- Visitor's guide which offers all information for the individual tourist. It is made in five languages (Dutch, French, German, English and Spanish) and is intended as tourist brochure. During my internship at the marketing department of the Tourist office, a new visitor's guide 'Ghent, dazzlingly authentic' was developed and emitted in five languages (Dutch, French, English, German and Spanish). It took about eight months to develop this brochure, the process started in August 2007. The brochure is more colourful and contains more pictures than the previous one. It is also a more extensive brochure that counts ten pages more. The text blocks are more condense, short descriptions are given of the places of

<sup>5</sup> Beleidsnota toerisme 2008

interest and it looks more orderly.

The visitor's guide was built up according to a new concept and in relation with the new pedestrian signposting that was placed in Ghent in June 2007. This divides Ghent into two quarters (Historic Centre and Arts Quarter) and each quarter is divided into several sites. Arrows in various colours show the way from one site to another and each signpost displays the location of the stations and coach parks. The same arrangement is followed in the new brochure; all places of interest are classified according to the site to which they belong.

The visitor's guide comes together with a new multilingual city map, there are two different maps to be found on this. Next to this, there is an annex containing the practical information (opening hours, entrance fees etc.) of the monuments and museums. The visitor's guide, the map and the annex form a whole.

- City map on which the most important places of interest and hotels are shown, made in cooperation with the vzw Ghent Hotels.
- Map with a scenic route for walkers, made together with the Association of Guides of Ghent and Eastern Flanders.
- Hotels and Restaurants Ghent and surroundings: an information brochure in four languages (Dutch, French, English and Dutch) with an overview of restaurants and hotels in Ghent.
- Sales Guide: brochure for professionals of the tourist industry.
- Guide for Schools: a guide for the organisation of school trips, this publication is sent yearly to all Flemish speaking primary and secondary schools in Belgium.
- Leaflet with events.
- Leaflet for the end of year (with festivities such as the Christmas market).
- Promotional flyer Portus Ganda.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Beleidsnota toerisme 2008

### 2.5.2 Welcome of professionals

The reception of professionals is an important aspect of the promotional function of the Tourist Office. In 2007 Ghent welcomed 11 film crews, 5 radio journalists, 255 journalists of the written press and 18 photographers. Next to this, 349 tour operators and 56 professionals from the tourist industry were received in preparation to events, congresses and symposiums.<sup>7</sup>

### 2.5.3 Digital media

In the field of digital media the Tourist Office has not yet accomplished much. There is no multilingual version of the website. This could be of negative influence for the promotion of Ghent. Newsletters, blogs and users generated content does not yet belong to the marketing mix of the Tourist Office.

A good website is very important. In 2007, 188.959 people visited the website of Ghent, this is 517.7 visits per day and 15.747 on a monthly basis. This number has been multiplied by five over the past three years.<sup>8</sup>

### 2.5.4 Fairs

Fairs play an important role in the marketing strategy of the Tourist Office of Ghent. Approximately 16% of the available means were used for participation in tourist fairs at home and abroad. For this, forms of cooperation are realised with Tourism Flanders or Tourism of Eastern Flanders. In 2008, The Tourist Office worked together with vzw Tourism Leiestreek for the fairs at home and a fair in Lille.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Beleidsnota toerisme 2008

<sup>8</sup> Beleidsnota toerisme 2008

<sup>9</sup> Beleidsnota toerisme 2008

## 2.6 *Customers*

The customers of the Tourist Office are the visitors of Ghent. This is different from the other services of the City of Ghent which all address the inhabitants of the city. Since 1998 an electronic eye registers the visitors of the Information Office at the Belfry. This eye has registered a growing amount of visitors (with the exception of 2001, after an extremely successful 'year of Keizer Karel'). In 2007, 352.184 visitors were registered, which is a record and an increase of 3.6% in relation to the visitors in 2006.

Of these 352.184 visitors, 165.328 asked for information, brochures or the booking of accommodation. It has to be kept in mind that especially individual travellers visit the information office since people who travel in group get the information via their guide. There was an increase in the number of persons who ask a question at the information office as well. 28% of the visitors who ask questions are Belgian but the neighbouring countries are also very important. Especially Spain is a market that is evolving quickly. In 2004, Spain occupied the fourth place with relation to the nationality of countries. Since 2006, Spain occupies the third place of visiting nationalities, after the Netherlands on the second place and before France, on the fourth place.<sup>10</sup>

## 2.7 *Competitors*

Ghent is one of the art cities of Flanders, next to Bruges, Antwerp, Leuven and Mechelen, so these could be competitors. But every other city in the world could be a competitor of Ghent.

Nathalie Dumon pointed out that the determination of the competitors of Ghent depends on the criterion that is used. When you take a look at housing and living, Eeklo is more ideal as a place to live than the city centre of Ghent. For tourism, Lille has a lot of assets and could be a competitor. As a city to go shopping, Ghent is especially popular with people from the region of Ghent. With regard to culture and

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<sup>10</sup> Beleidsnota toerisme 2008

leisure, we have a varied supply so we can attract a broad public. It all depends on the target group you look at.<sup>11</sup>

Ghent cooperates with Tourism Flanders for the promotion of Flanders in foreign countries because Tourism Flanders wants to promote Flanders - its coast, green region and its cities - abroad. For a Flemish city on its own to aim at foreign countries is not really feasible. Flanders is so small and the Flemish cities depend on each other. When tourists come to visit one of the arts cities or Brussels, they often stay for a longer period to visit the other cities as well.

A research project executed by Tourism Flanders showed that Ghent is not really known as a tourist destination. Ghent does not have a real profile or image while Antwerp is associated with diamonds, fashion and the harbour and Bruges as 'the Venice of the north'. The city marketing strategy of Ghent should reinforce the image of Ghent.

This chart shows the position of Ghent in relation to other European cities. The yearly number of visitors is given.<sup>12</sup>

< 10 milj	5 - 10 milj	2 - 5 milj	1 - 2 milj	500.000 - 1milj	> 500.000
London	München	Brussel	Antwerpen	Reykjavik	Aarhus
Paris	Amsterdam	Kopenhagen	Bratislava	Heidelberg	Klagenfurt
Rome	Hamburg	Dresden	Brugge	San Sebastian	Bregenz
Dublin	Nice	Zurich	Genua	Tampere	Novi Sad
Berlin	Boedapest	Valencia	Tarragona	Luxemburg City	St. Pölten
Barcelona	Lissabon	Göteborg	Bergen	Reims	Eisenstadt
Praag	Stockholm	Oslo	Innsbruck	Turku	
Wenen		Helsinki	Pardubice	Graz	
		Salzburg (City)	Belgrado	Gijón	
		Nürnberg	Bilbao	Linz	
		Tallinn	Malmö	Gent	
			Munster	Würzburg	
			Dijon	Ljubljana	
				Weimar	
				Duisburg	

Bron: *Bednights 2006. Tourmis*

This chart makes clear that Brussels has the most visitors, followed by Antwerp and Bruges, Ghent has the least visitors of the four most important cities of Belgium.

<sup>11</sup> Interview Nathalie Dumon, 15 May 2008, appendix 2.

<sup>12</sup> Beleidsnota Toerisme 2008

## 2.8 *SWOT-analysis*

Ghent and the Tourist Office are inextricably bound up with each other, so both are discussed in the SWOT-analysis on the following pages. For the evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses the following subdivision in topics was used: tourist product, support of tourist supply, congress, organisation, location/housing, Information office (service and facilities for visitors), communication/promotion, monitoring and others.

## Strengths

## Weaknesses

### Tourist product

- Large cultural historical patrimony
  - Large number of staying tourists because of sports events
  - Presence of top sports hall
  - Flexibility and cooperation between the several participants
  - Sufficient cultural creativity and dynamics
- Accessibility of patrimony is insufficient
  - The several events are not spread out sufficiently
  - Few cultural events with a name
  - Communication of the events towards the tourist industry comes too late
  - A good connection between culture and tourism is lacking
  - There is still a mental gap between culture and tourism
  - The promotional budgets are disintegrated
  - Cultural programming comes too late
  - Soft cultural recreation is lacking
  - The opening up of historic patrimony depends too much on people on the shop floor
  - Unnecessary long procedures to enter the buildings (associations of guides)
  - The commercial reflex for the development of the cultural product is insufficient
  - Performing arts only work one year in advance
  - The product is split up
  - Tourist mobility
  - No optimal connection between tourist attractions

### Support of tourist supply

- Four star camp site
  - Upgrading of the hotel supply
  - Vzw Ghent hotels
  - Locations are spread out well
  - Growth in supply over the last 5 years
  - Supply and demand are well balanced
  - Promotional fund is experienced as a valuable element
- An action plan for the promotional fund is lacking
  - Concentration of visitors, staying tourism is low during winter months
  - Supply in budget hotels is too restricted
  - Service in some hotels could be better
  - Communication with tourist participants
  - Closing of shops on Sundays
  - Not enough charming hotels
  - A top segment/showpiece is lacking (5\*-hotels, star restaurants, shops...)

## Strenghts

## Weaknesses

### Congress

- Growing share of stays because of congresses
- The share of the number of stays is not proportional to the potential of Ghent

### Organisation

- Clear structure
- New dynamics of Tourist Office
- Good knowledge of products and languages
- Flexible availability of personnel, at peak moments as well
- Average level of education is too low (B and A-level are too restricted)
- Level of acquisition is often too low in comparison to required capacities
- A division that defends tourism on other levels of the policy is lacking
- Division-exceeding procedures lack

### Location/housing

- The current information office is located centrally in the city centre
- Information office and Tourist office have different locations

### Information office (service and facilities for visitors)

- Long opening hours (7/7, 363 days a year, at lunch time)
- Hard to combine the reception with the telephonic answering service (after opening hours call centre and Ghent info)
- No lockers for visitors
- Public conveniences are not cleaned optimally, supervision is insufficient as well

### Communication/Promotion

- Highly qualitative leaflets and brochures
- Good and intensive welcome of professionals of tourist industry
- Visibility of art cities at fairs is too restricted
- There is no own detailed website
- No integration between the different means of communication
- There is no one-to-one communication (electronic newsletters)
- Efforts for promotion and tourist image are insufficient
- There is no clear and unanimous policy for fairs
- Flow of information to the sector

### Monitoring

- Systematic measurement and observance
- The data are not sufficiently put at people's disposal

## Strengths

- Geographical situation in relation to other Flemish art cities
- Expansion of tourist centre because of pedestrian signposts

## Weaknesses

### Others

- Geographical situation of Ghent
- There is not enough attention for tourism
- Budgets are split up
- Unoccupied buildings in the city centre

## Opportunities

- Greater demand for city trips at home and abroad
- Growing interest in experiencing a lot in a short period
- Growing interest for authenticity and charm
- Tourism of religious inheritance
- Profiling Ghent as a shopping city
- Artevelde Stadion/events
- Growing interest of cruise ships for Ghent as port of call
- Great demand for active holidays (cycle tourism)
- New means of communication offer new opportunities
- Art cities on a Flemish level
- Support of the cultural and events sector (collective fund with the cultural industry)
- Development of the fish market location
- One location for information office and Tourist Office
- Information office needs to be
  - a reference point (experience, promotion, anticipating interests)
  - a one stop tourist shop (one location for all tourist info such as multimedia, reception, ticketing, bookings, sale of souvenirs, maps, routes...)
- Finalising tourist welcoming point at STAM and St. Pietersstation

## Threats

- Growing competition on the leisure market because of new booming European cities as a destination
- Fame of name and a clear image are lacking
- A consumer who has become more critical, more demanding and more aware of quality.
- New means of communication are expensive
- A regulation for B&B is lacking
- There are several suppliers of tourist info

## **PART II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: CITY MARKETING**

### **1. Introduction**

Tourism can be very important for a city, as I discovered during my internship at the Tourist Office of Ghent. It can be very lucrative for several parties: not only the tourist attractions, museums and hotel sector benefit from tourist visits but shops, the restaurant industry and cafés profit from it as well.

Therefore it is very important for a city to sell itself well in order to attract as much visitors as possible. This is the goal of the Tourist Office; Ghent is the product they have to sell on the market. It is necessary that they distinguish themselves from other cities.

I investigated whether Ghent was present in travel guides from the neighbouring countries, together with the UK and Spain and if Ghent was present in them, how it was represented. The way authors of travel guides describe a city can be crucial for the image tourists have of it, therefore it is important that the information is correct. The Tourist Office could take actions to improve the quality of what authors of travel guides write. They could invite them to Ghent and stimulate them to write something about the city in their travel magazine or travel guide. This is one aspect of city marketing: reaching tourists through travel magazines and travel guides and that is why I have chosen the topic 'city marketing' for my theoretical framework.

### **2. What is city marketing?**

City marketing is a quite recent phenomenon. In the seventies, one realized that urban developments had to be stimulated by a more active presentation of the city as a product. There were several reasons for the growing importance of city marketing as a policy instrument: a slumping economy, a too optimistic expectation in growth and an increasing competition between cities.

City promotion was already widely used before the development of city marketing. Over time, it became clear that mere promotion, without an underlying marketing

strategy was not the right approach. Promotion is just one element of the marketing mix. Promotional activities need to be preceded by a marketing policy based on market research and a thorough analysis of the product and market characteristics. City marketing is not all about the promotion of the city or about the organisation of prominent events. City marketing should be integrated in the urban policy: an integration through organisation, initiatives that are geared to one another, spatial integration and integration of strategic marketing instruments. City promotion is often wrapped up as city marketing, but this is not what it is about. It is an aspect of city marketing that is used to promote the city.

Image management, one of the strategic city marketing elements, is the best point of departure for city marketing. The idea people have of a city shapes their opinion of it and is crucial for their decision-making.<sup>13</sup>

City marketing is a specific form of general marketing. Essential elements of general marketing are for example market research, analysis of the competitors, an analysis of target groups, drawing up a marketing plan and realizing promotional campaigns. Progress check and feedback of the efficiency of the several means that have been used are also crucial for 'general' marketing and in theory these stages should be run through in city marketing as well.<sup>14</sup>

City marketing is based on the idea that a city is also a product on a market. It is a product with concern to urban functions such as living, working, culture, leisure, tourism and services. There is a market because these several functions of the city have consumers/customers who are partly assigned on the urban product and have a choice between the supply and that of the competition. Market orientation and market engagement are two central elements for city marketing.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, cities and their products cannot be considered as independent, they have a relation with the regions where they are situated as well. Big cities are

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<sup>13</sup> Zwart A.H., 'Wat is city marketing?'. In: *City Marketing: marketing in de overheids- en non-profitsector* (verslagboek studiedag 9 november 1990). Gemeentekrediet, 1991, p. 7-30.

<sup>14</sup> Van den berg L., Klaassen L.H. & Van der Meer J., *Strategische City-marketing*. Schoonhoven: Academic Service economie en bedrijfskunde, 1990, p. 13

<sup>15</sup> Zwart A.H., 'Wat is city marketing?'. In: *City Marketing: marketing in de overheids- en non-profitsector* (verslagboek studiedag 9 november 1990). Gemeentekrediet, 1991, p. 7-30.

merely the centre of functional regions. Within these regions, big cities and their surrounding areas are highly complementary and dependent on each other.<sup>16</sup>

Europe has a long tradition in positioning its cities: Paris as an open-air museum, London as a financial centre, Milan as fashion city. The influence of multinationals and the development of the worldwide market, forces every city and society to choose an identity. In a world where everything is alike, a city needs to create a distinct profile, it needs to distinguish itself from other cities and it needs to excel. City marketing fails or succeeds with private-public cooperation. There should be close partnerships between cities, the business world and social organisations if cities want their city marketing to be successful.

What follows are some definitions of city marketing. According to Buursink city marketing is:

Een beleidsinstrument met een multidisciplinaire inhoud, waarin naast marketing verschillende beleidswetenschappen geïnteresseerd zijn, naast sociale planologie, politicologie en bestuurskunde.<sup>17</sup>

And further on:

Citymarketing is een strategie die berust op het besef dat een lokale gemeenschap moet proberen haar positie en ontwikkeling te baseren op eigen kracht, door het voeren van een marktgericht beleid, in een open concurrentieverhouding met andere steden en regio's.<sup>18</sup>

Boerema en Sondervan define it as follows:

Een wijze van denken door een ieder die zich met de invulling van de stedelijke ruimte bezighoudt, het terugdenken vanuit de afnemers: bewoners, ondernemers, recreanten/toeristen en andere bezoekers.

Or:

Een verzameling activiteiten bedoeld om de vraag naar en het aanbod van de stedelijke functies 'wonen', 'werken' en 'recreëren' tussen aanbieders (gemeenten) en vragers (bewoners, bedrijven, recreanten/toeristen en andere bezoekers) te optimaliseren.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Van den berg L., Klaassen L.H. & Van der Meer J., *Strategische City-marketing*. Schoonhoven: Academic Service economie en bedrijfskunde, 1990, p. 14

<sup>17</sup> Buursink J., *Steden in de markt: het elan van citymarketing*. Muiderberg: Dick Coutinho, 1991, p. 7

<sup>18</sup> idem, p. 29

<sup>19</sup> Boerema & Sondervan, *Ondernemersgerichte citymarketing*, 1988. As quoted in: Van den berg L., Klaassen L.H. & Van der Meer J., *Strategische City-marketing*. Schoonhoven: Academic Service economie en bedrijfskunde, 1990, p. 13.

Borchert & Buursink consider it to be:

Een marktgerichte vorm van exploitatie van het stedelijk (c.q. regionaal) produkt door de desbetreffende gemeente (c.q. regio), zo mogelijk in samenwerking met het bedrijfsleven.<sup>20</sup>

### **3. Elements of city marketing**

Zwart distinguishes some characteristics of city marketing as a policy instrument:

- Market oriented policy: the civic product is developed from a market oriented point of view and it is no longer a matter of interest groups but rather of target groups.
- Strategic policy: a strategy with clearly formulated goals is the base for city marketing. The strategy and specific goals are set down in a marketing plan.
- Continuation: city marketing is realised on the long run, a continuation of policy and a clear setting of priorities are crucial here.
- Integral: city marketing is an integral policy that aims on the totality of the civic product.
- Mix: the right mix between long-term goals and measures and short-term goals and measures increases the realisation of a city marketing policy.
- Cyclical: the cycle 'positioning, operating and resulting' needs to be passed through.
- Internal and external communication: next to an orientation on the market and market parties, the internal communication towards the organisation itself is crucial as well. Involvement is required for the organisation.
- Structure and culture: city marketing does not only require an adjusted organisational structure but especially demands a marketing oriented organisational culture.
- City management: city marketing requires an appropriate management style which has consequences for the official and administrative functioning of the organisation.
- Implementation: a clearly set out strategy is important but the correct implementation of it is at least equally important.

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<sup>20</sup> Borchert & Buursink, *Citymarketing en geografie*, 1987. As quoted in: Van den berg L., Klaassen L.H. & Van der Meer J., *Strategische City-marketing*. Schoonhoven: Academic Service economie en bedrijfskunde, 1990, p. 13.

- Elements of successful city marketing, its success depends on:
  - Mission: is the policy carried out correctly?
  - Reality: are the plans realizable?
  - Practicability: are the plans workable? Are there available means?
  - Commitment: are all parties really committed?
  - Enthusiasm
  - Leadership: is there a leader in the group?

A strategy of city marketing is successful if it is supported strategically.<sup>21</sup>

#### **4. Why city marketing?**

City marketing is a relatively new scientific field. The concept of city marketing found its existence in the Netherlands in the eighties. This phenomenon occurs in other countries as well, but not under the name 'city marketing'. Many think of it just as a group of tools and methods in order to sell the "product" of a city but it is more than that. It involves the definition of a city's product (the city as a product) and its image, in such a way that its recipients will see it as to the marketing intended. So, city marketing plays an important role, forming a bridge between a city's potential and the use of this potential for the benefit of the local society. During the past decades it has become crucial for cities to distinguish themselves from other cities. Cities must have the ability to attract more investment, business, residents and visitors in order to create more possibilities.

Today, the image of a city in some cases seems to play a more important role than its reality in shaping the opinion held by visitors, investors and its residents with regard to the place. Marketing techniques are often used to help with transforming the city into a post-industrial centre of tourism, culture and development.

Urban tourism plays an increasingly central role in defining the strategies for economic development that the respective local authorities process. On the other hand, in today's conditions of globalised economy, the competition for attracting tourists is even greater. City marketing plays a decisive role in this respect.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Zwart A.H., 'Wat is city marketing?'. In: *City Marketing: marketing in de overheids- en non-profitsector* (verslagboek studiedag 9 november 1990). Gemeentekrediet, 1991, pp. 12-14

<sup>22</sup> [http://www.feweb.vu.nl/ersa2005/final\\_papers/395.pdf](http://www.feweb.vu.nl/ersa2005/final_papers/395.pdf)

The wish to optimize the urban product and to exploit its potential is central in city marketing. The idea a person has of a city is crucial for the choice one makes to live, shop or to set up a company overthere. This image is as important as actual reality.

Noordman gives the following reasons to market a city:

- Towns have more responsibility because of liberalisation. They should communicate more actively with their target groups to sell their 'products'.
- The citizen speaks up for himself and participates in local politics, this forces cities to communicate their activities more efficiently and justify their actions.
- People's reality is becoming smaller. People start to think from their own place of residence or region, and the identity of these becomes gradually more important. Therefore, the city needs to communicate its identity to its inhabitants.
- Because of the deteriorating economy there is more attention for labour market issues and the housing market. Towns want to attract employment opportunities and find it more difficult to sell houses. They need to use their image to resolve such problems.<sup>23</sup>

Van den Bergh, Klaassen & Van der Meer point out these motives for the development of city marketing:

- The large amount of company premises that could be emitted as opposed to a shrinking demand for it. The post war industrious expansion accompanied with the need for space, led to optimistic expectations for the continuation of this growth in the sixties. In the early eighties, after the energy crisis of 1973 and 1978, this led to a large quantity of unsold or unlet company grounds. These conditions ask for innovation and a change in policy, such as the search for destinations for which a great demand is expected. In order to do this, a greater knowledge of the needs of the several market segments is necessary.
- There was a decentralisation of authorities and this enlarged the possibilities for a personal policy but a need for this as well.
- Changes in the economic structure gave rise to marketing-related activities. Technological innovations and expansion led to a greater demand for other places of business. The quality and appeal of the place of business became of

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<sup>23</sup> Noordman, B.J., *Cultuur in de citymarketing*. 's Gravenhage: Elsevier Overheid, 2004, p. 33.

greater importance. One of the conditions a city needs to meet is a good accessibility, so that companies could settle there.

- European integration.
- The need to keep up with competitors.<sup>24</sup>

Zwart distinguishes internal and external factors of the organisation that could be of importance for city marketing. The following external factors are mentioned:

- Social and economic developments on macro-level that change the civic functioning (for example: the individualisation of society, increasing mobility, internationalization of the economy);
- Growing competition between cities;
- The general evolution from a sellers market into a buyers market (the buyers decide what they want to buy).

These are the internal factors given by Zwart:

- The financial-economic need to exploit the city and its civic services optimally.
- The existing need to keep the level of civic services up to the required standard or to improve this level.
- The necessity for a policy that is more customer and market orientated.
- The demand for a strategic policy related to the above.
- The changes in cooperation between the government and business world and the alterations in organisational culture within the government.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Van den berg L., Klaassen L.H. & Van der Meer J., *Strategische City-marketing*. Schoonhoven: Academic Service economie en bedrijfskunde, 1990, p. 22-24

<sup>25</sup> Zwart A.H., 'Wat is city marketing?'. In: *City Marketing: marketing in de overheids- en non-profitsector* (verslagboek studiedag 9 november 1990). Gemeentekrediet, 1991, p. 10-11

## 5. The seven P's of city marketing

An important concept in marketing is the marketing mix which is the use and specification of 'the four P's' describing the strategic position of a product in the marketplace. The four P's in traditional marketing are product, price, place and promotion.<sup>26</sup> These four traditional P's function in another way for city marketing. Moreover, three aspects need to be added: politics, personnel and atmosphere.

### 5.1 *Product*

This could be both tangible products as well as services. Two examples of urban products are houses and facilities for education. Civic products could have very different functions. The city is not always the producer of its products.<sup>27</sup>

Moreover, the product is not flexible. The things that are most peculiar about a city or region cannot easily be altered. Adjustments to buildings and infrastructure do not only take a long time but they have to be able to endure the ravages of time. The development of cities is characterized by a 'life cycle' in which flourishing periods alternate with periods of decline.<sup>28</sup>

### 5.2 *Price*

The price-making process of cities is completely different from that of commercial products. A price for the product 'city' does not exist. Prices for municipal services are based on the costs, political desirability or the need for general resources. Price making for company premises does occur, but as a derivative of market prices. The specific preferences of consumers concerning location, quality, price and the presence of specific environmental factors, could be expressed but cause discussion. The tourist product consists of a mixture of commercial goods and governmental goods. The city indirectly benefits from tourist expenditure.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Kotler P. & Keller K., *Marketingmanagement: de essentie*. Amsterdam: Pearson Education, 2007.

<sup>27</sup> Noordman, B.J., *Cultuur in de citymarketing*. 's Gravenhage: Elsevier Overheid, 2004, p. 36

<sup>28</sup> Van den berg L., Klaassen L.H. & Van der Meer J., *Strategische City-marketing*. Schoonhoven: Academic Service economie en bedrijfskunde, 1990, p. 19

<sup>29</sup> Van den berg L., Klaassen L.H. & Van der Meer J., *Strategische City-marketing*. Schoonhoven: Academic Service economie en bedrijfskunde, 1990, p.20

### 5.3 Place

When the conventional marketer uses the instrument place (distribution), he thinks about how the product could efficiently get to the consumer. The quality of this accessibility is central here. This depends on the quality of all transport: roads, railways, airways and telecommunication. Internet plays an important role as place where the first orientation on the town occurs.<sup>30</sup>

In the case of city marketing there is rather a movement in the opposite direction, it is more a matter of bringing the consumer to the product. The accessibility and availability of a range of services could be decisive for people or a company to settle somewhere.<sup>31</sup>

### 5.4 Promotion

This instrument of the marketing mix is often unjustly considered as city marketing. City promotion is just one of the seven aspects of city marketing, as is made clear here. Promotion contributes to the public image and character of a city.<sup>32</sup> Promotional activities have recently been expanded and refined and are very popular for cities. The attraction of potential users through an inviting image is central. A positive reputation and image do not only attract consumers but it also has its effect on local businesses and the inhabitants.<sup>33</sup>

### 5.5 Politics

The policy to market a certain town is always subordinate to political priorities. Politics are authoritative for city marketing and not the other way around. The success of city marketing depends on the political basis with politicians and their supporters. The city government needs to decide whether a city marketing plan could be useful or not.

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<sup>30</sup> Noordman, B.J., *Cultuur in de citymarketing*. 's Gravenhage: Elsevier Overheid, 2004, p. 37

<sup>31</sup> Van den berg L., Klaassen L.H. & Van der Meer J., *Strategische City-marketing*. Schoonhoven: Academic Service economie en bedrijfskunde, 1990, p.19-20

<sup>32</sup> idem p. 37

<sup>33</sup> Van den berg L., Klaassen L.H. & Van der Meer J., *Strategische City-marketing*. Schoonhoven: Academic Service economie en bedrijfskunde, 1990, p. 21

The organisation of political commitment is crucial to implement the development and the resulting marketing activities. Actions of engaged politicians play an important role to enlarge the use of civic products.<sup>34</sup>

### 5.6 *Personnel*

Public servants should be convinced of the necessity to change their attitude to work into a dynamic, customer-friendly approach in order to sell the city successfully.<sup>35</sup>

Van den Berg, Klaassen & Van der Meer only give the six above P's of the city marketing mix<sup>36</sup>, Noordman however gives seven P's and adds atmosphere to the marketing mix.<sup>37</sup>

### 5.7 *Atmosphere*

The city offers a large selection of goods and services. The atmosphere of a supermarket affects the selling of these goods; the atmosphere is used as a marketing instrument. This is similar for the city: its quality and its neighbourhoods affect the success of the separate products.<sup>38</sup>

## 6. **Stages in the city marketing process**

A city marketing plan has the following stages according to Buursink:

- Strategic orientation: in this stage the goals of the local policy need to be determined in relation to living, employment, cultural reputation, tourist potential etc.;
- Identification of the target groups;

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<sup>34</sup> idem p. 37-38

<sup>35</sup> Noordman, B.J., *Cultuur in de citymarketing*. 's Gravenhage: Elsevier Overheid, 2004, p. 38

<sup>36</sup> Van den berg L., Klaassen L.H. & Van der Meer J., *Strategische City-marketing*. Schoonhoven: Academic Service economie en bedrijfskunde, 1990, p. 19-21

<sup>37</sup> Noordman, B.J., *Cultuur in de citymarketing*. 's Gravenhage: Elsevier Overheid, 2004, p.35-38

<sup>38</sup> idem p. 38

- Inventory of the urban products;
- External research: market research;
- Product-market combinations: In this stage specific products for certain target groups are distinguished and could be implemented in relation to the available elements of the marketing mix;
- Operational marketing plan;
- Continuation and process control.

## **7. The city as a product**

The city is considered as a product for users who are seen as customers/consumers. Because of the big variety in urban products, city marketing is a complex concept. Its character is tied to a particular place, so this product cannot be distributed easily. The city is multifunctional and has three basic functions: living, producing and consuming.

To some extent cities are mass products that resemble each other in several respects. The city has become a mass phenomenon. Because of their number, their size and the way they look, cities take on the characteristics of a mass product.

What makes the city most unique is its historic character. Every city is the result of a process of development. Cities preserve their historic characteristics as much as possible to use this as an asset in relation to other cities.<sup>39</sup>

Some of the most important products in the city that are suitable to be marketed are: company grounds, office blocks, houses, facilities for education, shopping, the catering industry, sports, nightlife, culture, tourism, business trips and health.

What makes city marketing even more complicated is that the city itself is a product as well. The product 'city' in its totality is especially used for promotion and the creation of an image. Cities or their surrounding regions are not always the

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<sup>39</sup> Buursink J., *Steden in de markt: het elan van citymarketing*. Muiderberg: Dick Coutinho, 1991.

producers or proprietors of their products. They could only be co-proprietors together with other companies, organisations and the inhabitants.<sup>40</sup>

The product 'city' could be divided in five sub products that have a clear relationship with a market:

- The town or city as a place to live;
- The town or city as a place where companies settle;
- The tourist-recreational product;
- The available services, more specific in relation to retail;
- The cultural product and nightlife.<sup>41</sup>

There are several factors that determine the identity of a city:

- The city's location:  
This is not really the absolute position of a city but rather the perceived location. People need to know, or at least have a vague notion, about where a certain city is located. The location of a city is the first element of the urban identity that is being promoted through campaigns.
- The city's age:  
Cities could characterize themselves as places with a long and interesting development and history. A city's age contributes to its identity.
- The city's appearance:  
The city's looks are crucial for its identity. A city manifests itself especially by the way it has been built. The appeal of the city determines the image of the city.
- The city's size:  
The concept 'city' is based on the association with a lot of inhabitants; a place with less or few inhabitants is a village. The more inhabitants a city has, the more its fame grows.
- The city's attributes:  
These attributes are the city's buildings, companies or events that collectively contribute to the familiarity with a city's name.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Van den berg L., Klaassen L.H. & Van der Meer J., *Strategische City-marketing*. Schoonhoven: Academic Service economie en bedrijfskunde, 1990, p. 16-17

<sup>41</sup> Zwart A.H., 'Wat is city marketing?'. In: *City Marketing: marketing in de overheids- en non-profitsector* (verslagboek studiedag 9 november 1990). Gemeentekrediet, 1991, p. 11

<sup>42</sup> Buursink J., *Steden in de markt: het elan van citymarketing*. Muiderberg: Dick Coutinho, 1991, p. 87-90

## 8. Target groups

The consumers of the civic product could be subdivided into three target groups: residents, visitors (both tourists and business people) and investors or entrepreneurs. The city needs to be attractive for all three of these. City marketing sees the city as a place where people work, live, invest in and relax. Dependent on the target group there are three types of city marketing: residential, tourist and business city marketing.

### 8.1 *Residents*

A lot of cities in Europe have been confronted with an exodus of people. In order to keep people in the city, the quality of living and housing was improved.<sup>43</sup>

To improve the local quality of life, social welfare in the city and to prevent emigration, recreational facilities should be established, as well as a highly qualitative public transport, infrastructure and houses supply.

### 8.2 *Visitors*

The visitors of a city could be subdivided into two large groups: tourists and business people.

#### *Tourists*

In general, a city needs to aim at attracting as much tourists who are staying in the city as possible; the focus should not be on day trippers. A city should decide which tourists it wants. This choice is limited by factors as climate, culture, facilities etc.<sup>44</sup>

The expansion of sports facilities, parks and a greater culinary variation should make the city more attractive for tourists (day trippers as well as people who stay). These include culture-oriented tourists as well, who are attracted by the cultural heritage and events of a city.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Allaert G. & Tydgat T., *Regiomarketing & Regiomanagement naar Toepasbaarheid in de ruimtelijke Planning*. Gent: Academia Press, 1994, p. 54-55

<sup>44</sup> Allaert G. & Tydgat T., *Regiomarketing & Regiomanagement naar Toepasbaarheid in de ruimtelijke Planning*. Gent: Academia Press, 1994, p. 53

<sup>45</sup> Noordman, B.J., *Cultuur in de citymarketing*. 's Gravenhage: Elsevier Overheid, 2004, p. 35.

### *Business people*

Business people come to cities largely for commodity exchanges, congresses, conferences etc. The key elements for profit are here : the size of the group, the duration of the stay, the demand for services. Between the several cities there is a great competition for this target group.<sup>46</sup>

### *8.3 Entrepreneurs and Investors*

The acquisition of companies is important to create more employment in the region and higher revenues. The target group consists of industrial and service industries that could have an added value for the regional economy. Infrastructural expansion projects, financial stimulation and a favourable labour market should increase the appeal of a city as business location and as a place to work. Such location factors would make the city competitive towards other cities. The acquisition of companies leads to a sharpened competition between cities and regions.<sup>47</sup>

## **9. Strategies**

### *9.1 City branding*

Closely related to city marketing is city branding, which positions the city as a brand. City branding goes further than city marketing. City branding aims at developing and exploiting a municipal brand with the urban brand identity as the essence of it.<sup>48</sup>

City branding is a means by which a clear identity of the city is built; with clearly described values as starting point, its goal is to realise relationships with several target groups. These target groups could be the city's inhabitants, but also tourists, companies, investors and associations.

The basic idea of city branding is that the city is the sum of certain values which one can identify with. Everything that gives an identity to the city - sport events, the

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<sup>46</sup> Allaert G. & Tydgat T., *Regiomarketing & Regiomanagement naar Toepasbaarheid in de ruimtelijke Planning*. Gent: Academia Press, 1994, p. 53-54

<sup>47</sup> Allaert G. & Tydgat T., *Regiomarketing & Regiomanagement naar Toepasbaarheid in de ruimtelijke Planning*. Gent: Academia Press, 1994, p. 55-56.

<sup>48</sup> [http://www.gototalbranding.nl/index.php?file\\_id=80](http://www.gototalbranding.nl/index.php?file_id=80)

location and environment of the city, shops and places of entertainment or certain inhabitants – could have an added value and could be used by city marketers.

The biggest error that could be made in city branding is that one first looks at architectural styles and not at the consumers. In other words, the brand develops supply oriented rather than demand oriented. Furthermore, product oriented thinking – first the buildings and secondly the experience of a city – is very persistent. City branding creates a central focus with core values as a base, which is the added value of city branding. It is pointless to proclaim how enjoyable it is to live or work in a certain city, if this is not the case in reality.<sup>49</sup>

## 9.2 *Flagship projects*

Flagship projects can play a functional role in creating an image and an identity for a city, as well as its marketing. Investing in prestigious constructions and landmarks is an important promotional tool and a tool for image making, used both by public and private investors. The most well-known case of this kind within Europe is the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. Bilbao became known because of the establishment of the Guggenheim Museum there. In Spain there is also the church of Sagrada Familia by Gaudi in Barcelona. These buildings characterise the city and contribute to a city's fame. They are often exploited in promotional campaigns.<sup>50</sup>

## 9.3 *Mega event hosting*

There are two basic reasons for engaging in the process of mega event hosting. The first is that local authorities deal with mega events in strategic terms. These mega events create opportunities for regional, national or even international promotion at low cost because they always get a lot of media coverage.

The second reason is that mega event hosting can boost tourism development, not only during the event but afterwards as well. Visitors come to a particular city for a

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<sup>49</sup> Roothart H., City Branding: De stad als merk. In: *Tijdschrift voor Marketing*, jg. 37 (2003), nr. 10, pp. 68-69.

<sup>50</sup> [http://www.feweb.vu.nl/ers2005/final\\_papers/395.pdf](http://www.feweb.vu.nl/ers2005/final_papers/395.pdf)

specific event. The event could have a positive influence of the perceived image of a city, which enhances the appeal of the city afterwards.

Barcelona's marketing abilities are a good example of this. The international profile of the city was shaped during the Olympics of 1992, as the city used this event to renew itself. After the games, Barcelona conserved and empowered its image by a marketing strategy that aimed to "sell" the city as a European centre of recreation and culture.<sup>51</sup>

## **10. City marketing of Ghent**

In this part some aspects of the city marketing of Ghent will be discussed. In the strategic note for the period 2007-2012, the strategic goals for the several departments were set out. One of the strategic goals for the department of city promotion is to reinforce the desirable image of Ghent in order to enlarge the appeal of Ghent to live, study, start up a business, work and to relax there.

This strategic goal consists out of four operational goals. The first one is for stakeholders of the city to work with a well-structured and current marketing strategy for their promotional activities and product development by 2013. The second strategic goal is that Ghent is a strong brand by 2013. The following goal is to promote the historic patrimony through events. Finally, Ghent will be promoted as a film location.<sup>52</sup>

The interview with Nathalie Dumon<sup>53</sup> (see appendix 2) learned that the city marketing plan of Ghent is not completed yet. At the end of 2006, Ghent gave several consulting bureaus the task to draw up their specifications for developing a city marketing strategy, 11 candidates handed in an offer. A jury compared and evaluated these offers with a favourable result for the management developing bureau Berenschot Belgium. Berenschot has an extensive experience in city marketing for large cities, they already developed a city marketing strategy for cities as Amsterdam, Leiden and Maastricht.

<sup>51</sup> [http://www.feweb.vu.nl/ersa2005/final\\_papers/395.pdf](http://www.feweb.vu.nl/ersa2005/final_papers/395.pdf)

<sup>52</sup> Strategic note of the city of Ghent for 2007-2012, approved by the city council in December 2007.

<sup>53</sup> Nathalie Dumon is adjunct of the directorate of the department of city promotion and sports. Interview d.d. 15 May 2008.

Berenschot did desk research, market research, organised discussion groups, ordered InSites Consulting to do research on the image of Ghent. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of February 2008, a 'Groot Overleg' ('large consideration') was organised. The city of Ghent suggested to do this because they wanted to have a larger basis for their marketing strategy and wanted to check if their stakeholders (University, cultural institutions, the university hospital, the port of Ghent, large companies, resident's associations etc.) and residents agreed with the ideas presented by Berenschot. People were able to cast their vote on the proposed dimensions. The account of the 'Groot overleg' is enclosed (see appendix 3).

As a result of their research, Berenschot delivered a report to the city of Ghent 'City marketing Ghent: proposal of a brand concept' in February 2008. As a conclusion of their research, they suggested that Ghent should focus on the following three pillars: knowledge and innovation; urban living and Ghent as cultural city. The corresponding values for these pillars are: innovative, authentic and accessible. In the 'Groot Overleg' it was suggested to replace the value 'accessible' by 'tolerant'. Tourism is not one of the pillars the marketing plan will focus on, so it is not a priority for the future.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of May the bench of alderman took notice of this proposal but it was not yet approved. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of May a debate took place between the management team and the city council.

The next step in the process will be the creative translation of the brand concept of Ghent in a slogan and logo. Five communication bureaus were selected to make a proposition for this. This concept will be chosen on consultation with the several stakeholders of the city. The final logo and slogan will then be used on all communication of the city of Ghent.

The final step in this stage will be the implementation of the marketing strategy on all aspects of the city's policy. Berenschot will analyse the several parties in order to determine their power of decision. An organisational structure with people from the several stakeholders will be formed who will take the decisions in relation with the city marketing of Ghent. They will decide which events or initiatives will be financed

or receive sponsoring. These events will have to correspond with the pillars and values set out in the marketing plan.

### *10.1 Mega event hosting*

One of the strategic goals set out in the strategic note for 2007-2012 of the Department of City promotion and Sports is to effectively identify, prepare and coordinate events that strengthen the image of the city. There are three operational goals related with this strategic goal. The first aim is to structure and open up the knowledge and expertise in relation to events. Another goal is to integrate and professionally organise events. Finally, Ghent wants to attract image reinforcing events pro-actively. This makes clear that the Department of City promotion and Sports wants to focus on events and improve their approach of events for the future. Ghent hosts several events and festivals such as the Festival of Flanders, the International Film Festival of Flanders Ghent, the Ghent Floralties, The Six Days of Ghent (cycling event). These are all famous events, but they are not mega events. Ghent does not have the resources or the capacities to organise mega events.

The most important event for the city are the Ghent Festivities, one of the largest cultural popular festivals in Europe. They take place every year in the week of the 21<sup>st</sup> of July and last for ten days. It is the 165<sup>th</sup> edition of the 'Gentse Feesten' this year. This event attracts a lot of tourists and visitors as well as inhabitants. In 2006, the Ghent Festivities attracted approximately 1.3 to 1.4 million visitors. There are several festivals within the Ghent Festivities: 10 Days Off, Polé Polé, comedy festival, The International Street theatre Festival... But despite its international reputation, the Ghent Festivities remain mainly regionally-oriented. The festival is popular with tourists from the Netherlands and visitors from other Belgian provinces. For some inhabitants of Ghent the Ghent Festivities have become less attractive because of all the visitors and tourists coming to Ghent during that period.

Following the organisation of 'Flikkendag', Ghent will organise a 'Sara-dag' on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June 2008 where the popular VTM series will be promoted. It is organised in cooperation with 'Gent Verwent' and wants to promote Ghent as a shopping city.

Just as 'Flikken' was set in Ghent, a new VTM series 'Lalola', the successor of 'Sara' will be set in Ghent as well. The city paid 40 000 euros to get the series to Ghent. The shootings will start next month and the TV series will be seen on television in fall.

## *10.2 Relationship City of Ghent and Ghent University*

Ghent would not be the same city without its students; the students are part of the image of the city. The university counts over 30 000 students every year. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of May 2008, I interviewed Tom Desmedt, head of the communication department of Ghent University, about the role the city in itself plays in the decision making process of students to come and study here (see appendix 4). The City of Ghent and Ghent University are closely related. It is partly because of the image of the city and its profile that the University is able to attract foreign students and researchers. The alderman of Education, Rudy Coddens, has the right to vote in the board of the University. There are several consultative bodies between the University and the City of Ghent that function in two ways.

Besides distance from home, the city in itself is given as the second reason why students chose to study in Ghent. A study of MTB-students in 2005 for Ghent University showed the same result. The accessibility, the housing, the nightlife and the cultural life are important elements to choose for Ghent as the city to study. The City of Ghent is conscious of the importance of the students for the city and Ghent University is aware of the city's importance for its students, but they will not specifically focus on it. The university is inseparable from the city but it will not promote Ghent in itself in its communication to future students.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Interview Tom Desmedt, 16 May 2008.

## **PART III: INTERNSHIP AT MARKETING DIVISION OF TOURIST OFFICE**

I did my internship at the division 'Marketing and Data processing' of the Tourist Office. This division is responsible for the marketing of the Tourist Office and the informatics. On my first day I first got some more information about the structure and activities of the Tourist Office of Ghent from Mrs. Anita Waeytens. Afterwards, Kathy De Man led me around the office and introduced me to the members of staff, afterwards we went to the Information Office at the belfry. Thanks to their friendly welcome I felt at home immediately and already knew that my internship would be a pleasant and unforgettable experience. I was able to work independently on my research using all the resources available at the Tourist Office. I had my own desk, computer and my own e-mail address. Everyone was always ready to give me information or to answer my questions.

### **1. Research topic**

The goal of my research was to analyse Ghent in the written press of the neighbouring countries (France, Germany, The Netherlands, UK and Spain). The first element of my assignment was to draw up an inventory of as much travel magazines and travel guides as possible.

Next to this, I had to find out in which travel guides Ghent was present and if the city was present, in which way it was represented. It is also important for the Tourist Office to know in which travel guides Ghent does not appear and when new editions appear or are planned to appear. A following aspect that is interesting is whether the information in the travel guides is accurate and up-to-date and to what extent the information is copied from other travel guides.

Concerning the travel magazines it was not necessary to research whether there has already been published an article about Ghent in the past. This was not feasible either; it is not possible to get all the issues of all these magazines of the past years.

The most important aspect of this inventory are the contact data of the publishers and the scope of the magazines. The Tourist Office could invite some of these journalists in the future and encourage them to write an article about Ghent for their magazine.

Next to this, I was also asked to take a look at what information about Ghent – next to the information provided at the Information Office – could be found once the tourists are already in Ghent. Normally, tourists buy travel guides of their travel destination in their own country, so that they can already read on the way. We wanted to know which information in their native language they could find in the bookshops in Ghent. The starting point here is: I am a tourist in Ghent, how do I get information about Ghent?

## **2. Methodology**

The first thing I did was to contact the BTO's<sup>55</sup> of France, Germany, The Netherlands, UK and Spain if they could give me some more information about the travel magazines and travel guides that were available in the respective countries.

I also contacted Kristof Dams of Use-It, the Tourist Office for young people. In 2006, Use-it – in cooperation with Tourism Flanders – conducted a research about the budget travel guides about Flanders. Since this research topic was quite related to mine, I contacted Kristof Dams to give me some more information about his research project and the methodology he used.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April I went to the bookshops Standaard Boekhandel, Fnac, Atlas & Zanzibar and the newspaper shop Universal News in Ghent. I made an inventory of all the travel guides and travel magazines that were present there, this document is appendix 5. It might be argued that the Zanzibar travel bookshop is too far from the city centre for tourists but I decided to include it for several reasons. The bookshop can easily be accessed by tram no. 1 coming from the station to the city centre or in the other direction, the tram practically stops right in front of the door and

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<sup>55</sup> BTO = Belgian Tourist Office

moreover it is the only specialised travel bookshop in Ghent. It was also the only bookshop where I found a travel guide in Spanish.

I have processed the information I received from the BTO's about the travel magazines and travel guides into an inventory. I completed this with information I have found myself through Google, Amazon etc. The lists are found in appendices 6 (inventory travel magazines) & 7 (inventory travel guides) and are not exhaustive. It would take more than 5 weeks to find all the travel magazines and travel guides that are available, but I tried to find as much as possible and those that are the most important and relevant.

I have drawn up a list with all the travel guides that I have discussed (appendix 8). These travel guides were travel guides that were present at the tourist office and five extra travel guides that I have bought during my internship. Of these 22 travel guides, there are five in Dutch and from a Belgian publisher, two in Dutch but from a publisher from The Netherlands, ten in English, four in French and one in Spanish. Unfortunately, I was unable to discuss a German travel guide since there was no travel guide in German available in any Standaard Boekhandel in the country, so the travel guide had to come from Germany and the delivery time was too long.

For each of these travel guides I looked at the share of Ghent in them, which monuments, hotels, restaurants, shops and cafés were discussed, which pictures were published, if there was a detailed map included etc.

### **3. Conclusion and recommendations**

The first element that struck me was that there are no German travel guides available in Fnac nor in Standaard Boekhandel so the German tourist would not be able to find a travel guide in his mother tongue in Ghent. For Spanish tourists there is not much information to find either, only in Atlas & Zanzibar bookshop there was a Spanish travel guide available but this shop is not located in the city centre.

The first thing that catches attention when you take a look at the inventory of travel guides is that there are a lot of travel guides that do not have a guide about Belgium. A second element which is important is that there is no guide in the foreign countries that deals with Ghent alone. The only exception here is *Essential Ghent* of AA world travel guides. Belgian publishers do have travel guides about Ghent such as *Gent onder vriendinnen* or *Gentse Toeren*, both published by Lannoo.

With regard to the other travel guides there are four possibilities. The first is that they discuss Belgium (whether together with Luxembourg or not) such as *The Rough Guide to Belgium & Luxembourg*, *Guía Total Bélgica/Luxemburgo*, *Michelin's Guide Vert Belgique et GD Luxembourg*, *Lonely Planet's Belgium & Luxembourg*.

A second possibility is that the four most important cities of Flanders (being Brussels, Bruges, Antwerp & Ghent) are discussed together, for example in: *Capitool reisgidsen: Brussel, Antwerpen, Gent en Brugge*, *The rough guide to BRUSSELS, Bruges, Ghent & Antwerp*.

The next possibility is that Brussels has a separate travel guide in the assortment of the publishers and that Antwerp, Ghent & Bruges are discussed together e.g. *Insight city guide Bruges, Ghent & Antwerp* or *Petit Futé 2007-2008 Bruges-Anvers-Gand*.

The final possibility is that Ghent is discussed together with another Flemish city, either Antwerp (*Footprint Antwerp & Ghent*) or Bruges (*Rough guide directions: Bruges & Ghent*).

As a starting point I took a look at the part about Belgium in general travel guides about Europe. These describe the general characteristics of Belgium and Belgian customs, food, drinks etc.

The *Lonely Planet Europe on a shoestring* describes Belgium as follows: "Belgium's a bizarre little place. Called 'Europe's most eccentric country' in one breath and 'boring' in the next, if you want something offbeat, this is it."<sup>56</sup> According to this guide Belgium's big three are Brussels, Bruges and Antwerp. This guide does mention Ghent as well although it is only worth a day trip. The information given

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<sup>56</sup> *Europe on a shoestring: Big trips on small budgets*. Lonely Planet 2007, p. 115

about the city is very limited and takes up about one page and a half (including map): only the belfry, St. Baafskathedraal and the Adoration of the Mystic Lamb, Gravensteen and SMAK are pointed out as places of interests. The most attention goes to Brussels and to a lesser extent to Bruges and Antwerp.

In *Read this first: Europe* Ghent is not discussed, once again all the attention is given to Brussels, Bruges and Antwerp. Only if you stay for two weeks in the country, you can visit Ghent - according to the guide - which is "medieval Europe's second largest city after Paris and boasts the excellent Fine Arts Museum and good views from its belfry."<sup>57</sup>

Nearly every travel guide includes a statement in which the publisher declares that practical information could change and that they are not responsible for the consequences of any alteration of (practical) information. These statements are all similar to the following one found in the Lonely Planet *Best of Brussels, Bruges, Antwerp & Ghent*:

Although the authors and Lonely Planet have taken all reasonable care in preparing this book, we make no warranty about the accuracy or completeness of its content and, to the maximum extent permitted, disclaim all liability arising from its use.<sup>58</sup>

The publishers also ask the cooperation of the readers in order to inform them about mistakes in the guides. Some publishers encourage travellers to do so by promising them that they will receive their newsletter (Rough Guides), or a copy of a travel guide such as Lonely Planet says:

We love to hear from travellers – your comments keep us on our toes and help make our books better. Our well-travelled team reads every word on what you loved or loathed about this book. Although we cannot reply individually to postal submissions, we always guarantee that your feedback goes straight to the appropriate authors, in time for the next edition. Each person who sends us information is thanked in the next edition – and the most useful submissions are rewarded with a free book.<sup>59</sup>

Other travel guides declare that their authors are not allowed to accept any reduction or compensation which could influence the things they write in the travel guides. People who meet authors or journalists who do so, could file a complaint as *Le guide du Routard* describes:

<sup>57</sup> *Read this first: Europe*. Lonely Planet 2000, p. 204

<sup>58</sup> *Best of Brussels, Bruges, Antwerp & Ghent*. Lonely Planet 2006, p. 2

<sup>59</sup> *Belgium & Luxembourg*. Lonely Planet 2007, p. 340

Avis aux hôteliers et aux restaurateurs: les enquêteurs du *Guide du Routard* travaillent dans le plus strict anonymat. Aucune réduction, aucun avantage quelconque, aucune rétribution n'est jamais demandé en contrepartie. Face aux aigrefins, la loi autorise les hôteliers et restaurateurs à porter plainte.<sup>60</sup>

Ghent is often praised as a wonderful medieval city, next to Bruges. Bruges however is described as Belgium's tourist pull or ville-musée<sup>61</sup> whereas Ghent is described as an « undiscovered gem ». Ghent and Bruges are described as (ancient) rivals, but while Ghent remains a quintessentially Flemish city with a tourist industry, with Bruges it is the other way around according to the Rough Guides.<sup>62</sup>

Le guide *Évasion*<sup>63</sup> describes Ghent as follows:

Capitale culturelle de la Flandre, fière d'avoir vu naître Charles Quint, Gand est une cité industrielle et portuaire qui a conservé en son centre, enlacés dans les méandres de la Lys, des quartiers anciens qui renaissent lentement après une longue décrépitude. Elle rassemble des monuments remarquables et des trésors artistiques de premier plan, en tête desquels le prestigieux retable de *l'Agneau mystique* des frères Van Eyck, conservé dans la cathédrale Saint-Bavon (...)

Alors que Bruges se contente de gothique et de Renaissance, qu'Anvers étale son vernis XVIe siècle et baroque, Gand prend ses aises avec tous les styles. (...)

Mais Gand, ce sont aussi des habitants simples et chaleureux, bagarreurs et bons vivants, parmi lesquels sont nés quelques génies contemporains tels que Horta ou Maeterlinck. Ses 17 000 étudiants contribuent à répandre une ambiance décontractée et permissive assez semblable à celle qu'on peut trouver à Amsterdam. La ville se goûte pleinement lors des fêtes de juillet, lorsque la vie nocturne envahit tard le soir les places et les terrasses des innombrables estaminets.<sup>64</sup>

Ghent is praised for its vibrant atmosphere – and the students who contribute to this – its canals and its Flemish art and architecture. However, in this quote there is already some false information to be found: there are much more than 17 000 students in Ghent. The university alone has already approximately 30 000 students, and there are circa 60 000 students in total. This guide dates from 2007, so the number of 17 000 students is completely wrong.

Other recent travel guides have included false information as well. The most recurrent mistake is that the travel guides still include the Bijlokemuseum as one of the city's musea, while it is already closed down since 2005 and the buildings are being altered at the moment for the STAM, the new museum that will open in 2009.

The *Insight city guide to Bruges, Ghent & Antwerp* (2006) still names the

<sup>60</sup> Belgique. Le guide du Routard 2007, p. 2

<sup>61</sup> Belgique. Le guide du Routard 2007, p. 271

<sup>62</sup> Rough Guide Directions: Bruges & Ghent. Rough Guides 2008, p. 108

<sup>63</sup> *Guide Evasion : Bruges et la région flamande*, Paris: Hachette Tourisme, 2007.

<sup>64</sup> *Guide Evasion : Bruges et la région flamande*, Paris: Hachette Tourisme, 2007, p. 120

Bijlokemuseum and mentions the city parade as one of Ghents events as well but the city parade took place only once in Ghent, in 2003. *Le guide Evasion* makes the same mistake with relation to the Bijlokemuseum, while this is a travel guide of 2007, so the information should have already been updated. The same mistake is made once more in *Le guide du Routard Belgique* (2007) and in *Guía total: Bélgica – Luxemburgo* (2007).

Whereas other travel guides are really accurate and up-to-date. The *Rough Guide directions Bruges & Ghent* (2008) already mentions the new museum STAM that will open at the Bijloke in 2009. The *Gids voor Vlaanderen*<sup>65</sup> is really detailed, accurate, up-to-date and complete.

In the travel guides that discuss Belgium as a whole the four largest cities (Brussels, Bruges, Antwerp & Ghent) take in a large part. In the *Rough Guide to Belgium & Luxembourg* (2002), Brussels takes in the largest part with 67 pages in the guide followed by Antwerp (30 pages), Bruges (26 pages) and Ghent (23 pages). *Le Guide du Routard* (2007) discusses Brussels in 98 pages, Antwerp takes in 38 pages in the guide, followed by Bruges (32 pages) and finally Ghent (28 pages). In *Guía total: Bélgica – Luxemburgo* (2007) the largest share is for Brussels (40 pages), followed by Antwerp (21 pages), Bruges (13 pages) and Ghent (12 pages). Michelin's Green Guide of *Belgium & Luxembourg* has divided (2005) the cities as follows in their guide: Brussels (35 pages), Antwerp (22 pages), Bruges & Ghent (both 16 pages each). In the ANWB *Goud Vlaanderen* (2005), Antwerp takes in the largest part with 23 pages, followed by Brussels (22 pages), Ghent (11 pages) and Bruges (10 pages). The Lonely Planet *Belgium & Luxembourg* (2007) has reserved most pages for Brussels, namely 52, Antwerp is second with 28 pages and Bruges and Ghent have the same share in the guide with 19 pages each.

The share these cities take in in the several guides determines their importance, Brussels always has the largest part in the travel guides, followed by Antwerp, Bruges and Ghent mostly take in a similar share, but Bruges is often discussed more extensively.

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<sup>65</sup> Gids voor Vlaanderen. Lannoo: 2007

What is also striking is that in most of the travel guides the same restaurants and pubs are included. The restaurants that are most frequently found were: Amadeus, Avalon, Bij den Wijzen en den Zot, De Blauwe Zalm, Pakhuis, 't Buikske vol and De 3 Biggetjes. In relation to (beer) cafés 't Dreupelkot, Het Waterhuis aan de Bierkant, 't Velootje, Pink Flamingo's, Trollenkelder and the Dulle Griet are very popular.

All of the travel guides mention the Ghent Festivities as the major event in Ghent.

The most recent editions of the travel guides are: *The Rough Guide to Belgium & Luxembourg* (February 2008), *Groene Gids België & Luxemburg* (May 2008). A new edition of the Michelin Travel Guide for Belgium & Luxembourg is planned to be available from the 15<sup>th</sup> of October, 2008.

With regard to the travel magazines the following can be said. The paper versions of the travel magazines are still very important. Travel magazines are often quite expensive – approximately 5 euros - and they often look very glossy, with a lot of beautiful pictures. Travel magazines are very attractive for their readers. However, in the future, webzines (e.g. Ulysemag.com, Atamag etc) will become of greater importance for the travelling business and the possibilities of this means of communication are endless. A lot of magazines already have an on line version and some of them can be glanced through on the website. On some websites travellers can compose and print a travel guide about the destination of their choice. Next to this, travelling blogs play an important role in relation to the communication about travelling as well. There are great opportunities in these fields for the future.

For France, *Geo* magazine is the most important travel magazine with a circulation of 298 912 copies and a total readership of 4 968 000. For Germany, two travel magazines are very important: *ADAC Reisemagazin* and *MERIAN*. *ADAC Reisemagazin* has a readership of 3.7 million, with a print number of 262 000 copies and the number of copies that are sold of 184 260. 80% of *ADAC Reisemagazin's* readers are subscriptions. *ADAC* is the n° 1 of travel magazines in Germany, followed by *Geo Special* (1.8 million readers) and *MERIAN* (1 million readers).

For The Netherlands, *Kampioen* is very important, it has a readership of 6.7 million and a print number of 3.4 million a month. This monthly magazine aims at families and deals with recreation, travelling , traffic etc.

*Viajes* (National Geographic) is important in Spain. Recently, Lonely Planet has launched its travel magazine in Spain. There is a large offer of travel magazines in Spanish. Spain has a very active magazine market with huge distribution channels through kiosk selling. News and magazine kiosks are an important part of the Spanish market.

Internationally, *Condé Nast Traveler* and *National Geographic* magazine are very important. They are available in several countries around the world. *Condé Nast Traveler* is a luxurious and glossy magazine in English. *National Geographic* is published in several languages such as Dutch, German, French, English and Spanish.

## **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

My internship at the Tourist Office of Ghent was a very positive experience that enriched my knowledge. I feel that I am more prepared to find a job and go to work now.

First of all, the atmosphere at the Tourist Office of Ghent was very positive, all members of staff were very friendly and co-operative. When I was shown around the building and introduced to the whole staff on my first day I already realised that there was a pleasant work atmosphere and that all people got along well.

Since I did my internship at the marketing department of the Tourist Office of Ghent I have learned how important it is for a city to promote itself. I have learned more about the tourist industry and about city promotion. Tourism can be very lucrative for several parties. The things I have learned during the marketing course were useful, since city marketing is a form of marketing. It was interesting to see what the activities of a marketing department of a Tourist Office are such as developing new tourist brochures, cycle routes etc.

The optional course Spanish of the MTB programme I have taken during the first semester was also very useful for my internship since I researched Spanish travel magazines and travel guides as well.

In addition, I got acquainted with the structure and operation of a public sector organisation. I realised that it takes up a lot of time and effort for plans to be approved. My internship had to be approved by the bench of Aldermen as well and this took quite some time.

On a personal level I had to adapt myself to working life and working hours. The first week I was really exhausted when I arrived home, I have learnt that it takes some time to adjust to the working rhythm. I also found it very tiring to work on the computer for a whole day so maybe I will try to find a job that is more varied.

I was glad that I have chosen for an internship in Ghent, so that it did not take a long time to get to and from work. By bicycle, it took only five minutes to get from my student room to the Tourist Office. This is a factor that will certainly play an important role in my choice for a job, I do not want my work to be very far from the place where I live, so that I have some spare time in the evening.

I learned a lot by following the MTB programme and I am well pleased that I took the decision to study Multilingual Business Communication. In secondary school I studied Economics-Modern Languages since these were my major interests. I did not want to study economics at university for four years but I did want to freshen up what I had already learnt in secondary school. MTB freshened up my knowledge of economics and accountancy and I have learnt something about marketing, market research and trade law. Moreover, my communication skills – more specifically with regard to business-related terms – in both English and French were improved.

During the MTB programme I have learned that it is not always easy to work as a team, everyone has his or her own opinion and some people are willing to do more work than others. I did not experience this problem during my internship since I did my research independently. I was offered full autonomy to decide how I would handle the research so this was a good opportunity to develop myself and to show my capacities.

In general, I feel that MTB is a very useful education - especially for those students who studied languages before. I believe that MTB has extended my chances to find a job in various sectors and functions.

However, some improvements could be made to the programme. There could be more variety in the guest lectures, some of them were really interesting but the majority of the lectures did not have the announced subject, but were just another presentation about the working of an advertising agency filled with commercials.

I can conclude by saying that the internship has been a great experience. I have learnt a lot about the working of a non-profit organisation, the Tourist Office and

professional life in general. Moreover, I got a greater insight in my personal capacities and preferences with regard to my professional life. Working at the marketing department of the Tourist Office and writing this dissertation helped me to understand the importance of tourism and city marketing for a city. I feel that my traineeship was an excellent experience that will benefit my opportunities in the job market. The internship was the perfect closing of a very interesting, social and intense year.

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Interview, d.d. 15 May 2008

Ghent is a compact, authentic city where the past and present co-exist in perfect balance. Walking through the city is like travelling through time: you turn the corner and just like that, you go from the fourteenth century to the twenty-first. In Ghent pounds the young heart of a cultural city filled with music, theatre, film and visual arts. Because of its central location in Flanders, Ghent is an ideal operating base to visit the Flemish Art Cities. Ghent is ready to welcome you with open arms! 112 is the general number used in all countries of the European Union to contact the emergency services: police, fire brigade or medical assistance. The number operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. 112 Ambulance/Fire Department/Police. Even still in 2002, market research conducted in the neighboring countries showed that more than half of the international visitors believed that Rwanda was an unsafe destination. 6. (Grosspietsch, 2006). Surveys carried out in 2003, however, showed that the satisfaction level of visitors for safety and stability was very high. It has received positive coverage in over 350 credible international press publications, as well as in travel guides such as Bradt travel guide, Lonely Planet and others. Furthermore, the country has been represented at major tourism fairs (ITB in Berlin, World Travel Market [WTM] in London) since 2000 and has even earned the first prize for the best African stand at the ITB for three consecutive years, 2007-2009, and at WTM in 2009. The old city of Ghent (in Flemish Gent; in French Gand) is a picturesque muddle of alleyways rimmed by quaint steeple-roofed buildings running along pretty canals. Along with Bruges, Ghent is Belgium's star architectural attraction, but unlike Bruges, it comes without the tour bus hordes. A walk through town on a summer's evening, when most of the important buildings are illuminated, is an unforgettable experience, as is a canal boat ride down the many branches of the Scheldt and Leie Canals that intersect the city. For history-lovers and architecture fans, Ghent can't be beaten