



UNIVERSITAT ROVIRA i VIRGILI

# FACULTY OF TOURISM AND GEOGRAPHY

FINAL MASTER PROJECT

## **WALKING GASTRONOMIC TOURS OF BARCELONA**

ACADEMIC TUTOR: ANTONIO PAOLO RUSSO

PROFESSIONAL TUTOR: GIANLUCA CAMAGGIO

STUDENT: IZABELLA SHAHSUVARYAN

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## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Framework of the internship

As a part of the Master course of Management of Tourism Destinations at University of Rovira i Virgili the final internship took place May-July 2019 at Turisme de Barcelona. Being the professional tutor of the internship Gianluca Camaggio (Sales Director of TdB) assigned me to a project which I had to work on individually. The main scope of the project was the Market Research of Walking Gastronomic Tours of Barcelona. The final aim of the research was to come up with suggestions for a better product by analyzing the current offer, understanding the main players of the market as well as by identifying the main gaps mentioned by customers.

In previous years Turisme de Barcelona was one of the first organizations to launch a similar product which, however, did not have much success. In the following years more and more companies as well as individuals (in case of Airbnb hosts) have found it attractive to create walking gastronomic tours for tourists seeing Barcelona as a “foodie” destination.

Thus, in 2019 Turisme de Barcelona became interested once again in entering the market of gastrotours. However, in order to avoid the previous problems, they needed to do an initial market research to be able to analyze both the offer and the demand. The results would give a direction for the creation of a more sophisticated tour which would cater perfectly to the needs of the customers and at the same time would highlight the authenticity of Barcelona.

The internship project was therefore divided in the following phases:

1. Data collection through various platforms
2. Analysis of the current offer (tour providers, types of tours, price, duration, languages, areas etc.)
3. Analysis of the demand (what do people think about the tours, what they like and what they dislike)
4. Conclusions based on the data

5. Suggestions for Turisme de Barcelona with the aim of creating a successful walking gastronomic tour

## 1.2. Host Organization

### *1.2.1. Presentation and history of Turisme de Barcelona*

Nowadays Barcelona is one of the most popular tourist destinations of the world. Millions of visitors come every year to enjoy the multifaceted offer of the city. However, this was not always the case. The boom in tourism development of Barcelona took place after the Olympic Games (1992) which brought dramatical changes in the international positioning of the city.

The success of this big sport event shed a new light on Barcelona by putting it on the international travel map. After the Olympic Games, Turisme de Barcelona was created in 1993 as the result of public-private cooperation. In fact, Consortium Turisme de Barcelona was created by the City Council of Barcelona, the Official Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Navigation of Barcelona, and the Foundation for the Promotion of Barcelona and became the official entity for promoting and boosting the tourism, cultural, commercial offer in Barcelona and its environment. Even though created in 1993, it started to function on January 1<sup>st</sup> 1994 “*which was the beginning of a new phase, a new model and a new tourism offer from the city*” (Barcelona Tourism Activity Report, 2014).

The role of Turisme de Barcelona was huge on the history of tourism promotion of the Catalan Capital as its primary task was to promote the city to its target markets. This was revolutionary at a time as Barcelona was the first city on the Iberian Peninsula to have a tourism promoter financed and directed by the public and private sectors. Probably the public-private cooperation was one of the factors of success as it showcased to the world that united forces are needed when dealing with the destination promotion.

So, initially Turisme de Barcelona had one clear objective: the growth of tourism activity in the city. To achieve this goal, additional economic and human resources were provided.

Unlike previous conventional model of undifferentiated offer Turisme de Barcelona implemented a new model of segmented markets: different Barcelonas for different markets. This was a cornerstone in increasing the number of visitors to the city as people

could find something special for their interests. Besides, this strategy allowed to guarantee high number of tourists all year round.

However, as a response to tourism management in the time of crisis the Strategic Plan (2010-2015) was initiated followed by the 2015-2020 plan which challenged overtourism and had 2 main objectives:

- Improve the tourism activity
- Improve the way it affects the city

From then on, the promotion of the city of Barcelona was not the only goal of TdB but moreover the institution started to pursue the reach of sustainability in terms of environment, culture and local residents.

As part of that strategy TdB started the cooperation with Diputacio de Barcelona with the aim of dispersion of tourism activity. Carrying the slogan of “Barcelona is much more” the collaboration had the goal of uniting the efforts of Barcelona city and the surroundings in attracting potential tourists.

### *1.2.2. Institutional set-up*

#### Governing Bodies

The Governing bodies of Turisme de Barcelona are the General Council and the Executive Committee.

The General Council is the highest representation of Turisme de Barcelona. The General Council is chaired by the Mayor or Mayoress of the City. Today, the President of the General Council is the Honourable Ada Colau i Ballano.

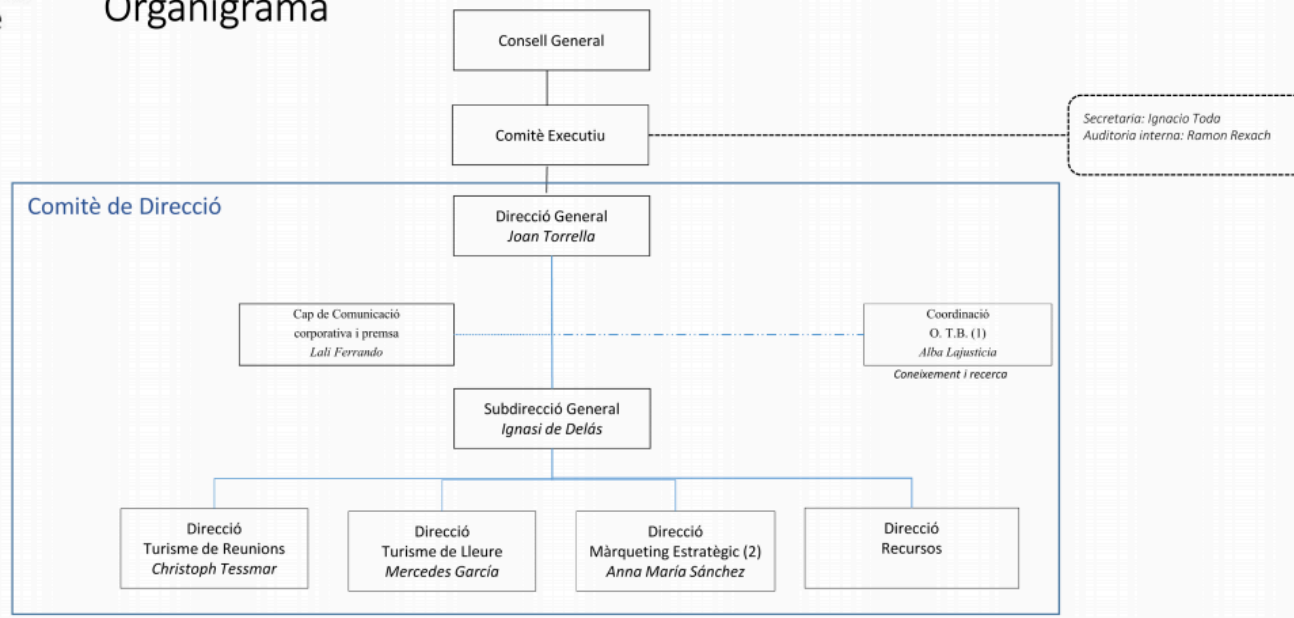
The Executive Committee is the permanent governing and administrative body of Turisme de Barcelona with the broadest faculties in legal and economic order, except those reserved for the General Council. The President of the Executive Committee also chairs the Official Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Navigation of Barcelona, who can delegate a member of the Plenary of said Chamber. Today, the President of the Executive Committee is Mr. Joan Gaspart i Solves.

## Functions

The essential function of Turisme de Barcelona is the promotion of tourism and commerce in the city. In order to do achieve the goal TdB can perform the following functions (Official Website of TdB):

- Promoting activities aimed at increasing the demand for tourism and commerce.
- Managing, promoting and performing all those citizen activities that may benefit increasing and improving the quality of the touristic and commercial offer in Barcelona.
- Promoting the active presence of Barcelona in the tourist market, in an attempt to co-ordinate the interested sectors in fostering tourism and commerce.
- Encouraging, helping and making it possible to adapt the structures and services in the tourism offer, by supporting the private initiative in the sector.
- Encouraging and promoting conventions, meetings and similar activities, both national and International, in the city of Barcelona.
- Boosting the tourism sector in areas relating to accommodation, restaurants, travel agencies and cultural and leisure activities.
- Studying the city's problems with tourism and commerce by adopting or proposing the measures considered the most appropriate for solving them.
- Preparing the necessary information material, publicity and image to inform people about the resources in Barcelona, in an attempt to attract visitors.
- Working alongside other public or private entities to promote Barcelona, and attract visitors.
- Promoting and, if necessary, participating in agreements with other entities, public or private, to finance tourism and commercial promotion campaigns.
- Contributing to defending the city's natural resources and social-cultural values.





- (1) Observatori de Turisme a Barcelona (OTB) és una plataforma de treball formada per l'Ajuntament de Barcelona, la Diputació de Barcelona, la Cambra de Comerç de Barcelona i Turisme de Barcelona.  
(2) El conveni Destinació Barcelona 2019 (Ajuntament, Diputació i Turisme de Barcelona) comparteix la direcció estratègica de màrqueting de la Destinació entre Turisme de Barcelona i Diputació de Barcelona

FIGURE 2 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF TDB

Source: *Turisme de Barcelona official website*

Besides it is important to note that there are 10 programs within Turisme de Barcelona which facilitate the specific target segmentation. The programs are the following:

- Barcelona Convention Bureau
- Barcelona Shopping City
- Barcelona Sports
- Barcelona Pirineus - Snow and Mountains
- Barcelona Sea
- Barcelona Culture
- Barcelona Food and Wine
- Barcelona Premium & Weddings



- Barcelona Sustainable Tourism
- Visit Barcelona Tickets (Commercial Department)

Each program has its member companies which in return to annual fee are featured in TdB's catalogues or other promotional materials. This is especially beneficial for small and medium sized enterprises as their own budget might not be enough to attract customers and become visible in the fierce competition existing in Barcelona currently.

### *1.2.3. Commercial Department Presentation*

The Commercial Department of Turisme de Barcelona is relatively new compared to other units of the organization. As it has been mentioned above TdB is based on the public-private cooperation. It is self-financed hence the commercial department guarantees the money flow needed for the existence of this institution.

Turisme de Barcelona offers more than 140 products including but not limited to:

- Barcelona Card
- Barcelona Bus Turistic
- Barcelona Walking Tours
- Catalunya Bus Turistic
- Articket Barcelona
- Teleferic de Montjuic
- Casa Battlo Tickets
- La Pedrera Tickets
- Hola Barcelona Travel Card
- Mirador de Colon
- Barcelona Zoo
- Etc.

Having the connections with the majority of the market players TdB ensures the highest quality of the provided services and gives an elevated sense of trust among the tourists.

### 1.3. Objective of the Internship

#### *1.3.1. Tasks Assigned throughout the internship*

As mentioned above, the main tasks of the internship were related to the project of Market Research about “Walking Gastronomic Tours of Barcelona”. Since the project had been carried out individually the scope of the tasks were elaborated based on the needs of the project. Hence depending on the phase of the research process various tasks were required.

After the collection of all the relevant data the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the project started: Quantitative and Qualitative Analyses. In this phase the important tasks were connected with analysing the data in regard to the final aim of the project. The final results of this phase are presented in section 4.

After the analysis of data final conclusions and suggestions were made in order to help Turisme de Barcelon create a product which will fill the missing gaps of the current offer and create an additional value for the customers.

#### *1.3.2. Additional activities*

Upon the completion of the project the remaining time of the internship allowed me to have additional meetings with the representatives of various programs of TdB such as Ignasi de Delas (Deputy Director of TdB), Silvia Flores (Coordinator of International Relations), Eva Camins (Product Manager Shopping Tourism), Mireia Tubau (Product Manager Barcelona Weddings), Maria Parrilla (Product Manager Cultural Tourism), Josep Diago (Head of Active and Cruise Tourism) and Josep Maria (Sustainable Tourism).

Each of them shared their knowledge and expertise regarding their department and their own functions and tasks.

Having the exceptional opportunity to have interviews with those people enhanced my knowledge of internal processes of Turisme de Barcelona. Furthermore, it helped me understand that each program operates individually, however, creating the touch points among each other.

One thing which is worth mentioning is that all the interviewees had one vision and strong belief in what they did. All the interviews except with Ignasi de Delas were conducted in Spanish.

## **2. THE ROLE OF THE GASTROTOURISM IN DEVELOPMENT OF URBAN TOURISM**

### **2.1. The rising importance of food experiences and the “gastroscape” for urban tourism competitiveness**

In the recent years the industry of tourism has registered a considerable growth. Unlike the previous century the last 20 years were significant by the number of tourists worldwide. An activity which once was considered only affordable for bourgeoisie have become a norm for the middle class today.

The rapid development of tourism was accompanied with constant changes in trends and preferences of the travelers. While in the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century people would travel to learn more about the historical and cultural heritage of the destination, in the past decade the travel interests have changed. Tourists started to search for more specialty which made destination managers refine their offer.

As a result, gastrotourism among many other tourism forms and products has become a distinct way for establishing competitive advantage for a destination. According to Williams et al. (2013) Gastrotourism is:

*“Intentional pursuit of appealing, authentic, memorable food and beverage related experiences of all kinds, while travelling internationally, regionally or even locally”.*

While countries such as Italy, France, Spain or Belgium have already shaped their “gastroimage” in the minds of millions of travelers, more and more destinations now realize the importance of gastronomic positioning and try to present their offer through various methods.

But why is gastrotourism so popular nowadays and what makes it so attractive for travelers?

As mentioned by Richards (2002), food has become a way to recover our identity. More specifically he gives us the following explanation:

*“With the disintegration of established structures of meaning, people are searching for new sources of identity that provide some security in an increasingly turbulent world”.*

Hence, food is extremely important for people not only from the physiologic point of view but moreover it can be considered as a harbor of security. Pillsbury (1990) even distinguishes two categories in food catering: Body food and Soul food.

When speaking about gastrotourism, it is also important to mention that globalization has played a major role. In fact, globalization is not just a fashionable idea, it is a “concept with consequences” (Hirst 1997:424). As many authors have mentioned in the studies of gastronomy, globalization was also influential in the formation of cuisines and our eating habits. For example, products such as peppers, corn and potatoes were introduced to European cuisine after the discovery of America while a variety of other products were imported to the New World.

As a matter of fact, in their research Hall and Mitchell (1998) illustrate 3 separate stages which brought a rapid change to regional cuisine:

1. Mercantile (from the late 1400s to the 1800s)
2. Migration (from 1600s to 1900s)
3. Technology/Communication (Current period)

During the first period the main objects of exchange were fruits, vegetables and animals. It corresponded to the times of ecological imperialism (Crosby 1986) in which the produce of Asia and the new worlds of the Americas were brought to Europe and vice versa (Sokolov 1993;).

The following centuries were the result of massive migrations from one location to another. Knowing the importance of food in our daily lives people took the products they used in their everyday cooking rituals and as a result those have spread up in the new areas. This period lasted till 1950s.

And, of course, the last wave of change was brought due to the development in technologies and communication and we can witness it as it is of now.

The question of global and local has never been as prevailing as now. What was local once has become global and what is global now can be traced locally. The question is whether the existence of global fast-food chains represents a threat for local players of the market, or it is a necessity to satisfy the needs of certain customers. For example, travelers coming to Barcelona from the US might not always be ready to indulge in the Catalan gastronomy and still crave for their safety harbor at a worldwide-known chain.

Despite the existing discourse regarding the homogenization of food diet from a global perspective, we can notice that the fiercer becomes the competition between destinations the more local culture is valued. Food is definitely a prominent part of the local culture which contributes to the creation of heritage. Hence, we can say that food tourism is related to cultural tourism too.

Now that more light was shed on the development of gastrotourism let's identify the trends in tourism today in regard to gastrotourism. First of all, it is necessary to mention the notion of push and pull factors so popular in the travel industry.

**Push factors** are defined as internal motives or forces that cause **tourists** to seek activities to reduce their needs, while **pull factors** are destination generated forces and the knowledge that **tourists** hold about a destination (Gnoth, 1997).

As specified earlier destination managers use gastrotourism in order to create a competitive advantage which in this case corresponds to pull factors. So which are the push factors coming from the travelers?

In order to answer this question, we need to consider 2 factors: social media and excessive search for authenticity.

With the rise of social media food has become one of the main objects people like to share about. We see all social platforms flooded with pictures of breakfast, lunch and dinners. This is a new phenomenon which did not exist in the past and now has a groundbreaking role. 24/7 connectivity to the world gives us access to millions of people with whom we can share the food on our plate. Going further in the research of social media in regard to our psychology, it gets obvious that majority of people do not share "for the sake of sharing". Rather they want to showcase their purchasing power by letting us know what

they eat and where they eat. Hence, Greg Richards argues the idea that “we are what we eat” (Hjalager & Richards, 2002).

On the other hand, there is a new trend in the travel industry which logically has its reflection on gastrotourism as well. People are looking for authenticity when being on their trip. If it is not authentic, it is not good enough. New traveler does not want to go to a common tourist place, s/he wants to be the one who will visit the place where “locals go”, the place which is not yet spoiled by the wave of tourists.

The search for authenticity and the endless desire to show off to the world can be quite paradoxical. On the one hand, we want to keep the hidden gem we found special to us and if we share with others there is a risk of massification. On the other hand, we would like to be proud of the place that only we were able to find. This type of paradoxical thoughts is very common among travelers nowadays and can seriously impact on the decision-making process.

Taking into consideration the globalization, importance of food in our life as well as the newest trends in tourism it becomes clearer why food experiences are on rise and how destinations can use it for increasing their competitiveness.

## 2.2. Barcelona as a Foodie Destination

Barcelona has highlighted its spot on the international travel map since 1992 after hosting the Olympic Games. From then on, the so-called Barcelona Model was created which became widely recognized as a prime example of “best practice” in urban regeneration (Soro 2017). Despite various opinions regarding the sustainability of the model many tourist destinations has set an example of Barcelona as an icon trying to achieve the same level of success.

Barcelona, which once was considered to be an industrial city, has become the favorite destination for millions of tourists nowadays. It seems as if Barcelona has it all: good weather, beautiful architecture, vast cultural and historical heritage, friendly people and of course delicious food.

In fact, Barcelona has become one of the capitals of gastrotourism due to the Mediterranean cuisine, fresh products, vibrant lifestyle and sophistication of dishes by internationally renowned chefs. In 2016 Catalunya was named European Region of Gastronomy.

The interview with the Deputy Director Ignasi de Delas has revealed that unlike other urban places, Barcelona does not want to position itself as only Michelin-star gastronomic hub, on the contrary the official promotional body thrives to offer food experiences for all types of tourists.

The mix of the local cuisine backed up by history and tradition with the international gastronomy gave it result by making Barcelona a cosmopolitan food destination.

So, on one side there is the Catalan gastronomy, which is a blend of heritage, produce, terroir, tradition, creativity, innovation, and international cuisine which was cultivated by immigrants from various parts of the world.

From this perspective it is interesting to mention the research done by Elsa Soro who has examined the diversity of culinary venues due to the migration processes to Barcelona. In her paper Soro mentions specifically 4 restaurants (La Federal, Meson David, Le Cucine Mandarosso and Chen Ji) in various neighborhoods of Barcelona which have created a lasting image in the eyes of both residents and tourists. In fact, she shows the connection between the location and the culinary type which became popular in a specific area.

The fact that Barcelona is a foodie destination can also be seen from various blog posts online. In one of its articles Forbes also put Barcelona among top 10 food destinations in the world. More specifically Barcelona was ranked the 2<sup>nd</sup> (after San Sebastian) for the best quality of the culinary scene.

The importance of food in the capital of Catalunya can also be traced by the fact that there are around 10000 restaurants and 39 food markets in total. Being traditionally the main places for buying fresh products local residents still enjoy visiting the markets which allow them to have an interpersonal communication with the sellers unlike the chain stores.

Being part of the culture landscape that shapes gastronomic identities, food markets have become tourist attractions as well. La Boqueria is the most prominent example of it. Named as the world's best food market at the Congress of the World Union of Wholesale Markets in Washington 2006 (Website of Turisme de Barcelona) it is one of the landmarks of the city. Located on La Rambla it is flooded with hundreds of tourists on a daily basis. As a

result, majority of locals stopped going there as it ceased to be the authentic market of their times.

Being a foodie destination, it is not surprising that Barcelona offers a wide range of food and wine experiences both by local and international tour providers. In fact, the experiences can take a form of a visit to a specific restaurant/bar/shop or it can be a walking tour with the final aim of gastronomic fusion.

As we can see Barcelona is a trendy foodie destination which can be attractive to tourists not only with its local cuisine but also by all types of gastronomical dishes making gastrotourism one of the distinct types of tourism in the destination.

### 2.3. Case study of Barcelona as ‘gastroscape’

#### 2.3.1. *The ‘Barcelona Brand’*

After the Olympic Games of 1992, Barcelona has transformed into a cosmopolitan city with vibrant lifestyle and international status. Despite not being the capital city Barcelona competes with many European capitals such as London, Paris, Rome or even Madrid.

The following table showcases some of the world rankings in 2018 where Barcelona has been situated on high positions:

<b>Ranking</b>	<b>Title</b>
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Preferred European City for launching a start-up
4 <sup>th</sup>	Most attractive city in the world for working abroad
9 <sup>th</sup>	Urban area in the world in terms of volume of foreign investment projects
3 <sup>rd</sup> -5 <sup>th</sup>	In the world ranking of best business schools



1 <sup>st</sup>	City in the world in terms of international congresses and number of participants
7 <sup>th</sup>	Airport in Europe in terms of number of passengers
4 <sup>th</sup>	Most well-prepared city in the world for a technological future

Source: *Barcelona Observatory 2018*

The image created by the city is quite positive regardless of the interests of the tourists. This is linked to the fact that Barcelona has a set of icons for all types of tastes.

*“Barcelona is a city that brings a smile to people’s faces”*. (Identity and Positioning of Barcelona, A Collaborative Storytelling, 2019)

The same work devises 6 main pillars for the new brand of Barcelona oriented towards globalization and new technological developments keeping people as the main asset of the city. These are the main pillars:

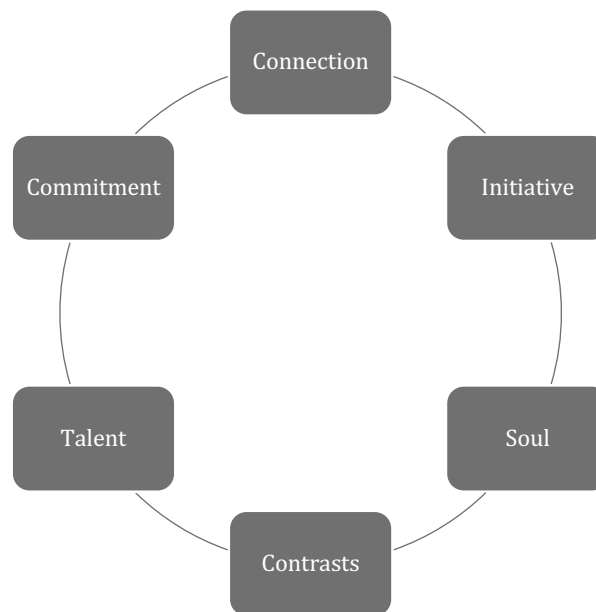


FIGURE 3 BARCELONA BRAND MAIN PILLARS

Each of these pillars shows the main insights and conclusions drawn from numerous workshops including both professionals and citizens and tries to differentiate Barcelona by highlighting its unique points.

Below are the personality traits of Barcelona brand:

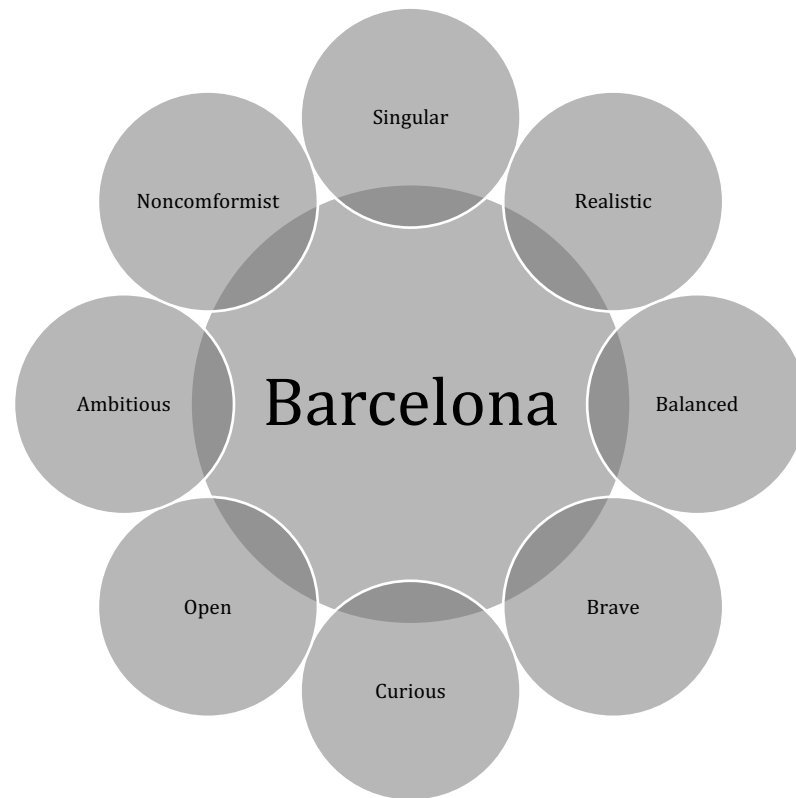


FIGURE 4 BARCELONA BRAND PERSONALITY TRAITS

To sum up, the new positioning of Barcelona aims to brand the city as a place not only attractive for tourism but also a place where people would love to live, work and enjoy their life.

### A history of success

In order to better understand the history of success of Barcelona Brand it is necessary to go back to the first events which contributed to the development of the city by making it one of the most cosmopolitan and vibrant cities of Europe.

The first urban transformation plan (Cerdà Plan) took place in 1856 and allowed to host the Universal Exposition in 1888. This big event for its time had a huge influence on the

city as around 2 million visitors came to Barcelona in 2 months. The impact of the event was considerably big having the direct influence on accommodation sector as well as the urban infrastructure of the city.

The next important year was 1906 when the Commission for the Attraction of Foreigners and Tourists was created. This was the first municipal organization with the aim of tourism promotion in Barcelona. The Commission has established the first tourist information office (the ground floor of City Hall in Plaça Sant Jaume) as well as it has come up with the first poster and slogan for the city: Barcelona ciudad de invierno (Barcelona, a city of Winter).

The Commission for the Attraction of Foreigners and Tourists was soon replaced by the Society for the Attraction of Foreigners which operated for 3 decades (1908-1936). This body was composed of representatives from both public and private sectors which made it stand out as benchmark for other European cities.

The next prominent event that marked an important influence on the formation of the city image of Barcelona was the World's Fair in 1929. Being the host of the event Barcelona showed its commitment to being an open city for tourism.

However, the paradigm shift in the positioning of Barcelona as an international tourist destination happened after the Olympic Games of 1992.

As a part of the preparation works a range of urban projects took place. Due to the restoration and rejuvenation plan the ring roads were constructed, the sea front was restored, El Prat airport was improved as well as the construction facilities were built such as the Olympic Ring in Montjuïc, the Olympic Village and the Collserola Telecommunications Tower. Besides, the museums and other cultural entities were renovated in order to increase the attractiveness of the city. The new hotel plan was also implemented which increased the total number of beds of the city.

As a result, around 10000 athletes from 169 countries participated in the Olympic Games 1992 and thousands of people came to support the sportsmen or entertainment themselves.

From then on, Barcelona gained the hearts of millions of people by becoming one of the most visited cities of the world.

The success of Barcelona model underlies in the following factors:

- Public-Private cooperation
- Favourable socio-economic situation and environment to position Barcelona's tourism model
- Decisive, historic commitment to the professional and events tourism segment

Even though there is a big discourse regarding the sustainability of Barcelona model it is still considered to be a successful one as it made the Destination Barcelona one of the most visited ones in the world by ensuring its economic benefits for the region.

### Current Challenges

According to Barcelona Tourism Activity Report 2014 there are 4 strategic challenges for tourism in Barcelona:

- Territorial de-concentration of tourism
- New governance of tourism within the framework of the city and its territorial surroundings
- Engaging the involvement of society and institutions
- Leadership and improved competitiveness of the destination and of its activities related with tourism

The first challenge is probably the most important one as it causes many negative effects on the city life. The congestion of tourists in certain areas (especially in the area of Ciutat Vella, Park Güell and some areas of the Eixample district) has become a serious issue and is equally not welcomed by residents and tourists. Solution such as selling limited number of tickets for iconic places as Sagrada Familia or Park Güell has become not enough to tackle the problem.

Hence, more efforts are needed in order to disperse the tourism activity of Barcelona. In order to do it official tourism bodies need to enlarge the tourist activity space from the city to Municipality, try to promote other tourist attractions beside the iconic ones and invite tourists to visit new neighborhoods in Barcelona instead of coming to the traditional places time after time.

The second challenge refers to the governance of tourism not only from the promotional perspective but also from the governing side. This means that Turisme de Barcelona together with other institutional bodies needs to manage the whole sector of tourism and does not limit its functions by pure promotion of the destination.

The third challenge is quite important too and should have been acknowledged from the beginning of “Barcelona Model” construction. Involvement of all stakeholders is a key factor in creating a sustainable tourism destination.

In the previous years the tension between tourists and residents started to grow and came to a point when extreme groups commenced to do protests against overtourism and for the first time they organized a manifestation in front of Turisme de Barcelona office (July 2019).

Hence work should be done to improve the community involvement in relation to tourism. On the other hand, the greater cooperation with various travel agents of Catalunya needs to be reinforced which will be beneficial for the whole region.

And finally, the last challenge refers to the sustainable growth of the destination. The accelerated growth model turned out to have many negative externalities which are at a higher cost now to eliminate. However, it is in the interest of the tourism bodies of Barcelona to reinvent the existing model to a more sustainable one from economic, environmental and societal perspectives.

The final goal of TdB as the promoter and the governor of tourism activity of Barcelona should be to ensure the harmony between the tourism activity and the life of the residents and through the coordination of all stakeholders involved. To sum up, this is a quote from the Barcelona Tourism Activity Report 2014

*“...the growth of tourism must be made within the parameters of balance and fairness so that tourism growth produces the least friction possible and provides maximum benefit to the community”.*

Necessity to strengthen the Barcelona brand and defend the quality reputation of the supply towards more genuineness / ‘slower’ and more sustainable products

The Slow Food movement was initiated in Italy by a journalist, Carlo Petrini, and a group of activists in 1980s. The movement rose in contestation and contrast to the ‘fast food culture’ when a first McDonald’s opened in Rome. As a sign of protest, they brought their plates with pasta and started to yell “We do not want Fast Food...we want Slow Food”.

Even though they were not able to stop the rapid spread of fast food chains they achieved some success as they created the community and soon more people joined it. The idea behind their philosophy was to eat good, clean and fair. Besides, they gave a preference to whole foods grown locally as well they chose dishes which would be healthy for both body and mind. Appreciation of food was another important aspect for this community members.

Their initial aim was “to defend regional traditions, good food, gastronomic pleasure and a slow pace of life” (The official website of Slow Food). Originally deriving from Europe nowadays Slow Food Movement has become global and is present in more than 160 countries.

The need of slowing the pace of gastronomy came from the idea that technological developments are not sufficient for the sustainability of the world. Therefore, more and more people joined the movement with the same ideology of reducing the food waste.

Hence it can be concluded that slow food philosophy is directly linked with the sustainability.

Barcelona is also part of the movement with its joint association. They work with local producers as well small businesses with the aim of improving ecologically high-quality products and increase the connection between land and local cuisine. On their official website 30 restaurants are listed under the title “Slow Food”.

Turisme de Barcelona has shown its dedication to the promotion of Sustainability. In fact, it became the first city in the world to be awarded Biosphere certification. The award recognizes the city as a sustainable tourism destination committed to developing responsible tourism and including sustainable, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic criteria.

Thus, TdB collaborates with restaurants using local products and incorporates measures in order to reduce waste production.

However, coming back to the Slow Food philosophy, one should notice that according to TdB only 30 restaurants in the total offer of 10000 is a quite low number. Moreover, there is a growing number of fast food chains which did not exist 20 years ago in the same place. Many local residents have expressed their discontentment regarding the new opening of international chains highlighting the fact that Barcelona is losing its brand of Catalan Cuisine.

Nevertheless, the situation is not that simple. As a cosmopolitan city, Barcelona attracts millions of tourists coming from all parts of the world. Even though some of the visitors travel especially to this destination for food purposes there is a great majority of people who want to eat their own food since their taste buds are not ready to experience other type of cuisine.

On the other hand, Barcelona is flooded by restaurants coming from various parts of Spain which can be confusing for a traveler who wants to try authentic Catalan cuisine. As it will be seen in the section 4 some of the tourists complain about trying “Basque food” instead of “Catalan gastronomy”.

Another aspect which is also important to discuss is that with the growing number of tourists increasing year after year there is a high consumption level of products which also comes with a big waste. From this perspective it seems like a good alternative to turn to slow food philosophy making it the new brand of Barcelona. This decision will have 3 major positive effects:

1. Giving a more sophisticated brand image to Barcelona on the gastronomical scope of the city
2. Contributing to more sustainable supply practices as the production and mobility of food products, or the promotion of local and ecological value chains
3. Decreasing the negative attitude towards the tourists who will stop being perceived as people who deteriorate the authenticity of the city

In brief, turning Barcelona into a Slow Food Destination and promoting actively that brand can be quite beneficial and can become an optimal solution in attracting more visitors without losing the identity of the city.

### **3. PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT**

#### **3.1. Research Question: Can gastrotourism be a way of promoting sustainable tourism for the destination?**

The word sustainability means to maintain, preserve and cause as little damage (or not at all) as possible to the environment. However, the concept of sustainability focuses not only on the environment, but it also has 2 other pillars – economic and social.

Development is considered sustainable when it “meets our needs without compromising the ability of people in the future to meet their needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987 in “Sustainable Gastronomy as a Tourist Product” Rosario Scarpato 2002).

According to the Brundtland Report issued by United Nations any sustainable development must at least:

- Have ecological limits
- Preserve the basic resources
- Allow an equitable access to such resources

However, despite the official frameworks and concepts that were formed by this report there was still a misconduct between the documentation and the real operations of the world. Still, after acknowledgment of the importance of sustainability there is much debate nowadays whether we are floating in the correct direction or not.

When talking about the sustainability in tourism the discussion is very alive in the past 20 years. The question if the planning and management of tourism destinations is done in a sustainable way contains lots of ambiguity and causes many questions which are still not answered.

Tourism is generally considered sustainable when it includes the following characteristics:

- It recognizes the importance of the host community
- It adopts good standards for the treatment of staff
- It maximizes the economic return for the local communities
- Its development happens at a low speed



- It is environment friendly
- Tourists adopt responsible behavior (e.g. mental preparation, learning local languages, quiet, repeat visits)

The tourism model of Barcelona is a clear example of unsustainable development as it resulted in overtourism, gentrification, the increase of tension between residents and tourists etc.

When it comes to sustainable gastronomy it should be noted that it implies that “communities can evolve socially and economically whilst keeping an eco-nutritional commitment to environmental sustainability and the optimal health of members of the community (Scarpato 2000:186 in “Sustainable Gastronomy as a Tourist Product” Rosario Scarpato 2002).

Sustainable gastronomy means becoming more conscious about what we eat as it has a great influence on our body and mind.

Knowing that the gastrotourism is a part of cultural tourism the following question might arise:

“ Can gastrotourism be a way of promoting sustainable tourism for the destination?”

The following research aims to explore the gastronomic offer of Barcelona in terms of walking tours and thus it will try to give the answer whether we can use gastrotourism as a way of promoting sustainable tourism for the certain destination.

### 3.1. Methodology

The methodology of the research was developed based on the specialties of the project. After the discussion with the professional tutor Gianluca Camaggio it was decided that in order to have a clear picture of the gastronomic walking tours of Barcelona the observations will be made on various websites offering the tours. This is the list of the websites from where the data was collected:

- Google
- Websites of Tour Providers

- TripAdvisor
- GetYourGuide
- Musement
- Expedia
- Airbnb Experiences

The database was stored in an Excel worksheet and contained the information about:

- Tour Provider
- The name of the tour
- Whether it is private or open group
- Category
- Location
- Duration
- Time of the Day
- Offered Languages
- Price
- Reviews

The final list contained 236 tours divided in the following categories:

- Walking Gastronomic Tours (201)
- Spirits Tasting (22)
- Dinner Experiences (5)
- Cooking (4)
- Other (4: Bitemojo, Dinner and Concert Flamenco Party + Sangria Workshop, Travelling to Cheese Country)

The fieldwork was carried out in June-July 2019. After it was completed, a second stage of the research was started, the analysis. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were

conducted. Descriptive statistical methods were mainly used in order to analyse the price and the ranking. While qualitative methods helped in identifying the opinion of users and drawing insights regarding various features of the tours.

## **4. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS**

### **4.1. Presentation and Analysis of Data**

This section will be dedicated to presenting the results as well as the analysis of the collected data. The information is demonstrated through quantitative and qualitative analyses.

As it was mentioned above the final result showed that there were 236 tours which were later subcategorized in 5 groups.

However, only the Walking Gastronomic Tours were then analyzed since they were under the direct scope of the project. Within this category the 10 subcategories were determined:

- Tapas Crawl
- Market Visit
- Cooking
- Historic
- Spirits
- Entertainment
- Sweets
- Local Shops
- Family
- Vegan
- Modernisme
- Cultural

The clustering into groups was not an easy task as some tours offered mixed products such as tapas with wine tasting in a historic ambiance. The main criteria for putting the tour in

the specific subcategory was mainly done by checking the main features of the product on the website. However, one should consider as well that some tours are presented in 2 or more categories. Such example can be a cooking tour which involves a market visit. Hence this type of tour is both included in Cooking and Market Visit subcategories.

In the following part the analysis per each subcategory will be presented.

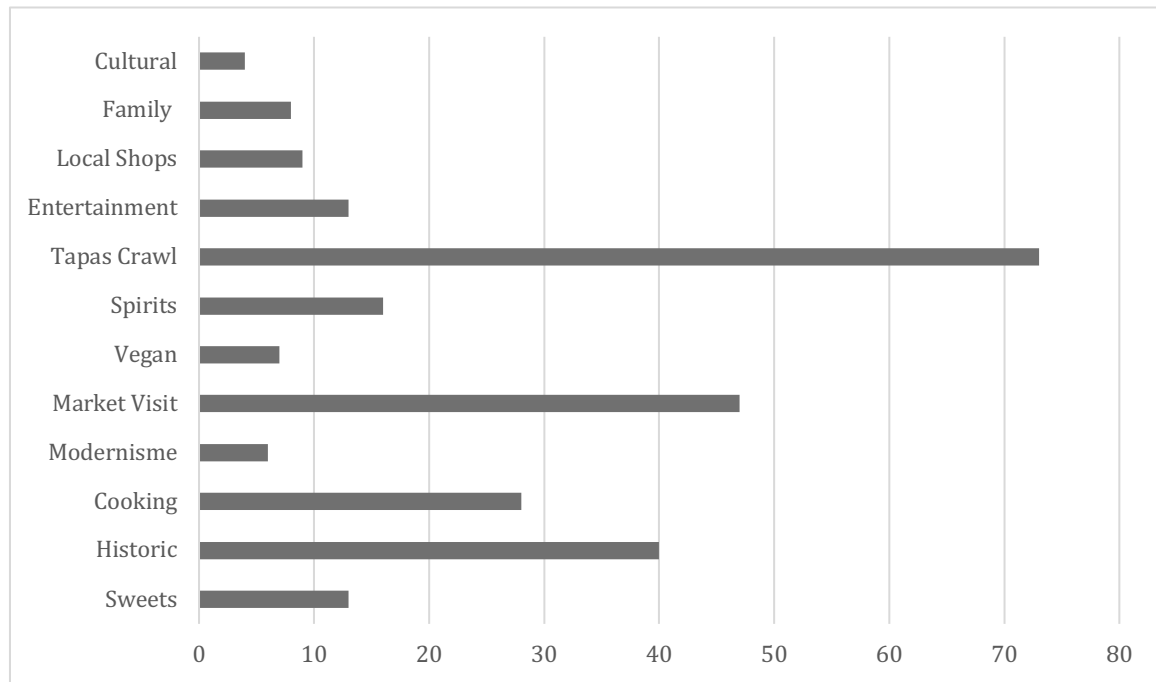


FIGURE 7: WALKING GASTRONOMIC TOURS PER CLUSTERS

## Tapas Crawl

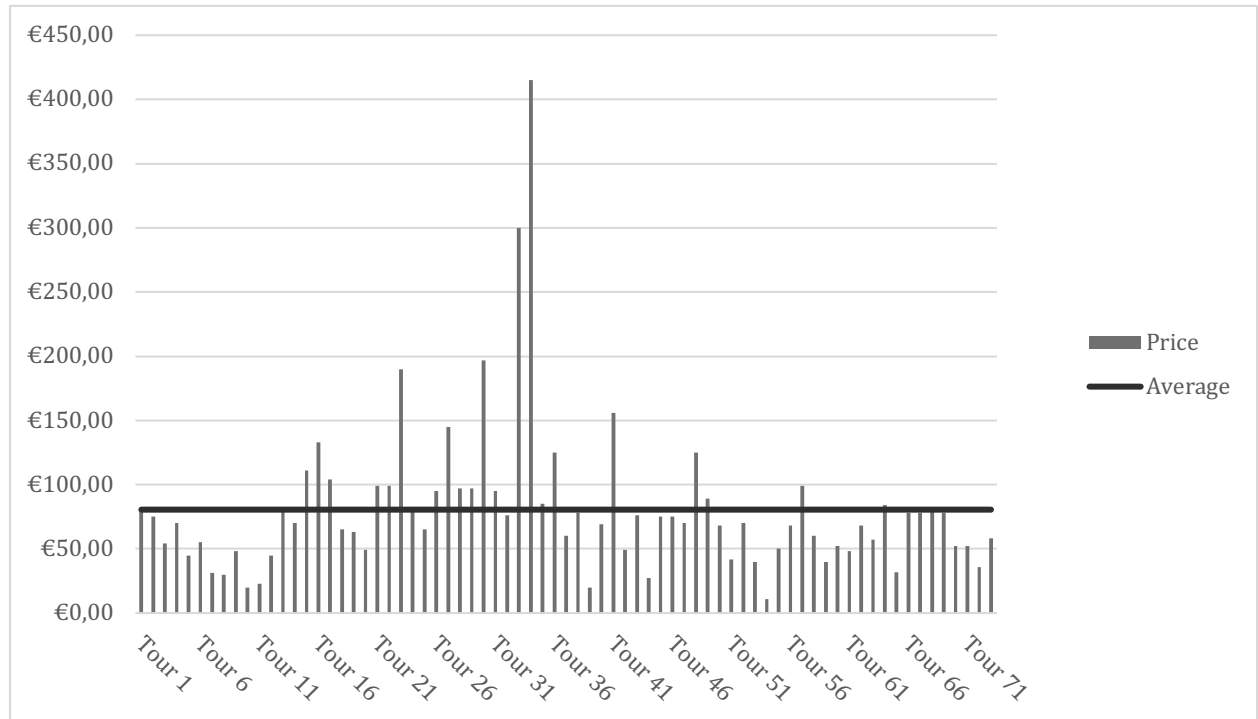


FIGURE 8 TAPAS CRAWL TOURS

This subcategory is the most popular one as it involves the greatest number of tours (73). The tour providers offered both open group<sup>1</sup> and private tours<sup>2</sup>. The areas where the tours are offered are Gothic Quarter, El Born, Eixample, Gracia, Poble Sec as well as Sant Antoni.

As it can be seen from the diagram the average price of the tours is 80,56 euros while Median is 70 euros meaning that half of the tours are more expensive than 70 euros.

Regarding the ratings 50% of the tours were rated 4 & higher. The highest ranked tour (ranked 5 by most amount of people) is offered by Barcelona Local Experiences. Meanwhile the most expensive tour offered by Context Walks has no reviews on Platforms.

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<sup>1</sup> open group tours means that anyone can join the tours

<sup>2</sup> private tour means that the tour is provided only for certain people who book the tour for themselves

## Market Visit

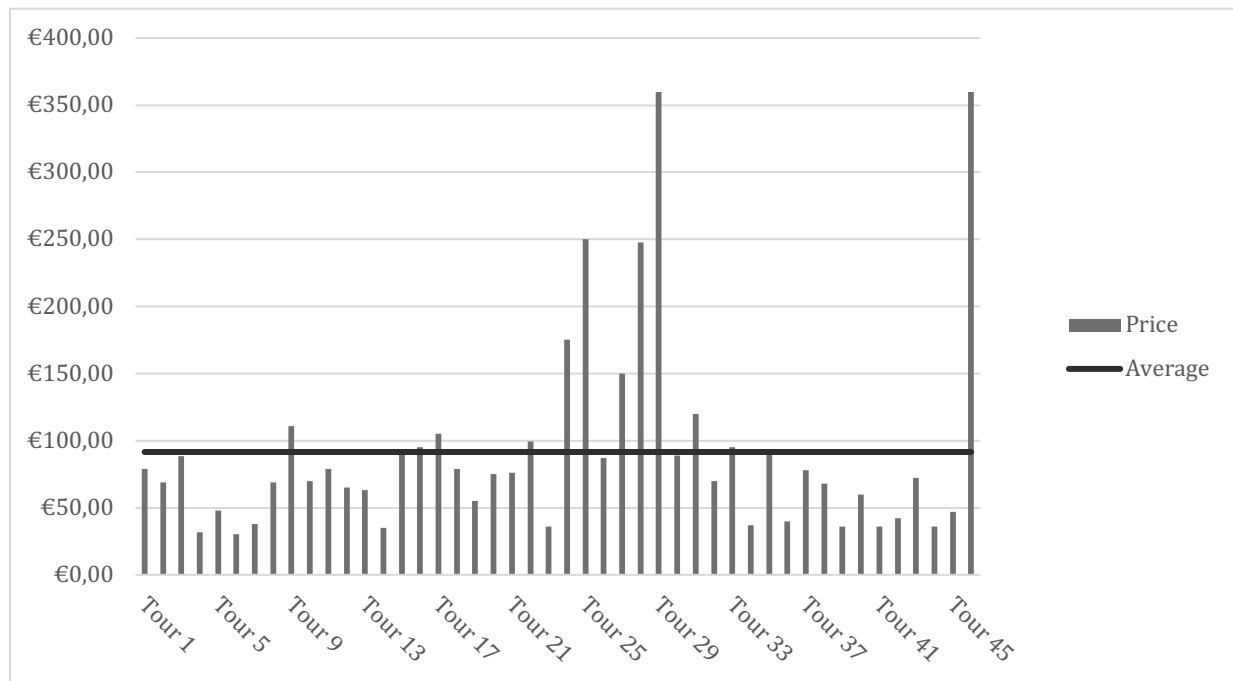


FIGURE 9 MARKET VISIT TOURS

The second group with the highest amount of tours is Market Visit. This cluster involves 46 tours. Just like the first one it also offers both open group and private tours. Majority of walking tours happens in the area of Gothic Quarter, Eixample & El Born which is obviously conditioned by the location of the main markets of Barcelona. The average price of this cluster is slightly higher compared to the first group (91,53 euros), however the median is 73,50 euros which means that 50% of the tours have lower price than 73,50 euros.

An interesting observation about this category was that 12 of the tours are offered by Airbnb hosts. And one of those tours which is among the cheapest ones in this category has more than 500 ratings however the final rating is 4.94. The most expensive tour of the category has only the rating of 4.77.

## Historic tours

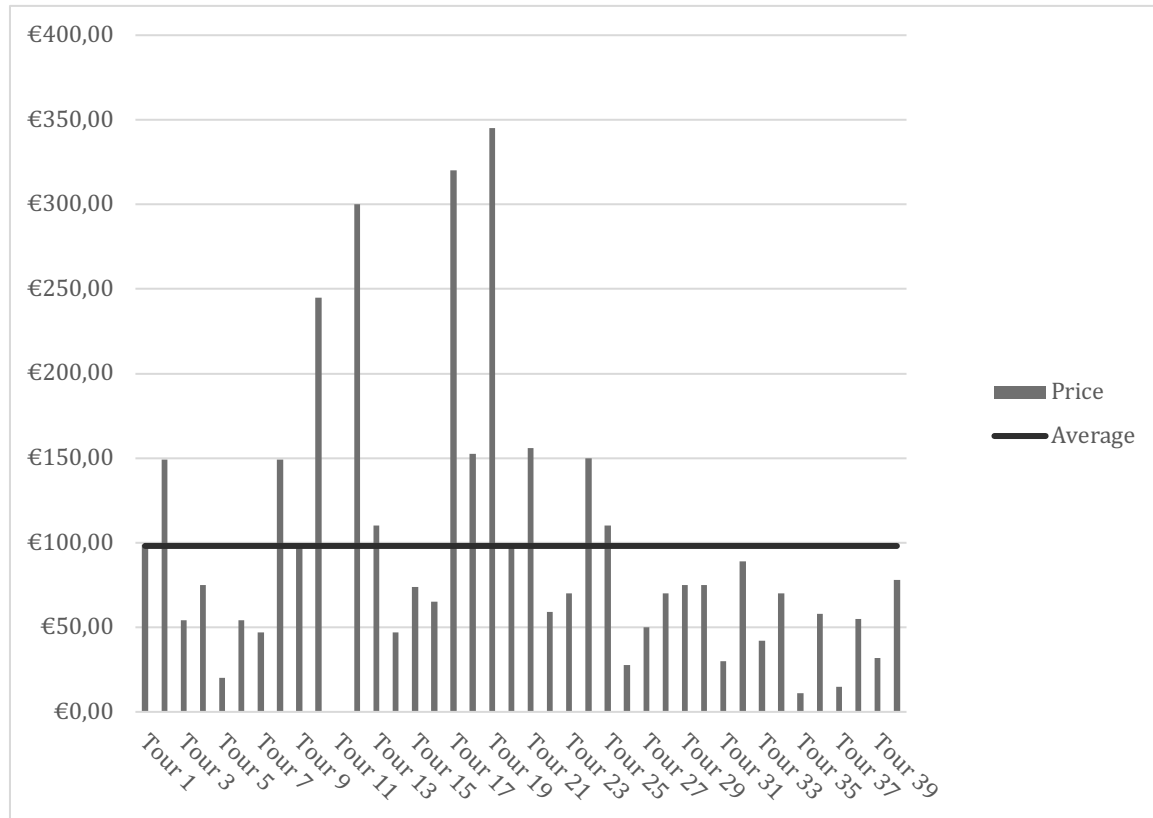


FIGURE 10 HISTORIC TOURS

The next category is historic which has 40 tours. As it can be understood the tours offered in this cluster focus mainly on sharing knowledge about the history of Barcelona while also taking the customers to various authentic bars and restaurants to fulfill their gastronomic needs. The tours are offered in the Old City in the areas of Gothic Quarter, El Born, Barceloneta as well as Gracia. Just like the previous categories there are open group and private tours too. The average price of the tours is 98,10 euros while Median is 74 euros.

The most expensive tour is offered by Context Walks and has no reviews on platforms. Only 45% of the tours have a rating of 4 or higher.

## Cooking tours

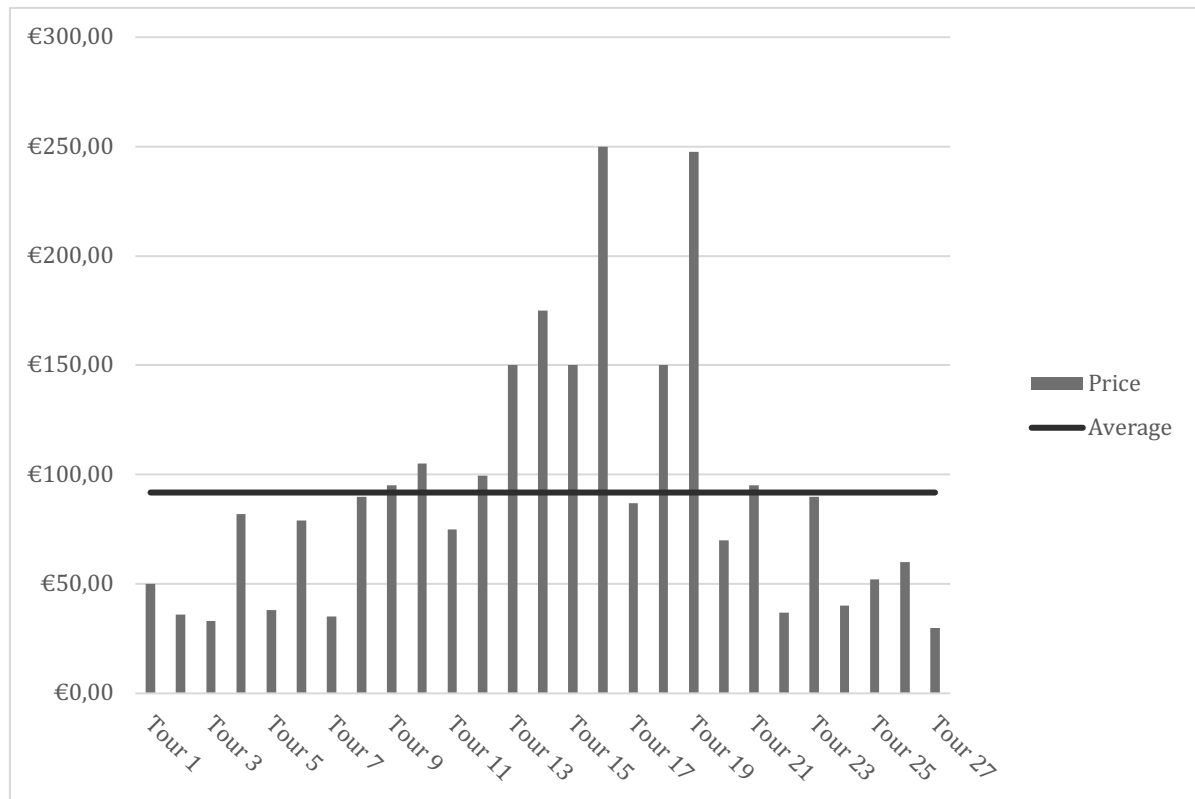


FIGURE 11 COOKING TOURS

The cluster of cooking tours could be much bigger as the number of cooking tours in Barcelona is quite high. However, only the tours which included walking in the city were included in the data. Hence, there are 28 cooking tours most of which involve a visit to a market (in order to buy the needed ingredients). There are both open group and private tours offered in Gothic Quarter, El Born and Raval (other areas are also present however do not have a representative number). The average price of the cooking tours is 91,82 euros while the median is 82 euros.

The highest number of reviews belong to the experiences offered by Airbnb hosts.



## Spirits tours

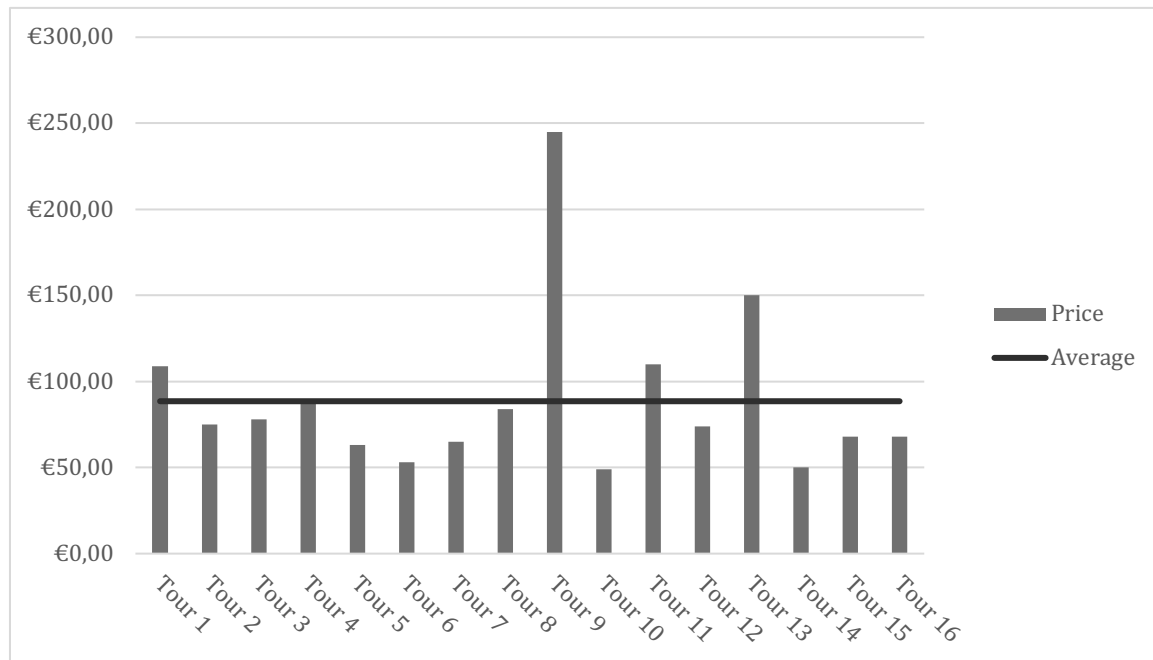


FIGURE 12 SPIRITS TOURS

The category of Spirits Tasting could also be much broader as the general offer of Barcelona is very big. However, only the tours that were included in the cluster are the ones which are focused on tasting various types of spirits in different bars and restaurants while trying food too and walking in the city. Hence the spirits tastings organized by certain shops or bars are excluded in the cluster.

The total number of tours in this category is 16. There are both open group and private tours. Most of the tours are offered in Gothic Quarter, however other areas include El Born, Poble Sec, Sant Antoni, Eixample and Barceloneta.

The average price of the tours is 89,38 euros and 50% of the tours is cheaper than 74,50 euros.

The most expensive tour of the category has no review on the Platforms.

## Entertainment tours

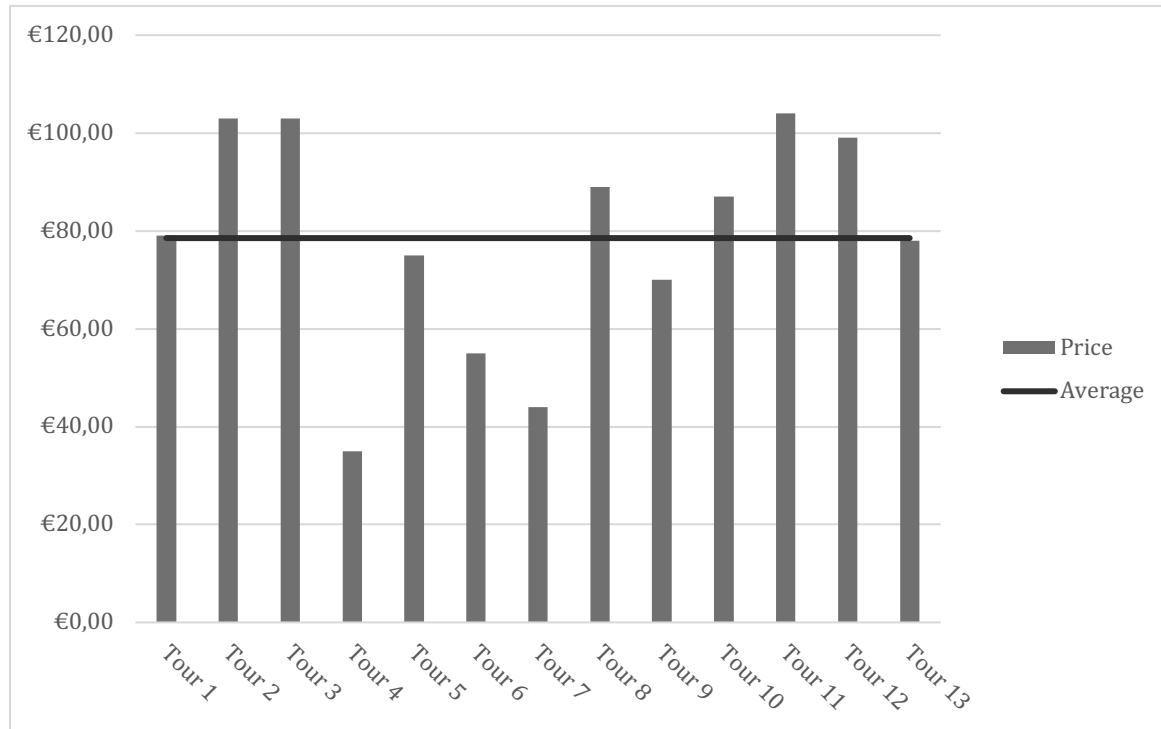


FIGURE 13 ENTERTAINMENT TOURS

12 out of 13 tours in this category are the ones which offer flamenco shows as part of the gastronomic experience (the other tour offers Human Tower experience). The reason of not putting them in the subcategory of “Cultural Tours” is that they do not offer something which is part of Catalan culture.

The majority of the tours in this cluster are open group tours. And the main area where the tours are offered is Gothic Quarter. The average price of the tours is 78,54 euros and the median is 79 euros. In general, there are no big price fluctuations in this cluster.

It is interesting to mention that some tours have as low ratings as 2 or 3.

## Sweets tours

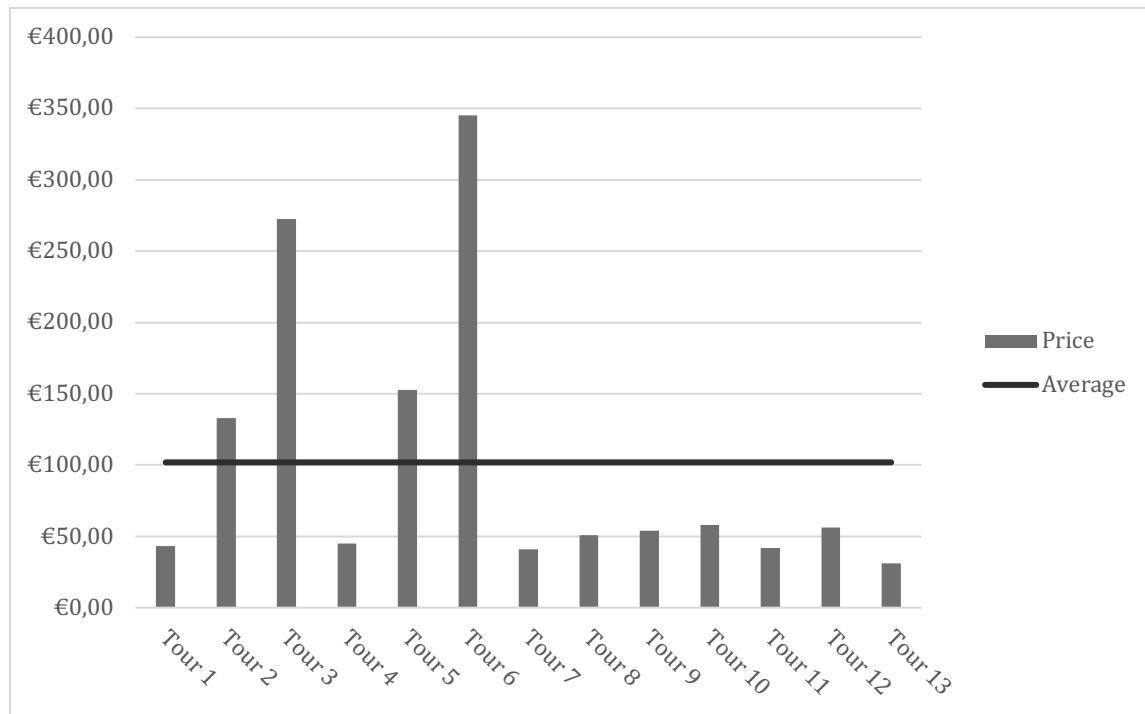


FIGURE 14 SWEETS TOURS

There are 13 tours in this cluster which offer visits to Churreterias or other places to try chocolate or dessert. All the tours in this category are offered at daytime. There are both open group and private tours which are offered in Gothic Quarter, El Born, El Raval & Eixample.

The average price of the tours is 101,85 euros while half of the tours are cheaper than 54 euros. The most expensive tours (offered by Context Walks) has no reviews on the platforms. Most rated tour is again offered by an Airbnb Host.

## Local Shops

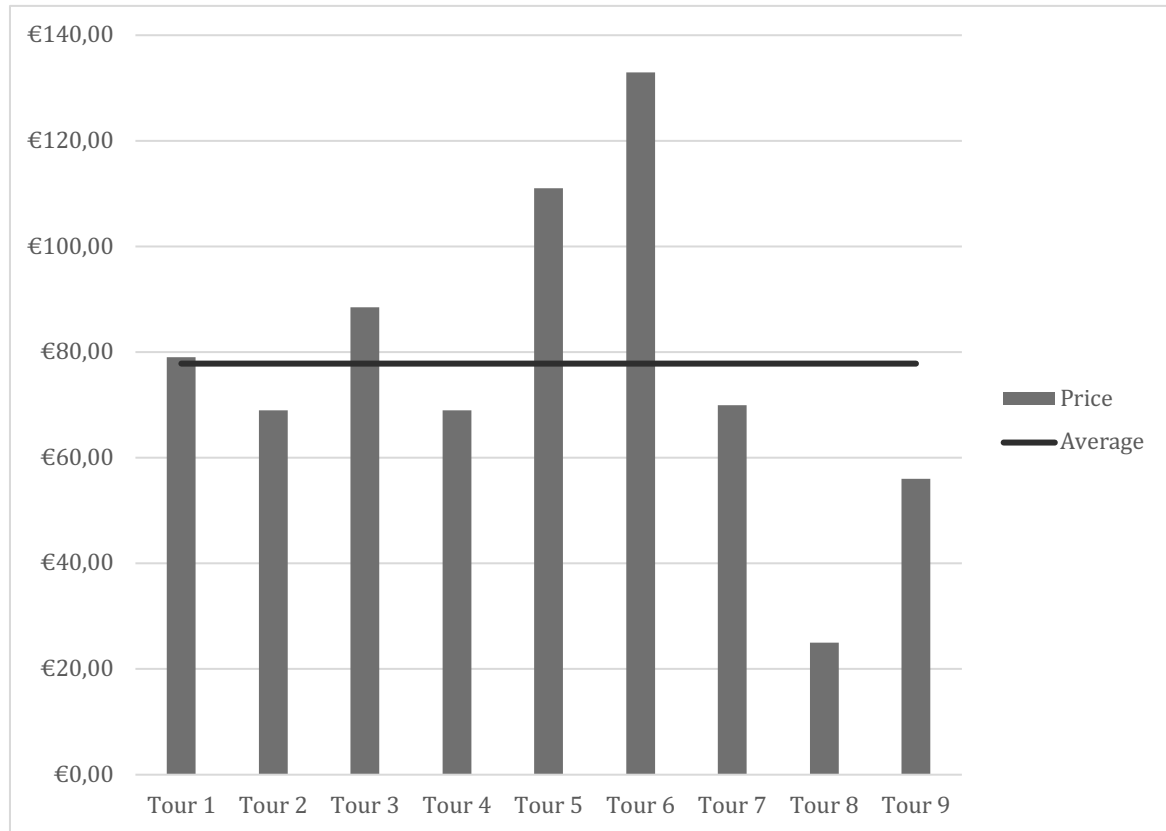


FIGURE 15 LOCAL SHOPS TOURS

This category involves tours which aside from gastronomic part also include a visit to a local shop (mainly food shops). There are 9 tours in total in this cluster and most of them are open group. The tours are offered in Gothic Quarter, El Born, Barceloneta, Gracia & Sant Antoni.

The average price of the tours is 77,83 euros and median is 70 euros. The most expensive tour has a rating of 4.

## Family Tours

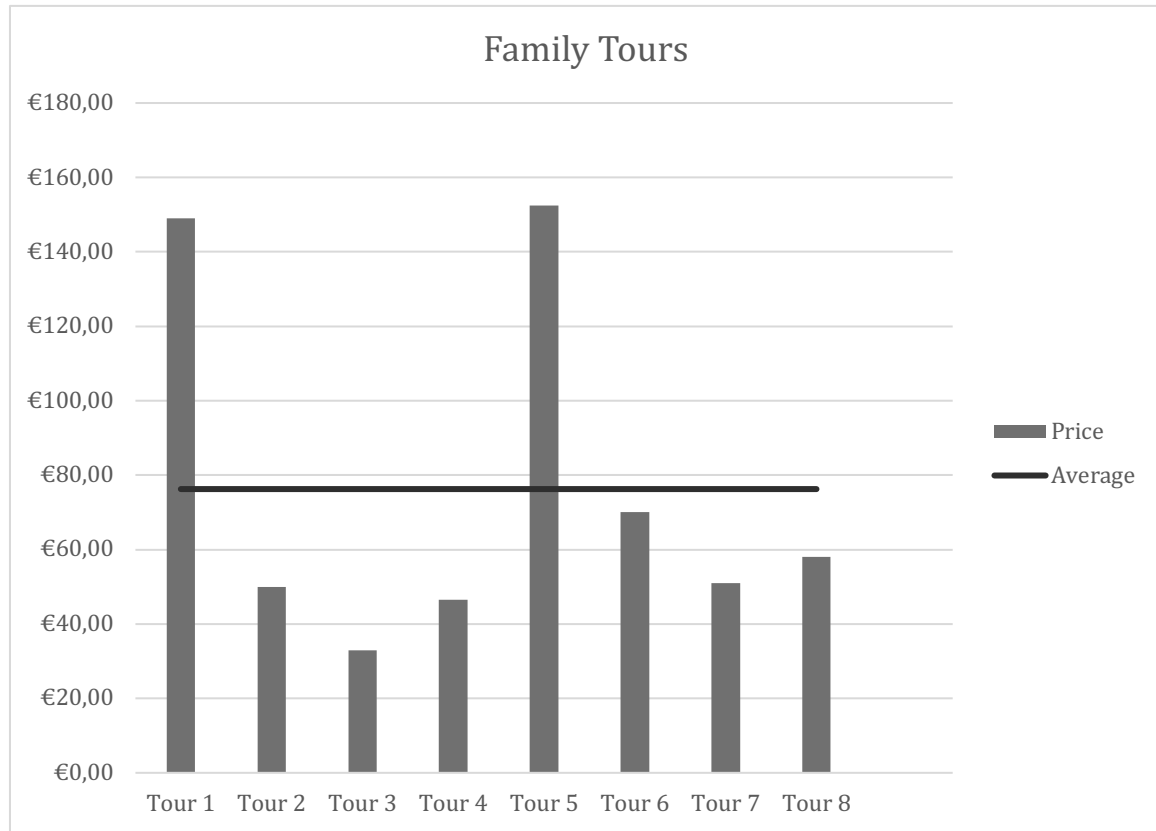


FIGURE 16 FAMILY TOURS

The tours in this category are oriented on families and include the name “family” in their naming. The total number of tours is 8 and most of them are private. The tours are mainly offered in the areas of Gothic Quarter & El Born (other areas include Poble Sec, El Raval, Gracia & El Carmel). There are both daytime and evening tours.

The average price of the tours is 76,25 euros, however half of the tours are cheaper than 54,50 euros.

As in other subcategories the most expensive tour has no reviews on platforms while the most rated tour is offered by Airbnb host.

## Vegan tours

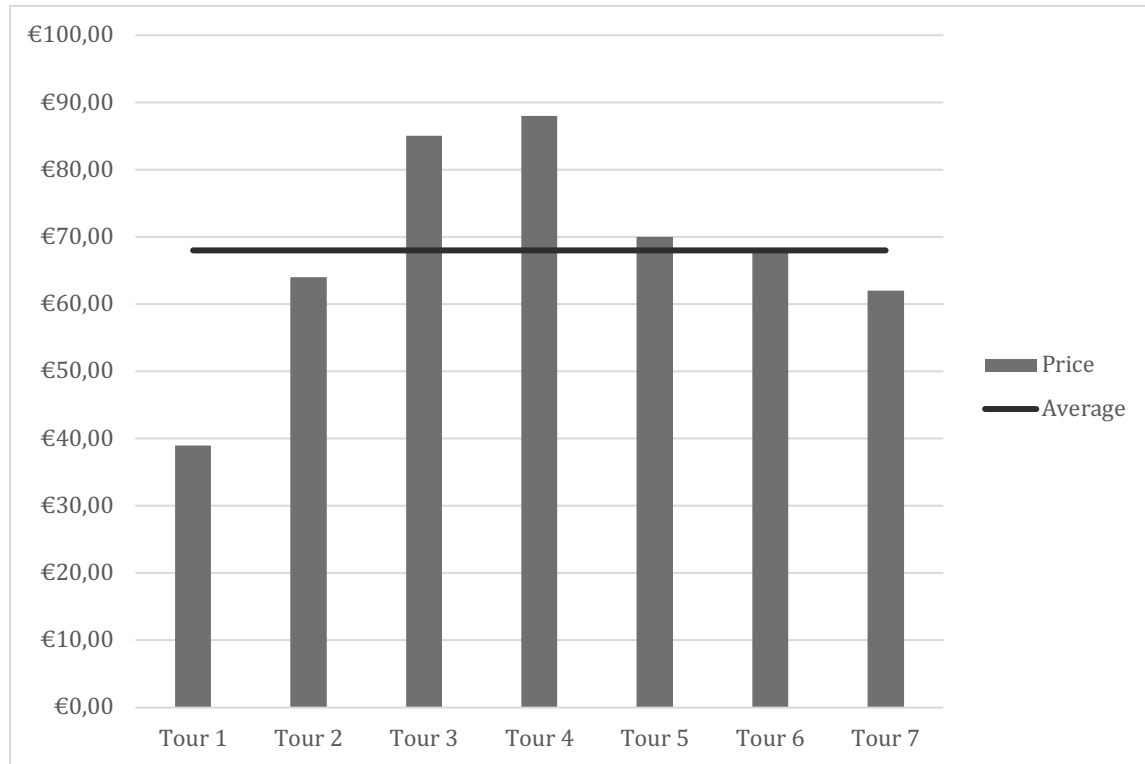


FIGURE 17 VEGAN TOURS

Even though there are only 7 tours in the subcategory of “Vegan Tours” this has a potential of growing. Most of the tours in this cluster are open group and are offered in the areas of Gothic Quarter, El Born, El Raval & Gracia.

The average price of the tours is 68 euros and the median is almost the same 69 euros.

Since this is a relatively new category most of the tours are offered by Airbnb hosts.

## Modernisme tours

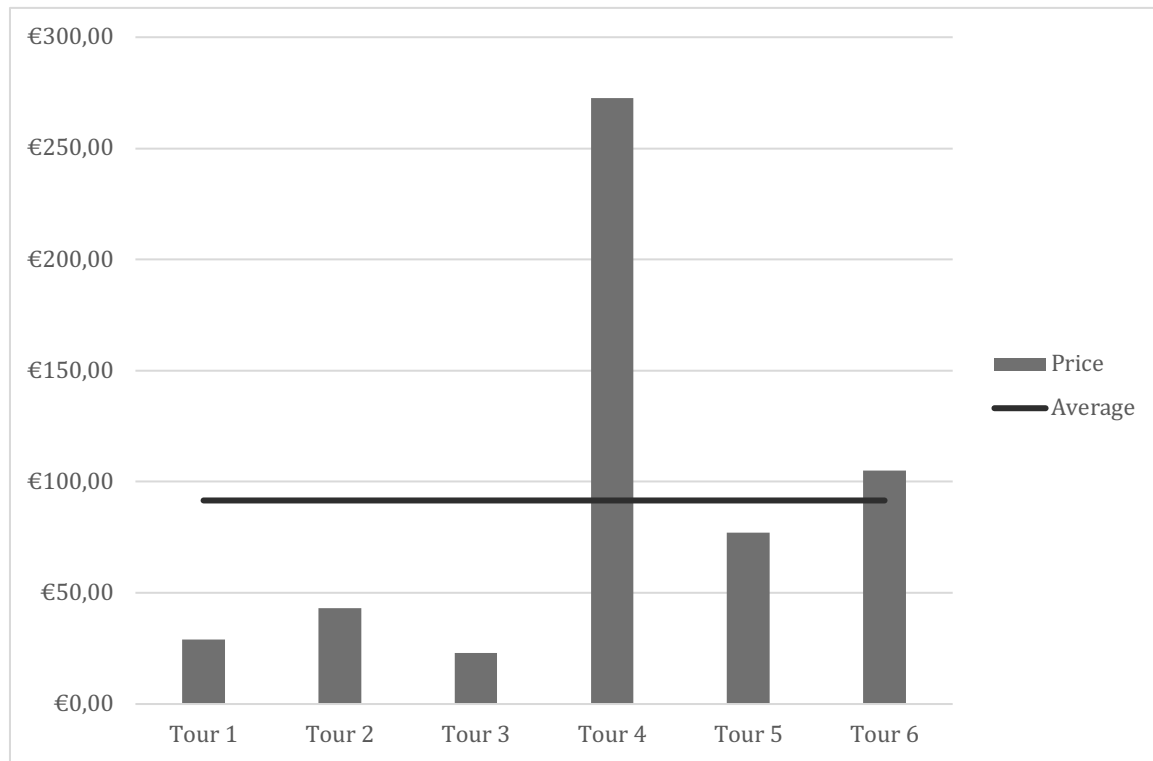


FIGURE 18 MODERNISME TOURS

The tours included in this category are in some way related to Modernisme heritage of Barcelona. At the moment there are only 6 tours in this subcategory which makes it relatively a small one.

The tours which are both open group and private are mainly offered in Eixample, Gothic Quarter and El Raval.

The average price of the tours is 91,58 euros while the median is only 60 euros. It is interesting to notice that the most expensive tour is offered by a Michelin chef. On the contrary the cheapest tour is offered by local residents of Barcelona (Tour Provider: Withlocals).

## Cultural tours

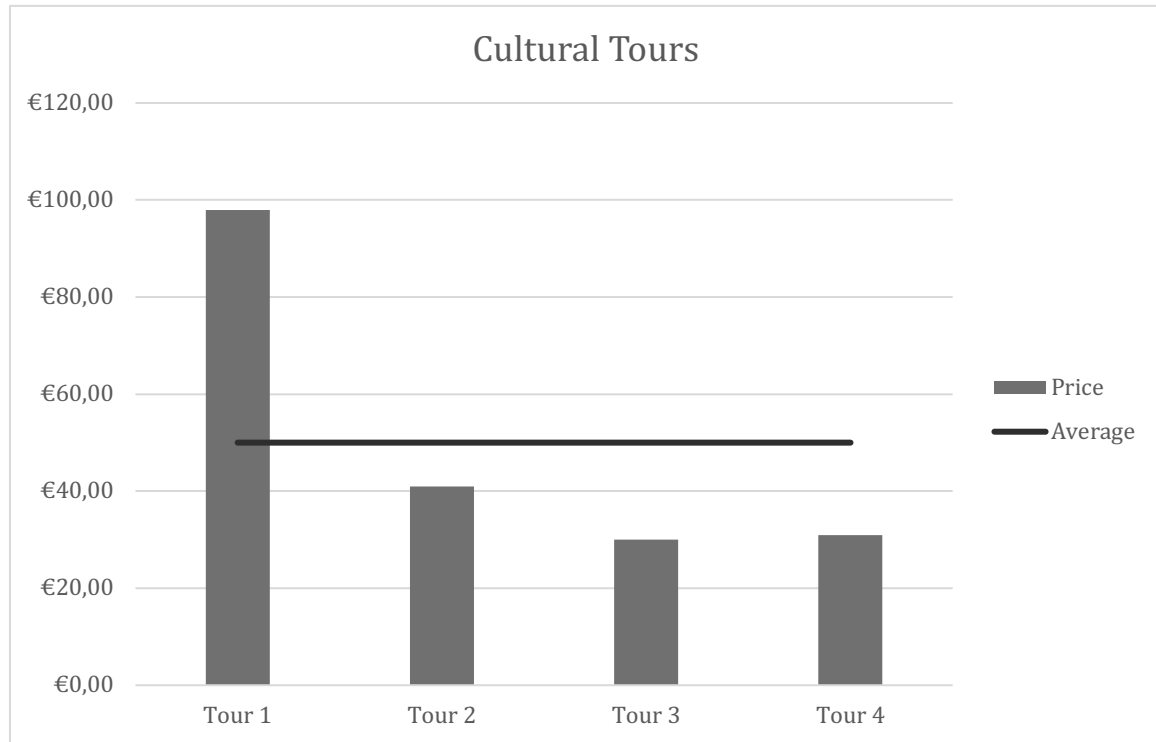


FIGURE 19 CULTURAL TOURS

The last subcategory is Cultural as the tours involved in this cluster are related with museums except of 1 which offers a conversational Spanish class while walking and enjoying the gastronomic offer of Barcelona. Most of the tours in the subcategory are open group and are offered in the areas of El Born, El Raval and Gothic Quarter.

The average price of the tours is 50 euros and the median is 36 euros. All the tours are offered in the morning. The majority of them are not rated on the platforms.



### Price & Review Comparison Between Subcategories

Based on the provided information the following analysis was done in order to create a comparative chart between the subcategories as well as to give a clearer image of the market offer.

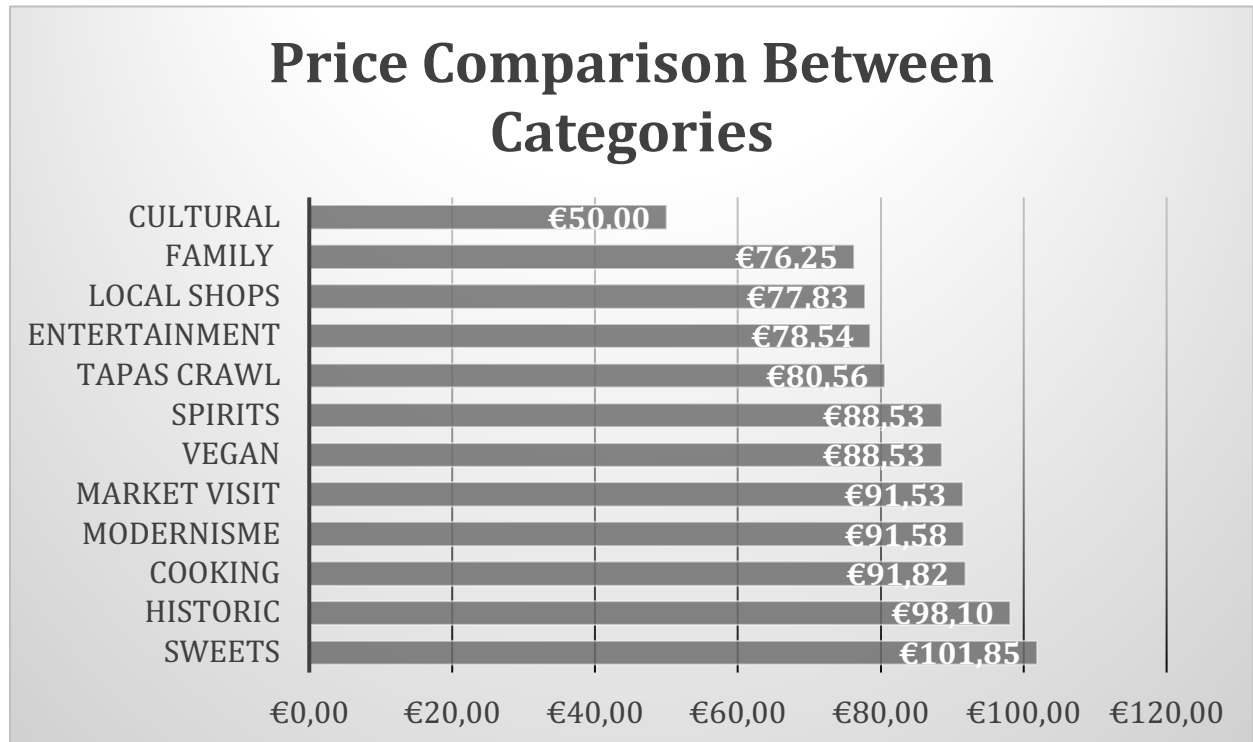


FIGURE 20 PRICE COMPARISON CHART

*Based on the average prices of each category*

As it can be seen from the chart, the cheapest category belongs to Cultural Tours while the most expensive cluster is the one of the sweets. However, it is important to note that the average is not always a precise statistical measure and shows only the approximate picture of the offer.

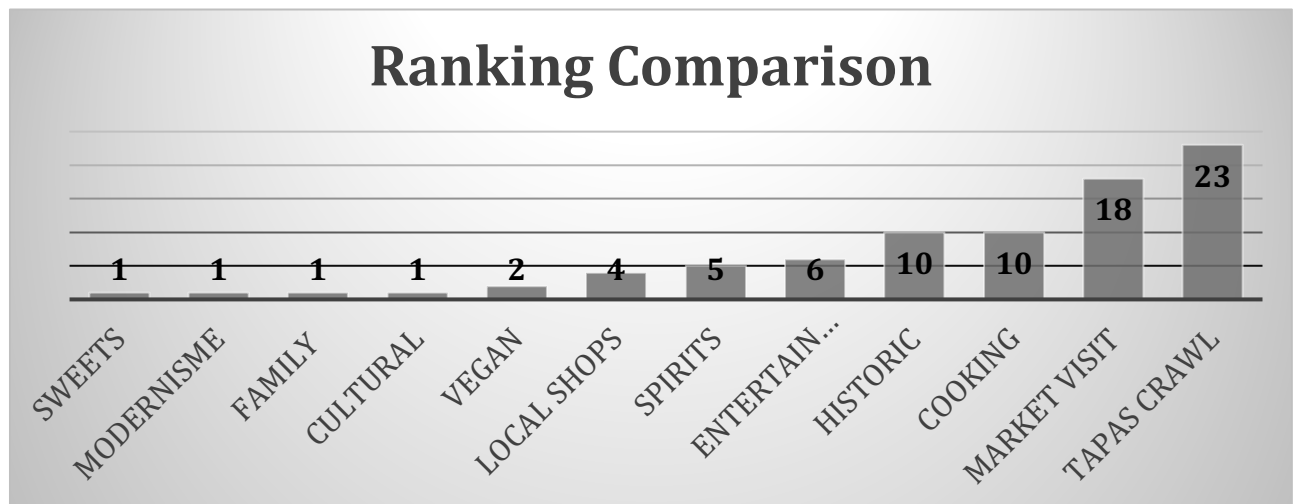


FIGURE 21 RANKING COMPARISON CHART

*Numbers indicate the amount of tours ranked 5 in each category*

Another interesting way of comparing the categories is to see how many tours in each category have absolute rating of 5. As it is demonstrated through the graph there is only 1 tour in the category of Sweets which has an absolute rating of 5 and the category with the maximum number of tours that have 5 rating is the “Tapas Crawl”. However, this can also be conditioned by the absolute number of tours in each category as “Tapas Crawl” has 73 tours in total while there are only 13 tours in the category of “Sweets”.

### Most Popular Tours

After the completion of the analysis of all the tours it was important to identify the most popular ones on various platforms. In order to do it the following methodology was used: Sorting the tours which have the maximum ratings of 5.

The following are the 5 most popular tours:

1. Tapas & Wine Tour Experience by Barcelona Local Experiences (285 Reviews)<sup>3</sup>
2. Barcelona tapas tour in El Raval by Urban Adventures (196 Reviews)
3. SecretFood Tours by Secret Food Tours (167 Reviews)

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<sup>3</sup> The final number of reviews was extracted on July 2<sup>nd</sup> which means that currently there might be more reviews

4. Tapas, Taverns & History Tour by Devour Barcelona (155 Reviews)

5. The Ultimate Tapas & Wine Tour by With Locals (139 Reviews)

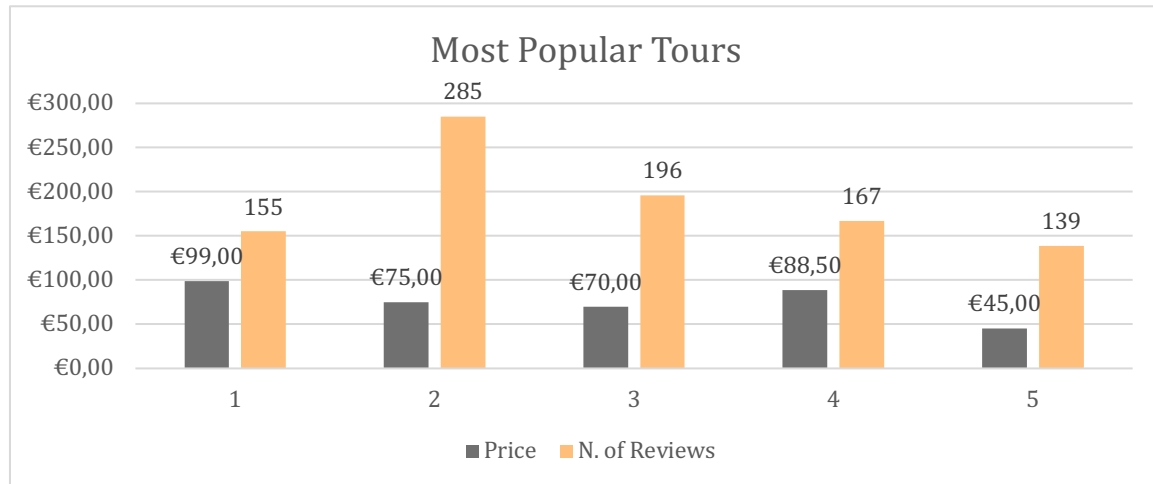


FIGURE 22 MOST POPULAR TOURS

*Tours which have the highest number of ratings of 5*

### **TAPAS & WINE TOUR EXPERIENCE by Barcelona Local Experiences (285 Reviews)**

The highest ranked tour by the greatest number of people belongs to Tapas & Wine Tour Experience by “Barcelona Local Experiences” Company which is one of the average priced products in the market (75 euros). The tour is offered as an open group activity which means that anyone can join, and it cannot be booked privately. It is located in Tapas Crawl subcategory as the main feature of the tour is trying delicious tapas in famous bars of Gothic Quarter & El Born. The duration of the tour 3.5 hours and it is offered in English; however, other languages are available upon request.

### **What People Think**

While analyzing the reviews on the platforms the positive and negative mentions were identified. Below are some of the most used words by majority of reviewers:

### **Positive Mentions (281)**

- Knowledgeable tour guides
- Delicious Food
- Fun Places
- Abundance of Food

### **Negative Mentions (4)**

- OverPriced
- Not enough information
- Poor Management
- Not enough food

*“Thoroughly recommend this tour” – Customer 1*

*“...While Barcelona was a beautiful city and one of my favorites of the trip, I unfortunately believe this is an experience that is overpriced and under-delivered, I can’t recommend this program or experience for anyone visiting the city”. – Customer 2*

### **BARCELONA TAPAS TOUR IN EL RAVAL by Urban Adventures (196 Reviews)**

The second highly rated tour is Barcelona Tapas Tour in El Raval by Urban Adventures. As the name already says the expected tour takes place in El Raval and includes tapas degustation in some of the authentic bars of Barcelona. Just like the first tour this one as well as is moderately priced (70 euros), it is inclusively offered in English and has a duration of 3 hours. Similar to the first tour it is an open group experience.

### **What People Think**

While analyzing the reviews on the platforms the positive and negative mentions were identified. Below are some of the most used words by majority of reviewers:

### **Positive Mentions (196)**

- Great Food
- Cultural Tour
- Amazing Guide
- Local Experience

*“A perfect way to taste Barcelona!” – Customer 1*

*“A Barcelona must-attend trip for foodies” – Customer 2*

### **No Negative Mentions**

### **SECRETFOOD TOURS by Secret Food Tours (167 Reviews)**

One of the most creative tours (according to naming) is the Secret Food Tour offered by the company with the same name. The tour is offered in El Born and La Barceloneta and it takes place in the morning. It is usually designed for 3-3.5 hours and features visits to some of the most authentic shops as well as local markets which is why it is included in the subcategory of Local Shops and Markets. Unlike the previous 2 tours this one is offered in English, Spanish and French, and is slightly more expensive (88,50 euros). This experience is also open for various people to join.

### **What People Think**

While analyzing the reviews on the platforms the positive and negative mentions were identified. Below are some of the most used words by majority of reviewers:

### **Positive Mentions**

- Fabulous Tours
- Culinary History

- Local Experts
- Foodie Experience

*“Wonderful way to explore Barcelona” – Customer 1*

*“Great way to get a taste of Barcelona with Lola” – Customer 2*

## **No Negative Mentions**

### **TAPAS, TAVERNS & HISTORY TOUR by Devour Barcelona (155 Reviews)**

Offered by Devour Barcelona Tapas, Taverns & History Tour is number 4 in the list of highly rated gastrotours. The tour is included in historic subcategory as the history is what they sell as a primary added value of the tour. It is an open group experience even though the company claims that the group will be small. The tour is offered in the areas of Gothic Quarter and El Born. It takes place in the evening with the duration of 3,5 hours. The tour is only offered in English which is most probably conditioned by the main customers they have. The price is 99 euros which is very close to the average price of the category.

## **What People Think**

While analyzing the reviews on the platforms the positive and negative mentions were identified. Below are some of the most used words by majority of reviewers:

### **Positive Mentions (151)**

- Great mix of history and food
- Authentic tapas and wines
- Great guides
- Absolutely Fabulous

### **Negative Mentions (4)**

- Overpriced
- Guides that are not good at storytelling
- Average Food

*“The only thing this company Devours is your wallet” – Customer 1*

*“Great tour even for a non-wine drinker like me”! – Customer 2*

### **THE ULTIMATE TAPAS & WINE TOUR by With Locals (139 Reviews)**

The last most popular tour is the Ultimate Tapas & Wine Tour offered by With Locals. This company is quite unique and the main difference from its competitors is that the guides are the local people living in Barcelona (does not have to be native Catalan just anyone who has lived in the city for some time to be able to provide guiding services). This tour just like the others is private and hence can be offered in various languages depending on the linguistic knowledge of the guide. It is relatively cheap as well as it offers a private experience for only 45 euros. The duration of the experience is 2 hours as it takes place in the evening in Poble Sec and Sant Antoni. The tour is included in Tapas Crawl Subcategory.

### **What People Think**

While analyzing the reviews on the platforms the positive and negative mentions were identified. Below are some of the most used words by majority of reviewers:

### **Positive Mentions (135)**

- Excellent way to experience local culture
- Fantastic guides
- Local history

- Fun company

#### **Negative Mentions (4)**

- No guide showed up
- Poor management

*“Paid 104€ and never happened...” – Customer 1*

*“10/10 great tour - one of our top trip highlights!” – Customer 2*

#### **Tours by Neighborhoods**

The research data has also shown the dispersion of tours in various neighborhoods of Barcelona. The chart below shows all 236 tours (including other categories of walking tours as well).



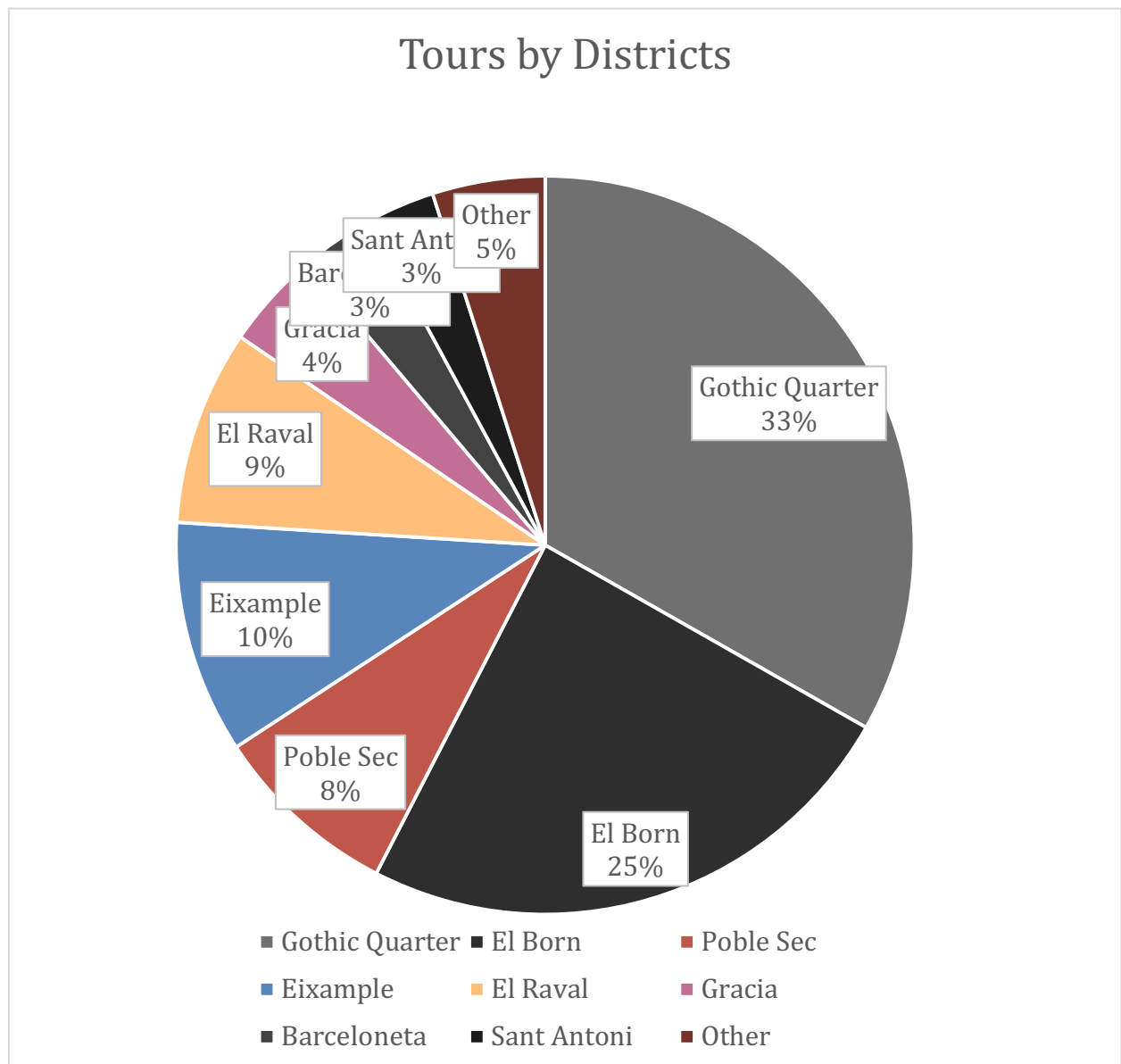


FIGURE 23 TOURS BY DISTRICTS

According to the research results majority of tours are concentrated in the Citutat Vella (Old City) with Gothic Quarter leading the chart.

### Tours by Time of the Day

Following diagram illustrates the tours in the main neighborhoods of Barcelona at daytime and evening:

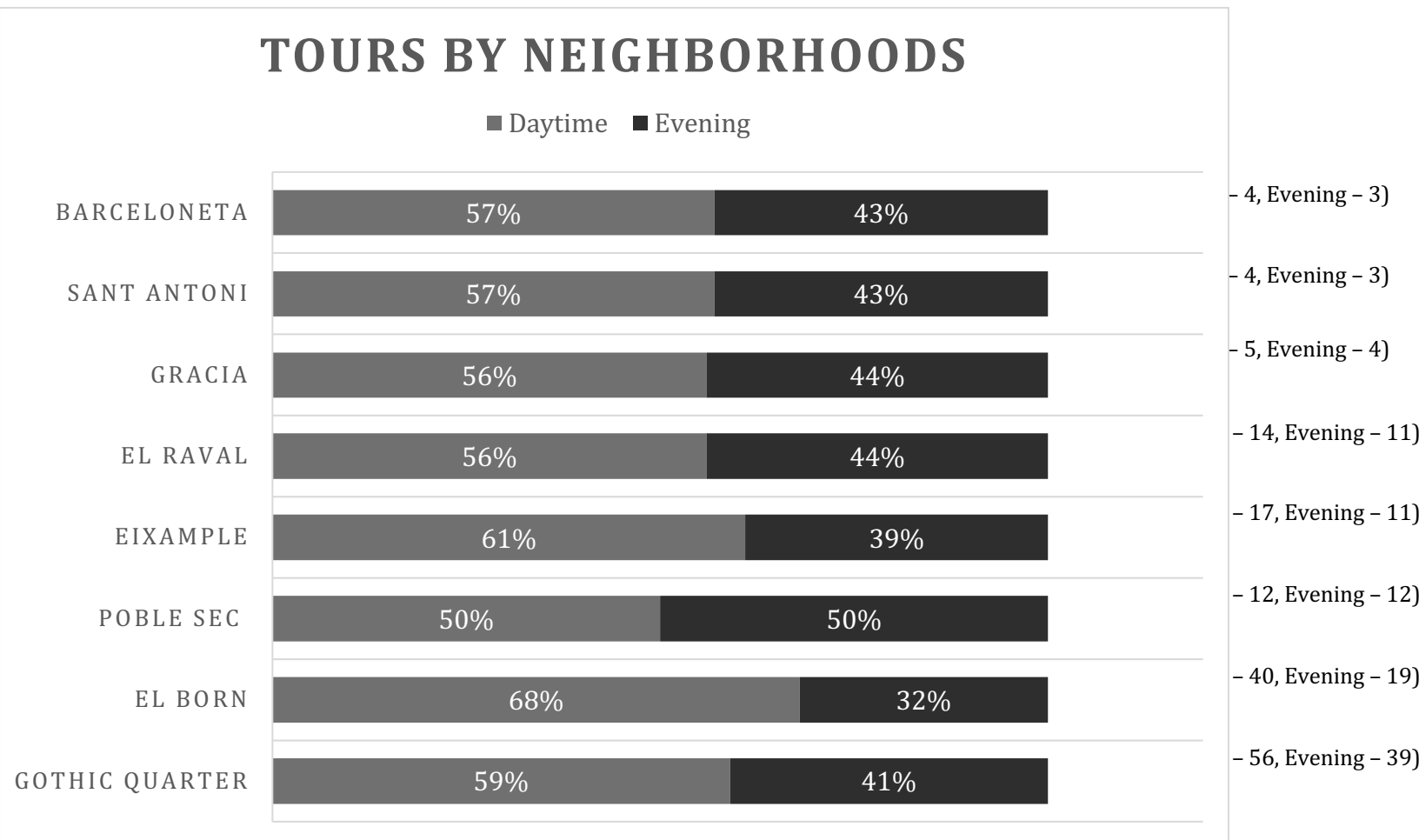


FIGURE 24 TOURS BY NEIGHBORHOODS ACCORDING TO TIMES OF THE DAY

*Daytime Tours: 09:00-18:00*

*Evening Tours: starting from 18:00*

As it can be seen from the chart the majority of areas have more tours during the daytime (except of Poble Sec).

## 5. CONCLUSIONS & SUGGESTIONS

After the completion of data collection and its analysis the following conclusions are drawn:

- It is highly important to pay attention to food restrictions as some people have special requirements.
- People sometimes consider tours to be overpriced for the small dishes (tapas) they eat.
- Guides are of a high importance for the overall experience of the tourist
- Naming of the tour is extremely important as people create certain expectations related to it (e.g. “Try the best Tapas Tour” should not be mainly oriented on history/culture)
- Some people want to try Catalan cuisine rather than food from other parts of Spain
- The management of the tour is one of the main problems of the current offer
- The amount of food should be enough so that the customer does not leave hungry & not satisfied
- Tour Providers should avoid forming large groups for the tour as it may make the customers feel not comfortable as well as the guide will not be able to pay enough attention to every guest
- Customers expect to go to “hidden gems” which they cannot find on their own

### 5.1. Suggestions for the Successful Walking Gastronomic Tour

Based on the conclusions and general observations during the research process some suggestions can be done to help Turisme de Barcelona create a successful gastrotour in Barcelona.

- **Enough Amount of Food** – A considerable number of negative reviews was about the complaint regarding a small amount of food compared to the paid price for the

meal. Hence people should not feel that they could get full by paying half of the price and going to the bars on their own. To avoid this problem, it is of a high importance to manage a reasonable amount of food during the gastroexperience. On the other hand, it is important to know your customers, because depending on the cultural background the “reasonable” amount of food might vary. For example, if the majority of the customers come from US then small tapas might not fulfill their needs.

- **Excellent Attention to Customer Needs** – Each and every customer wants to feel special attention, especially when they come to Barcelona on a vacation and they want to have the best experience ever. Some people had negative impression as companies did not pay attention to their special requirements which affected their overall experience. Therefore, excellent attention to customers is a must-do.
- **Highly Knowledgeable & Sociable Guides** – As the research showed guides are very important when it comes to walking gastronomic tours. People write both positive and negative reviews about them. Sometimes customers write negative review, however, mention that the guide was the only reason they enjoyed the tour at least a bit. It is also important to note that people expect guides to be not only knowledgeable but also have social skills to be able to keep the group as one while creating one-to-one relationship with each guest.
- **Reasonable Amount of People in the group** – Another insight which came out of the research was that customers feel not comfortable in case there are too many people in the group. It can be arguable what is the “correct amount of people” in one group, however it is advised not to include more than 15 people.
- **Naming corresponding to the tour content** – This is one of the factors which can become a pledge of success or the opposite can ruin the experience of the customer. For example, if the tour contains the word “Historic” then people would expect to know more about the history of the city and will not be satisfied by superficial facts which they could google themselves. On the other hand, if the tour promises trying a big variety of tapas however in reality people just try a couple of tapas and get indulged in the history of Barcelona, they will still feel bad as their expectations

were not met. Hence, while naming the tour the company should pay attention to the real content of the tour.

- **Hidden Gems** – Last but not least customers expect to go to the hidden gems which again they would not be able to find on their own. Hence including authentic bars and restaurants is another important component of creating a successful walking gastronomic tour for Turisme de Barcelona.

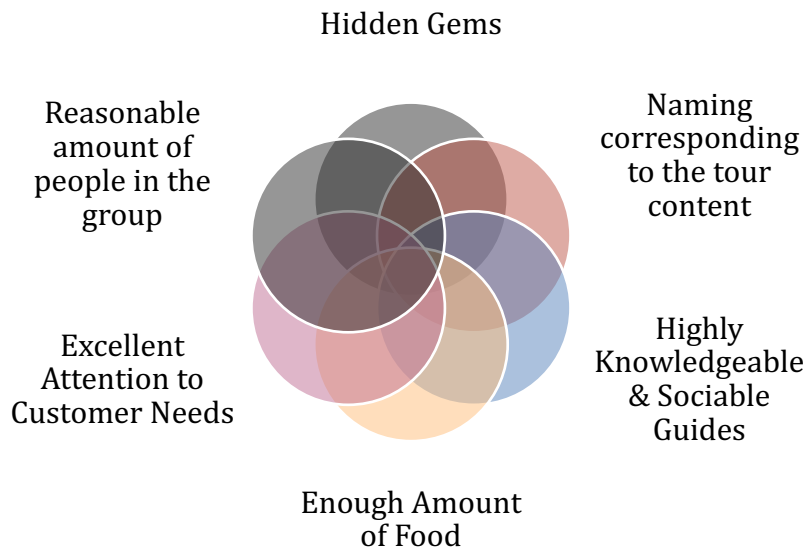


FIGURE 25 MAIN COMPONENTS FOR THE SUCCESSFUL GASTROTOUR

a. Use of the research data in helping Strategic Management of TdB

The research data stored as a result of the project can be very valuable for TdB as prior to it they had no image of the market. Even the Observatory did not provide any information due to the lack of research.

In the second part of section 4 the list of suggestions was given to TdB in order to create a product which will have competitive advantages compared to the existing tours of the market.

However, research data can also be beneficial from the strategic management perspective.

First of all, database gives the opportunity to know all the tour providers. This can be useful in case Turisme de Barcelona wants to cooperate with them or promote them in some way.

Secondly, the research results indicate the neighborhoods and times of the day when tours take place. From this perspective, TdB as a DMO can try to manage the dispersion of tours in various areas trying to avoid congestion of big tourist groups in one location.

And finally, Turisme de Barcelona can try to promote the companies which are using local products and encourage slow food philosophy in order to contribute to the sustainable tourism development.

## 5.2. Relation between the project and destination competitiveness / sustainability

The project was initiated by the Commercial Department of Turisme de Barcelona with the aim of understanding the offer of gastronomic walking tours of Barcelona in order to be able to present a better tourist product which would stand out among the existing ones.

Since Turisme de Barcelona is based on public-private cooperation it means that it is not only the DMO (Destination Management Organization) of Barcelona but it is also the player of the market. As the institution with broad connections, Turisme de Barcelona has all the potential of introducing a tourist product of its own which can both be attractive for the customers while showcasing the unique and authentic features of Barcelona.

When discussing the destination competitiveness from the perspective of the project it is obvious that Barcelona is an attractive “foodie” destination which is becoming more and more trendy in the recent years. Food tourism is definitely one of the factors for visiting the capital of Catalunya. The growing number of companies is another proof in the favor of the argument.

When it comes to sustainability several questions might arise:

“Are the existing tours sustainable from the ecological point of view?” “Isn’t the fact of tourist congestion in several areas of Barcelona another problem causing the dissatisfaction of local residents?” “Will the so-called “local” “authentic” restaurants and bars preserve their title after the big flow of tourists visiting them?”.

The research showed that there is a high congestion of tourists mainly in the areas of Ciutat Vella (the old city) while the other neighborhoods of Barcelona are not that popular for organizing gastrotours.

Another existing issue is the question of “free tours”. Even though this type of tours were not in the scope of research as companies do not provide gastrotours for free they are also part of walking tours of Barcelona. The research conducted by M. Londoño & F. Medina sheds more light on the concept of free tours in case of Barcelona. Being part of sharing economy free tours are on their rise and can be provided by both local and non-local companies. In fact, this new concept transforms the tourism landscape and has a direct impact on the commercialization of tourist destinations (M. Londoño & F. Medina, 2017). According to the authors free tour providers use this method as a marketing strategy for gaining more customers. However, they carry potential danger for the tourism management of the destination as they are absolutely out of any regulation.

Hence the big number of walking tours (regardless if it is paid or free) concentrated in the same areas of the city might cause threats for the tourism sustainability. However, further research would be needed to evaluate the influence of gastrotourism on sustainability development compared to other types of tourism.

#### b. Answering the Research Question

Gastronomy plays a key role in the image of the destination. Especially, a place like Barcelona is very famous for its culinary experiences and attracts millions of tourists to visit the city in order to try local food.

However, walking gastronomic tours are relatively novel and represent an alternative way of experiencing both culture and gastronomy of the visited area.

As it was discussed earlier, Barcelona is a mixture of cultures and the cuisine is not an exception. Hence, you might not only find local food but also food from other parts of Spain and even world.

From this perspective, some tourists expressed their complaints regarding trying Spanish food opposed to their expectations of trying Catalan cuisine. However, the vast majority of tourists was satisfied which fosters the further development of gastrotours in the city.

Gastrotourism can be a way of developing sustainable tourism in case it uses local products and it elevates the tourists’ knowledge regarding local culture and traditions. Besides, the

clientele of gastrotourism can be of a higher purchasing power which is the needed market for the destination.

Nevertheless, even gastrotourism can bring to deterioration of the sustainable tourism development in case of accelerated growth and absence of regulation.

### 5.3. Limitations and suggested follow-up of this work

The main limitation of the research work can be connected with the lack of informational sources regarding potential tours. The websites which were consulted for the fieldwork are widely used in the Western World and might not completely show the reality.

For example, there might be special platforms used by Russians or Chinese about the gastrotours of Barcelona. Besides, there are also Guides Associations who might organize tours on their own without publishing it on the internet.

Secondly, some information is missing (e. g. some details about certain tours) regarding some tours due to its absence on the Internet. As a matter of fact, some of the tour providers were contacted via email however not all of them got back in touch providing the missing details.

Furthermore, this research has only focused on the walking gastronomic tours of Barcelona City, however there are also tours organized outside of the administrative borders of the city taking place in the Municipality of Barcelona.

Moreover, observing all the walking tours (including free ones) would give the complete image of the market to Turisme de Barcelona and allow them to make Strategic decisions needed for the sustainable development of the destination.



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