

EMOTIONAL ADVERTISING AS A STRATEGY IN CITY BRANDING: THE CASE OF MALAGA

 **Zahaira Fabiola González Romo**¹: Mediterranean University College. Spain.
zahaira.gonzalez@eum.es

 **Meritxell Casals Rojas**: Open University of Catalonia. Spain.
mcasalsroj@uoc.edu

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Thanks to the advertising and marketing techniques used in the city branding strategy, cities seek to stand out through differentiating factors, among which the type of emotions that come with visiting or living in the city becomes a key factor. **Methodology:** Based on this qualitative research, a trend in city advertising is exemplified with an emotional approach used in the city branding strategy, which is projected in the city brand of Malaga. **Results:** The data obtained in the analysis process reveal the extensive application of associations and emotions and the identity elements of the city. **Discussion:** Although the focus of study of this project is to understand the application and identification of emotions and associations linked to the Malaga city and analyzed through advertising, positive experiences designed in the city also gain relevance within the emotional approach and as part of the city branding strategy. **Conclusions:** City advertising encompasses an emotional environment that sets the course for how cities are presented and the importance of excelling in the emotional arena to increase their power of attraction and thus achieve stronger long-term ties with the city.

¹ **Zahaira Fabiola González Romo:** Doctorate in Advertising and Public Relations from the UAB. Her doctoral degree is accredited by ANECA. She is currently the Undergraduate Program Coordinator at the UIC and a tenured professor at the UVIC. She is a member of the InCom research group at the UAB.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, markets have experienced increased competition, and positioning has become a key factor. This context has driven many cities to develop a strategic communication process centered on creating and managing a unique local identity as a method of differentiation to stand out and attract tourists, visitors, businesses, companies, and investors (Compte Pujol, 2022). Tourism plays a significant role in driving the Spanish economy, and many Spanish cities compete for top positions, investing their efforts in creating and projecting a positive image. This is how city marketing strategies are developed, integrating the promotion of tourism and its attractions (Cruz, 2022).

Malaga exemplifies a city undergoing significant transformation in recent years. It recently revamped its city brand, shifting from "cool city" to "round city," and the current brand has been recognized and praised as a successful model by city marketing professionals (El Español, 2023). Thanks to these types of city branding strategies, often linked to values and emotional experiences, the city is successfully propelled toward economic progress and advancement. This research aims to delve deeper into the application of emotional and value associations, exploring the complexities of this combination. These elements define the city's unique personality and allow it to shine in the realm of emotions (Puig, 2009).

This research aims to identify the application of emotions in city advertising and the value proposition linked to positive emotions and experiences as differentiating factors. It proposes to analyze, identify, and understand the application of emotional associations that are central to the city branding strategy. The goal is to gain an understanding of the role of emotions in increasing the city's appeal and enhancing its image in a positive and emotional way.

1.1. The City as a Product

Elizagarate (2008) defines the city product as a series of features that offer varying degrees of satisfaction and benefits to the city's public. This set of characteristics and values of identity and personality refers to what the city is and what it can offer. It comprises tangible elements, such as natural resources or city assets, and intangible elements, such as values inherent in the city's culture and customs, which enhance brand value and favorably promote its image (Elizagarate, 2008).

The concept of the "city-brand" also stems from the idea of the city as a product; however, it wasn't until the year 2000 that a model of urban management gained prominence (Elizagarate, 2008).

1.2. The City-Brand

Many cities are undergoing a brand transformation process, becoming places of interest where people consume and have experiences (Muñiz Martínez & Cervantes

Blanco, 2010). This creates “a network of relationships” (Elizagarate, 2008, p. 48), and of exchanges and transactions between the services and attractions offered by the city and its visitors, businesses, and investors.

Cities have adopted the satisfaction of their populations as their primary objective (Elizagarate, 2008), paying particular attention to the emotional aspects linked to happiness and well-being. This approach drives a constant cycle of consumption, as people continually seek products that offer them novel and rewarding experiences (Fernández-Ossó Fuentes & Sánchez-Gey Valenzuela, 2024).

Based on the city-brand concept and through this new orientation that it implies in the management of cities, they find the possibility of achieving a key position at the national and international level, while transmitting values through the identity and values projected by the city-brand (Muñiz Martínez & Cervantes Blanco, 2010).

For the creation and management of the city brand, the intangible aspects of the city's identity image become relevant, allowing cities to awaken in their publics the desire and interest to know and visit it (Morales Holguín & Cabrera Becerra, 2016).

1.3. Experiential Marketing

Currently, experiences and emotions have taken on a fundamental role, where the challenge now is to reach consumers who have become prosumers in the face of a saturation of advertising messages (Lenderman, 2008)

According to Lenderman (2008), forging connections with people allows them to be guided toward consuming an experience linked to a product or brand, and the ability to live this experience greatly increases the meaning and relevance of that brand. Thus, in relation to marketing strategies and those responsible for marketing in cities, it is necessary to recognize the new type of consumer, which leads to a new approach to the future of marketing based on experiences that offer more than just commercial aspects (Lenderman, 2008).

García Carrizo (2021) points out that various stakeholders must manage the city through marketing and advertising, designing experiences for the city's diverse audiences. That author notes how these tools not only attract audiences but also reinforce the city's identity by showcasing its unique character. We also consider the conclusions of Jiménez-Marín et al. (2022), who argue that sensory marketing can contribute to increased sales, customer loyalty, and satisfaction.

1.3.1. Relationship and Distinction Between Experiential and Emotional Marketing

Campos Tatay (2023) explains that emotional marketing strategy focuses on evoking feelings in consumers in order to create an emotional bond with a particular brand. This strategy aims to demonstrate a connection with the consumer to the point where they can identify with the brand's behaviors or personality traits, thereby generating an emotional reaction and connection. Based on emotional marketing, the next step is

to select the emotions most closely linked to the brand and determine how to convey them to consumers (Campos Tatay, 2023).

For city branding, emotions offer the opportunity to sell and project values through an emotional identity and to present the most interesting experiences and attributes to its target audiences (Martínez, 2004). In this sense, as García Carrizo (2021) points out, marketing and advertising are consciously used when managing and communicating the city brand.

City brand managers today use emotions when trying to gain a competitive advantage by developing various marketing strategies, thanks to which they can find added value when reaching their customers (Taylor, 2000).

1.4. Emotional Advertising

According to Ceruelo and Gutiérrez (2003), the field of marketing uses emotions as “creators, moderators and mediators of consumer responses” (p. 3), but in the discipline of advertising the use of emotions is even more notable.

López (2007) points out that “we are in the age of emotions” (p. 33). Thus, advertising focused on rationally arguing the advantages or benefits of a product is also giving way to a path that is evolving towards emotional aspects related to “desires, longings and internal aspirations of individuals” so that “sensory attributes are now taking on greater prominence compared to the rational attributes of products” (López, 2007, p. 29).

As a result, it becomes essential to delve into the world of emotions in order to convey and project them through brand communication. Thus, the new challenge lies in communicating emotional values, connecting with the consumer, and offering them a differentiated value proposition through seduction and the creation of an affective relationship (López, 2007).

Likewise, a new avenue is opened in brand communication where images for advertising and emotions come together and become part of a language full of symbolism and meaning, captivating the viewer or consumer in surprising advertising campaigns that project dreams and desires and introduce them to a journey full of emotions (López, 2007).

Emotional advertising is “understood as persuasion directed at the feelings of the public, it focuses above all on covering deep desires and longings in a real or symbolic way” (López, 2007, p. 32) so brands have at their disposal a new way to differentiate themselves and create affective bonds with the consumer through the emotional approach of advertising.

According to López (2007), consumer *insights* are fundamental for brands. This concept is closely linked to emotional advertising, which involves brands meeting expectations on both a rational and emotional level. He states that “companies must be like that magician who is able to turn dreams into reality” (López, 2007, p. 40).

1.5. City Branding

According to Portugal Germano (2018), a brand involves a set of functional, emotional, and strategic aspects that create a series of associations among the public and generate feelings toward a particular brand. To this end, Portugal Germano (2018) indicates that a strong brand capable of enduring over time must be authentic and possess unique values, culture, and personality.

Portugal Germano (2018) understands *branding* as the construction of a solid and recognizable identity that must be projected and transmitted in coherence with this.

1.5.1. City Branding Strategies

These are techniques aimed at achieving notoriety and a successful city brand, as well as enhancing and promoting the various associations with the place and its tangible and intangible characteristics (García Carrizo, 2021).

According to García Carrizo (2021), city brand identity and optimal positioning are linked. To this end, brand communication arguments are defined so that the city's positioning can be conveyed and project the values, attributes, or capabilities that have been identified and that the city possesses. This involves determining a set of emotional or rational values to communicate (Martínez, 2004). Furthermore, Portugal Germano (2018) explains that visitors to a city can be attracted by aspects related to the destination that make it a tourist destination.

Currently, managing a city involves treating it as a product whose exploitation generates benefits for both those who manage it and its inhabitants. This approach, supported by Sixto García (2010), requires the use of strategies specific to city marketing—tools that are essential for effective urban management aimed at shared benefits.

Thus, cities are positioned not only as habitable spaces, but also as brands that must be promoted and developed to maximize their social, economic, and cultural value (Sixto García, 2010). Authors such as Jiménez Morales and de San Eugenio Vela (2009) even include living elements such as events into the development of this promotion, since for them, events constitute a key strategy for boosting the promotion of the territory, acting as a powerful catalyst for images and creator of imaginaries that contribute to establishing a distinctive brand for the entire city.

2. OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of this study is to identify the emotional associations used in the city of Málaga's advertising communications and its identity— which form part of its city branding strategy—in order to understand the attributes associated with the city and how they are applied.

Specific Objectives:

- To identify the factors and define city branding, outlining its main strategies that align with the emotional approach implemented in Malaga and understanding its identity.
- To extract and identify the emotions and associations applied to the Malaga city through the analysis of the city's advertisements, and to detail and understand how they are applied.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study presents a qualitative case study, a content analysis that examines the proposed case through advertisements and/or audiovisual pieces. These materials are used to interpret and understand the case of the Malaga city in relation to city branding from an emotional perspective. Building on the work of Strauss and Corbin (2016), this research identifies various associations, revealing and understanding applications focused on projecting and conveying positive and exciting emotions and experiences.

Based on a sample of advertisements, an analysis is conducted of elements such as the message, the facial and gestural expressions of the characters, the images, the role of music in the advertisement, the genre and song type, and the use of sound effects. The aim is to analyze, through visual, auditory, and message analysis, a series of indicators that allow for the detection and identification of the role of emotions and their expression.

París (2022) mentions a group of basic emotions that coincides with Goleman's (1996) classification of basic emotions manifested through a series of facial expressions that are recognized worldwide and in different cultures.

Therefore, basic and universal emotions are analyzed based on Goleman's (1996) classification, and also understood from the classification between positive or negative emotions developed by López-García and Navarro-Jurado (2007).

Bourdin (2016) expresses his conviction regarding universal facial expressions and their relationship to emotions. In this sense, the manifestation of emotions is also analyzed, with Guerra (2024) developing a series of elements related to facial expression and body gestures in relation to each basic emotion.

In order to provide emotional associations that go beyond the classification of basic emotions, it is also proposed to analyze the connotation and emotional meanings through the use of colors, based on the contributions of Heller (2000) and Dupont (2012).

According to Portugal Germano (2018), "brand identity is established through key elements, which are usually the brand's values and identity, and emotional and functional benefits" (p. 18). Thus, the associations attributed to the city brand identity are one of the elements to analyze in order to understand the aspects and values

capable of appealing to emotions, and from which the power of attraction and desire for the city are increased.

Therefore, a systematic analysis is carried out in order to detect, extract and consider the elements and attributions applied and related to positive emotions and value promises, transmitted through advertising and under the *city branding strategy* of the city.

Table 1 outlines the elements and indicators to be analyzed in the advertising spots.

Table 1

Elements of Analysis

Elements and Indicators Analyzed in Advertising Content	
Language and visual elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Images and setting of the scene -Presence of text in the commercial -Scenes and locations -Inclusion of elements that represent the Malaga city. -Use of colors: clothing and landscapes -Body language: facial expressions, face, gestures, hands, arms, legs, postures, eyes, gaze. -Activity or action performed by the characters. -Inclusion of the city brand logo.
Language and sound elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Music: song, theme or lyrics -Changes in rhythm in the spot -Sound effects or use of pauses and/or silences.
Message	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Message, main idea or theme, the values it communicates, and existing associations. -Content of the character's dialogue, voice-over, and text.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Next, in Table 2, the elements of analysis for the identification of emotions in advertisements are broken down, among which body language and the use of colors will be analyzed based on the indicators of the authors mentioned, Heller (2000) and Dupont (2012).

Table 2

Elements and Indicators of Analysis for the Identification of Emotions

Elements and Indicators for Identifying Emotions	
Joy: happiness, serenity, fun, dignity, pleasure, gratification.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Body language: facial expressions that show joy, well-being, and satisfaction: laughter and smiles. Body posture: gestures, jumps, and/or gait. -Use of colors and connotations. -Positive and optimistic messages or words. -Cheerful, energetic, lively music.
Love: acceptance, cordiality, trust, infatuation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Body language: affectionate gestures: hugs, kisses, loving gestures. Tender facial expressions. -Use of colors and connotations. -Messages that show closeness, love, and a sense of pride or belonging to the city. -Romantic or harmonious music.

Surprise: astonishment, bewilderment, admiration.	-Body language: facial expressions: open mouth and eyes, raised eyebrows, body posture, hands and arms that project surprise or astonishment -Messages or words that uncover and reveal surprising aspects -Impactful music or special effects
Anger: rage, anger, fury, hatred, violence.	-Body language: facial expressions and gestures of anger -Use of colors and related connotations -Intense and/or irritating music -Negative and angry messages or words
Sadness: sorrow, grief, pessimism, melancholy, depression.	-Body language: slumped posture and facial expressions showing discouragement and/or tears -Use of muted colors or tones -Messages or words that show sadness or highlight aspects in a negative way -Soft and melancholic music
Fear: anxiety, apprehension, dread, dismay, phobia, panic.	-Body language: facial expressions and body language that show fear and concern -Words that convey fear or worry -Tense or suspenseful music
Aversion: contempt, disgust.	-Body language: gestures and expressions of rejection -Images of spaces that show neglect -Dark or muted colors and tones -Messages or words that show disagreement -Music
Shame: guilt, remorse, humiliation.	-Body language: expressions and gestures that show shyness, remorse -Scenes of characters or images that point to a responsible party or show withdrawal -Messages or words that indicate the search for or discovery of a cause or a responsible -Music

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

This analysis of advertisements and campaigns, in addition to identifying the use of emotions and associations with the city, also examines the presence of cultural, historical, artistic, natural, gastronomic, and traditional factors of the city, as well as recreational activities, which play a significant role as attractions in the city's advertising. The aim here is to determine the predominance, or lack thereof, of certain aspects of the city's identity in the advertisements.

Thus, the following elements –which are listed in each group of Table 3– are analyzed in relation to the city's defining characteristics.

Table 3

Indicators for the Analysis of Identity-Defining Elements

Elements and Indicators to Be Analyzed in Relation to the City's Identity	
historical, cultural, artistic value	Museums, galleries and art exhibitions, monuments, landmarks, theaters, historic buildings and architectural works.
natural value and appeal	Natural environments, landscapes, beaches, mountains, botanical gardens and parks.
gastronomic value	Typical products, markets and images related to gastronomy.

traditional and/or folkloric value	Scenes of traditional dance and dancing, clothing, handicrafts, events and festivals, popular shows and religious celebrations.
activities	Sports, recreational and leisure activities.

Source: Elaborated by the authors

Table 3 also includes the consideration of leisure, recreational or sporting activities that are incorporated into the city's value proposition, and which García Carrizo (2021) points out, along with other types of events, as elements that promote the environments and areas of identity through advertising and that reinforce its identity.

3.1. Sample Selection

For the selection of the sample (Table 4), the contents of advertising and/or audiovisual materials produced by the Malaga City Council and the Tourism Department were selected and examined. These are two entities that collaborate closely on the city's promotional and advertising efforts and are responsible for disseminating the vast majority of commercials, advertisements, and promotional materials for the campaigns launched in the Malaga city.

The selection criteria for the advertisements and advertising and audiovisual materials are outlined below:

- Advertisements and advertising campaigns launched from 2020 onwards.
- Advertisements and advertising campaigns from the institutional sphere: from the City Council and/or the Tourism Department.
- Advertisements and promotional and advertising materials in audiovisual format.

Table 4

Sample Ads

Year	Advertisement	Link
June 2020	"Malaga – better than ever"	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=avUm-zu7uY
January 2021	"Malaga – what better place?" - first phase	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eiYV8WFmuss
July 2021	"Malaga – what better place?" - second phase	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z8I4M6c6c9o
July 2022	"A perfect place"	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-t53TTeakog
End of the year 2023–2024	"Guilty of your best moments"	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIw-tQPombw

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

It was decided to select advertisements from the city starting in 2020, as this coincides with the global pandemic; as a result, a series of emotionally charged commercials were released, some of which also use the current pandemic situation as their starting point.

Following the pandemic and lockdowns, cities found themselves having to reinvent themselves due to the impact on tourism and the widespread reluctance or caution regarding travel, especially to cities, given their overcrowding and perceived safety concerns. In response to this sense of insecurity stemming from the global pandemic, Malaga launched a campaign to position itself as a safe destination, called “Malaga –better than ever.” Later, the campaign “Malaga– what better place?” was launched, fostering an optimistic outlook for the future with Malaga as its destination, while highlighting its most attractive features.

These are advertisements that begin to delve into the world of emotions, such as those stemming from a global problem that has generated all kinds of feelings, which the city is trying to address optimistically (Europa Press Andalucía, 2021). It was during the lockdown that the city also collaborated with singer Luz Casal, who, during her stay in the city during the pandemic, declared her love for Malaga through a song she composed. This song then became part of the city council's subsequent campaign, further promoting the city through emotions (El Español, 2022). Furthermore, the sample of advertisements includes an initial and a second version, reflecting the decision to expand the campaign months later (Área de Turismo y Promoción del Ayuntamiento de Málaga, n.d.).

These advertisements decisively mark the beginning of a way of advertising and promoting the city linked to emotions, culminating in the current advertising spot " I feel guilty of your best moments," which is no longer linked to the pandemic context, but continues to be related to the world of emotions.

A brief description of each of them can be found in the annex section.

4. RESULTS

Based on the data obtained, it is observed that music is present in all the advertisements analyzed. Furthermore, the use of music alternates with voice-over narration. Regarding the use of music in the advertisements, it is observed that this key element is present in every advertisement in the analyzed sample. As Mor Moreno (2021) points out, music is relevant due to its ability to guide the viewer toward the realm of emotions. In line with Mor Moreno (2021), its presence does not immediately imply an emotional connection, but it is decisive at different points in each advertisement analyzed, and due to various aspects, such as the meaning of the lyrics, the type of melody, a change of rhythm, or the role that the musical theme acquires at certain moments in the advertisement— aspects that can be observed in the detailed analysis and in the data collected in Table 5.

Table 5

Analysis Results

Year and Spot	Visual elements		Sound elements: musical theme and effects	Main message
	Basic emotions (positive and negative)	Connotations and meanings of an emotional nature		

	extracted from the analysis of body language	from the analysis of the application of colors		
2020: "Malaga – better than ever"	Joy, devotion, Pleasure, gratification. Love, dignity, happiness.	Passion, power, elegance, youth, peace, perfection, calm, freedom, dreams, well-being, warmth, balance.	Instrumental piece with traditional music. Sounds of heels, seagulls, ocean waves, horses trotting, and a boat engine.	A modern Mediterranean city, brimming with passion and culture, at its finest. A privileged place with a diverse offering, providing calm, satisfaction, well-being, peace, and magic.
First phase January 2021: "Malaga – what better place?"	Fear, sadness, dread, sorrow, anxiety, love, joy.	Calm, peace, joy of living, pain, loneliness, luminosity, tranquility, a place of infinite possibilities.	A soft, inspiring melody that suggests strength. The sound of waves, seagulls, ambulance sirens, and applause.	Overcoming challenges, resilience, a sense of belonging; it invites us to live in the present and look towards the future. It highlights the quality of life in the city and a place full of possibilities.
Second phase. July 2021: "Malaga – what better place?"	Happiness, joy, love, infatuation.	Luminosity, peace, youth, perfection, infinite possibilities, fantastic journey, freedom, optimism, joy of living, fun, kindness and joviality.	A melody with a catchy rhythm and tone, and a chorus that highlights themes like discovery, exploring the world, and going for walks. Sound of water.	A desire to return to a city of international renown that offers a high quality of life and has an open, welcoming atmosphere. The city is portrayed as a well-rounded place that captures the heart, where people can enjoy rewarding and pleasant experiences.
July 2022: "A perfect place"	Joy, pleasure, tranquility, happiness, love, tenderness.	Rest, calm, Experiences of peace, calm, and serenity. Tranquility, magic, and the world of emotions; vitality, strength, dynamism, emotional well-being, and joviality.	A soft musical theme with lyrics that make a declaration of love to the city. Sound of waves and seagulls.	Malaga is the perfect starting point, a place to find happiness and enjoy positive experiences. It's the place that awaits you, ideal for its unique natural beauty and tranquility. It also fosters a strong

				sense of belonging and connection with the city.
December 2023: "Guilty of your best moments"	Love, happiness, infatuation, surprise, joy, pleasure, gratification, tranquility, fun.	Happiness, serenity, a place where dreams come true, positivity, energy, strength, fun, enthusiasm, sociability, perfection, spaces full of life and connected to nature, a feeling of comfort, healthy living, balance, elegance, distinction, a luminous place, infinite possibilities, joy of living, joviality, wisdom, freshness, the fantastic, tranquility and placidity, longing, sophistication.	Instrumental music with a folk rhythm, groundbreaking, emotive, modern, and electronic. It shifts from a contemplative rhythm at the beginning to an accelerated pace at key moments in the advertisement. Ambient sounds of seagulls, ocean waves, and cathedral bells.	Through a self-deprecating confession from the city of Málaga, the city admits it is "guilty" of being a place where people experience unique moments and positive emotions – a place that inspires people to return time and again and to love it. It emphasizes that it is a "guilty" city for providing the best moments.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Regarding the emotions present in the sample, it is found that positive emotions occur in all advertisements, such as joy and love, and also along with their emotional subcategories such as infatuation, tranquility and gratification, all of which are proposed and belong to the classification of Goleman (1996).

In the first advertisement, the accompanying song plays a traditional role, and the emotions of joy and love are linked to the city's traditional values, conveyed through the music and the dancer – a character through whom these positive emotions are also connected to the natural settings and corners of the city that make way for these movements.

In the advertisements for the first and second phases of the "Malaga – what better place?" campaign, and in the fourth advertisement, "Malaga, a perfect place," the emotion of love and infatuation between the characters is emphasized. The fourth advertisement, "Malaga, a perfect place," primarily highlights the tranquility the city offers and its natural beauty, using images that have been previously analyzed. In this advertisement, the voice-over only appears at the beginning and end, and the musical theme, composed specifically for the city and relevant to the message being conveyed, takes center stage.

Regarding negative emotions, the second advertisement, “Malaga—what better place?” from the first phase of this campaign, features fear and sadness. These emotions are expressed through images and scenes depicting the pandemic context in the city. Subsequently, an emotional contrast is created by the use of positive emotions such as joy and love to emphasize other aspects of the city, which are also shown in the analysis and Table 5. This advertisement, from the first phase of the “Malaga—what better place?” campaign, differs from the advertisement in the second phase. The second phase lacks negative emotions and focuses on showcasing, through the images and scenes described in the analysis, the experience of positive emotions like love and joy through the gratifying and pleasurable experiences depicted in an advertisement aimed at international markets.

Furthermore, the fifth advertisement analyzed, “I feel guilty of your best moments,” stands out from the rest of the sample. It features three positive emotions: joy, love, and surprise, along with their various subcategories. This highlights the emphasis on positive emotions in one of the sample advertisements, which is the city's current campaign, and indicates the current focus and direction of the city's emotionally driven advertising.

On the other hand, regarding the emotional connotations derived from the use of colors and the meanings of Heller (2000) and Dupont (2012), a series of associations emerge that are also linked to the themes developed by López (2007), who points out that human aspirations and desires are timelessly expressed in advertising. In this sense, some associations drawn from the emotional symbolism of colors and also from the message of each advertisement are related to the categorizations proposed by López (2007), such as beauty, related to the landscapes depicted in the advertisements; fantasy, related to the ideal place to which one is invited to visit; freedom, related to the discovery of the surprising environments shown in the advertisements; magic, due to the charm of its hidden corners and the types of emotions experienced; passion, as each advertisement invites the viewer to live in the present and the future and to savor each moment; the progress of a city that presents itself at its best; and the prestige of a city that distinguishes itself through aspects such as quality of life and international recognition. Likewise, several common associations are evident throughout the entire sample: the joy of living, tranquility, cheerfulness, balance, perfection, and youth. However, the associations evoked by each advertisement individually also help reinforce the message in each one.

In the advertisement “Malaga, better than ever”, there is greater emphasis on associations linked to passion, elegance, youth and balance, linked to emotions that are related to traditional values and also to the natural and urban environments of the city.

Regarding the first and second phases of the “Malaga—what better place?” campaign, in the first phase, the emotional associations connect to the sense of overcoming challenges conveyed in the advertisement's message, which is linked to messages that encourage living in the present and looking towards the future. The associations present in the second phase of the campaign are also related to the

message of the advertisement, which seeks to emphasize the prestige and quality of life that the city offers. As for the advertisement “Malaga, a Perfect Place,” there are a series of associations primarily connected to the calm, tranquility, and perfection of the location. In contrast, the advertisement “I feel guilty of your best moments” contains a series of associations that emphasize the city's capacity as a place to experience positive, unique, and exciting moments. Individually, these associations are understood as linked to the message that each advertisement tries to convey, and in the total sample, the set of associations linked to the Malaga city from 2020 to the present are also understood, and are understood from a total perspective between these years of advertising carried out.

Furthermore, the old logo of the former city brand, “Malaga, the great city,” appears in the 2020 and 2021 advertisements, although the advertisement for the first phase, “Malaga – what better place?”, only includes the Malaga City Council logo and not the city brand logo. The new city brand, “Malaga, the round city,” is also present in the advertisements “Malaga, a perfect place” and “I feel guilty of your best moments.”

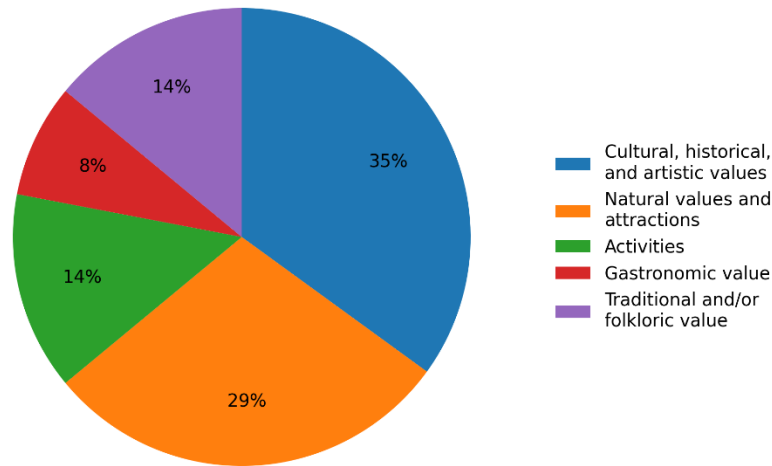
Based on the data obtained and the images analyzed in each advertisement, the fifth and current advertisement for the city, “I feel guilty of your best moments,” demonstrates a connection with the city's many facets. This advertisement, specifically aimed at an international audience, establishes a link with the international context the new city brand seeks to connect with, and features the series of positive emotions categorized by López (2009), as well as a greater presence of characters from diverse nationalities.

Based on the analysis and interpretation, the presence of the various elements that a city brand should contain when advertised, as pointed out by Huertas (2010), is confirmed. These include the graphic element, referring to the visual identity that appears in each advertisement, although an exception is observed in the second advertisement, “Malaga – what better place?” corresponding to the first phase of this campaign, with only the integration of the city council logo; the functional element, presenting the tangible values and their attractions; and the emotional concept, which integrates those intangible benefits and values linked and associated with the city and present in each of the advertisements that have been analyzed.

Figure 1 shows the presence of the identifying elements of the Malaga city in all five advertisements analyzed.

Figure 1.

Percentages of Identity Values Present in the Malaga Advertising Sample



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Based on the content analysis of the advertisements and the count of each of the identifying elements of the Malaga city, grouped into the different categories represented in the pie chart in Figure 1, it can be seen that, with respect to the total obtained from the sample of the five ads, the historical, cultural, and artistic value and identity of the city is one of the most prevalent factors. Within this group, the presence of emblematic monuments, historical sites, and cultural spaces such as theaters was counted, as well as architectural buildings, museums, art exhibitions, and artistic events.

The prominent presence of these elements reflects the historical, cultural, and artistic approach that the city projects through its advertising. In this sense, some of the factors pointed out by Huertas (2010) and Morales Holguín and Cabrera Becerra (2016) are present, as they indicate that every city brand must be able to differentiate itself through its own characteristics, such as its history, heritage, culture, and its relationship to the natural environment.

Following with a smaller percentage are the elements grouped under natural values and attractions. This category includes marine and mountain landscapes and natural environments, such as beaches, mountains, parks, and gardens. There is little difference between the percentages of the first group of historical, cultural, and artistic values and the second group of natural values and attractions, indicating that the city's natural and scenic appeal is another of the most prevalent and significant factors.

On the other hand, the various sports and recreational activities shown in all the advertisements were counted, including surfing, rowing, sailing, golf, horseback

riding, running, cycling, and climbing. These elements are included in Figure 1 due to one of the relevant aspects Huertas (2010) points out regarding the central objective of city branding: it should focus not only on showcasing the city's attractions in various areas and related to its identity, but also on presenting the appeal of the location for different activities, which in Figure 1 are given the same level of importance as traditional and folkloric values.

Of the elements counted within this group, the presence of traditional dances, costumes, shows, crafts, popular events and festivals, and religious celebrations were considered. This group represents 14% and relates to aspects of the city's personality, a relevant factor also highlighted by Huertas (2010). Finally, 8% corresponds to gastronomic value, calculated based on the presence of dishes and products from local cuisine, scenes in restaurants or beach bars, and images of the city's central market. Thus, the gastronomic richness of the Malaga city has a small share in the total number of *spots* and is highlighted to a lesser extent, resulting in a significant difference compared to the other results obtained for each group.

5. DISCUSSION

The introduction and approach to this project outline the new context in which cities find themselves and the importance of distinguishing them through a series of differentiating attributes. This opens a new avenue for advertising and promoting cities, one that integrates an emotional approach. Therefore, this research is designed from the outset to understand the existence and application of emotions and associations linked to the Malaga city and present in advertisements.

After conducting theoretical research on all relevant concepts surrounding the main topic of this work, a broad understanding of the elements and factors involved in city branding has been obtained. This is one of the aspects that was intended to be covered and is mentioned in the specific objectives of this work, along with other related concepts such as emotional advertising.

The importance of city marketing and concepts like city branding is evident in the findings obtained during the analysis and the theoretical research process. These are key elements in consolidating a strong identity like that of Malaga today, and in formulating the values and aspects that make the city stand out and differentiate itself. To create a distinctive city brand, the conceptualization and adoption of these positive values are crucial. Knowledge is gained from their application in trying to increase the attractiveness of the city and the new city brand, "Malaga, a well-rounded city."

The city's advertising and promotional efforts become a key component of its city branding strategy. One of the aspects emphasized in the city's advertising is its quality of life, highlighting the excellent lifestyle it offers. This factor is directly linked to the positive emotions and experiences associated with visiting or living in the city. Thus, the city's quality of life is a distinguishing element that also shapes the positive emotions and experiences presented in the advertisements. This results in a combination of diverse aspects, such as quality of life, the emotions associated with

living in the city, and the diversity of its natural and urban environments, while also promoting the city's values and defining characteristics. These elements converge to create emotional benefits for viewers and the city's audiences.

In this way, the city distinguishes itself through a unique combination of elements and associations, ranging from its roots and natural surroundings to the distinctive, welcoming, and warm atmosphere it currently projects, along with a whole host of pleasant emotions. The Malaga city has experienced growth and progress, which aligns with the influx of digital nomads and foreign investors. These aspects are also considered in the new visual formulation of the city brand, which aims to integrate all facets of the city and approach it from an emotional perspective, promoting a balanced lifestyle where work and leisure blend seamlessly. These elements are showcased in advertisements and respond to evolving individual preferences and societal changes, presenting Malaga as an attractive alternative that integrates holistic well-being. This holistic approach emphasizes the complete and emotional well-being projected across various areas of life and is increasingly integrated into the city's advertising.

Furthermore, the renewal of the city brand marks a turning point for a city that was previously defined primarily by its activity and tourist or cultural appeal. By reformulating its brand, the city expands its associations and values, amplifying its emotional appeal to other target audiences, such as the British, German, and Dutch, as well as the American, Asian, and Middle Eastern markets. This new brand decisively integrates the city into an emotional dimension, aiming for a broader reach and targeting new audience profiles. This also highlights the rise of emotional appeal in city advertising, designed to impact diverse audiences, including potential residents, who must be increasingly engaged from an emotional perspective. In this sense, the distinctive value that the Malaga city projects to prospective new residents and to an international audience is evident, as seen in two of the advertisements in the sample.

In this regard, it's understood that emotional advertising also becomes a tool for attracting specific segments, such as the premium market, which the Malaga city aims to reach through its current advertisement, "I feel guilty of your best moments." Therefore, the role of emotions becomes significant in this regard, and on the one hand, it takes center stage to showcase the benefits the location offers, along with the city's distinctive character and personality, while enriching some of its values – such as modernity, exclusivity, the spectacular nature and sophistication of the location, holistic well-being, the fulfilling life it entails, and the privileged lifestyle – all while seeking to resonate with these kinds of benefits and aspirations. Thus, emotional advertising elevates the appeal to an aspirational level and emphasizes that Malaga is a desirable place to improve one's standard or quality of life, achieve a certain status, or attain a higher quality of life. This is accomplished by demonstrating the city's connection with the premium segment and portraying it as a city immersed in a positive atmosphere that provides positive emotions and experiences, thus offering everything necessary for happiness. On the other hand, in the advertisement "I feel

guilty of your best moments” the presence of traditional identity markers is evident, an aspect that highlights the work of emotional advertising to connect the traditions of the place with the premium segment.

It is therefore evident that emotional advertising aims to attract premium segments, not only to enhance the city's relationship with this type of audience, thus highlighting its unique characteristics and emphasizing the city's high standards and prestige. These aspects also allow the Malaga city to open itself to new opportunities and audiences based on this projected image and the associations it forms.

Regarding the city brand renewal, the city's adaptability is also evident, a city that stands out for various reasons and has achieved significant positions, including top rankings in both national and international reports and classifications. The emotional connection the city integrates into its branding strategy and advertising, as well as the values embodied in its new brand, not only attracts the attention of local residents but also the national and international community. These new associations enhance the city's prestige and recognition, ultimately providing benefits to the city itself.

Following the analysis, it is also clear how the Malaga city is able to adapt to the constant changes of an increasingly competitive environment among cities, driven by market and environmental factors. The analysis of the sample confirms the city's adaptability and resilience, even in adverse situations that were entirely new globally, such as the pandemic. In this context, Malaga was able to respond, reinvent itself, and focus its efforts on emphasizing the emotional aspects the city offers through its advertising. At a time when negative emotions like sadness and fear were prevalent, advertising content was geared towards reversing these emotions by showcasing the emotional benefits that audiences could experience in Malaga. Thus, emotional advertising not only acquires great importance in advertisements and advertising spaces to capture viewers, but also plays a role in the city's recovery and revitalization, where the strategic use of emotions becomes a central element.

Regarding the emotional advertising employed in the analyzed advertisements, it is observed that the use of colors and body language projects a strong emotional charge, and the scenic beauty showcased in various urban environments also plays a prominent role. In this sense, the landscape becomes a key element in appealing to emotions and inspiring viewers to experience unique and exciting moments in the city, thus fostering a connection with its surroundings. The landscape is a recurring element in each of the advertisements in the sample, and it also embodies a series of intangible values related to well-being, tranquility, and positive emotions conveyed in each advertisement and in all the natural settings where the characters appear sharing moments. This confirms the continued use of a natural resource and its power and emotional role in the city's advertising, a theme also reflected in the sweeping panoramic views of the sea in several of the advertisements in the sample.

During the analysis process and based on the results obtained, an understanding of the application and presence of basic and universally known emotions was achieved,

based on Goleman's classification (1996). Furthermore, a wide range of associations and connotations attributed to the city were identified, reinforcing the emotional atmosphere created around the city and projected through advertising. On the one hand, the predominance of positive emotions is shown in all the ads, but the interference of negative emotions is also confirmed, even in one of the most successful ads currently available. This is the advertisement "I feel guilty about your best moments," which uses guilt in a positive sense. This peculiarity in the use and application of emotions in Malaga's advertising is observed, and it is this advertisement that has allowed the city to stand out internationally, even reaching the finals of the New York Festivals awards. The role of emotions in city advertising is also evident in the use of contrasting emotions. This is seen in advertisements that combine negative emotions and then contrast and emphasize positive ones, as well as in this current city advertisement, which suggests the use of connotations that invert the meaning of an emotion generally associated with negative, highlighting it as a positive aspect. This emotional approach in city advertising is thus evident, transcending conventional notions and reinforcing its distinctive character and value.

Meanwhile, the analysis highlights the importance of color as a tool with the potential to reinforce and amplify both the message and the emotional meanings of each advertisement, particularly those linked to the city. In Malaga's advertising, color is combined with elements of body language, allowing the viewer to connect with the city's attractive presentation from various perspectives. This presentation conveys a promise of intangible value that integrates the emotional benefits projected by these elements. The analysis reveals a diversity of colors used throughout the sample. Thus, Malaga's advertising stands out for its use of color as a powerful and amplifying element for emotions and associations.

Music, meanwhile, plays a prominent role in advertising in Malaga. Its use is identified as reinforcing and complementing the emotional character of each advertisement, as seen through instrumental pieces in a folk style, which also accompany and stimulate emotions linked to the traditions of the Malaga city.

The data obtained in the analysis process reveals the extensive application of associations, emotions, and elements of the city's identity. However, the use of identity elements linked to its traditional and/or folkloric value, as well as aspects related to its gastronomic value, is less prevalent, despite the city's unique traditional and gastronomic significance. Consequently, these elements are not emphasized. Advertising for the Malaga city incorporates various elements that reflect and connect with its historical, cultural, artistic, and natural identity, but its traditional or gastronomic hallmarks are reflected to a lesser extent, highlighting an opportunity to optimize these unique facets of the city's identity.

In addition to identifying and understanding the use of emotions in the analyzed advertisements for the city, this approach is also found in the main city branding strategies implemented by the city, which are incorporated into the theoretical framework. Although the focus of this project is to understand the application and identification of emotions and associations linked to the Malaga city and analyzed

through advertising, the positive experiences designed within the city are also relevant to the emotional approach and as part of the city branding strategy. Following the development of these sections, prior to the case study, some of the experiences, activities, and events in the Malaga city are presented as another set of factors that can contribute to creating connections with its audiences, such as tours, routes, sensory experiences, and unique activities. In this way, the Malaga city seeks to offer visitors memorable experiences that connect audiences with the city, relating not only to the physical environment but also to the emotions generated by the experience. In this way, its contribution within the city branding strategy of Malaga linked to the emotional approach is known, an aspect that allows the city to advance from this approach and emotional sphere.

Through the emotional approach to city branding employed in advertising, cities like Malaga are progressing by leveraging a range of intangible aspects. This integrated emotional approach allows them to distinguish and differentiate their unique identity, projecting and reflecting their distinctive character and personality, as well as highlighting their emotional attributes to generate an emotional connection with their audiences. These are essential in the face of the new challenges cities currently face, such as the constantly changing environment and the context of globalization. Therefore, emotional advertising for cities becomes crucial for this continuous adaptation, for maintaining lasting relationships, and for preserving and improving the city's projected image and positioning.

Thus, city advertising encompasses an emotional environment that points the way in which cities are presented and the importance of excelling in the realm of emotions to increase their power of attraction and try to remain among the preferences and choices of individuals and through meaningful emotional connections, thus being able to achieve stronger long-term links with the city.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis carried out in this study, it can be concluded that the Malaga city has managed to consolidate a city branding strategy that is coherent, distinctive, and emotionally resonant as well as aligned with the new dynamics of urban appeal. The research identifies how, in a context where cities compete to capture the attention and interest of global audiences, emotional attributes have become central to shaping their image and reputation. In this sense, emotional advertising is presented not only as a communication tool but also as a strategic resource that allows for the articulation of an attractive, aspirational, and differentiating narrative about the lifestyle that Malaga offers, a lifestyle that combines quality of life, holistic well-being, diverse environments, and memorable experiences.

One of the main contributions of this work is the identification of the intentional and systematic use of emotional components—colors, music, body language, landscape, and sensory narratives—that not only convey a desirable image of the city but also build affective connections with both local and international audiences. Specifically, the research demonstrates how Malaga has developed an emotional narrative geared

toward emerging audiences such as digital nomads, foreign investors, and premium segments, without entirely abandoning its ties to traditional tourism or its cultural identity. Thus, a transition is observed from a city brand focused on tourism toward a more complex, sophisticated, and emotionally resonant identity.

The study also shows that this strategy has allowed Malaga to adapt effectively to complex and changing scenarios, such as the pandemic, where the emotional component of advertising acted as a mechanism for resilience and recovery, offering symbolic responses to collective negative emotions. In this context, the use of universally recognized emotions, and the reformulation of some traditionally negative ones like guilt, reinforces the city's ability to project innovative and empathetic messages. These elements have also contributed to the city's international recognition, positioning its advertising among the most highly regarded at global festivals.

However, despite these positive findings, the study also reveals certain limitations. In particular, it notes a relatively low presence of identity elements linked to Malaga's traditional, gastronomic, or folkloric heritage, which represents an underexplored opportunity in the city's current emotional narrative. Although some advertisements subtly incorporate these elements, their symbolic and evocative potential could be better leveraged to reinforce the authenticity and uniqueness of the urban story. Furthermore, the research focuses exclusively on the analysis of advertisements, thus excluding other complementary dimensions of city branding strategy, such as digital communication, direct urban experience, or public policies aimed at the emotional management of the territory.

Based on the results achieved, multiple lines of future research emerge that would allow for a broader and deeper understanding of city branding. Emotional appeals are a key aspect of this phenomenon. On the one hand, there is a need for comparative studies between cities employing similar strategies to identify patterns, differences, and transferable best practices. On the other hand, it would be pertinent to explore the real impact of emotional campaigns on different target audience segments through reception and perception studies. Similarly, the possibility arises of integrating mixed-methods approaches that combine content analysis with urban ethnography or public policy evaluation to obtain a more comprehensive view of the phenomenon.

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Authors' Contributions

Conceptualization: González Romo, Zahaira Fabiola and Casals Rojas, Meritxell. **Methodology:** González Romo, Zahaira Fabiola and Casals Rojas, Meritxell. **Software:** González Romo, Zahaira Fabiola. **Validation:** González Romo, Zahaira Fabiola. **Formal Analysis:** González Romo, Zahaira Fabiola and Casals Rojas, Meritxell. **Data Curation:** González Romo, Zahaira Fabiola. **Drafting:** González Romo, Zahaira Fabiola. **Revision and Editing:** González Romo, Zahaira Fabiola. **Visualization:** González Romo, Zahaira Fabiola. **Supervision:** González Romo, Zahaira Fabiola. **Project Management:** González Romo, Zahaira Fabiola and Casals Rojas, Meritxell. **All authors have read and accepted the published version of the manuscript:** González Romo, Zahaira Fabiola and Casals Rojas, Meritxell.

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AUTHOR(S)

Zahaira Fabiola González Romo

She holds a Doctorate in Advertising and Public Relations from the UAB. Her doctoral degree is accredited by ANECA. She is currently the Undergraduate Program Coordinator at the UIC, a tenured professor at the UVIC, a consultant at the UOC, and an associate professor at ESERP, the CITM at the UPC, the Escola Universitària del Mediterrani, and the UEMC; she is also a regular instructor in the UVIC's MBA program. She has been a visiting professor at EGADE Business School at Tecnológico de Monterrey and at Pompeu Fabra University. She is a member of the InCom research group at the UAB. She also runs her own advertising agency.

zahaira.gonzalez@eum.es

H-Indice: 15

Orcid ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2034-9704>

Google Scholar: <https://scholar.google.es/citations?hl=ca&user=hkhWq5UAAAAJ>

ResearchGate: <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Zahaira-Gonzalez-Romo>

Academia.edu: <https://universitatdevic.academia.edu/ZahairaFabiolaGonz%C3%A1lezRomo>

Meritxell Casals Rojas

She holds a bachelor's degree in Communication from the Open University of Catalonia and is currently completing a master's degree in Advertising Strategy and Creativity at the same university. She is interested in the broad field of communication, and her interests include branding and emotional advertising, experiential marketing, brand strategy, branded content, storytelling, and transmedia. Throughout her studies, she has worked on projects focused on strategic brand communication and the creation of brand experiences.

mcasalsroj@uoc.edu

Orcid ID: <https://orcid.org//0009-0007-5093-349X>

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