

## Positioning Sucre as a tourist destination

### Posicionamiento turístico de Sucre

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#### Abstract

This research analyses the importance of touristic image in the positioning of a destination in the tourism area. Also, the diversity of touristic brands that the city of Sucre presents to develop tourism is examined, which lay in between the destination's competitiveness and even the sustainability. As a result, we ask each other. How this duality of touristic images affects to the competitiveness of tourism in Sucre? What are the causes for which Sucre has two touristic images? We should also mention that the city of Sucre has a touristic brand designed by the Direction of Tourism of the Mayoralty of Sucre. It is evidenced that it is necessary that the city of Sucre develops a brand image that is based on the touristic strategies of the tourism strategic plan, so this image answers to the local necessities while positioning Sucre in the chosen demand segment. It is no longer possible elaborate a brand image based in personal whims or just the perception of the local population, the most important thing is the perception of the touristic demand.

#### Resumen

Esta investigación analiza la importancia de la imagen turística en el posicionamiento de un destino en el ámbito turístico. Asimismo, se examina la diversidad de marcas turísticas que presenta la ciudad de Sucre para desarrollar el turismo, que se interponen entre la competitividad del destino e incluso la sostenibilidad. Como resultado, nos preguntamos ¿Cómo afecta esta dualidad de imágenes turísticas a la competitividad del turismo en Sucre? ¿Cuáles son las causas por las que Sucre tiene dos imágenes turísticas? También debemos mencionar que la ciudad de Sucre tiene una marca turística diseñada por la Dirección de Turismo de la Alcaldía de Sucre. Se evidencia que es necesario que la ciudad de Sucre desarrolle una imagen de marca que se base en las estrategias turísticas del plan estratégico de turismo, para que esta imagen responda a las necesidades locales y posicione a Sucre en el segmento de demanda elegido. Ya no es posible elaborar una imagen de marca basada en caprichos personales o sólo en la percepción de la población local, lo más importante es la percepción de la demanda turística.

**Tourist image, Images, Sucre**

**Imagen turística, Imágenes, Sucre**

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## Introduction

The city of Sucre has been an important tourist destination since the 1970s. Over the course of these years, Sucre's tourist image has changed due to different circumstances. The different tourism actors elaborate their tourist offer based on different perceptions of the tourist image. This situation prevents the positioning of Sucre as a competitive destination in the tourism market. This implicitly affects the sustainability of tourism activity.

In the current environment of globalization of tourism markets with internationalization business strategies, tourist destinations are immersed in a competitive gale against each other, even if they are geographically dispersed. As a result, destinations face a complicated process of survival in which the strategy of differentiation and competitiveness mark their trajectory. In this sense, one of the guidelines that mark the differentiation is the tourist positioning of a destination within a competitive context. Consequently, the objective of this academic work is to analyze the tourist positioning of Sucre based on its tourist brand image. In this context, the research question guiding this work is: To what extent is Sucre's tourism positioning with its current tourism brand image competitive in the field of tourism?

Many destinations have problems with tourism positioning, and it is argued that it is the lack of communication. In reality, what we must affirm is that communication is the problem. In the field of tourism, a new way of looking at communication is through the approach of positioning, a concept so simple that tourism authorities fail to understand how powerful it is. First of all, we must clarify that tourism positioning does not refer to the destination, but to what is done with the minds of the probable clients or people to be influenced; in other words, how the destination is positioned in their minds. Positioning is the first thing that comes to mind when trying to solve the problem of how to be heard in an over-communicated society.

Tourism has become one of the most important socioeconomic activities for the city of Sucre, given the lack of a business structure in other economic sectors. In this sense, public authorities and tourism entrepreneurs are investing in this growing activity.

However, the city of Sucre is not unique with its offer in the national and international context. For this reason, it is urgent to analyze the importance of the tourist image and its impact on the competitiveness of the tourist activity developed in Sucre.

This is due to the fact that the agencies responsible for promoting tourism have little coordination in this area, which means that each of them has a different perception. Nowadays, in the field of tourism destinations, one of the factors related to competitiveness and sustainability is the image of the tourist destination (OMT, 1999).

It is necessary for the tourism authorities of the city of Sucre to know the perception that consumers (tourists) have of the product(s) of this city. This will allow them to establish, among other things, the current position of their product with respect to those of the competition or with respect to a series of attributes. Correct differentiation and positioning will constitute a competitive advantage for the city.

Tourism branding allows products to be identified and, at the same time, to differentiate them from their competitors. They can be powerful tools for creating a positive image of the product and the company. And image is a matter of great importance in tourism. The commercial management of the company or those responsible for the promotion of tourism destinations should strive to establish an image that distinguishes the city from other destinations and determine whether they are willing to invest significant resources in creating a strong brand image and what kind of branding strategy they want to follow. A tourism image should communicate the attractions and distinctive positioning of the place. Developing a strong and distinctive image requires creativity and hard work on the part of these stakeholders. Symbols are often very important for the recognition of a tourism brand, and the differentiation of its image. The symbols chosen should be communicated through advertisements that express the personality of the tourism brand.

The inclusion of marketing strategies in the actions carried out by public institutions, such as municipal governments, can generate very positive results in both economic and social terms. In particular, the creation of a brand image-provided it is managed correctly- can satisfy objectives as diverse as obtaining greater opportunities for economic expansion, strengthening relations with other governments, improving public opinion, attracting investments (domestic or foreign) and consequently reducing the unemployment rate, increasing foreign exchange income by attracting international tourists, helping to preserve both the historical-cultural and natural heritage, among others. It is precisely because of these qualities of the -city brands that a growing number of municipalities are currently including the creation of a local brand in their strategic plans, in order to be identified and differentiated. At the same time, it is also possible to identify the same strategy at higher levels of government.

But what is a brand image technically? As José Crespo -an expert in strategic communication- mentions, it is the effect of global meaning -activated by a country in the minds of citizens around the world; that is, an imaginary or abstract construction, configured from the interaction of meanings associated with identity (given by the distinctive features and characteristics of a country), personality (human aspect with which the image of a country is clothed) and the general service of the country (i.e., the functions and utilities provided by the country within the international concert, through what it does). The reasons that, according to Crespo, justify the need for its development are related to the maximum competition between regions, countries and companies, the tariff and para-tariff barriers of the central countries, the concentration of distribution channels, the saturation of messages in the global media space, the difficulty of countries of lesser geopolitical weight to access third markets, among others.

Based on the above, the brand image of the city of Sucre was not designed exclusively to position it competitively in the tourist activity, but rather, it is a municipal institutional decision, under criteria of limited social consensus. Although the tourism sector encompasses multiple sectors, it is necessary to seek consensus.

On the other hand, when speaking of the multiple sectors involved in this activity, reference should not only be made to the public and private sectors, but the local community should also be considered from the outset, since it is its members who will experience the consequences of any decision, and on whom the outcome of the strategy depends to a large extent, whether it will be positive or negative, since the favorable or unfavorable attitude of the residents is a determining factor in the strategy's implementation process. Furthermore, in order to create an effective brand image, it must first be accepted by the local inhabitants. Once local acceptance and internalization of the brand, as well as the values it promulgates, have been achieved, the community will be the main promotional agent. And in this way, the tourist positioning of the Sucre tourist destination will be linked to competitiveness and sustainability criteria.

Finally, having reflected on the concrete benefits of creating a brand image, there is no doubt about the usefulness of this type of strategy as an integral tool for tourism positioning. However, it is necessary to emphasize that the branding strategy is a tool, not the solution to all the problems of a destination. Therefore, it is necessary to urge the municipal government of Sucre to develop a brand image, without forgetting that it should not be an end in itself, but a means to achieve the desired results, since it is not simply a matter of positioning the city of Sucre in the minds of the target public, but of what can be achieved thanks to this tourist positioning.

Currently, the city of Sucre has, implicitly, two tourist images, on the one hand is the architectural wealth, reinforced by the nomination of UNESCO, as a cultural heritage of humanity. On the other hand, there is the tourist image of the Dinosaur footprints in the area of Cal Orcko. Consequently, it is worth asking how this duality of tourist images affects the competitiveness of tourism in Sucre. What are the causes for Sucre to have two tourist images. Also, it is worth mentioning that the city of Sucre has a tourist brand designed by the Directorate of Tourism of the Mayor's Office of Sucre.

## Results and discussion

For the development of this work, bibliographic documents were analyzed, as well as the tourist brands used in Sucre. The survey technique was also used to obtain information about people's knowledge of Sucre's tourist image.

The fieldwork was carried out during 2 months in the city of Sucre.

### *Tourism in Sucre*

Tourism in the city of Sucre dates back to colonial times, however, institutionally, tourism in Sucre is considered a priority activity since the seventies. Since then, the tourist flow has been increasing. Currently, Sucre has a tourist flow of around 22,904 tourists, which represents approximately 5% of the total flow of foreigners to the whole country. The flow of domestic tourism with a total of 35,942 national residents in Sucre represents 4% of the total flow of national residents.

The main international issuing markets are very diverse: 15.8% of them are French, 10.8% are British, 9.3% are German, and 6.50% each are American and Swiss. It is possible to mention that the remaining percentage shows great variety in terms of nationality, including Australian, Canadian, Dutch, Spanish and others. Regarding national tourists, 23.2% come from Cochabamba, La Paz is in second place in outbound tourism to Sucre with 21.1%, then Potosi with 17.6% of the total of national tourists arriving to Sucre, and finally Santa Cruz is in fourth place with a share of 15.8%, making these 4 cities about 67% of the total visitors to the city of Sucre. The rest of the national tourists are made up of travelers from the cities of Tarija with 8.7%, Oruro with 7.9%, Beni with 3.4% and finally Pando with 2.4%.

This influx of tourists is conditioned by the tourist seasonality. That is, the flow of visitors is marked by two seasons: low and high. In the high season, the international market visits Sucre in winter and the national market in summer. During the low season, the tourist flow is limited. However, the average stay of visitors in Sucre is 2.3 days for foreigners and 1.9 days for Bolivians.

The tourist offer that motivates the flow of tourists to Sucre is based on tourist services and attractions. Within the services, Sucre has means of transportation in regular conditions, since the airport infrastructure is precarious and within the terrestrial infrastructure there is only the asphalted stretch that is Sucre-Potosí. There are different categories of lodging. During the last decade, the hotel offer has improved ostensibly. In terms of places to eat and recreation, the offer has also increased. Travel agency services have also increased and offer different possibilities for tourist activities. Regarding tourist attractions, Sucre offers cultural resources based on the colonial architectural heritage, the paleontological wealth of Cal Orck'o and District Eight with the presence of ethnic groups and archaeological remains.

The main actors involved in the development of tourism in the city of Sucre are related to the public sector, whose main articulator is the Municipal Mayor's Office. The private sector includes travel agencies, hotels, restaurants, tourist transportation, museums, and tour guides.

### *Sucre tourism products*

The supply of tourism products in the city of Sucre has increased over the years. The initial products were the city tours or tourist visits around the city and the Sunday visit to the Tarabuco indigenous fair. The city tours product is based on visits to museums and tours of the city since the city has the title of heritage city. On the other hand, the visit to the Sunday fair is based on the presence of indigenous people and local commerce. This Sunday market is one of the most authentic in Latin America. Subsequently, travel agencies began to offer the cultural and archaeological richness of District Eight. This product, called District Eight, offers activities based on hiking, trekking, visits to the communities and observation of archaeological and paleontological remains. And, in the nineties, dinosaur footprints were discovered in the Cal Orck'o area, becoming the star product. For this reason, a park was built, called Cretaceous Park.

Of the products, the products that make up Sucre's tourism offer are: The cultural and architectural heritage of the city of Sucre, the ethnic and archaeological cultural richness of District Eight and the paleontological richness of Cal Orck'o.

From this identification we can conclude that there are several elements to consider for the elaboration of a brand image: urban culture, ethnic culture, architectural heritage, archaeological heritage and paleontological heritage. Obviously, this diverse set of tourism products complicates the positioning of tourism and the design of a brand image. However, decisions have to be made in order to be competitive. With this in mind, in the next point, we will analyze the brand image at the state and municipal level, with the purpose of analyzing to what extent Sucre's tourism brand image is consistent with the tourism products offered by Sucre's tourism entrepreneurs.

#### *Tourist image of Bolivia and the city of Sucre*

Bolivia's tourism brand image has two elements: a slogan and a logo. The slogan has the following text: Bolivia, the authentic still exists. This slogan contains elements that are based on the products. That is to say, this slogan tries to transmit the message that in Bolivia, authentic cultures and authentic nature exist. What kind of authenticity does it refer to? The concept of authenticity is very complicated to define. According to the definition of the Royal Spanish Academy, authentic means: Accredited of certain and positive by the characters, requirements or circumstances that concur in it. As you can see, this concept has many vertices of definition. Therefore, what this slogan mainly transmits are the characteristics of the product and the benefits that the consumer or tourist can obtain. That is, to see culture and authentic nature. But ironically, Bolivia is not the only country that has these products.

Regarding the logo, it is represented by a llama and a stylized palm tree on a background with a handmade fabric texture and the colors are red, yellow and green. Analyzing the image, we can mention that once again it transmits an image of the tourist product that Bolivia offers.

However, this logo does not manage to transmit an image of the tourist destination Bolivia, because the characteristics of the logo are not unique, and can be confused with those of other destinations. For example, llamas and palm trees exist in many places in Bolivia.



**Figure 1**

In summary, this image of Bolivia's tourism brand is very focused on the product, but not on positioning the country in the minds of visitors. Since, from the aesthetic point of view it is perfect, but it generates a very confusing visual image of the country. Going deeper into the analysis, the slogan, translated into other languages, acquires connotations that are different from the original conception.

It is very important for Bolivia to rethink its tourism brand image in order to position itself competitively in the minds of potential tourists and to consolidate its position in the minds of current tourists.

The tourist brand image of the city of Sucre is made up of two elements: a slogan and a logo. The slogan is based on the text:

The colours of time. This text fails to convey any message, since it is very ambiguous. In a more detailed analysis of the slogan, it can be interpreted that the city of Sucre has a diversity of historical periods. From another perspective, perhaps, it is related to the changes that existed in Sucre. In concrete terms, it is very complicated to interpret this slogan.



Figure 2

From a touristic point of view, it fails to convey any message, not even from the product perspective. Regarding the logo, it is structured in a rectangle, based on two colors, red and blue, divided in the middle by a white line and has the silhouette of a tower in the middle. This logo sends two messages, on the one hand by means of the colors that have no relation with the colors of the city, which are red and white. Therefore, the meaning of the colors of the logo is unknown. The image of the tower, we consider that it alludes to the architectural heritage of Sucre. From the academic analysis. It can be mentioned that this logo is focused on the characteristic of promoting the tourist product, but not the image of Sucre. It is understood that the image of Sucre is not only conformed by the colonial architecture, but it is the set of diverse factors, such as its climate, people, environment, among others. Therefore, the tourist brand image promoted by the mayor's office of Sucre has ambiguities that prevent the Sucre tourist destination from achieving a competitive position in the potential and real tourist demand.

In this context, there is also another tourism brand image where Sucre is involved. This tourism brand image was designed by the Destination Management Organization - OGD, Sucre-Potosí-Uyuni. The main objective of this organization is to promote the development of tourism in the cities of Sucre-Potosí-Uyuni. To this end, it developed various activities in the different cities. However, a common factor was the design of a tourism brand image for the three regions. This image has two elements, a slogan, and a logo.



Figure 3

This corporate brand image does not reflect from any point of view the characteristics of the city of Sucre.

At present, the municipal tourism department uses the brand image under the slogan: Sucre turístico.

This new brand image has serious limitations to position Sucre as a competitive tourist destination.

**Results obtained**

In order to obtain information, a survey of 60 people was carried out with three questions, the first one with a closed answer and the other two with an open answer that allows for multiple responses.

First question: this question has a closed answer in the first part, but if the answer is affirmative, it is requested to indicate which is the tourist image they know, to know if the image issued by the tourist authorities is known and really responds to the characteristics and appreciation of the people.

1.- Do you know Sucre's tourism brand image?	
YES	39
NO	21
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>60</b>

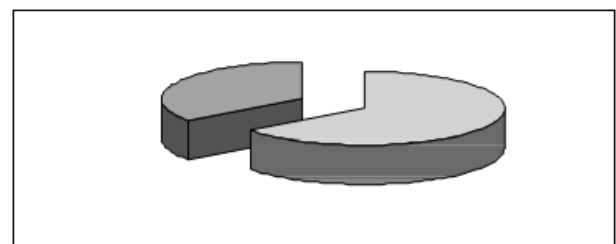


Table 1 Do you know the image of Sucre's tourism brand?

Within this response it is possible to appreciate that 65% affirms that they know Sucre's tourism brand image; however, when asked to indicate which image they know, they indicate options that are not really the brand image. The responses that stand out the most are those detailed in Tables 2 and 3 below.

What is?	
Answers that encompass many aspects	
City architecture	3
White City	4
Colonial City	6
Tourist Attractions	2

**Table 2** What is it?

What is it?	
Responses that encompass only specific tourist attractions or sites	
San Francisco Bell	3
The House of Freedom	8
La Recoleta	5
Dinosaur footprints	19
The Sica-Sica and Churuquilla Hills	7
Tarabuco	4

**Table 3** What is it?

Among the responses that stand out the most are the dinosaur footprints, followed by the house of freedom and the Sica-Sica and Churuquilla hills. Thus, it can be assumed that people do not really know Sucre's tourist brand image.

Second question: the objective of this question is to know what is the most representative in Sucre, in order to issue a tourist brand image that really represents what Sucre has to offer to visitors. The answers are diverse, which is why the analysis is based on two parameters: first, the answers that include many tourist aspects and the second part in answers that point only to certain tourist attractions.

2.- Which image represents Sucre?	
Answers that encompass many aspects	
City Architecture	7
White City	6
Colonial City	5
Cultural City	1
Student City	2
Historic City	8

**Table 4** Which image represents Sucre?

In the first part of the analysis of the second question, it is possible to observe that the most representative for the people, in terms of image, is represented by the characteristic of Sucre as a historical city, followed by the architecture of the city, then the name of White City, colonial city and the other responses that are detailed in Table No. 4 and the percentages of the graphic 4.

2.- What image represents Sucre?	
Responses encompassing only specific tourist attractions	
The image of a Tarabuqueño	3
Textiles	3
The Sica-Sica and Churuquilla Hills	14
La Recoleta	3
La Casa de la Libertad	11
Dinosaur footprints	25
Glorieta Castle	1

**Table 5** What image represents Sucre?

As for the second part of the analysis of the second question, referring to the attractions specifically speaking, we find the dinosaur footprints, followed by the Sica-Sica and Churuquilla hills, the Casa de la Libertad, and the other answers as shown in Table No. 5 and graph 5.

Third question: the purpose of this question is to determine the image that, according to local people, tourists have when they visit Sucre. There were also several answers, which were divided, as in the second question, into two parts of analysis: the first one encompassing different characteristics or aspects of Sucre and the second part into specific attractions, as detailed in Tables 6 and 7.

2.- What image represents Sucre?	
Responses encompassing only specific tourist attractions	
The image of a Tarabuqueño	3
Textiles	3
The Sica-Sica and Churuquilla Hills	14
La Recoleta	3
La Casa de la Libertad	11
Dinosaur footprints	25
Glorieta Castle	1

**Table 6** According to your perception, what is the tourist image that tourists have of Sucre?

In the first part of the analysis, many people assume that tourists perceive Sucre as a Colonial city, Historical city, White city, architectural city and other aspects that are found in a lower number of responses, as described in Table N° 6 and shown by the percentages in the graph 6.

3.- According to your perception, what is the tourist image that tourists have of Sucre? Responses encompassing only specific tourist attractions	
the Pujllay of Tarabuco	2
The House of Freedom	1
Dinosaur footprints	6

**Table 7** According to your perception, what is the tourist image that tourists have of Sucre?

In the second part, it is possible to verify that some people assume that the tourist image of Sucre for tourists is represented by the dinosaur footprints, then the Pujllay and finally the Casa de la Libertad, as shown in the table below N° 7.

From the results obtained, it is possible to indicate that Sucre's current tourism brand image is not well known and that it does not contemplate the characteristics that people have of a tourism image for Sucre. The analysis of the results shows that the most representative tourist brand image of Sucre is the dinosaur footprints, followed by the characteristics of the city's colonial architecture.

## Conclusions

According to the analysis carried out, it can be concluded that the city of Sucre underwent a metamorphosis in the field of tourism image, but under no circumstances did these changes manage to represent the tourism attributes of the city of Sucre in a competitive manner.

This situation shows that the tourism activity developed in our city is still at the stage of artisanal development. Where, the main axes of tourism development are the intensive use of the rich diversity of resources by the actors to achieve short-term benefits. In the same tone are the public institutions that have serious limitations in terms of tourism planning, which has repercussions in the fact that it is still not defined what type of tourism is developed in Sucre and what type of tourists are the target audience.

For these reasons the current tourist image of Sucre is: Sucre Turístico, trying to suggest that all kinds of tourists can come to the city of Sucre, that this tourist destination is inclusive, that we are a destination where there is everything for everyone, a huge fallacy.

These circumstances generate that the competitive participation of the city of Sucre is limited and confined to wait for tourist flows of overflow. Economic investments that generate limited returns, given the diffuse tourist image of Sucre. Intensive and improvised use of resources without taking into account aspects of preservation and valuation.

It is also possible to observe that the results of the surveys show that the most representative tourist image for the people are the dinosaur footprints and the characteristics of colonial architecture that has different infrastructures in the city, and the authorities should work on the basis of such characteristics so that they really represent what Sucre implies in the tourist activity.

In summary, it is necessary for the city of Sucre to develop a brand image that is based on the tourism strategies of the strategic tourism plan, so that this image responds to local needs and is positioned in the chosen demand segment. It is no longer possible to develop a brand image based on personal whims or only the perception of the local population, the most important thing is the perception of the tourism demand.

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