

The commitment to sustainability and its impact on tourism: the case of the European Green Capitals

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ABSTRACT

The integration of sustainability values into territorial management challenges places to commit to and implement strategies that ensure ecological transition. The recognition of the good environmental performance of urban areas, through international awards, can have an impact on their reputational value as sustainable destinations and influence the behaviour of residents and visitors. In this context, an exploratory study was carried out with the aim of interpreting the purpose and significance of the European Green Capital Award in the context of the internal dynamics and external projection of the award-winning cities. The methodological approach was a literature review to map the field of research, supported by the Web of Science bibliographic database, and with recourse to grey literature. The results show that the award, in addition to recognizing the city as a model of urban sustainability, presupposes a strategy that, prior to the application itself, is oriented towards objectives that commit the territory to the green transition and an ambitious action plan, whose initiatives are intended to have repercussions internally and in its external positioning, suggesting possible impacts on tourism. The nature of the study only allows for preliminary insights to be presented, which should be interpreted as a basis for future empirical research, more comprehensive and in-depth, on the disruptive nature of the European Green Capital award in the context of the territory and its tourism development.

Keywords: Sustainability, Tourism Marketing, Destination Branding, Destination Image, European Green Capital.

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Received on: 2025.11.28

Approved on: 2026.01.26

Evaluated by a double-blind review system

1. INTRODUCTION

Sustainability has become a strategic priority in the management of territories and public and private organisations (Molina-Collado et al., 2022). In terms of tourism, the value of sustainability has been affirmed in the scientific literature, following the discourse focused on the need to align business, political and governmental action with its pillars, emphasized especially from 2015 onwards, with the approval of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Han, 2021; Zhang et al., 2024). At the same time, the widespread perception of the negative impacts generated by tourism activity has contributed to sustainability being seen as a panacea capable of mitigating all problems (Paunović et al., 2020; Rahman, et al., 2024), bringing tourism closer to place marketing strategies based on sustainable development models (Bilbao-Terol & Bilbao-Terol, 2020; Buhalis, 2000; Voichuk & Kozliuk, 2021).

The value of sustainability, in the context of territorial management, and its integration into tourism development strategies thus tend to commit territories to strategic choices that allow them to position themselves as sustainable places for residents and visitors and make commitments that impact their reputation and environmental image (Carballo & León, 2017; Pérez-Cornejo et al., 2023; Kusumah, 2024; Sun et al., 2022).

In cities, where the environmental challenges are potentially greater, given the high concentration of human activity (Chung et al., 2021), the commitment to sustainability can contribute positively to their reputation (Pérez-Cornejo, et al., 2023). In this context, sustainability certifications, programs and awards can have special significance, as they aim to recognize and encourage sustainable policies, practices and management models, also applicable to tourism (European Travel Commission, 2019), giving visibility to the commitment to reducing the ecological footprint (Dias & Esteves, 2024). This is the case of the European Green Capital (CVE) award, as it aims to distinguish a city's determination to lead environmental sustainability (Dimitrovska, et al., 2024; European Commission [EC], 2025a) and, in this sense, rewards the relationship of commitment that a city assumes with sustainable development.

Based on this assumption, and verifying the existence of a gap in the scientific literature, it was considered relevant to develop a research work around the relationship between the CVE award

and tourism, through an empirical study developed from the case of Guimarães, CVE 2026. Considering this framework, this article appears as an exploratory work or introductory approach to familiarize with the theme, with the aim of interpreting the meaning of the CVE award in the context of the internal dynamics and external projection of the awarded cities. The structure of the article comprises the literature review, the presentation of the data collected on the CVE award, the analysis and interpretation of the results and the presentation of the preliminary conclusions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Sustainability and Tourism

Although there is no widespread consensus and a single perspective regarding the concept of sustainability (Molina-Collado et al., 2022; Moyle et al., 2020), the meaning of sustainable development presented in 1987 in the Brundtland Report "Our Common Future" established an important conceptual framework, defining it as the model of "development that allows us to respond to the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development [WCED], 1987).

According to Ferreira et al. (2018), sustainable development translates into a dynamic process, which results from an integrated and three-dimensional territorial approach, based on the economic, social and environmental pillars, which is based on the premise that it is possible to develop without destroying the environment. In this way, sustainable development has come to represent a strategic alternative for territories that aim to achieve the desired balance with the environment, through the implementation of transformative and disruptive actions (Martins & Nunes, 2016), materialized in new priorities, strategies and sustainable practices, which are reflected in the dynamics of different stakeholders and in the agenda of organizations and territories (Almeida-Garcia et al., 2019; Dotto & Slongo, 2020; Pereira et al., 2021).

The transposition of the challenge of sustainability to tourism can be summarised in the concept of sustainable tourism, defined as "tourism that takes into account its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, and that responds to the needs of visitors, industry, the environment and host communities" (United Nations Environment Programme & World Tourism Organization, 2005, p. 11). From the perspective of Streimikiene et al. (2021), the trajectory of sustainable tourism translates into a continuous process that presupposes a holistic and integrative

view of the territories, with regenerative development formulas, defined according to sustainability criteria.

In this context, Lee et al. (2021) emphasize that the sustainability of the territory is a key factor for the satisfaction of the host community and the literature shows that strategies based on the sustainable development of tourism recognize residents as fundamental stakeholders who, in this way, foster their involvement and participation in the process of planning and development of tourism in their own territory (Eusébio et al., 2018; Gursoy et al., 2019; Lee & Jan, 2019; Šegota et al., 2017). In turn, authors such as Pourhossein et al. (2023) and Zhou et al. (2020) point out that visitors to sustainable destinations are more likely to create a positive relationship with the destination itself, which favors a higher degree of satisfaction and, in general, promotes more environmentally responsible behavior in the place visited. Marchi et al. (2023) add that the promotion of sustainable behaviours among residents, companies and visitors is one of the challenges of urban tourist destinations that want to stand out for their commitment to sustainability, which presupposes the definition of assertive strategies, but they also warn of the need to intensify research on the relationship between urban tourism and sustainability. This view is shared by other authors (Barcellos-Paula et al., 2024; Wong et al., 2021) who underline the importance of expanding knowledge about how the environmental performance of destinations impacts visitor behaviour.

2.2 Place Marketing, Branding and Image of Destinations

Globalization has expanded the world, dictated new rules and accelerated the need for territories to define marketing strategies that allow them to increase attractiveness to residents, visitors and investors (Sousa & Rocha, 2019). Place marketing, or place marketing, is at this level an important tool at the service of territorial planning in order to create value with the different stakeholders (Lages et al., 2018), in relation to a territory, which is intended to be competitive (Ocke & Ikeda, 2014).

For Istenic (2016), cities have sought to revitalize urban spaces and mitigate environmental problems, as a strategy to become more competitive and Neidig, et al. (2022) add that in this specific case, the international diffusion of the concept of sustainability, accompanied by an increase in competition between cities, has imposed a new agenda of priorities aligned with selective environmental objectives, of valuing green and nature.

In the context of place branding, which aims to define and expand brand awareness and positively impact the image of territories (Eshuis et al., 2014), Braun et al. (2018) reinforce its importance in terms of the reputation of cities, which, according to Boisen et al. (2018) stems from the ability to influence the perception of individuals through positive associations with urban spaces. In turn, authors such as Pérez-Corenejo et al. (2023) and Sun et al. (2022) emphasize that a city's commitment to sustainability can be a decisive factor in leveraging its reputational value, identified as an intangible, sensitive, and valuable asset.

For Garanti et al. (2024), destinations must prioritize sustainability and social responsibility in their branding efforts, which presupposes sustainable practices and the implementation of concrete actions that contribute to the preservation of the environment, the well-being of local communities and the achievement of economic benefits for different stakeholders. The authors (Garanti et al., 2024) also add that destinations should seek to associate themselves with international certification schemes, with the aim of monetizing them as marketing tools, improving the reputation of destinations and attracting more ecologically conscious visitors.

In turn, Andersson (2016) mentions, regarding the Swedish city of Växjö, that urban sustainability policies, related to the pioneering character or visibility of its good environmental practices, can constitute a real contribution to the international notoriety of cities, inspiring local governments to capitalize on this position for branding purposes (Audouin, 2022).

Green or sustainable city brands cover aspects such as green spaces, air and water quality, waste management and recycling, food, urban agriculture and transport, and should be noticeable to individuals (Carrizo Moreira et al., 2023), so green initiatives can influence tourists' perception of the environmental image of the destination (Bilynets et al., 2021).

From a conceptual point of view, the destination brand is associated with the image that visitors perceive as the stimulus that motivates them to visit a place (Garanti et al., 2024; Ruiz-Real et al., 2020). In the literature, the concept of image associated with a territory or a tourist destination encompasses several proposals for definition. Echtner and Ritchie (2003), for example, associate the image with a set of perceptions of the individual attributes of a place and the holistic impression it generates. According to other authors, such as Kotler et al. (1993), the image of a territory always results from an exercise of interpretation of reality, that is, it corresponds to a set of perceptions and associations that arise from the way in which the characteristics of that same territory are

transmitted, communicated, promoted or experienced, which may have a positive or negative influence on its different users or target audiences.

Almeida and Almeida (2023), in addition to associating the image of the destination with a mental representation, made by individuals in relation to a given territory and composed of beliefs, ideas and impressions, recognizes it as a critical factor in attracting visitors. The same position is taken by Zhang et al. (2018), when they show, through the literature, that the image of the destination is a decisive and widely recognized factor, which influences visitors' decision-making, the choice of destination, evaluation, and future behaviors. Buhalis and Park (2021) also state that sustainability is reflected in the very image of destinations and, in this regard, authors such as Bilynets et al. (2021) or Lee and Xue (2020) add that sustainable destinations, especially from an environmental perspective, tend to be considered more attractive. Agapito et al. (2022) point out that a destination promoted as sustainable and socially responsible has the potential to attract tourists who are equally sensitive to environmental issues and socially responsible practices.

3. METHODOLOGY

The methodology chosen for this exploratory study favored the review of scientific literature and the analysis of gray literature. Regarding the review of scientific literature, a previous search was carried out, with the support of the Web of Science, oriented to key terms, or words with similar meaning, in English, defined according to the theme: sustainability, sustainable tourism, place marketing, place branding, green brand, image of the destination. Advanced search by topic was chosen and sometimes the Boolean operator "AND" was used to facilitate access to literature that favored a more comprehensive analysis. The decision aimed to cover possible perspectives or relational approaches in order to map the field of research and outline the spectrum of future empirical research work. Scientific articles were privileged, based on criteria related to their relevance, and an exploratory reading of them was made, which allowed a thematic and content analysis. The results were also filtered according to the year of publication, in order to value the most recent articles, focusing the research on the period from 2019 to 2024.

With regard specifically to the CVE award, and due to the scarcity of literature, the inclusion criterion was to give priority to the (few) scientific articles published on the subject, privileging institutional sources, or grey literature, whose access was made through the official portal of the European Commission and the European Travel Commission, with the aim of collecting more

detailed information and analyzing data on the purpose and strategic rationale, application process, benefits awarded and actions implemented by the awarded cities in the context of CVE.

4. DATA PRESENTATION – EUROPEAN GREEN CAPITAL

4.1 Contextualization of the award

The CVE is, according to Cömertler (2017), a brand, a title and an award. Neidig et al. (2022) highlight the reputational value associated with it and that is transferred to the awarded cities. Sharing the same conviction, Šileikienė et al. (2025) consider that the title of CVE has the potential to raise the international profile of the cities that are distinguished, contributing to their positioning as leaders in sustainable urban development, with an impact on opportunities for international cooperation, partnerships, financing for sustainable projects, and also influencing their attractiveness as a tourist destination.

The CVE award is awarded annually by the European Commission to a city with more than 100,000 inhabitants, which stands out for its commitment to ensuring a transition to a greener and more sustainable future (Dimitrovska, et al., 2024; European Commission [EC], 2025a). Its creation resulted from the European Union's recognition of the important environmental role of cities and the determination to make them more ecologically balanced spaces (MacGregor-Fors et al., 2021). The commitment to sustainability, made a priority in 2006 by a group of 15 European cities, culminated in the choice of Stockholm as the first CVE in 2010, initiating an ongoing process that would recognize and reward local efforts to improve the urban environment, the economy and the quality of life of the inhabitants of European cities (EC, 2025a; MacGregor-Fors et al., 2021).

The European Union is clear about the current environmental challenges of urban spaces, regarding the need to join efforts at local level to mitigate the problems that currently affect cities and provide better living conditions for those who live in them (EC, 2025a). Based on this observation, the European Commission's decision to award the CVE prize to recognise and reward the action of cities committed to the transition to a greener and more sustainable future seems coherent.



Figure 1. European Green Capital logo

Source. European Commission (2025a)

4.2 Objectives

The CVE award aims to simultaneously encourage cities to set continuous and ambitious goals for environmental improvement and sustainable development, to encourage them to commit to the pursuit of high environmental standards, to inspire cities to follow the good examples of CVEs and in this way to promote best practices and experiences in all other European cities (EC, 2025a).

4.3 Application process

The process of applying for a city to CVE presupposes a set of steps and prerequisites that aim to validate the cities' commitment to environmental sustainability through the actions developed or designed within the scope of the green transition.

Currently, the selection of candidate cities for CVE is evaluated according to seven indicators or environmental areas, aggregating the twelve previous indicators (EC, 2025b): (i) Air quality; (ii) Water Quality; (iii) Biodiversity, Green Areas and Sustainable Land Use; (iv) Waste and Circular Economy; (v) Noise; (vi) Climate Change: Mitigation; (vii) Climate Change: Adaptation.

Candidate cities must provide evidence regarding the evolution of each of the indicators, along with information on the improvement strategies that have been implemented, the objectives, strategies and action plan(s) to be developed in the short, medium and long term to mitigate environmental problems (MacGregor-Fors et al., 2021). After a first evaluation process, the finalist cities are selected for the next phase of the competition, which involves submitting their application to a jury, which finally decides the city that will hold the CVE award (EC, 2025b).

4.4 Potential benefits

According to the European Commission (2025a), the CVE award allows the chosen cities to benefit from a set of competitive advantages, which extend over time and can translate into the following impacts: (i) Unique opportunity to become a symbol of European urban sustainability; (ii) Demonstration and projection of its commitment to sustainability; (iii) Acceleration of the

green transition process; (iv) Positive international media coverage; (v) Organization and participation in prestigious national and international events; (vi) National and international recognition and visibility; (vii) Attraction of investment; (viii) Increased tourism; (ix) participation in the European Green Capital Network; (x) Increased local pride and a sense of community belonging.

Table I. European Green Capitals

Year	City	Country
2010	Stockholm	Sweden
2011	Hamburg	Germany
2012	Vitoria-Gasteiz	Spain
2013	Nantes	France
2014	Copenhagen	Denmark
2015	Bristol	United Kingdom
2016	Ljubljana	Slovenia
2017	Essen	Germany
2018	Nijmegen	Netherlands
2019	Oslo	Norway
2020	Lisbon	Portugal
2021	Lahti	Finland
2022	Grenoble	France
2023	Tallinn	Estonia
2024	Valencia	Spain
2025	Vilnius	Lithuania

Source. Adapted from European Commission (2025c)

4.5 Examples of actions developed in the context of the CVE

Information on the awarded cities, provided by the European Commission (EC, 2023; EC, 2025c) and by the CVEs themselves, allows the identification of some of the areas of action and respective actions implemented.

Table II. Examples of actions implemented (2010-2025)

Stockholm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to clean and accessible transport. • Resident involvement: Naming an environmental hero. • Green Capital Ambassadors. • Sharing experience through international conferences, exhibitions and professional study visit programs. • Stockholm Culture Festival: interaction between culture and the environment. • European Green Capital Tours.
Hamburg
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of sustainable urban mobility: public transport and bicycle. • Improvement of the energy performance of buildings. • Strategies for efficient use of the soil. • "Train of Ideas" project: traveling exhibition on aspects of the green city. • Official guided tours and environmental tours.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European dialogues on CVE. • Youth Environmental Summit. • "Get involved" <i>campaigns</i>.
Vitoria-Gasteiz
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a green belt: semi-natural green area in degraded areas. • Projects to reduce light pollution. • Creation of community gardens. • Tours of the "Green Factories" (places that made the city greener). • Lectures, workshops, circuits encourage the use of bicycles. • Diversity of national and international events. • Laboratory City: Promotion of local environmental technological projects. • Ecotourism and tour packages: "Green Weekends".
Nantes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable transport policy: reintroduction of trams and expansion of bicycle infrastructure. • Attracting international events. • Green walking trails. • Promotion of regional agriculture, canteen with locally sourced agricultural products. • Promotion of unique experiences: art, welcoming visitors by residents. • Cultural events in the parks.
Copenhagen
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public-private partnerships for eco-innovation and sustainable employment projects. • Green Lab focused on green technologies. • Diversity of actions to involve residents and partners in the ecological transition and co-creation projects. • Guided tours of the green city. • Activities for the promotion of urban agriculture. • Collective meals of organic food in the public space.
Bristol
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate protection and sustainable energy strategy. • Involvement of residents in environmental planning. • Youth Summit. • "Go Green" project, aimed at companies/organizations. • "Neighbourhood Arts" programme: promotion of community art. • Festival dedicated to green technology. • Museum activities inspired by sustainability, the environment and nature.
Ljubljana
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement of public transport, expansion of pedestrian and cycling networks. • Environmental strategies and disaster management practices. • Planting trees, creating parks and revitalizing the banks of the river. • Information pavilion with diversified daily programming. • Creative environmental education for children. • Exhibits at the city's museum and other venues about the city's green transition.
Essen
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of extensive green and blue corridors. • Sustainable forest management, promotion of good forestry practices. • Educational visits around the environmental benefits of urban vegetation. • Creation of a strategic map with the participation of citizens. • Big events, green community green festivals, <i>slow food festival</i>.
Nijmegen
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Green Connects" campaign, to boost civic engagement. • Creation of the first wind farm in the city. • Organization of events, ecological walks and cafes about sustainability.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Break the Stones" campaign, on the importance of green spaces and aimed at removing hard surfaces, such as pavement, and replacing them with plants or trees.
Oslo
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation and creation of new opportunities within the scope of the circular economy. • Business Climate Network: collaboration between business, citizens and NGOs. • Creation of the Climate Budget. • Activities and campaigns in urban agriculture, electric mobility and waste reduction. • Program to strengthen environmental education in schools.
Lisbon
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Sustainable Forest Management" Certification: Monsanto Park, one of the largest urban forests in Europe. • Creation of a network of bicycle paths and walkways for access to nature, outdoor recreation and promotion of biodiversity and increase of green areas. • Municipal plan to reduce food waste. • Network of electric vehicle charging points.
Lahti
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation and funding of the Lake Vesijärvi project, bringing together university research groups, residents, local companies. • Organization of the International Forum "Ecocity". • "Timeout": project to promote dialogue with children about the environment. • Creation of the Lahti sustainability map.
Grenoble
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban regeneration programmes: transformation of abandoned industrial areas into ecological neighbourhoods. • International forums on place marketing, well-being, informed cities. • Reinforcement of urban gardening and encouragement of the creation of vertical private gardens. • Ecobairros. • Nature-centered events and activities.
Tallinn
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International conference "Smart Cities". • "Green Tracks" Project: improvement of green areas. • "Avalinn" App: application for city (co)planning, open to the community. • Ecofriendly festivals and sporting events.
Valencia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy for the development of sustainable tourism. • Project "My neighborhood in transition". • European Conference on Agroecology. • Projects for the restoration of natural ecosystems and wetlands. • "Neighborhood and Food" Program.
Vilnius
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewable energy projects, public transport, walking and cycling routes. • "Community Refrigerator" Project. • Programs designed to promote the happiness of citizens. • Creation of an application with the aim of citizens participating in the management and planning of the city.

Source. Adapted from European Commission (2023; 2025c)

The data show that the commitment to sustainability is a process that, prior to the application itself, constitutes a path composed of the definition of an action plan and diversified initiatives, oriented

towards its environmental indicators that, while differentiating each CVE, also allow us to glimpse common guidelines, namely: (i) Attracting and organizing events of different dimensions, including the international one, exhibitions, workshops, lectures, concerts, festivals and thematic weeks framed in sustainability and the environment, especially in the year in which they bear the award; (ii) Privileged involvement of the local community in creative and artistic projects, awareness campaigns, educational projects aimed at schools, collaboration with universities or projects aimed at partners, companies and other organizations; (iii) Initiatives focused on sustainable mobility, promoting the use of bicycles, sustainable public transport, or new pedestrian areas; (iv) Creation of infrastructures and increase of green areas, with ecological value and in favor of the health, well-being and happiness of citizens; (v) Actions related to the promotion of endogenous products associated with the enhancement of regional agriculture and healthier and more sustainable food; (vi) Visitor-oriented activities and development of eco-tourism, promotional campaigns to reinforce the image of these cities as sustainable tourist destinations internally and externally.

5. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF PRELIMINARY RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The analysis and interpretation of the research results allows us to understand that the attribution of the CVE prize is framed in the environmental emergency declared from the Brundtland Report and the 2030 Agenda (United Nations, 2015; WCED, 1987) and, in this context, it also corresponds to the European Union's intention to promote a paradigm shift in the management of urban spaces and the adoption of a sustainable development model, encouraging cities to make commitments in terms of environmental improvement and the quality of life of their citizens (Neidig, et al., 2022). The European Commission's recognition of the importance of green urban policies and sustainability justifies the mobilization of cities to stop being part of the problem and become an active part of the solution to the numerous environmental challenges they have to face (Dimitrovska, et al., 2024; MacGregor-Fors et al., 2021; Neidig, et al., 2022). To this end, the territorial management of candidate and elected CVE cities involves prioritizing strategies that allow them to meet high standards of sustainability, leveled by environmental indicators and materialized in measures and actions that seek to have a positive impact on the territory itself, but which are also oriented to the outside (EC, 2025a). The external projection of inspiring models,

experiences and practices, which is one of the objectives of CVE (EC, 2025a), is associated with another set of competitive advantages, to which cities are not indifferent (EC, 2025a).

In turn, the achievement of CVE status, if analyzed from the point of view of place marketing, has the potential to contribute to the differentiation of the awarded city, create value with different audiences, including residents and visitors, and impact its positioning in the context of environmental sustainability (Sousa & Rocha, 2019; Istenic, 2016; Ocke & Ikeda, 2014; Neidig et al., 2022). By corresponding to an institutionalized green brand (Cömertler, 2017; Neidig et al., 2022), the CVE award could leverage the city's national and international reputation, as a reference for commitment to the ecological transition, and positively influence the perception of the destination's image (Bilynets et al., 2021; Braun et al., 2018; Buhalis & Park, 2021; Neidig et al., 2022; Pérez-Corenejo et al., 2023; Sun et al., 2025; Šileikienė et al., 2025; Ruiz-Real et al., 2020), which will tend to be reflected in the city's tourist attractiveness and its affirmation as a sustainable destination (Agapito et al., 2022; Šileikienė et al., 2025).

In this way, it seems clear that the significance of an award aimed at improving the environment of cities (MacGregor-Fors et al., 2021) is not limited to an analysis focused only on environmental indicators, but deserves a multidimensional approach, in which tourism can and should also be considered (Braun et al., 2018; Šileikienė et al., 2025), as is assumed by the European Commission itself (2025a), by associating the award with potential benefits related to the increase of local pride and the sense of belonging of residents or with new dynamics in tourist flows.

The examples of the actions developed by the CVEs allow us to identify the type of initiatives developed by the awarded cities, but also to envision the scope of their potential impacts. In the particular case of tourism, there seems to be a concern to affirm the city as a sustainable tourist destination (EC, 2023; EC, 2025c), which according to the literature can favor the increase in the competitiveness of the destination and influence the perception and behavior of residents and visitors (Carballo & León, 2017; Lee et al., 2021; Pourhossein et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2020).

Although the exploratory nature of this study only allows us to present preliminary insights, the analysis and interpretation of the results suggests that, following the commitment that the territories make to the ecological transition, the attribution of the CVE award, by validating and giving greater visibility to the good environmental performance of a city, intends to have a catalytic effect on its internal dynamics and external projection, from which its repercussion on tourism can be inferred.

Recognizing the limitations of the study and its contribution, it is intended that it be interpreted as an introductory basis for a more comprehensive and in-depth empirical investigation, focused on the case of Guimarães, CVE 2026, which assumes the collective objective of being a European reference in sustainability and climate action (Guimarães City Council, 2025).

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How to cite this article:

Vasconcelos, C; Sousa, B; & Villamarín, P. (2026). The commitment to sustainability and its impact on tourism: the case of the European Green Capitals. *International Journal of Marketing, Communication and New Media, Special Issue on Communication and Marketing in Tourism and Hospitality: Trends in Sustainability, Innovation, and Artificial Intelligence*, February 2026, pp. 78-95.