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Maria Curie-Skłodowska University

KRZYSZTOF RAGANOWICZ

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0410-0028>

[krzysztof@raganowicz.eu](mailto:krzysztof@raganowicz.eu)

OLGA SMALEJ

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6230-059X>

[olga\\_smalej@wp.pl](mailto:olga_smalej@wp.pl)

*Symbols of the City of Lublin in the Perception of Its Inhabitants in  
Light of Quantitative and Qualitative Research*

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Symbole miasta Lublina w percepcji mieszkańców w świetle badań ilościowych i jakościowych

**Keywords:** symbol; place branding; Lublin; survey; FGI

**Słowa kluczowe:** symbol; marketing miasta; Lublin; badanie ankietowe; zogniskowany wywiad grupowy

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## Introduction

The possibility of applying a marketing approach at the level of territorial units has resulted in cities beginning to communicate with their stakeholders, and, above all, with the inhabitants, using techniques and tools previously used only by enterprises. Place branding has enabled cities to build their brands consciously. In the case of cities, which often have a centuries-old history and a very distinctive identity associated with it, the process of building and managing a brand requires laying it on a firm foundation, directly linked to the city's identity, in order to effectively

shape a credible image in the eyes of stakeholders. The elements of a city's identity that have the most significant impact on its image are symbols rooted in the public consciousness, which are permanent carriers of associations with the given city.

Lublin is a Polish city with one of the longest traditions of building its brand and is, therefore, a subject of research regarding the effects of its implementation. The aim of the research presented in the following article was to identify the symbols of Lublin in the perception of its inhabitants and to indicate the differences between groups of women and men, as well as students and senior citizens, and to determine the place of the brand of the city, consistently built since 2007, or its elements among the symbols of Lublin. These symbols were studied using quantitative research (in the form of a PAPI survey) and qualitative research (with the use of focus group interviews). Getting to know the most important symbols of the city that shape the current image of Lublin among its inhabitants against the background of the elements of the brand used in the process of shaping its image will enrich the knowledge of the effectiveness of Lublin's marketing activities.

## **1. City symbol in the context of place branding**

Place branding implemented at the city level is based on three essential elements: identity, image, and brand of the city. They are the basis for creating a framework for building an effective marketing strategy and selecting the most useful tools for its objectives, which will allow strategists to implement the assumptions and meet the expectations of stakeholders. Competition between cities and other territorial units in the territorial offers market is hampered by its imperfections: imperfect information flow, low susceptibility to changes in territorial products, atypical transactions and the tendency of participants to rely on stereotypical views and media images of cities [Markowski, 2006, p. 94]. For this reason, an essential element of city marketing is the creative use of a city's identity, defined as "a set of historically determined city characteristics, which distinguish it from others, and are expressed by all actions taken in the city to create its specific personality and character" [Olędzki, Tworzydło, 2009, p. 31], in such a way as to create a real, positive and credible image of a given place and a strong brand supporting promotional activities. This is possible thanks to components of the place's identity such as local symbols, cultural values, unique spatial forms or urban layout, as well as activities characteristic of a given city [Markowski, 2006, p. 95]. They make up the original image of the city, which is presented to the market [Łazorko, 2011, p. 75].

In marketing activities, the most important and exploited area of identity is the visual identity of the city expressed in the visual identification system. It should be built on the most evident symbols that uniquely identify the city. This is because the perception of the city's symbol is determined by the historical, cultural and social position of the person who perceives it [Pietrzak, 2015, p. 287]. Thus, the

most distinctive symbols usually come from the following areas: human potential (e.g. Wadowice – John Paul II), architecture (e.g. Paris – Eiffel Tower), history (e.g. Jericho – the oldest city), economy (e.g. Rochester – Mayo Clinic), science (e.g. Oxford – Oxford University), religion (e.g. Częstochowa – Jasna Góra), nature (e.g. Zakopane – Tatra Mountains), sport (e.g. Funchal – Cristiano Ronaldo), music, film, art (e.g. Verona – *Romeo and Juliet*), one-off events (e.g. Verdun – WWI battle) or other attractions, such as regional cuisine, folk costumes, legends or sayings [Łazorko, 2011, pp. 76–78]. The coat of arms and the flag, which are the symbols of the city that most often come from history, are also instruments of visual identity. They are the basis for choosing the colours of the municipal visual identification system, they are also used in formal situations, in documents and official buildings, but in marketing communication, they are often replaced by the promotional sign [Łazorko, 2011, p. 78].

Identity, as a comprehensive resource of information about the city, is the basis for creating the image of the city. Its characteristics influence how the city will be perceived in its surroundings, as “identity is the original and cause, the image is the reflection and effect” [as cited in Stanowicka-Traczyk, 2008, p. 18]. Image, on the other hand, is defined as subjective images of the viewer built on the basis of associations and information related to a given place. It is not an objective category, but a reflection of how all stakeholders perceive an individual’s identity of the particular place. Therefore, one can define the image as a whole of subjective knowledge created as the result of one’s observations, the influence of the mass media and other information media [Janisz, Jacak, 2011, p. 92]. The elements of the city’s image that determine its characteristics and uniqueness are the symbols of the city, which are indicated by stakeholders in the form of free associations with the city [Daszkiewicz, 2012, pp. 82–83]. Moreover, the symbols of the city form the basis for the development of the group identity of local stakeholders and create a sense of belonging to a given place [Mueller, Schade, 2012, p. 81].

The brand of the city serves to shape the image of the city within the framework of marketing activities. It allows strategists to reliably influence the change of the city’s image in the direction determined by the objectives, thanks to the use of elements of the city’s identity, which may constitute its competitive advantage, and those which are its distinguishing features: symbols. The elements used in the process of managing and building brand awareness include, among other things, its name (in the form of a city name), logo (promotional sign), slogan, and promotional and image campaigns [Temporal, 2015, pp. 11–12].

Depending on the influence of identity and its elements on shaping the image of the city in the process of building brand awareness, we can distinguish four attitudes presented by the cities. Two extreme ones are the drift – lack of knowledge about the identity of the city, and conscious marketing activities – and full coherence – when the city is fully aware of its identity and consciously and actively creates its image on this basis, striving for a situation in which stakeholders perceive the city accord-

ing to the image communicated by a credible brand of the city. Indirect attitudes are indistinguishability – when the city is aware of its identity but does not create its image – and buffoonery – when marketing communication of the city is not based on its identity, and the created image is not supported by a detailed analysis indicating competitive advantages [Stanowicka-Traczyk, 2008].

## 2. Official symbols of the city of Lublin

Lublin has traditional city symbols in the form of a coat of arms (Figure 1), colours, flag, official flag and bugle-call, which have been codified in the Resolution of the Lublin City Council on the Establishment of the coat of arms, the flag of the city of Lublin, the official flag of the city of Lublin and the bugle-call of the city of Lublin:

(...) § 1 The coat of arms of the City of Lublin is a silver goat with golden corrugated corners and golden hooves in the red field, climbing from the green grass to the green wine bush. § 2 The colours of the City of Lublin are white, green and red, arranged in three parallel strips. The colours of the City of Lublin are the components of the City flags (...) [Uchwała nr 465/XXI/2004].



Figure 1. The coat of arms of the city of Lublin

Source: Lublin.eu, <https://lublin.eu/lublin/o-miescie/symbole-miasta/> [access: 18.06.2018].

These symbols result from the historical tradition of the city – according to legends, the coat of arms was awarded town rights in 1317, and the oldest recorded image of the Lublin coat of arms dates back to 1401 [Plisiecki, 2017, p. 13]; the colours of the city, which form both official flags, are derived from the colours present on the coat of arms, and the oldest note of the bugle-call, played since the 15<sup>th</sup> century, dates back to 1685 [Uchwała nr 465/XXI/2004].

The Lublin City Hall on the Lublin.eu website also mentions the promotional logo of the city of Lublin (Figure 2), one of the symbols of the city [Urząd Miasta Lublin, *Symbole miasta*]. It is a visual element of the Lublin brand, developed since 2007, implemented in 2008 [Krzyżanowska, 2014, p. 199] and still in use in 2018. It was constructed from a precisely designed layout – a graphic sign, a logotype and a claim (promotional slogan). The slogan “City of Inspiration” is an integral part of the logo [Urząd Miasta Lublin, *System identyfikacji wizualnej*]. The brand itself was designed using the Brand Foundations method, which indicated the key distinguishing elements for the Lublin brand. These include the historical and cultural richness of the city, creative potential, “eastern” competence, borderland spirituality, and the potential of ecological products [Krzyżanowska, 2014, p. 201]. Additionally, the elements of the brand strategy include the Jagiellonian period, multiculturalism, religious tolerance, Renaissance art and literature, and the pre-war Jewish diaspora [Urząd Miasta Lublin, *Elementy strategii marki*].



Figure 2. Logo of the city of Lublin

Source: Lublin.eu, <https://lublin.eu/lublin/o-miescie/symbole-miasta/> [access: 18.06.2018].

### 3. Symbols of the city of Lublin in light of the conducted research

Two research projects were carried out to study the symbolism of Lublin functioning in the consciousness of the city's inhabitants. The first method used was quantitative research, and the research technique used was PAPI-type interviews. The sample selection was of a quota nature, and every effort was made to ensure that the structure of the sample was as close as possible to that of the surveyed population. The research tool used was a specially developed questionnaire to be filled in by the respondents. The quantitative survey was attended by 623 respondents living in the city of Lublin. Quantitative research was deepened through a qualitative method using focus group interviews (FGIs). Four FGIs were conducted – two groups of older people (five people and six people, respectively) and two groups of young people (both consisting of eight people). The focus on the comparison of these two extreme age groups was the result of a quantitative study which revealed significant differences in the perception of the analysed aspect of reality between the two groups, and it was decided that this should be looked at in more depth. Figure 3 shows the structure of the sample by sex.

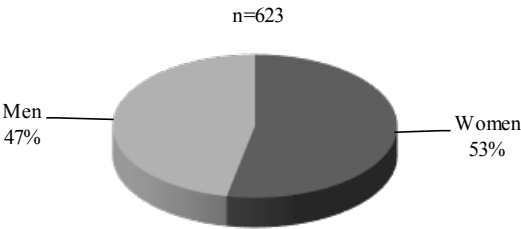


Figure 3. Structure of the sample

Source: Authors' own work.

The research projects were aimed at solving the following research problems:

- Identification of the most important symbols of the city in the perception of Lublin's inhabitants.
- Definition of the place of Lublin's promotional logo as the symbol of the city in the consciousness of the inhabitants.
- Identification of possible differences in the perception of Lublin's symbols between groups of women and men.
- Identification of possible differences in the perception of Lublin's symbols between the age groups of young people and senior citizens.

The following subsection presents the analyses carried out.

**3.1. Symbols of the city of Lublin in light of the quantitative research**

The results of the quantitative study have shown the symbols of Lublin functioning in the consciousness of the city's inhabitants. The most frequently indicated symbols are shown in Figure 4.

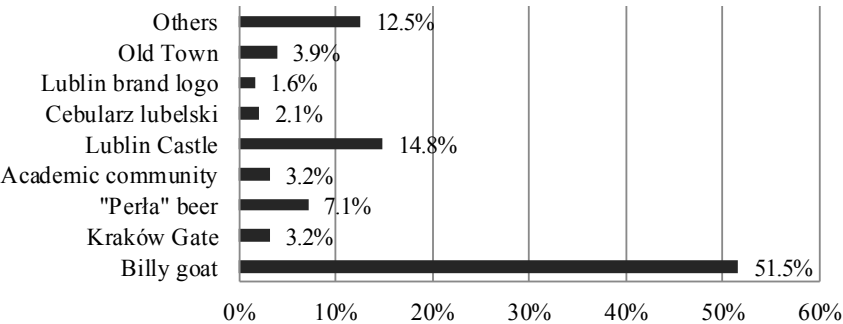


Figure 4. Symbols of the city of Lublin in the perception of its inhabitants

Source: Authors' own work.

The symbol of Lublin most frequently indicated by the respondents turned out to be the billy goat present on the city's coat of arms. It was indicated as a symbol of the city by 51.1% of the surveyed inhabitants. The second most important symbol of the city, with a much lower percentage of indications, is the Lublin Castle, which was indicated by 14.8% of respondents. Subsequently, the local beer "Perła" (7.1%) was recognised as a symbol of Lublin. Other symbols were indicated much less frequently. The study also pointed to the following: the Old Town (3.9%), the academic community of the city (3.2%), the Kraków Gate (3.2%), *cebularz lubelski* (Lublin onion pastry – a regional delicacy; 2.1%) and the Lublin brand logo (1.6%).

The next part of the analysis focuses on the comparison of groups of women and men. A list of responses for both genders is shown in the graph (Figure 5).

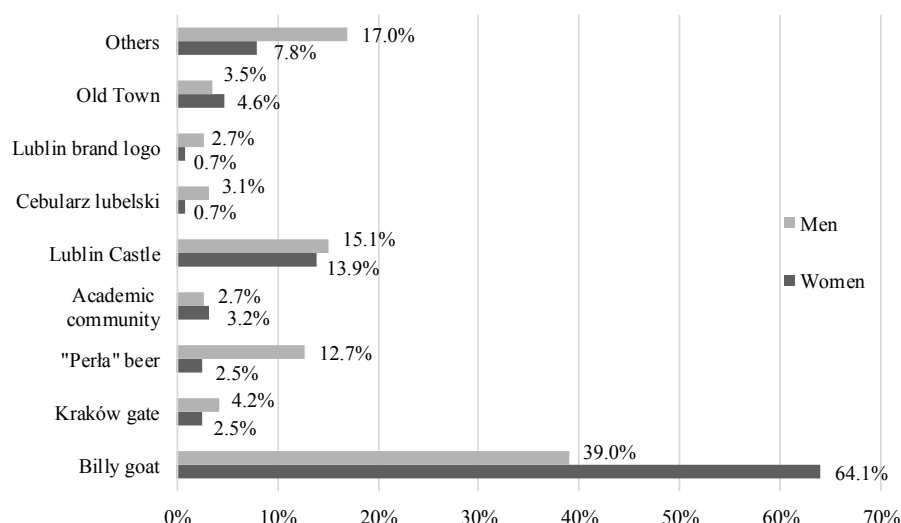


Figure 5. Symbols of the city of Lublin in the perception of its inhabitants – comparison of groups of women and men

Source: Authors' own work.

To compare the distribution of responses between groups of women and men, a chi-square test was carried out, which amounted to 53.88 at  $p = 0.000$ . This confirms the existence of a statistically significant difference in the responses of both groups. Women indicated the billy goat as a symbol of the city much more often in their answers (64.1%) compared to men (39%). In contrast, men indicated the local beer "Perła" as the symbol of Lublin more often than women, with 12.7% and 2.5%, respectively. Also, men's responses appear to be much more varied than those of women. Men's answers also often differed from the most popular ones (17% for men vs 7.8% for women).

The next issue to attract the attention of the researchers was the examination of differences in the perception of the city's symbols among people of different ages (Figure 6).

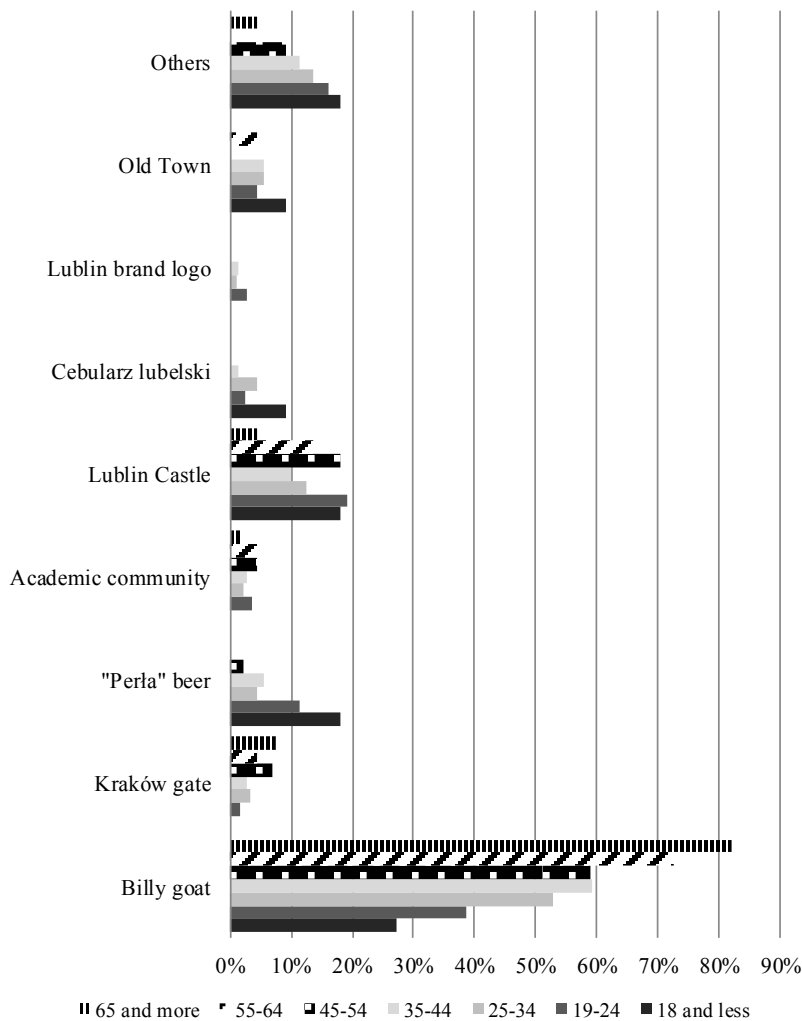


Figure 6. Symbols of the city of Lublin in the perception of its inhabitants – comparison of age groups  
Source: Authors' own work.

The study showed statistically significant differences between the analysed age groups. The value of the chi-square was 90.74 at  $p = 0.000$ . The older the age group, the more often the billy goat is indicated as a symbol of Lublin. In the oldest age group (65+), it was indicated by more than 80% of respondents; in the youngest group (under



18), it was indicated by less than 30% of respondents. Also, as the age of respondents rises, the number of indications of one of the city's symbols – the Kraków Gate – grows: in the oldest group, it was indicated by 7% of the respondents, while in the youngest age group, it was indicated by about 1% of the respondents. People at a younger age are much more likely to indicate the local brewery “Perła” as the symbol of the city. The younger the person, the more often he/she is inclined to point out less popular answers (category “Others”). The academic community of the city and the Lublin Castle achieved a similar number of indications in particular age groups.

The diversity of indications in the age groups, as shown in the above analysis, inspired the researchers to deepen their analysis in this respect. In the next part of the article, the results of the qualitative research carried out using focus group interviews will be described, in which particular attention will be paid to two age groups: senior citizens and students. These groups are characterised by different ages, different life expectancies, different levels of commitment to the city, and different lifestyles and places to which they belong. All of this is vital for showing the different perspectives presented in this subsection.

### 3.2. Symbols of the city of Lublin in light of the qualitative research

During the group interviews, the respondents were asked to indicate no more than five associations with the city of Lublin that first come to mind, and they were subsequently asked to choose the symbol of Lublin from the given associations. The following figure presents the most common answers in all analysed groups.



Figure 7. Symbols of the city of Lublin

Source: Authors' own work.

In the qualitative study, the Lublin Castle was indicated by respondents as a symbol of the city more frequently than the billy goat (which dominated the quantitative analysis). Many indications were also connected with associations with the academic

community of the city (universities, students), the local “Perła” beer, the Old Town, the Kraków Gate or public transport.

A more detailed analysis, taking into account the specific number of indications of particular elements, is presented below in the list containing the description of the analysed age groups (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Symbols of the city of Lublin – comparison of age groups (students)

Source: Authors' own work.

The associations with Lublin most frequently mentioned by students are the Lublin Castle and “Perła” beer – eight indications each. The next most frequently mentioned was the billy goat, and, at the same time, this answer was considered to be the most important. The Old Town received six indications, and the Lithuanian Square (*Plac Litewski*) and universities and students got five indications each. This suggests that Lublin is strongly identified with the academic community. It seems interesting to obtain a similar number of indications related to the development of the city, its architecture, as well as to the student life of the city – this may indicate a powerful identification of the city with students, who, as the results of the research have shown, became the constitutive element of the city, almost on an equal footing with the buildings. Subsequently, *cebularz lubelski* and the Motor Lublin (sports club) received four and three indications, respectively. Moreover, the students also pointed to the Night of Culture (an annual cultural event), “City of Inspiration” (Lublin brand slogan), galleries, cultural events, the Kraków Gate, student city, KUL (Catholic University of Lublin), UMCS (Maria Curie-Skłodowska University), and MPK (municipal transport company), with two points each. Other associations were mentioned sporadically, e.g. kebabs, lack of work, and entertainment. These associations clearly show that the students associate the city of Lublin with the ways in which it directly affects their everyday life, interests them, and takes up their time.



Figure 9. Symbols of the city of Lublin – comparison of age groups (senior citizens)

Source: Authors' own work.

Comparing the group of the oldest inhabitants of the city, one can notice a slightly different way of perceiving the symbols of Lublin. In the group of senior citizens, the dominant associations with the city are the billy goat and the Lublin Castle (five answers each). Next, the Old Town, Lithuanian Square, KUL, and MPK (four indications each) appear. The next places in the group of senior citizens were taken by Majdanek (former German Nazi concentration camp) and the Kraków Gate (three indications each), followed by MCSU and universities (two answers each). Therefore, it can be stated that for older people, the city of Lublin is not so clearly associated with academia, instead being more strongly associated with its architecture and history. Moreover, older residents pointed to such aspects as the Crown Tribunal, the Union of Lublin and the Saski Garden, which were not indicated by the group of students. The dominant associations are similar in both groups, but associations that occur less frequently and have single indications are no longer consistent. The elements that were associated with the city by both groups were the Lublin Castle, the Old Town, the billy goat and associations with the academic community of the city.

## Conclusions

Symbols of the city of Lublin functioning in the consciousness of its inhabitants are most often connected with the city's unique signs, architecture or monuments. The billy goat is indicated by more than half of Lublin's population as the primary symbol of the city in the quantitative study. However, the qualitative study shows the dominant role of Lublin Castle as an object associated with the city in the study

of free associations. This difference shows the validity of the two research perspectives, which provide a better picture of the reality under study. The elements of the brand (including the promotional logo of the city of Lublin) are not indicated as associations with the city by its inhabitants.

Thus, in response to the research problems described above, the following can be stated:

- The most important symbols of Lublin have been identified, including the billy goat from the coat of arms and the Lublin Castle.
- It was found that Lublin's promotional logo does not function as an important spontaneous symbol of the city in the consciousness of its inhabitants.
- Differences in perception of Lublin's symbols between groups of women and men were identified.
- Differences in the perception of Lublin's symbols between the age groups of young people and senior citizens were identified.

Older people more often indicate the traditional and historical elements of the city's identity, i.e. the billy goat, the Lublin Castle, and the Old Town, while younger people identify Lublin with elements related to their everyday life, i.e. "Perła" beer or universities. Interesting elements differentiating both groups include symbols which frequently appeared in one group but did not appear at all in the other. For example, in the group of senior citizens, the former German Nazi concentration camp Majdanek was often mentioned as a symbol of the city, but this did not appear at all in the group of students. Similarly, "Perła" beer, one of the answers most frequently indicated by the group of students, did not appear in the indications of the group of senior citizens. This shows that the perception and lifestyle of these two groups of city inhabitants vary considerably.

In the qualitative study, a significant age group was omitted, which could also provide an interesting perspective for future research, and this may be a contribution to further analysis of the city's symbols. The results of the presented research will have an impact on the creation of a new Lublin development strategy 2030 within the framework of a functional marketing strategy, which indicates the application value of the presented research.

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### **Symbole miasta Lublina w percepcji mieszkańców w świetle badań ilościowych i jakościowych**

Symbol miasta jest elementem bazowym kształtującym zaplanowany w strategii marketingowej wizerunek oraz stanowi naturalną podstawę do budowania marki miasta. Celem artykułu była identyfikacja symboli miasta Lublin w percepcji jego mieszkańców. Symbole Lublina zbadano za pomocą badania ilościowego w formie ankiety PAPI oraz badania jakościowego, którym zastosowaną techniką badawczą były Zogniskowane Wywiady Grupowe. Szczególnie uwagę zwrócono na dwie grupy wiekowe: najmłodszych pełnoletnich mieszkańców miasta (uczniów i studentów) oraz na osoby starsze. Ponadto dokonano porównania między grupami w zakresie skojarzeń swobodnych związanych z miastem. W rezultacie przeprowadzonych badań zidentyfikowano symbole Lublina, którymi przede wszystkim okazały się kościoły herbowy, Zamek Lubelski i Stare Miasto. Dostrzeżono również istotne różnice między analizowanymi grupami wiekowymi. Skojarzenia osób starszych oscylowały wokół historii, tradycji i architektury Lublina, natomiast osoby młodsze skupiły się na elementach związanych z ich życiem codziennym.

### **Symbols of the City of Lublin in the Perception of Its Inhabitants in Light of Quantitative and Qualitative Research**

The symbol of a city is a primary element shaping the image planned in a marketing strategy, and it is also a natural basis for building a city's brand. The article aimed to identify the symbols of the city of Lublin in the perception of its inhabitants. Symbols of Lublin were studied using quantitative research (in the form of a PAPI survey) and qualitative research (with the use of focus group interviews). Particular

attention was paid to two age groups: the youngest adult residents of the city and the senior citizens. Moreover, a comparison was made of free associations connected with the city between groups. As a result of the research, symbols of Lublin were identified: the goat on the Lublin coat of arms, the Lublin Castle and the Old Town. Significant differences between the analysed age groups were also observed. Associations of older people oscillated around the history, tradition, and architecture of Lublin, while younger people focused on elements related to their everyday life.