IMPACT OF BRAND RECOGNITION ON REINFORCING THE DESTINATION'S IMAGE

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Abstract
Today's market is characterised by a crisis of global proportions, which is also clearly reflected in tourism. Tourist destinations are investing more into tourism development, seeking to ensure competitiveness by adjusting to the requirements of the tourism demand. It is assumed that a destination with a strong and recognized brand will have a better image on the tourism market. In accordance with the research problem and research object, the following working hypothesis has been formulated: Development of recognizable destination brand will reinforce the image of the Kvarner destination.
The primary objective of scientific research was to prove the formulated hypothesis. To accomplish this objective, a variety of scientific research methods have been applied. In scientific research the survey method has been used. The case study method has been used in the research carried out through the application of an Integrated Model of Destination Competitiveness, in which the case of the Kvarner destination has been examined. To prove the formulated working hypothesis, a variety of statistical methods have been applied.
The research presented in this paper confirms the need for branding the destination in order to strengthen its image on the tourism market. By having a unique and distinctive identity, the Kvarner destination will be able to be more successful and competitive on the tourism market.[1]
Keywords tourist destination brand, tourist destination image, branding, Kvarner region

1. INTRODUCTION

Today tourism is one of the leading and fastest growing industries in the world. The importance of tourism and the entry of many new destinations into the market have forced all to emulate and compete in the battle at a global level (Riege et al. 2001 cited by Bakri Hassan, Soliman Abdel Hamid and Al Bohairy 2010, 269-270) to win many tourist markets (Konecnik 2002 cited by Bakri Hassan, Soliman Abdel Hamid and Al Bohairy 2010, 270). Research concerning world tourism trends points to the increasingly sophisticated requirements of tourism demand, to personalization in the use of tourism services, and to the growing importance of unique experiences that tourists expect from their stay in a destination. Only those tourist destinations offering an integrated tourism product, whose authenticity in all segments will be capable of ensuring a unique tourism experience, can expect to gain a good position on the tourism market. A destination is distinguished from its competitors by the uniqueness

and authenticity of its offering, what is of particular importance, in a time of crisis, as a destination's competitive advantage. Therefore, many authors suggest that tourism destination branding represents the most obvious means by which destinations can distinguish themselves from the mass of commodity destinations around the world (Folyey, Fahy, 2004 cited by Huong Bui and Perez 2010, 95) and a powerful marketing tool because of increasing competition, product similarity and substitutability on the tourism market (Usakli and Baloglu 2011, 114). To achieve successful destination branding, destination marketers are increasingly focusing on the tourist experience and creating marketing messages based on these experiences that will appeal to the emotions of potential travellers (Hudson and Ritchie 2009, 217). The aim of this study is to prove that recognizable brand affects and reinforces the destination image.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Tourist destination brand and brand identity

The word "brand" probably stems from the Old Norwegian word "brandr", which means to burn, and has retained this meaning in the Anglo-Saxon. It is precisely the act of branding with red hot objects – marking your cattle with symbols in the early beginnings of humanity, which started the process of branding, and the development of commerce enabled buyers and sellers to distinguish the animal's origin from one farmer to another (Paliaga 2010, 3).

The literature offers various definitions of the term "brand", the key being the understanding of what one wishes to achieve with a particular brand. The American Marketing Association defines a brand as a name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller's goods or service as distinct from those of another (UNWTO and ETC, 6).

Such a definition of the term "brand" is considered to be static; therefore, the definition by the United Kingdom Chartered Institute of Marketing is more acceptable. Their definition connects the product or service to the reaction which inspires the buyer. A brand is thus considered the set of physical attributes of a product or service, together with the beliefs and expectations surrounding it – a unique combination which the name or logo of the product or service should evoke in the mind of the audience (UNWTO and ETC, 6). This definition emphasizes the dynamic nature of the relationship between the product or the tourist destination and the buyer, i.e., tourist, and the key importance of the brand lies in the way in which the buyer or tourist perceives the individual product or tourist destination. Therefore, a brand represents the essence of a product that makes it different from all other products in the eyes of its potential costumers – the product's competitive identity. This endows a product with a "personality" which makes it distinctive, memorable, valuable to specific market segments and resilient, thereby being more able to inspire loyalty and retain customers in hard times and ideally charge a premium because it is unique (UNWTO and ETC, 7).

As opposed to branding products, branding tourist destinations is much more complex, due to the complexity and specific nature of tourism products, which encompass a greater number of amenities and services. Therefore, in order to brand tourist destinations it is necessary to select a consistent element mix to identify and distinguish a destination through positive image building (Cai Liping 2002 cited by Bakri Hassan, Soliman Abdel Hamid and Al Bohairy 2010, 271) that influences consumers' decisions (Blain et al., 2005 cited by Houng Bui and Perez 2010, 97).

Most other definitions of "brand" and "branding" tourist destinations contain the following elements (Skoko and Kovačić 2009, 31):

- increasing the recognition of the identity and improving the image
- creating a future identity,
- making promises and the ability to fulfil that promise made to the user, while upholding his perception of the brand,
- bestowing a "soul" to a subject and making it come alive in the consumer's consciousness,
- generating additional value by creating emotional (intangible) and functional (tangible) brand attributes,
- creating unique emotional associations,
- entering the awareness of consumers and creating a qualitative difference with regard to the competition.

The branding process begins by creating an identity, a difference that the consumers will perceive by means of signals, accept it as a value, create their own preferences and submit to these ideas. (Pavlek 2008, 50). Ekinci and Hosany (2006 cited by Usakli and Baloglu 2011, 114.) suggest that destination personality can be used as a viable metaphor for building destination brands, understanding visitors' perceptions of destinations and crafting a unique identity for tourism places. Throughout this process, marketing positioning on the tourism market is of key importance, because some aspects of a destination may seem positive to one segment while ineffective to another (Fan 2006 cited by Qu, Hyunjung Kim and Hyunjung Im 2011, 466).

The position of a product on the market represents the way in which the product is perceived according to its main characteristics by the consumer, i.e., the position of the product represents the place it holds in the consumer's mind with respect to competing products. (Horner and Swarbrooke 1996, 153). Based on the projected brand identity, consumers should develop a relationship with a particular brand by generating a value proposition either involving benefits or giving credibility to a particular brand (Aaker, 1996; Konecnik and Go, 2008 cited by Qu, Hyunjung Kim and Hyunjung Im, 2011, 466).

When the tourist destination is placed on the tourism market, an important role is played by promotion and the applied promotion mix, and a significant role in today's computerized world is played by the Internet and its opportunities as a medium for promotion. It is important to promote tourism experiences and through marketing campaigns to bring brands to life by dazzling consumer senses, touching their hearts

and stimulating their minds (Widdis 2001 cited by Bakri Hassan, Soliman Abdel Hamid and Al Bohairy 2010, 275).

Therefore the importance of a brand is made obvious by the fact that the brand adds value to the product or service and differentiates it from the competition (Olimpia 2008, 559). Tourist destinations can claim to have a successful brand if they can convey the expectations or promise of a memorable travel experience that is distinctly associated with the destination (Ritchie and Crouch 2003; Blain, Levy and Ritchie 2005; Knapp and Sherwin 2005 cited by Bakri Hassan, Soliman Abdel Hamid and Al Bohairy 2010, 271).

2.2. Destination image

Researching the image of a tourist destination is a very frequent research topic and area of interest for a great number of authors. This is further confirmed by the fact that from 1973-2000 a total of 142 scientific papers have been published on tourist destination image in various publications. The central postulates of the destination image studies are that a destination image has a crucial role in the individual's travel purchase related decision making and that the individual traveller's satisfaction/dissatisfaction with a travel purchase largely depends on a comparison of his expectation about the destination, or previously held destination image and his perceived performance of the destination (Pike 2002, 541).

Although the notion of image destination is a very frequent topic, there is still a lot of discussion and discord present in academic literature on questions such as conceptualization and the dimensions of destination image. Vincente (2004, 3) supports the definition according to which a destination's image is a mental image, the total sum of beliefs and impressions that people have of certain places; it is under the influence of the perception of all target groups, their culture, economic development, the product's quality, and other products that the destination is famous for (Vincente 2004, 3). Previšić (2011, 239) defines image as the sum of a person or a group's total knowledge, impressions, prejudices and feelings about a certain destination.

One can say that image is a reproduced multidimensional image of all concepts that link a person, or a group of people, to a certain object that is being contemplated. Thus the destination's image is nothing more than a collection of thoughts and feelings that a certain interested category of people (potential investors, politicians, bankers, tourists, residents) have of a destination (Paliaga 2008, 77).

Brand image is a collection of associations that consumers link to a brand (Previšić 2011, 237). However, irrespective of which image this is, the factors that influence it primarily are product quality and services, followed by promotional activities connected to the tourism product, as well as a number of uncontrollable factors which influence image creation (Meler 2005, 193).

The importance of image is also made obvious by the role that the image has for suppliers as well as for buyers (Ryan & Gu 2008 cited by Qu, Hyunjung Kim and Hyunjung Im 2011, 467). The suppliers see image as a source of information on which

they base their promotional activities and create products. For buyers it represents information on the grounds of which they make decisions on what to buy, how to behave and how to consume products.

The most recent studies confirm that the image of the whole destination not only influences the assessment of existing products within the destination, but it transfers parts of its own image onto new products. Aaker and Keller (1990, 29) have concluded that consumers transfer their own beliefs from the original brand onto secondary products, and the level of similarity with new products influences the success of the image transfer.

Due to the aforementioned role of image, for destinations it represents an important factor which needs to be managed. First of all, the perceived image should be stated. Setting out the perceived image will enable the destination to compare the perceived image with the desired, ideal image and move forward with building and improving the desired image of the destination. Thereby, managing and differentiating the destination image will be put on healthy footing (Maden, Köker, Topsümer, 106). Therefore, creating a positive image and image management are especially significant in today's time of crisis and growing competition, since positive destination image can lead to an increase in demand for this destination.

2.3. Reasons for branding the Kvarner region

Primorsko-Goranska County, often called "the Kvarner Region", was chosen as this paper's object of analysis because of the important role this region plays in the tourism industry of the Republic of Croatia. Its importance for the Croatian tourism industry is made obvious by the fact that it accounts for 19.4% of overnight stays in 2011 (FTHM, 11), and for 21% of the overall accommodation capacity in 2010 (FTHM, 7 and MINT, 1), which puts it in second place in Croatia, after Istria County.

Although all of the above puts the Kvarner Region among Croatia's leading tourist regions, the discrepancy with regard to the opportunities arising from surrounding trends, "pressure by the competition", as well as the needs and expectations of the tourism sector which has been exposed to investment risks and risks made by changing surroundings, have called for changes in the destination marketing of the Kvarner Region (Institute for Tourism, 28).

The last ten years have positioned the Kvarner Region on the tourism market based on the following attributes (Institute for Tourism 2009, 9):
- The Kvarner: the area with the longest tourism tradition in Croatia
- The Kvarner: a mixture of complementing differences - the blue Adriatic Sea and the green mountainous hinterland
- The Kvarner: a combination of Mediterranean and Central European cultures
- The Kvarner: an area with a pleasant and healthy climate and preserved environment
- The Kvarner: conveniently located with respect to leading emissive tourism markets.

Among these attributes, the idea of a "combination of complementary differences", interpreted by means of the region's spatial diversity, was emphasized as the most dominant one. Although the Kvarner Region's existing positioning attributes are not questioned, especially the uniqueness and appeal of a region that combines the diversity of mountain, coastal and island landscapes, it has been concluded that the Kvarner Region, based on these positioning attributes (as well as for other possible reasons), has not been able to build sufficiently marked recognition. The opinion has been expressed that the region's image is unclear, and customer benefits have not been clearly communicated, which leads to insufficient recognition of the Kvarner Region (Institute for Tourism, 28). Furthermore, it has been stated that certain sub-regions of the Kvarner Region have become better recognized than the region as a whole. The insufficient recognition of the Kvarner Region has, therefore, been identified as one of the crucial limitations to a more successful market performance, especially when it comes to entering new markets.

The lack of market recognition of the Kvarner Region; the severe economic crisis in Europe and the world, along with its expected negative impact on the level of tourist activity; the region's Mediterranean location (a region of fierce competition and a dominant "sun and sea" holiday product); a new kind of buyer, who prioritizes quality of life, which in turn calls for product and communication innovations – all this constitutes a well-founded basis for branding the Kvarner Region (Institute for Tourism, 4, 22, 23 and 29). This is also confirmed by research which indicates that in the hospitality industry branding is fundamental in obtaining competitive advantage (Olimpia 2008, 559) and that branding serves to differentiate destinations' identities and to emphasize the uniqueness of their products (Moilanen 2009, 294) and to create a destination image by positively influencing the choice of the consumerism destination (Olimpia 2008, 559). These are all key preconditions for the success of a tourist destination when countries, cities and tourism destinations are increasingly competing in an attempt to attract tourists, new residents, business and investments into their areas (Moilanen 2009, 294).

Taking into account the theoretical framework, the research question arises: Will the development of a recognizable brand help to reinforce the image of the Kvarner destination? Taking into consideration the previous findings about the connection between brand and destination image, we hypothesize: *The development of a recognizable brand will reinforce the image of the Kvarner destination.*

3. METHODOLOGY

Field research was conducted to test the hypothesis. The following section details the research sample and research instrument and reveals the fundamental findings of this research.

The research was carried out using the survey method. The respondents were the most important stakeholders - tourist officials and people involved in the development of tourism in the Kvarner area. They were contacted personally or through e-mail. Research was conducted in the period from February to September 2010. Out of 380

questionnaires sent, 107 were obtained back, and of these 104 were completed and usable for further analysis. Questionnaires were mostly returned via e-mail, and a smaller part was personally submitted. The response rate was 27%, and the sample was considered relevant. Most of the participants were under the age of 40 (70.2%), and the average age of respondents was 38.7 years. The questionnaire was mostly answered by women (68.3%). Most respondents had a university degree (58%), 23% had a high school education, and 19% had a master's degree or a Ph.D. The sample included 27.9% of managers in tourism associations, 23.1% of the participants were hotel managers, 18.3% were employed in travel agencies, 10.6% of respondents belonged to the local governments, 7.7% of respondents attended postgraduate studies in the field of tourism, 4.8% of the participants were employees of educational institutions in the field of tourism, 4.8% were civil servants, and 2.8% of respondents belonged to the category of "others".

The research was carried out using a questionnaire as the basic form of data collection. The starting point for the research was an integrated model of destination competitiveness, the most frequently used model being the *Integrated Model of Destination Competitiveness*, which is a combination of the basic Ritchie-Crouch model from 1999 and the Kim and Dwyer model from 2003 which was adapted for researching the competitiveness of a tourist destination on the example of Slovenia, carried out by Omerzel Gomezelj and Mihalič in 2008. Based on that model, the competitiveness of the Kvarner destination was assessed (Bagarić, 2012), by combining the score of 85 indicators evaluated according to the Likert scale from 1 (far below average) to 5 (far above average). The indicators were divided into six basic groups, i.e., Determinants of Competitiveness: Inherited Resources (indicators 1-9), Built Resources (indicators 10-33), Accompanying Facilities (indicators 34-45), Situation Conditions (indicators 46-56) Destination Management (indicators 57-81) and Demand Conditions (indicators 82-85).

The groups of Inherited, Built and Accompanying resources comprise indicators of the various destination characteristics that make it attractive to visitors. The Destination Management group comprises indicators that increase the appeal of the resources by strengthening the quality of elements of support and by encompassing actions that organize destination management, marketing management, development guidelines, planning, human resources development and environmental protection management. Demand Conditions consist of four main elements of tourist demand: International Award for Destination Product, Compatibility of Destination Product with Tourist Needs, International Award for the Destination and Overall Destination Image.

The interdependence of Brand Recognition and Destination Image was investigated by correlating two indicators: (1) Development of a Recognizable Destination Brand from the group of indicators used to assess Destination Management, and Overall Destination Image used to assess Demand Conditions. Analysis of the data was performed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Considering that preconditions to the application of parametric methods were not met, non-parametric statistical methods used. The following section presents the results of research conducted.

4. RESULTS

The research results obtained by applying the previously mentioned competitiveness model on the Kvarner destination served as a starting ground for the purpose of analysis carried out during the process of writing this paper.

Twenty-five indicators were used to assess Destination Management. Respondents were asked to assess each indicator with a score from 1 to 5. The general score of Destination Management was 2.74, which can be considered as being below average. Graph 1 presents a detailed overview of scores.

Graph 1: **Destination Management**

	Score
Extent of foreign investment in destination tourism industry	2,19
Destination has clear policies in social tourism (disabled, aged)	2,37
Development of a recognizable destination brand	2,38
Level of cooperation (strategic alliances) between firms	2,42
Developing and promoting new tourism products	2,54
Appreciation of service quality importance	2,62
Enterpreneurial qualities of local tourism businesses	2,62
Quality of research input to tourism policy, planning, development	2,63
Public sector commitment to tourism / hospitality education	2,69
Government cooperation in development of tourism policy	2,71
Private sector recognition of sustainable tourism development..	2,73
NTO reputation	2,75
Public sector recognition of importance of sustainable tourism..	2,77
Private sector commitment to tourism /hospitality education	2,79
Destination vision reflecting resident values	2,79
Destination vision reflecting tourist values	2,81
Destination vision reflecting stakeholder values	2,83
Tourism / hospitality training responsive to visitor needs	2,85
Resident support for tourism development	2,85
Destination vision reflecting community values	2,87
Educational structure / profile of employees in tourism	2,98
Quality in performing tourism services	3,02
Tourism development integrated with overal industry development	3,04
Existence of a adequate tourism education programs	3,12
Efficiency of tourism /hospitality firms	3,33

Source: Bagarić, L. (2012), Upravljanje procesom brendiranja na primjeru turističke destinacije Kvarner, Doctoral Dissertation, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Opatija, p. 176.

Indicators of Demand Conditions refer to the international perception of the destination's image, which can be measured by various international awards for the destination and its products, by the level of coordination between the destination product and tourist needs, as well as the overall image of the destination. This group of elements was rated with 2.78 (Graph 2).
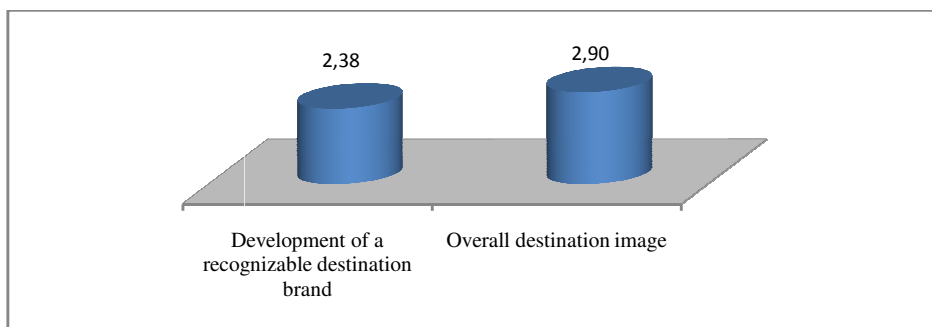
Graph 2: **Demand Conditions**
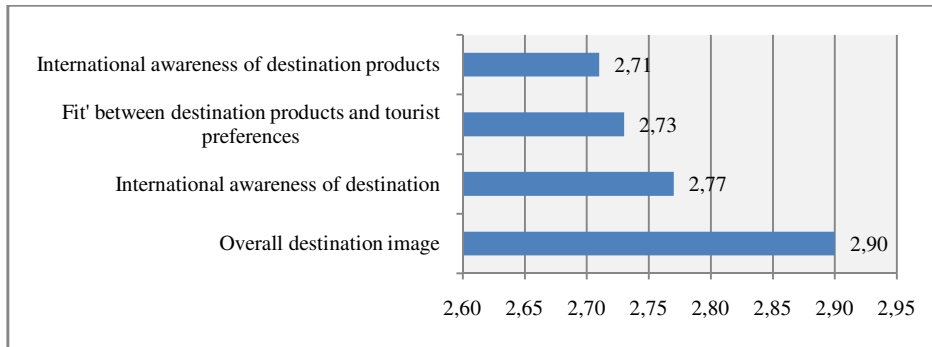
Source: Bagarić, L. (2012), Upravljanje procesom brendiranja na primjeru turističke destinacije Kvarner, Doctoral Dissertation, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management Opatija, p. 178.

This research aimed to determine the connection between the recognition of the destination's brand and the destination's image. In the Destination Management group, the indicator Development of a Recognizable Brand was examined as an independent variable, while in the Demand Conditions group, Overall Destination Image was determined to be the dependent variable. Since the indicators used for this research were originally part of a previous research on applying the earlier mentioned competitiveness model on the Kvarner destination, there are limitations in using the indicators to examine brand and image elements in greater detail.

The respondents evaluated the aforementioned indicators in the following manner:

- p82- Overall Destination Image – average score 2.90
- p76- Development of a Recognizable Destination Brand – average score 2.38 (graph 3).

Graph 3: **Development of a recognizable destination brand and the overall image of the Kvarner Region**

Source: Bagarić, L. (2012), Upravljanje procesom brendiranja na primjeru turističke destinacije Kvarner, Doctoral Dissertation, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Opatija, p. 171.

As an indicator in the evaluation of competitiveness, the element Recognizable Destination Image is part of a group of indicators which assess Demand Conditions as one of the elements of competitiveness. On a scale of 1 to 5, Destination Image was given a score of 2.9, which can be interpreted as being average. Destination branding should strengthen the image perception of the destination and thus boost demand conditions, as well as the overall competitiveness of the Kvarner destination.

To determine whether there is a connection between brand recognition and destination image, we carried out a correlation analysis by applying Spearman's correlation coefficient. The results of the correlation analysis are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1:   **Correlation between assessments of brand and image of the Kvarner destination**

Competitiveness indicator	Brand	
	r_s	p-value
Destination image	0.279	0.004

Source: research results

The results of the correlation analysis are statistically significant and indicate the existence of a positive correlation between the assessments of brand recognition and the Kvarner Region destination image.

The interrelationship between brand and image was analysed by applying the Wilcoxonrank-sum test which examines the existence of statistically significant differences in the distribution of image/brand assessments with respect to the two categories of brand/image defined on the basis of their below average, i.e., (above) average assessments. The results are shown in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2:   **Analysis of the differences in the distribution of image assessments between two brand categories**

Brand	N	Sum	Median value	Arithmetic mean	p-value
1	49	2931.0	59.816	3.1	0.006
0	55	2529.0	45.982	2.7	

Source: research results

The Wilcoxon rank-sum test indicated the existence of statistically significant differences in the distribution of image assessments between respondents who gave the brand below average or (above) average scores. The image score distribution of (above) average brand assessments is shifted towards the right side, which means that respondents who assessed the brand as (above) average in general graded the destination image better than respondents with a below average brand assessment.

Table 3:   **Analysis of the difference in brand assessment distribution between two image categories**

Image	N	Sum	Median value	Arithmetic mean	p-value
1	81	4526.5	55.883	2.5	0.019
0	23	933.5	40.587	2.1	

Source: research results

The Wilcoxon rank-sum test indicated the existence of statistically significant differences in the distribution of brand assessments between below average image assessments (image=0) and (above) average image assessments (image=1). The respondents who assessed the image as (above) average have in general assessed brand recognition as better than respondents with a below average image assessment.

Logistic regression analysis was conducted to further study the correlation between image and Destination Management indicators, including the indicator Destination Brand Recognition. The indicators of Destination Management (indicators 57-81) were selected as independent variables, while Destination Image was chosen as the dependent variable. By applying a stepwise model in selecting variables, results were obtained for logistic regression with two independent variables – Destination Brand Recognition and Growth of Foreign Investment in Tourism. The other predictors were excluded from the model because they did not contribute to explaining the model (Table 4).

Table 4:   **Results of logistic regression of the influence of Destination Management indicators on Image**

Variables	B	Std. Error	Wald	Odds Ratio Estimates			Sig.
				Point Estimate	95% Wald Confidence Limits		
Intercept	-1.805	1.057	2.916				0.088
p76	0.686	0.366	3.511	1.987	0.969	4.073	0.061
p77	0.726	0.367	3.906	2.067	1.006	4.247	0.048
R2							
0.1343							

Source: research results

Results of the analysis indicate that, although marginally significant, indicators p76 and p77, i.e., Destination Brand Recognition and Growth of Foreign Investment in Tourism, can be considered statistically significant predictors of image. The chances of (above) average scores for Image grow with the increase in the value of these indicators. A unit increase in the score for Brand Recognition, together with the growth of foreign investments in tourism, leads to almost twice the likelihood of obtaining (above) average scores for Image. Despite the fact that a relatively weak statistically significant correlation has been established between Development of a Recognizable

Destination Brand and Overall Destination Image, results point to the conclusion that the development of a recognizable brand can help to strengthen the image of the Kvarner destination. Hence, based on the research results we can confirm the hypothesis that *the development of a recognizable brand will reinforce the image of the Kvarner destination.*

CONCLUSION

In today's time of economic crisis and given the existence of a large number of competitors who have a similar offer, tourist destination branding is a significant marketing tool which is being used by a growing number of tourist destinations. The branding process of tourist destinations aims to create a recognizable identity and the desired positive image on the tourism market. The tourist destination brand should reflect the authenticity of the tourist destination, which will differentiate the destination when compared to its competition, giving it a recognizable identity, both of which are prerequisites for good destination positioning on the tourism market. This diversity and authenticity of the tourist destination must be conveyed to the buyer by communicating and using modern ways of promotion, as well as by conjuring a unique experience which the tourist can feel and experience by visiting the destination. Therefore, it is crucial to emphasise, by means of promotion, the added value offered by the destination, based on a recognizable brand and unique experience, which will influence the tourists' emotions and the way they perceive the tourist destination and will help to create a positive image of the destination. Because having a positive image can greatly influence the tourists' decision-making process when choosing a tourist destination, destinations can use this to increase demand.

There are many reasons behind the need for branding the Kvarner destination, such as, the importance the Kvarner destination has for the Croatian tourism industry, its insufficient recognition on the market, and growing competition and new demands by customers which call for adjustments in the offer and in the way of communicating value to buyers. A recognizable brand will create a competitive advantage for the Kvarner tourist destination. This will enable the Kvarner destination to strengthen the emotional bond tourists have with the destination and generate the desired positive image for the Kvarner Region, which will result in a growth in demand.

The research presented in this paper also confirms the need for branding the destination in order to strengthen its image on the tourism market. Research results indicate the need of greater involvement in and commitment to the process of branding the Kvarner tourist destination, and they underline the fact that a more rational management system will be able to initiate, coordinate, manage and monitor the development of tourism in line with the defined development vision and brand strategy of the Kvarner destination.

The research presented in this paper opens many questions and is a starting point for further research, which may be based on the use of other research instruments and measurement scales for assessing destination image. In doing so, the image should be evaluated by tourists. In addition, a longitudinal study of the topic is considered necessary in order to monitor the efforts of all stakeholders in reinforcing destination

image. Only by having a unique and distinctive identity will the Kvarner destination be able to be more successful and less vulnerable to the negative impacts coming from the market.

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