

## **BRANDING CITIES AS TOURIST DESTINATIONS; THE CASE OF SLAVONSKI BROD, CROATIA**

Scientific paper

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### **Abstract**

The research problem – Despite the fact that the visual identity of Slavonski Brod is created in early 2011<sup>th</sup>, it is still not sufficiently recognizable among tourists.

Research objectives – It is necessary to determine activities that have to be undertaken as components of an action plan for tourism development of Slavonski Brod within the branding strategy to make the city more recognizable in tourist markets.

The purpose – The purpose of this paper is to support the thesis that tourist destinations branding is lengthy process that includes an evaluation of the image by the visitors, but also by the target market groups we aim at.

Design – The special focus is given to review the issue of the process of determining the logo, slogan and visual identity of a destination.

Methodology – The methodology of the research includes the examples of good practice, analysis of the existing strategic documents in the segment of tourist destinations branding and activities on branding Croatia and Slavonia, as well as Slavonski Brod as a tourist destination. It also includes primary research conducted by the Tourist Board of Slavonski Brod among the tourists and the locals, as well as the Tourist Board web visitors, city public institutions and tourism and hospitality sector.

Approach – Synthesizing distinguishing elements on which one should build a long-term market recognition of Slavonski Brod, the Zagreb Institute for Tourism, during the development of tourism master plan, found that the tourist image of Slavonski Brod should be based on history and culture, friendly people, a characteristic atmosphere and natural features space. That was the starting point for the research of the Tourist Board of Slavonski Brod.

Findings – In the past activities on the branding of the city of Slavonski Brod neither tourists nor the local population were dominated by negative associations. However, studies that were conducted among the various target groups during January and February 2014<sup>th</sup> showed that the practical application of the new visual identity of Slavonski Brod in tourism and hospitality sector was more or less absent, what is the reason why the city brand was not recognized by a sufficient number of tourists as well as users of services in this sector which resides outside the city.

The originality – The paper defines the steps that should be undertaken to create the new logo and slogan in a tourist destination. The model of branding of the city of Slavonski Brod can be applied in surroundings.

**Keywords** Slavonski Brod, tourist brand, slogan, logo, visual identity, tourist destination

### **INTRODUCTION**

Tourist destinations branding is lengthy process that includes an evaluation of the image by the visitors, meaning tourists that already visited destination, but also by the target market groups, meaning potential visitors we are aiming at. Through this process the logo, slogan and visual identity of a destination will be determined in a way that

logo must be congruent with the image a destination seeks to create, while a slogan should convey information about the destination.

Synthesizing distinguishing elements on which one should build a long-term market recognition of Slavonski Brod, the Zagreb Institute for Tourism, during the development of tourism master plan, found that the tourist image of Slavonski Brod should be based on history and culture, friendly people, a characteristic atmosphere and natural features space.

Following the research results, the Tourist Board of Slavonski Brod in collaboration with the Zagreb Faculty of Graphic Arts, conducted, during December 2010<sup>th</sup> and January 2011<sup>th</sup>, a contest among regular students to determine the slogan and visual identity of Slavonski Brod. The best selected solution has been based on the evaluation of the jury, including the results of electronic voting, treated as a single voice.

The main problems appeared from the fact that although the visual identity of Slavonski Brod is created in early 2011<sup>th</sup>, it is still not sufficiently recognizable among tourists. Therefore, the main objective of the Tourist Board of Slavonski Brod research was to determine activities that have to be undertaken as components of an action plan for tourism development of Slavonski Brod within the branding strategy to make the city more recognizable in tourist markets, while the research question was to determine if the visual identity of the city of Slavonski Brod has been applied sufficiently.

There were several methodologies applied in this paper. One of the methodologies was desk research based on all relevant domestic and foreign expert and scientific literature about the research theme which has been studied. The results of the research have been interpreted by using methods of economic analysis and descriptive methods. The methodology of the research also included analysis of the examples of good practice as well as analysis of the existing strategic documents in the segment of tourist destinations branding and activities on branding Croatia, Slavonia and Slavonski Brod as tourist destinations. It also included primary research conducted by the Tourist Board of Slavonski Brod among the tourists and the locals, as well as the Tourist Board web visitors, city public institutions and tourism and hospitality sector.

The work consists of an introductory section that lists the main problems, objective and methodology of the Tourist Board research, which is followed by review of the literature and the authors who wrote about tourist destination branding. In continuation of this paper are examples of good practice from the environment, as well as an overview of the activities in branding Croatia, the region of Slavonia and the city of Slavonski Brod as tourist destinations. The following is a part of the work which gives an overview of the methodology and results of primary research conducted by the Tourist Board of Slavonski Brod and concluding remarks.

## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to achieve marketing objectives of tourism development of specific tourist destinations, it is necessary to apply different strategies. One of them is the positioning strategy and establishing brand products.

Different authors approach to the process of establishing brands through which actually develops the identity of a particular area in relation to competing destinations in different ways.

Kotler<sup>1</sup> observes the strategy of positioning and establishing brand products as a continuous process of exploring the image of a tourist destination among specific target market groups, which are determined by comparative advantages of destinations, factors that affect the image of the destination, change in image created over a longer time period, crisis situations management related to the image (image related crisis) and relevant messages sent to a different audience.

According to Balakrishnan<sup>2</sup>, the starting point in creating a strategy for positioning and establishing brand represents a vision that is achieved by composing elements which attract visitors, helping them decide to visit some destination and make them loyal. Its action begins in the country of a guest residence, enhances during the arrival and during the stay in a tourist destination, it is also present at the time of leaving the destination, and by the end of the visit. Creating an experience, a destination can boost its image, but it should be borne in mind that too many brands in a destination can lead to confusion, in the sense that a guest decides to visit more difficult.

Pike<sup>3</sup> emphasis on positioning strategy focusing on one or a few key attributes and while tourist destinations positioning proposes in a number of steps such as identifying target markets and travel contexts, identifying groups of competing destinations in the target market and in a given context travel, identifying the motivations and benefits of previous visitors, as well as those who have not visited destination, identifying perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of each of the competing destinations, identifying opportunities for differentiated positioning, selection and implementation of market position, as well as monitoring the implementation of the strategy of positioning for a certain period of time.

In contrast to the previously cited authors, Ritchie and Ritchie<sup>4</sup> in core brands determining go more detailed, including under the brand destination as a result of the process of establishing the brand a name, symbol, logo, trademark, or other graphic element which at the same time identifies and differentiates the destination and intends

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<sup>1</sup> Kotler, P. et al., *Marketing places Europe*, Financial Times, Prentice Hall, Edinburg, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Stephens Balakrishnan, M., "Strategic branding of destination: a framework", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 43, No. 5/6, 2009, 62-622.

<sup>3</sup> Pike, S., *Destination Marketing*, Butterworth-Heinemann, Burlington, 2008, 224.

<sup>4</sup> Ritchie, J.R.B., Ritchie, R.J.B., „The branding of tourism destinations – Past Achievements and Future Challenges“, in P. Keller (ed.), *Destination Marketing, reports of The 48th Aiest Congress, Marrakech, 1998*, 17, in Scott, N., Baggio, R., Cooper, C., *Network Analysis and Tourism*, Channel View Publications, Clevedon, 2008, 132.

to transfer promise and travel experiences associated with the destination, and also serves to amplify the union and pleasant memories of the experience of the destination.

However, when it comes to marketing point of view, most cited definition of brand is these of Aaker<sup>5</sup>, according to which the mark is "characteristic name and / or symbol (such as a logo, trademark or packaging design) intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group and differentiation of these goods from goods of competitors ."

Anyway, from all the previous definitions of the term of positioning and establishing the brand, it is evident that the process of positioning and determining brand answers the question of what the destination that we position or brand is in comparison to other tourist destinations, in a way as perceived by visitors. Therefore, the experts who are engaged in the marketing of destinations tend to affect just the first association that appears in the perception of a specific target market groups, when they hear the name of a specific tourist destination.

Establishing brand products in the tourist destination has become one of the most popular concept in the field of marketing, especially when it comes to tourist destinations, so in the world of brands image and positioning of products and services become more important than the actual characteristics.<sup>6</sup>

About the image of tourist destinations as one of the components determining the brand has been written by many authors. Under the image of the place Kotler<sup>7</sup> implies summation of opinions, ideas and impressions that people have to a certain place, while by Elizur<sup>8</sup> rich image means that we know a lot about the place, from different sources, and from personal visits and personal knowledge, while poor image means that the place we know very little, and that this knowledge usually comes from a single source of information.

Unlike the above mentioned authors, Kunczik<sup>9</sup> discusses two possible types of image: open allowing the addition of features and closed which does not allow the addition of new features, at least not those that are different from the core image and that we call stereotypical. According to this author, when the stereotype of a particular place is formed, it is difficult to change it, and you need to invest a lot of effort to target groups become subject to new and different image.

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<sup>5</sup> Aaker, D.A., *Managing Brand Equity*, Free Press, New York, 1991, 7.

<sup>6</sup> As an example of a successful determination of branded products can be extracted Coca Cola, which in 2003, among the worlds\* top ten brands, was in first place, with a brand value of billion U.S. dollars. It was followed by Microsoft brand value of 65,17 billion U.S. dollars (according to data from Business Week from August 2003).

<sup>7</sup> Kotler, P. et al., *Marketing places*, Free Press, New York, 1993.

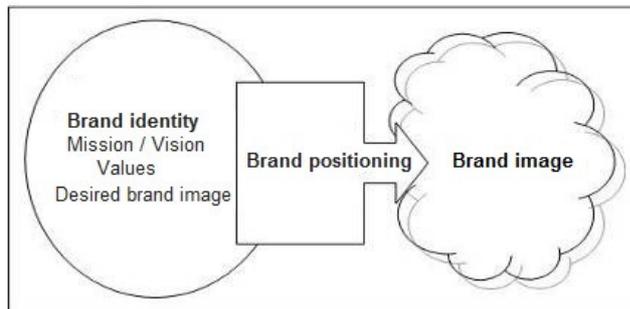
<sup>8</sup> Elizur, J., *National images*, Hebrew University, Jeruzalem, 1987.

<sup>9</sup> Kunczik, M., *Images of nations and international public relations*, LEA, Mahwah, New York, 1997.

## 2. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The basic components include brand identity that represents own image pursued<sup>10</sup>, brand image that relates to the current image as consumers perceive it, and brand positioning as a third element which is a function of increasing correspondence between identity and brand image (Figure 1.).

Figure 1: **Identity, positioning and brand image**



Source: Pike, S., *Destination Marketing*, Butterworth-Heinemann, Burlington, 2008, 179.

Creating brand image of tourist destinations is long and not at all simple process that involves the evaluation of the image of the visitor, but also of the target market group. In doing it, it can be used a variety of research instruments such as surveys of attitudes, questionnaires, focus groups or in-depth interviews.

An example of a very interesting process of establishing brand had the Italian city of Turin in which, on the basis of studies of the National Bureau of Statistics, it has been analyzed the perception that foreign tourists have of this city. The research results were used to promote a new brand; choose a logo, slogan, visual identity, and develop a strategic communications plan.<sup>11</sup>

At the core of the brand it can be put the name of a certain tourist destination which, in this case, is one of the elements of positioning the destination and its differentiation from competing destinations.

It is often the case to add to the name of the destination brand associations. So resorts Bargara, Moore Park and the nearby Queensland Woodgate in 2003<sup>th</sup> added to their name the word "beach" thus clearly signaling an important functional attribute, while the macro tourist regions when determining the names give the emphasis to the labeling

<sup>10</sup> While the brand identity of Wales is „In Wales you will find a passion for life – HWYL“ (Pride, R., *Destination Branding: Creating the Unique Destination Propostion*, Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, 2002, 109-123), New Zealand brand identity is „New Pacific freedom“ (Morgan, N., Pritchard and Piggott, R., New Zealand, 100% Pure: The Creation of a Powerful Niche Destination Brand, *Journal of Brand Management*, Vol. 9., No. 4/5, 2002, 335-354).

<sup>11</sup> Avraham, E., Ketter, E., *Media Strategies for marketing places in crisis*, Butterworth-Heinemann, Burlington, 2008, 19.

associated with the name of tourism products in these regions as Dinosaurs or Canyonland.<sup>12</sup>

As previously stated, the goal of branding process is to determine the brand's logo, slogan and visual identity of a particular destination. Most tourist destinations use as logo identical motifs such as flowers, trees, stars, buildings, or, if it comes to marine destinations, shore, waves, boats, sun, etc. Often used are also geographical forms such as triangles, circles, arches, etc.

To be effective as a marketing tool, a logo should be unique and congruent with the new image, which seeks to create a destination, and it must use its distinctive features.<sup>13</sup> An example is the city of Syracuse, New York, which entered the postindustrial era, but which still had a logo with chimneys, smoke, and industrial landscape, incompatible with the new image. After a long public debate, it has been adopted a new logo with silhouettes of skyscrapers, the heavens and the lake.<sup>14</sup>

Unlike the logo, the slogan implies a specific marketing message which, through a succinct and brief suggestive phrase, conveys certain information about the destination. A good slogan can be used for several years in various campaigns, but in any case must be aligned with what the destination truly offers, no matter to which the element positioning slogan puts the accent (the nature, location, people, water, air, gastronomy, etc.).

This means that if a particular slogan promises golden beaches, turquoise lagoons, a unique experience for tourists, and there is nothing of it, a tourist who comes will be disappointed, and the image will ultimately be compromised.<sup>15</sup>

Besides logo and slogan, visual symbols such as monuments, interesting buildings, gates, sculptures, bridges, towers, fortresses etc., can be used as a brand, too, becoming symbols and partly destination image, with greatest advantage in the efficiency of transmitting messages. So as some of the best examples of visual symbols in a global framework can be mentioned the Eiffel Tower in Paris, Big Ben in London, the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, Red square in Moscow, Operahouse in Sydney, the pyramids of Egypt.

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<sup>12</sup> Pike, S., *Destination Marketing*, Butterworth-Heinemann, Burlington, 2008, 203.

<sup>13</sup> In the London logo introduced in 2004, which was recently updated, is underground railways and typical London taxi, then the means of transport play a dominant role during the movement of visitors around London (Gabor, K., *Place Marketing*, Debrecen, 2006.).

<sup>14</sup> Avraham, E., Ketter, E., *Media strategies for marketing places in crisis*, Butterworth-Heinemann, Burlington, 2008, 56.

<sup>15</sup> The slogan that wanted to show Thailand as the country of wonderful people, wonderful experience and beautiful landscape was „amazing Thailand“, as in the slogan with which South Africa wanted to show the limitless possibilities that exist in the country after the collapse of apartheid was „It\*s (im)possible“. Interesting is a case of New York which after 30 years of using slogans, developed two new ideas of which one was selected as a slogan which will be added to about 200 products and services associated with one of the most successful global brands (Avraham, E., Ketter, E., *Media Strategies for marketing places in crisis*, Butterworth-Heinemann, 2008, 57-58).

According to most authors dealing with establishing brands, to create a new image of tourist destinations merely cosmetic changes in the logo, slogans and visual symbols, are not sufficient, but they need to be monitored by real change.

Thus, according to Paddison<sup>16</sup> successful marketing must have a foothold in the physical changes adapted a new image of the destination, while Fenster<sup>17</sup> points out that for real and profound changes in the image of the destination should pass from six to eight years.

Although the positive image of a particular tourist destination can be adequately built through taking of appropriate marketing activities in all aspects of marketing programs, it should be emphasized that it has to be primarily based at key tourist attractions of a destination which in the process of brand establishing have decisive role.

In establishing the brand destination, except that the image of the destination should be based on the main attractiveness, attitudes and feelings of local residents should not be put in the background, but they have to be examined and taken into consideration. The reason for this lies in the fact that the local population has an interactive relationship with visitors in different situations and in different places (gas stations, supermarkets, swimming pools, etc.), so the local support to the tourism industry, which is manifested through friendly encounters with visitors, goes in favor of destination tourism development.

Through these meetings, and by applying the appropriate positioning strategy, it will be easier to come up to the formation of the so-called thematic destinations that base their image on creating a special atmosphere and environment related to a destination. In such a cases it will be reflected in the architecture, street furniture, scenery, costumed staff, distinctive stories of tourist guides and local residents, recreational activities, entertainment, music, catering services, choice of souvenirs and other experiences for guests.

As a successful example of thematic destinations can be extracted Heidiland area in the eastern canton of Switzerland, Graubünden, where Johanna Spyri wrote her book "Heidi" on unwanted orphan Heidi. It is a destination that attracts tourists enabling them interactive experiences, especially through walking by Heidi footpath - hour to hour and a half long footpath that has 12 characters in several languages, each with a different excerpt from the book and an explanation of some of the chapters. At the top of the mountain is a 200 year old shepherd's cottage where tourists meet with the person who plays Heidis grandfather<sup>18</sup>, and the area has also developed a brand of mineral water called Heidiland. Tourism operators in this area came together in order to promote the region with an emphasis on home entertainment in the area of the Alps,

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<sup>16</sup> Paddison, R., City marketing, image, reconstruction and urban regeneration, *Urban Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 339-350.

<sup>17</sup> Fenster et al., *Selling the city: physical, social and administrative aspects of a marketing plan for Beer Sheva*, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer Sheva, 1994.

<sup>18</sup> Schur, M., Following my heart to Heidiland: Inside the landscape of a famous movie. Retrieved on 3/6/07 from: [http://www.escapeartist.com/efam/43/In\\_search\\_of\\_Heidiland.html](http://www.escapeartist.com/efam/43/In_search_of_Heidiland.html), June, 2007. (in Pike, S., *Destination Marketing*, Butterworth-Heinemann, Burlington, 2008, 227).

and Heidi story served them as an inspiration for the development of various tourist facilities, products and activities based on local natural resources and other resources created by man.<sup>19</sup>

Establishing brand tourist destinations in Central and Central Europe is still in its infancy. Faster process of establishing brand mainly hampered by the lack of financial resources, lack of marketing experience related to overseas markets, and unrealistic expectations about the time in which it is possible to achieve visible results.

As an example may be mentioned that the strategy of establishing brand of Slovenia after the secession was positioned as a destination civilizing Western European country whose neighbors are Austria and Italy, and that is far from the Balkan communities.

### 3. BRANDING CROATIA AS A TOURIST DESTINATION

In Croatia, however, it was necessary to establish the national tourism brand strategy with the primary objective of differentiation country from its neighbors and reassurances to restore the previous market quality and value.<sup>20</sup>

According to the Strategic Marketing Plan for Croatian tourism for the period from 2010<sup>th</sup> to 2014<sup>th</sup>, Croatia is primarily positioned as the Mediterranean country, which preserves the legacy of ancestors which proved extremely successful, and therefore it may be recommended the continuation of this strategy of establishing the brand in the coming period.<sup>21</sup>

In spite of the regional diversity of supply and the fact that inland coastal areas and inland parts of the country are started to be visited by foreign tourists, it is still not expressed in such a large extent that to affect the basic image of the country as a whole. Therefore, the recommended positioning strategy for Croatia ranges from pure Mediterranean authenticity with numerous functional (Mediterranean ambience, discovery, relaxation, authenticity and quality) and emotional (experience, familiarity, enjoyment of tradition, environment, security) benefits, but also benefits of self-expression (an escape from reality, enjoyment, entertainment, excitement, pleasure, research).<sup>22</sup>

In order to represent Croatia as a country that offers a variety of experiences, the application of the strategy of differentiation is a necessity and at the level of the Croatian regions, too. If the region does not define its own positioning and reinforce its specificity, tourists will see Croatia as a uniform land in which the Croatian regions compete with each other rather than compete with regions in other destinations.

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<sup>19</sup> Idem (in Pike, S., *Destination Marketing*, Butterworth-Heinemann, Burlington, 2008, 227).

<sup>20</sup> Hall, C.M., Harkonen, T., *Lake Tourism, an integrated Approach to Lacustrine Tourism Systems*, Channel View Publications, Clevedon, 2006.

<sup>21</sup> Strategic Marketing Plan for Croatian tourism for the period from 2010th to 2014th, THR and Horwath Consulting, Zagreb, 2009, 21.

<sup>22</sup> Idem, 172.

Through the proper positioning of the regions in Croatia can be accomplished a number of advantages, such as enrichment of Croatian offers by diverse experiences, increasing of the tourist satisfaction by targeted products, differentiation relative to competitors, disabling the internal competition between Croatian regions, as well as providing a framework for communication strategy and build the image with an emphasis on main competitive advantages.<sup>23</sup>

Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia until 2020<sup>th</sup>, when it comes to branding system, also talks about the need to conduct a professional structuring of Croatian tourism brand and its architecture in order to change the perception of origin market of Croatia as a summer vacation destination. Only through the development of professional branding, identity of Croatia, as a mixture of rational, emotional, social and cultural benefits available to potential guests, becomes understandable and based on real competitive advantages.<sup>24</sup>

#### 4. BRANDING SLAVONIA AS A TOURIST DESTINATION

When it comes to the region of Slavonia, it is empirically possible to determine how this region currently does not have specific and recognizable identity that results from an equally distinctive economic and marketing identity. For its realization it is necessary to position all the positive dimensions of their identity into a coherent whole that will be able to correspond with the dynamic reality. That would be the most effective out of all post-war trauma and how to connect the contemporary European and world development directions.<sup>25</sup>

In order to position the area of the region of Slavonia properly, there is a number of questions to be answered such as those relating to the types of products we offer, as well as markets or market segments where we offer the products. The basis of a successful strategy of establishing brand and positioning for this area, which provides for the Strategic Marketing Plan for Croatian tourism for the period 2010<sup>th</sup> to 2014<sup>th</sup> should be a mutual agreement on a common destination management organization at the regional level that would develop and implement a strategy of establishing a professional brand with "authentic joy of living" as a basic element positioning and nature, peace and gastronomy as a primary image.

The image of the region of Slavonia can be estimated by Elizur's model of the star<sup>26</sup>. Graphical model of the star shows the different attributes of a particular area. The area which has a poor image has one dominant feature, while a region with a rich image has more dominant features and many facets. The more lines of a star, it's a richer image.

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<sup>23</sup> *Strategic Marketing Plan for Croatian tourism for the period from 2001th to 2005th*, THR and Horwath Consulting, Zagreb, 2002, 172.

<sup>24</sup> *Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia untill 2020*, Institute for Tourism, Zagreb, 2013, 36.

<sup>25</sup> Ružić, D. i dr., *Park prirode Kopački rit Plan upravljanja, sektorska studija Turizam*, Ekonomski fakultet u Osijeku, Osijek, 2002, 63.

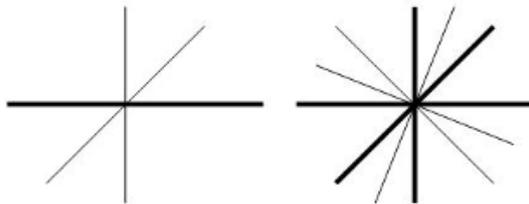
<sup>26</sup> Elizur, J., *National Images*, Hebrew University, 1987, from Avraham, E. and Ketter, E., *Media Strategies for Marketing Places in Crisis*, Butterworth – Heinemann, Oxford, 2008, 26.

All features do not have the same effect, some lines in the graphical model are very striking, and the other invisible. In areas with rich image, stars are with a lot of arms, as in the case of areas with poor image, the stars have two or three branches.

Figure 2. shows the image of the region of Slavonia in the present, and the image of the area as it would be desirable in the future. While current image of the region is poor (shown by a star with a small number of arms and one distinctive facet representing business tourism as the dominant tourism product), the image of Slavonia in the future should provide the more dominant characteristics displayed by the stars with multiple arms of which some are accentuated and present selective forms of tourism in whose development should be invested over the next period (rural, wine, eco, cultural tourism, etc.).

Through the application of this model it is possible to show that through effective marketing areas with poor image can become areas with rich image. The more dimensions the area has, the less the visitors will be focused on the problematic aspects. Intense marketing of one or several attractive facets can get a dominant role in the image of the area, so it can overcome previous perceptions.<sup>27</sup>

Figure 2: **Determining the image of the region of Slavonia in the present and future models through a star**



Source : Modified by Elizur, J., *National Images*, Hebrew University, 1987, from Avraham , E. and Ketter, E., *Media Strategies for Marketing Places in Crisis*, Butterworth – Heinemann, Oxford , 2008, 26

## 5. BRANDING THE CITY OF SLAVONSKI BROD AS A TOURIST DESTINATION

In any case, even in the case of the region of Slavonia, as well as its individual parts, tourist destination branding is a lengthy process involving evaluation of the image of the visitor, but also of the target market group. The aim of this process is to determine the logo, slogan and visual identity of a particular destination. Thereby, a logo should be unique and congruent with the new image, which seeks to create a destination, a slogan designed as a marketing message through a succinct and brief suggestive phrase

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<sup>27</sup> Avraham, E., Ketter, E., *Media Strategies for Marketing Places in Crisis*, Butterworth-Heinemann, Burlington, 2008, 27.

conveys information about the destination. As elements of the brand are also used visual symbols that often become part of the image of the destination.

The city of Slavonski Brod, the seventh city of Republic of Croatia by size, has 59 141 inhabitants. It is situated by the river Sava, on the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina, and on the highway Zagreb – Lipovac that connects the European countries with Near East. According to the data of the Tourist Board of Slavonski Brod, in 2013<sup>th</sup> Slavonski Brod recorded 27 924 overnight stays with a share of 41,3% overnight stays of foreign tourists, and 5 300 arrivals of tourists in organized groups who visited the city under the program of excursion tour and with using the services of licensed tourist guides.

Synthesizing key distinguishing elements on which long-term market recognition of Slavonski Brod should be built, in the study of the Zagreb Institute for Tourism, while drafting the tourism master plan, it was found that the tourism image of Slavonski Brod should be based on four elements: history and culture, friendly people, a characteristic atmosphere and natural features of the area.<sup>28</sup>

On the basis of this vision of the elements that make up the key components of tourism identity of Slavonski Brod core brand values that are shown in Figure 3. were derived, and these are, along with openness as a core brand promise, also other values, such as displacement, sociability, relaxation and enchantment.

Figure 3: **Brand concept of Slavonski Brod as a tourist destination**



Source: *Tourism Master Plan for the city of Slavonski Brod*, the Institute for Tourism, Zagreb, 2010 , 117.

Although part of the branding process of Slavonski Brod (resource basis, market analysis, stakeholder analysis, SWOT analysis) is contained in the tourism master plan, branding strategy for the city, especially in terms of integrating the brand in marketing the city as a tourist destination, is a part of the action plan of Slavonski Brod tourism development made also by the Institute for Tourism.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *Tourism Master Plan for the city of Slavonski Brod*, Institute for tourism, Zagreb, 2010, 116.

<sup>29</sup> *Action plan of Slavonski Brod tourism development*, Institute for tourism, Zagreb, 2011, 57.

This document is envisaged that the project is implemented through the creation of brand manuals that will explain what is the essence of the brand of the city and what are its core values, and how they are expressed through tone of voice, image, graphics and the color scheme. It was also emphasized that one should take into account the ways in which to apply the value of the brand in marketing to present the city consistently in all types of media and communication, but also on the technical aspects in terms of coverage, and how to use the logo, font, colors, etc.

In the course of action to branding the city, with the aim of gaining insight on how on one hand Slavonski Brod is perceived by its citizens, on the other hand by visitors, in September 2010<sup>th</sup> there was conducted primary research on the image of the city through a survey. The results of research on a sample of 700 people, of whom 40% were younger than 25 years, which were published in a study of The Tourist Board<sup>30</sup>, showed that :

- almost 50% of the respondents considered that the city of Slavonski Brod is not only an industrial city, and almost 80% of them are proud of their city,
- by more than 70% of the respondents Slavonski Brod is perceived as a city which boasts openness to new ideas and people,
- by more than half of the respondents the city was assessed as the friendly, picturesque and relaxed town,
- more than 75% of the respondents, when they were able, would not limit tourism development.

In continuation of the project it has been established cooperation with the Zagreb Faculty of Graphic Arts, on which basis was, in December 2010<sup>th</sup> and January 2011<sup>th</sup>, among regular students, conducted a competition whose object was the creation of slogans and visual identity of Slavonski Brod. Defined content referred to character and / or logo - to basic graphic standards and relations in terms of horizontal and vertical series and relations with the background; the slogan (in Croatian and English) and the relationship with the sign and / or logo, and display the relationship between the sign and / or logos and slogans, characteristic color show, the characteristic letters display, clear and concise description of the solutions, and show practical applications through the use of the website, cover of the brochure or catalog and stationery including stationery, envelope and business card.

The competition entry should have been prepared in digital format on CD-ROM with accompanying A3 printing, laid on a hard surface, with application form, brand concept for the city of Slavonski Brod established by the Institute for Tourism and study that combines the results of opinion polls in the Annex. The jury consisted of representatives of the Tourist Board, the Zagreb Institute for Tourism and the Zagreb Faculty of Graphic Arts, with the evaluation procedure conducted by secret ballot through evaluation sheets, assigning one score from 1 to 5 to each template according to pre-defined criteria. Papers were evaluated for three days and electronically via the

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<sup>30</sup> *Project of branding of the city of Slavonski Brod, the results of primary research and the announcement of further activities*, Tourist Board of Slavonski Brod, 2010.

web, voted a total of 3 622 voters, where the results of the vote were treated as one member of the jury.

In May 2011<sup>th</sup> it was made a book of graphic standards in written and electronic form template to the winning logo and slogan chosen in the process of conducting the contest to design the visual identity of the city, which included the appearance of a protective space on the gray scale and the different colored surfaces on a business card, letterhead, stationery, envelopes, business seal, business folder, invitation, card/ticket, advertisement, poster, brochure, calendar, including the application of the sign on a T-shirt, pen, drop, lighter, cup, plate, glass, flag, napkin and glass washer.

## **6. METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS OF PRIMARY RESEARCH**

Tourist destinations branding is a lengthy process that involves the evaluation of the image of the visitor, but also the target market groups. As this is a very complex process, it takes some time to start operating the brand. Although it was expected that the new visual identity of Slavonski Brod in a relatively short period of time will be accepted by the tourism sector, and among those subjects who participate in the creation of the tourism product at the city level, and then at other levels (economy, culture, public institutions, etc.), it can be said that, in terms of its practical application during the past two and a half years, it was not accepted at a satisfactory level. Besides the website, letterheads and promotional materials of the Tourist Board, a new visual identity of the city has been almost only applied on the tourist information boards on which has been expressed welcome to the city and, to a lesser extent, on billboards, through which the organizers have announced some city events.

In order to determine the extent to which new tourism brand is even recognizable among the tourists and the locals, as well as the Tourist Board website visitors, and the degree of implementation of the visual identity of the representatives of the city public institutions and the city tourism and hospitality sector, the Tourist Board of Slavonski Brod conducted a primary research during January and February 2014<sup>th</sup>.

Research among the local population was conducted on a sample of 382 people stopped during the afternoons of the last two weeks of January of 2014<sup>th</sup> at the central square of the city. As methods were applied survey and a method of a random sample, and as a research instrument was used questionnaire. Demographic representativeness of the sample was ensured by the fact that the study in which subjects with grades ranging from "insufficient" to "excellent" rated new visual identity of Slavonski Brod comprised 95% of the population of the city and surrounding.

Research among visitors of the Web sites of the Tourist Board of Slavonski Brod was carried out in the second half of January of 2014<sup>th</sup> using a web questionnaire. Questions concerning the age of the respondents provided ages segmentation of respondents, while categorization of respondents was secured through employment status of respondents. The study was carried out on a sample of 300 respondents, of which 75% aged between 25 and 49 years and 62% at the current status "permanently or

temporarily employed". Respondents had to recognize the components of the visual identity of Slavonski Brod.

Research among tourists who in January 2014<sup>th</sup> stayed overnight at the hotel "Art", the "Levicki" rooms and at the Moto club Brod was conducted on a sample of 90 tourists, 82% of them males, with response rate of 44%. 95% of researched tourists who were supposed to recognize the brand of Slavonski Brod among six offered brands of other Croatian cities has the current status „permanently employed“.

Additional primary research during January and February 2014<sup>th</sup> was conducted among representatives of the city's thirteen companies and public institutions, as well as, eleven companies from the tourism and hospitality sector, and was aimed to determine the extent to which the above-mentioned entities apply the chosen city logo and slogan. In this case as a method was also applied survey, and as a research instrument questionnaire, with the response rate of 52% in public sector, and 37% in tourism and hospitality sector.

The results of research were as follows :

- new visual identity of the city so far has seen 62% of the representatives of the public sector, and 45% of representatives of tourism and hospitality sector,
- the brand so far has been used by 38% of the public institutions and companies owned by the city, mostly on the boards (14%) and websites (14%) , and only by 9% of the respondents, when it comes to the service providers in the tourism sector, mostly on the leaflets (20 %) and brochures (20%),
- 62% the of respondents in the public sector stated that it intended to begin (continue) with the use of the brand, while most of the respondents in the tourism and hospitality sector (60%) declared that there is a possibility.

Brand destinations is a relatively new concept, originated during the study of tourist destinations. Mix of brand destination has implications for consumer behavior. The image of the destination and the awareness of the destination are very important when defining the brand. It has been shown that there is a connection between the strength of the brand and the visibility and success of destination.<sup>31</sup>

If the primary research carried out shows that the image of a tourist destination is bad, and that negative associations are prevailing, local marketing specialists will need to decide on the selection of appropriate strategies that will serve the annulment of the negative and positive associations supporting.

In the past activities on the branding of the city of Slavonski Brod neither tourists nor the local population were dominated by negative associations. In the primary survey conducted by the Tourist Board in 2010<sup>th</sup> perception of Slavonski Brod as "the city that collapses", „economically stagnant", „not interesting for tourists" or "should avoid" were rare.

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<sup>31</sup> Ban, O., Mezei, K., „Romania, seeking for a destination brand“, in 20. Biennial International Congress *Hotel and Tourism 2010*, Proceedings, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management Opatija, May 6- 8, 2010, 1387.

## CONCLUSION

Restrictions on primary research arised primarily from data limitations, and sample sizes. However, research that was conducted by the Tourist Board of Slavonski Brod among the various target groups during January and February 2014<sup>th</sup> showed that the practical application of the new visual identity of Slavonski Brod in tourism and hospitality sector was more or less absent, what is the reason why the city brand was not recognized by a sufficient number of tourists as well as service users in this sector which resides outside the city.

From the conclusions of the meeting, which was held in the second half of February 2014<sup>th</sup> with the accommodation providers that generate a monthly average of more than 500 nights in the city of Slavonski Brod, it is evident that, at least when it comes to this activity, one can not expect significant progress in the implementation of the brand in this sector, without financial support of the Tourist Board.

Application of the new logo and slogan on the website, invoices, letterheads, etc. of registered providers of accommodation is not in question, but for the application of the visual identity on the inventory, furniture, key rings that keep the keys to the room, hotel cards, cover held menus or price lists, the owners of accommodation facilities require additional funding which, in terms of funding, is by them expected from the local community. At the same meeting was initiated that the Tourist Board with the purpose of giving tourists staying in accommodation facilities a certain amount of souvenirs with the city's logo and slogan.

There are numerous methods which will be in the function of continuation of the project of branding the city of Slavonski Brod as a tourist destination, including examining public opinion and target market groups of newly-built brand. One of them that will be definitely used is the method of evaluation of Slavonski Brod in comparison to other destinations, so that, for example, one of the questions, with the use of non-structured questionnaires, will be: „What other tourist destinations can compare the city of Slavonski Brod?"

A method that will also be used, and that is recommended by Avraham and Ketter<sup>32</sup> will be interviewuing focus groups sized from 8 to 15 people who will be selected from specific target groups, as well as particular foreign journalists who visit Slavonski Brod in the framework of the thematic study trips organized by the Croatian National Tourist Board through the region of Slavonia. One of the recommended method will also be the method of interviewing experts with the intention to obtain data about their experiences during the implementation of marketing activities.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Avraham, E., Ketter, E., *Media Strategies for Marketing Places in Crisis*, Butterworth-Heinemann, Burlington, 2008, 21-26.

<sup>33</sup> Idem, 21-26

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