

CONSTRUCTION OF TOURIST POTENTIAL TROUGH BRANDING AND GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS

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Abstract: *Nowadays, the image plays a crucial role in attracting tourists and foreign investments, placing products on foreign markets, obtaining organization rights for cultural and sporting events, gaining respect in international relations, and imposing their own values. It is often fundamentally based only on impression, superficial experience, often wrong information, especially when speaking of regions or countries. Tourists are more and more having greater expectations from the sites they visit, and their expectations often go beyond mere sightseeing or relaxation. The focus is not on one offer anymore, but they expect and demand more. Destinations, apart from historical offer, often provide a wide range of various products and services: traditional products, national music, premium drinks, etc. Offering such content ensures sufficient income to the local community, and thus, long-term existence. Registering geographical indication “Čigota” for provision of health and tourism services represents the first geographical indication for service in the world. An increase in the number of tourists not only benefits the development of the region through developing infrastructure, increase of housing capacities and construction of suitable roads, but also the increase in GDP. Higher incomes lead to improvement of working conditions and life in the countryside, development of infrastructure (roads, water supply, schools, health services, children’s institutions, cultural centers), development of rural tourism, domestic work and other activities.*

Keywords: *tourist potential, creating a brand, geographical indications, first geographical indication for service in the world.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Once, the offer that was available to consumers was limited, and only in certain categories the offer was a little bit wider. Demographical, economic, social and other changes, hand in hand with incomparable improvements in the field of transport and telecommunications, have exponentially increased the offer in all spheres of supply. Tourists are not anymore choosing between a selected and expected few destinations. From the mid-twentieth century, up until today, the number of tourist visits has increased multiple times, from 25 million to over one billion [29]. The World Tourist Organization predicts that the number of international tourists will reach 1,6 billion by 2020 [22]. This has also caused a strong increase in tourist sectors, within which the number of tourist destinations are on an ever-increasing rise. Such competition between tourist destination has led to market segmentation, where tourist destinations tend to attract the highest number of tourists possible through different strategies for designing and implementing marketing programs. The difference between the offered choices does not make up for what the place itself has to offer, but the way people perceive it. Accordingly, destinations must put in some effort, time and funding into branding activities in order to be competitive [15]. Branding is not a goal itself, but should contain the creation strategy that will, in the end, be useful for the citizens.

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Key figures		
International tourist arrivals	2017	Jan-Apr 2018
World	+6.8%	+6.2%
Europe	+8.4%	+6.8%
Asia and the Pacific	+5.6%	+7.8%
Americas	+3.3%	+3.0%
Africa	+9.0%	+5.6%
Middle East	+4.6%	+4.5%

Source: UNWTO (Data as collected by UNWTO June 2018)
 Provisional data based on information to date.

Table 1. The number of international tourists that has increased by 6% in comparison to 2017.
 Sources of data: UNWTO (2018)

Tourism has become a key sector for economic development and creating jobs in the world. The importance of this economic branches we can also see through the fact that tourism generates almost 10% of the world's total GDP [27].

2. BRANDING TOURIST DESTINATIONS

Branding tourist destinations demands more than creating graphs and conducting research. It includes much more than logos, mottos, marketing campaigns, public relations... [15]. It is the branding of a live community that is impacted by numerous variable political, sociological, economic and other factors.

Brand is a phenomenon of the contemporary society. Consumers are less and less buying a product, and more and more buying a brand. Brands help people in making decisions, and thanks to them, companies manage to survive in the sea of numerous competitions. However, in order to create a successful brand, one must have much time or a lot of money, and most often – both.

Identity of a tourist destination is created in the public on three levels: national, regional and local, through creation and maintenance of associations. Associations are created through personal projections, in order to create a wished perception by the target market. Material (monuments, art, buildings, etc.) and intangible heritage (customs, folklore, handicrafts, etc.) are factors that provide a certain place with unique and real identity. They enable the creation of recognizable identity, but are also the source of inspiration and new experience for tourists that seek authenticity.

Even though the idea of a brand started forming with the emergence of mass industrial production, its essence has been known for 5000 years already, and thus, one must ask, why do we give it so much attention? The enormous possibility of choice when shopping and the wealth of information have made the olden manners of estimating goods non-functional. Comparing features and benefits of the goods by comparing products does not provide satisfying results anymore. The progress in production has made the differences in the quality of products unimportant, and the state thus worsened by numerous copying of successful products. Even though a brand is, first of all, perceived as an economic category, it is, in its essence, a communicational phenomenon [19].

Above all, it expresses the relation between the consumer and a brand [11]. A brand is worth as much as the consumers perceive it as worthy by their feelings when facing an offer. It refers to the identity of the product and its differentiation in comparison to competitors' products. The differences might be numerous, but, in terms of a brand, only differences that are perceived as significant and desirable by the customer are actually important.

According to Anholt, branding is a process of projecting, planning and placement of the name and the identity of a product, service or an organization, in order to construct and manage its reputation [3].

Numerous authors often confuse the terms “branding” and “advertising”, even though they do not represent the same process. Branding is a significant tool of comparative advantage and economic competition. Advertising is an important tool for communicating the message of a brand, but, still, represent only one part of branding.

The customers are more and more realizing that products and services have become very similar, even identical, and thus are usually differentiated only by the nuances in price.

How to make a different, unique brand? A strong brand implies the existence of a clear and positive image that stresses the specificities of a territory, not only in the sense of tourist attractions, natural beauty, but also in the sense of culture and history of the said region, hospitality and character of the host [23].

Creating a strong brand on the market through the process of branding is a goal of many organizations, given that it provides numerous benefits for companies, including lesser sensibility to competitive marketing actions, higher margins, as well as the possibility of extending the said brand.

Branding destinations has a wider social significance, since its positive construction has a strong influence on building up potential of countries and regions in which they are located, as well as on its citizens, institutions, business, image and reputation [1].

3. BRANDING REGIONS, COUNTRIES AND TOURIST DESTINATIONS

Even though the image of a site is created in a very complex way, it is often basically funded on the mere impression, superficial experience, often wrong information, especially when speaking of regions and countries. This applies to almost everything, whether we are speaking of consumers, tourists or decision-makers. Nowadays, the image plays a crucial role in attracting tourists and foreign investments, placing products on foreign markets, obtaining organization rights for cultural and sporting events, gaining respect in international relations, and imposing their own values. It is often fundamentally based only on impression, superficial experience, often wrong information, especially when speaking of regions or countries [19].

Many global branding campaigns has, in its initial phases, the task of, first of all, creating a perception of the country from which the brand originates, and only the second phase included introduction of customers to the brand [19].

The influence on the way tourists understand, perceive, see and grade a certain region, country or a tourist destination is created through numerous factors. This multilayered subjective

feeling emerges as a consequence of numerous factors, but it is noticeable that, due to pressure caused by globalization, an increasing number of people wishes exactly to withdraw from the contemporary life. Cultural heritage and empathy with the destination and its values might prevail over five-star hotel offers, sterile and edited content.

Tourists are having increasingly greater expectations from the sites they visit, and their expectations surpass the mere tourist sightseeing and vacation. Traditional concept of a tourist destination as a tourist site, within which the destinations are equaled with the cities and sites, are more and more being replaced by a modern concept that refers to the organized and recognizable tourist space in which tourists, apart from housing capacities, are provided with a variety of content that will most likely appeal to them, and then prolong their stay [25].

The focus is not on one offer anymore, but they expect and demand more. Destinations, apart from historical offer, often offer a wide range of various products and services: traditional products, national music, premium drinks, etc. Offering such content ensures sufficient income to the local community, and thus, their long-term existence.

Tourism workers are more and more blending offers from a wide variety of gravitational region of the tourist place in order to satisfy the increasingly complex needs of the tourists through their content [24]. Capacity of tourist offers does not reflect anymore only on the number of beds, the proximity of cities and roads, the length of beaches, ski centers, etc. Capacity is nowadays a complex offer that might attract tourists and prolong their stay in the wished destinations for as long as possible.

Tourism is an economic branch that directly involves a large number of different activities [28]. The modern concept of managing a tourist destination requires a qualitative analysis of relevant factors [27]. By combining elements of the tourist offer of the entire gravitational region, one or more tourist products permeated by all the elements together in a unified destination offer might be created [16].

Tourist offer of rural regions is most often complex, since it is not enough to offer only preserved nature, fresh air, peace and quiet to a wider circle of tourists. They are unlike sea or mountain destinations, where the offer is to a great extent based on the central resource – the sea or ski tracks, that are the main carriers of the offers of such destinations and where tourists, optionally and depending on their personal interest, opt for additional content. In order to attract more tourists and fulfill their needs, tourist offers of rural regions are often a complex combination of many different offers: sport – recreational (walking, cycling, running, mountain climbing, horseback riding), wine (visiting vine roads or individual producers and their wine cellars), gastronomic (consuming specialties prepared in a traditional way or visiting gastronomic manifestations: “Roštiljijada” (en. Barbecue Festival), “Kupusijada” (en. Cabbage Specialties Festival), “Slaninijada” (en. Bacon Festival), “Festival duvan čvaraka” (en. Duvan Čvarci Festival), etc.), health (staying at hospitals with thermo-mineral springs, healing mud), - ecotourism (staying in capacities that do not distort the appearance and the cleanliness of the environment and sources of renewable energy, birdwatching, enjoying pleasant sceneries, wild plants and animals), adventurer-adrenaline (alpine climbing, mountain biking, acrobatic skiing, gliding), camping (accommodation and stay in campsites), cultural tradition (visiting cultural monuments, galleries, cultural manifestations), religious (visiting religious sanctuaries, religious manifestations), hunting and fishing (hunting, falconry, photo-hunting), educational (excursions with pedagogical and teaching values), nautical (accommodation and stay of tourists on a ship or other floating object), residential (occasional stay during the weekend, holiday or vacation in your own buildings - cottages and similar), nostalgic (sentimental visit to rural regions) [10].

We have especially highlighted the importance of tourism and geographical indications for rural areas due to the decades-long trend of depopulation and the lagging behind in the development of rural areas.

The wealth of local culture and natural beauty is the criterion towards which millions of tourists are striving for. Strengthening local or regional brand has a significant role also when speaking of attracting foreign investments; by strengthening a brand, the possibilities for attracting direct foreign investments are increasing [13].

Geographical indications give a strong seal (for example, Swiss watches and chocolate, German cars, etc.), they are created through a perennial existence of successful brands in certain brand, all originating from the same region, subliming them into regional or national symbols. Forming a reputation requires a long period of time, and this is one of the reasons of its high value. Reputation is an essential element of every product or a service of the geographical indication of origin, and thus the power of geographical indications as the right to mark a product with them is very valuable.

4. GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS OF ORIGIN

The idea of a destination is created on the basis of its geography, history, culture and other significant peculiarities of the broader or wider region in which it is located. Among numerous mediators of effect that transmit this message, geographical indications of origin have a special role [15].

Marking geographical origin is rooted even in the earliest periods of human civilization, which is testified by the records on wines from Nicosia and Sicilian honey from the fourth century. The tradition of differentiating products that owe their specialties to the specific environment from which they originate and which gives them specific characteristics, and thus reputation and renown as well, is thousands of years old [18].

The reputation acquired with the help of these natural conditions (climate and other geographical characteristics), as well as the efforts of numerous generations of people residing in the said region, are the factors that provide products from certain regions with a greater competitive advantage in comparison to the same or similar types of products that are being produced under different geographical conditions and by other producers [14].

Products containing the geographical indication of origin are products that differ from other, similar products thanks to their local identity and characteristics. They are used for identifying specific products, such as products originating from a certain country, region or a site, in which cases that special quality, reputation or other characteristics of the goods might be essentially attributed to their geographical origin [17].

Special natural conditions and years of experience of people residing in a certain geographical region create, in the minds of consumers, an impression that certain products originating from certain environment contain specific characteristics and special quality that are, as the time passes by, being accepted as a part of the identity of a certain region [12].

Jurisdiction in the field of protection of geographical indications of origins, since 1981, belongs to the Intellectual Property Office. Until today, 77 geographic indications of origin were registered with the Intellectual Property Office. Among 59 traditionally Serbian products that are protected with the geographical indication of origin are: carpet from Pirot, barbecue from Leskovac, Duvan Čvarci from Valjevo, homemade ajvar from Leskovac, etc. We also have the first protected geographical indication of origin for a service in the entire world.

“A product of a small value can be created by anyone and everywhere. When you have the knowledge that nobody can access – it’s a dynamite” [2]. Combination of special knowledge that is necessary for creating products of exquisite features, in synergy with the region in which they have been produced for centuries – provide certain products with special reputation.

Special national resources and years of experience of people residing in the certain region create, in the minds of consumers, an impression that certain products originating from a specific region have specific features and especially valued quality. A reputation gained thanks to these natural circumstances (region and other geographic characteristics), as well as efforts of numerous generations of people from a certain region are factors that provide products originating from certain regions with a far greater advantage in comparison to the same or similar type of products that are produced under different geographical conditions and by other producers. Even though the bigger number of products are created through the previously-mentioned symbiosis of natural and human factor, providing in such a way is a special quality. Still, in the case of certain products, the decisive role lays within the human factor, traditional way of creating a certain product, typical for a certain region, obtained thanks to the mutual efforts of numerous generations. But still, for certain products, natural factors expressed through special features of the pedologic composition of the land or climate conditions in a certain region has a decisive significance for the quality of the certain product.

It is almost certain that there is no wider circle of consumers who will decide to buy Italian whiskey instead of Scottish whiskey, and especially the reverse, Scottish olive oil. Apart from numerous reasons that provide an explanation for the stated examples only through historical analysis of branding of Scottish whiskey, its qualitative features expressed through reasons for determined geographical indications of origin state the following: Scottish whiskey owes its special characteristics to natural features of the local water and land, as well as to the inherited knowledge of the ones distilling it. Thus, no matter the effort and knowledge, Italian or Japanese producers of whiskey cannot make the whiskey as the one originating from Scotland [19].



Image 1. <http://www.wipo.int/edocs/mdocs> [21]

Apart from functional value, geographical indications of origin also have a great emotional value, and thus enable a far better management of brands through the experience of users via messages sublimed in them. Products and services that are protected by geographical indications of origin are produced in a traditional way, and thus help preserving the environment.

4.1. Economic significance of geographical indications of origin

Tourism implies direct or indirect job postings, encourages exporting domestic products, impacts the increase of the income tax, etc. [15]. The competition that rules tourist destinations on the market is increasingly intense, which was affected by a vast supply and transparency of prices [8].

The number of visitors thinking locally and not globally, in which case authenticity is of a vital significance, is strongly increasing. It stresses the difference between monotonous and unique [7]. Institute of Geographical Indications of Origin is a guarantee of quality and authenticity of goods and services.

The significance of geographical indications of origin is nowadays financially more significant and greater than ever. Their significance for the region from which they originate is not only reflected in the direct economic development expressed in cash inflows generated by direct sale of products marked with a geographical indication of origin, but also in immediate benefits that the said region gains by the power of the geographical indication of origin. Geographical indications of origin bring glory to certain regions. An average consumer, apart from Champagne and Bordeaux, might know of only several other provinces in France. And a small place in the heart of the province La Charente called Cognac would be known to a significantly smaller number of people if not for the famous brandy originating from the said region.³

Products that carry the label of the protected geographical origin in the European union reach the prices that are higher, an average between 10 and 230% (of wines), in comparison to products that do not carry the said label. In France, cheese that carry the label of protected geographical origin has a higher price of almost two euros in comparison to other, similar cheese, without the label. Thus, this results in an increase of prices of other factors in the production chain, and thus the purchase price for milk intended for production of the famous French cheese Beaufort was 0,57 euros, which is 90% higher than the price of raw milk, which is 0,30 euros [14].

Majority of geographical indications originate from poorly developed or undeveloped rural regions. Revitalization of rural regions and enabling their sustainable future through retention of jobs or opening new job posts is most often based on traditional products and services that are easily placed and sold thanks to geographical indications. Traditional forms of production help preserving the nature, as well as preserving rural crafts as tourist attractions.

A wide range of actors acting together in the area of one destination in the field of tourism (accommodation, transport, food, market, attractions, etc.) send different messages about this place by its variety of activities. Building a good image and strong tourist brand should be based on the creation of awareness of that place, and thus presentation of its identity and values in a way that would awaken a desire within a tourist to visit this place. A message to customers regarding uniqueness and authenticity might best be sent locally or regionally.

³ Every cognac is a brandy, but not every brandy is a cognac. Label „Cognac“ can be carried only by wine distillate produced in La Charente province. The grapes from which a cognac is produced are quite sour and such of a taste that it is neither edible nor suitable for production of quality wine. From the sour grapes, a famous drink is created, glorifying France all over the world.

4.2. First registered geographical indications of origin for services

By recognizing a high reputation built by the Special hospital for thyroid gland diseases and metabolic diseases Zlatibor - Čigota, with more than 50 years of tradition, Intellectual Property Office made a decision on March 31, 2017, and thus registered the first geographical indication of origin for services in the world.

Registration of geographical indication “Čigota” for providing health and tourist services represents a significant shift in the perception of geographical indications and their possibilities, especially from the perspective of registering other tourist destinations that have the necessary high reputation, special quality or other characteristics gained thanks to geographical indication of origin [6].

Zlatibor is a Nature park, a protected area of exceptional importance, where, especially in the area of the mountain pass Čigota, under the mountain peak carrying the same name, flora and fauna benefit the decades-long successful recovery, treatment and vacation of thousands of visitors. As in the cases of products with a registered geographical indication of origin where a natural factor (pedologic composition of the soil, climate conditions, water, etc.) has a decisive significance for the quality of a certain product [5], for the specialized health resort “Čigota”, apart from having a special rehabilitation program, the extremely favorable conditions in Zlatibor are especially significant for the treatment of thyroid gland diseases and obesity problems.

Registration of geographical indication of origin “Čigota” will definitely benefit the strengthening of the tourist offer of the western Serbia, but the entire country as well. Not only due to the uniqueness of the first registration of service in the entire world, but also for all the other benefits that geographical indications of origin carry along. Potential of “Čigota” clearly surpasses rehabilitation and tourism frameworks, since the complex offer of Zlatibor (reservation “Forest Park”, three Black pines, nature monument “Stopića Cave”, nature monument – Old village in Sirogojno), hand in hand with the local gastronomic offer, might act as an engine of progress for the entire western Serbia.

5. CONCLUSION

Branding is of an exceptional importance when speaking of tourism, since service users pick a destination that is in accordance with their needs, values and their lifestyle. Consumers are loyal to brands, which decreases the risk present when purchasing services characterized by intangibility [4].

An increasing number of customers is willing to pay extra value for products that feature specificity expressed through national and regional identities.

The issue of strengthening tourist potentials, especially in poorly developed and rural areas, is of a special significance. Among other things, it is determined that migration movements (especially from smaller communities to larger ones) are highly correlated with the development of the area and the amount of GVA per capita. The increase of tourists definitely contributes not only to the development of the area, but also the increase of housing capacities and construction of suitable roads and increase of GVA. It is increased through the number of new job posts in the field of tourism and support activities. An important factor in the tourist offer of such areas

are products based on the characteristics of space and people's experiences. Contemporary customers are growing more and more accustomed to appreciating more autochthonous products produced usually in rural areas [20], and are willing to pay even a higher price for such products and services, and it's exactly in undeveloped and poorly developed areas that such local characteristics are best preserved. Higher incomes lead to improvement of working conditions and life in the countryside, development of infrastructure (roads, water supply, schools, health services, children's institutions, cultural centers), development of rural tourism, home craft and other activities.

Given that the system of geographical indications is recognized on all meridians as a guarantee for special features and qualities conditioned by the areas from which they originate, contemporary consumers know how to recognize products and services resulting from the effort of numerous generations of people residing in a certain region. Those are the factors that provide products originating from certain areas with an advantage on the market in comparison to the same or similar types of products that are produced under different geographical conditions and by different producers [14].

Even though branding of tourist destinations is conditioned by specificities of a tourist destination, creating a brand is best done through highlighting the authenticity. Our country has a rich cultural heritage, preserved natural beauty, traditional products and authentic services.

Consumers, buried in the sea of commercials on a daily basis, are less and less trusting their credibility. The guarantee that a certain product labeled with the geographical indication of origin has a special quality and characteristics conditioned by geographical characteristics is most often confirmed through a decades-long tradition of production. As a consequence, geographical indications of origin nowadays represent a powerful propaganda factor for economy and tourism of every country.

The aim of this paper is to point out the impact that branding has on tourism potential, not through direct marketing activities, but through the complex prism of the branding process. A special accent is given to geographical indications of origin due to their strength and impacts on consumers.

According to the methodological nature, a systemic non-experimental research was carried out, which implies a contemplative (thoughtful observation, thinking) relation to the problem being studied. The study has provided an analysis of different phenomena in relation to time, i.e. the analysis of the impact of regional and national branding in the tourist sites.

From the explicit research methods (interpretation of the presentation and exposure of matter), the bibliographic - speculative method was used. This method involves collecting, analyzing and interpreting data primarily by theoretical and connotative method, with relevant bibliographic units (books, textbooks, magazines, etc.).

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