BUILDING A DOMESTIC DESTINATION BRAND: A CASE OF SERBIA

Milivoj Teodorović[1a], Jovan Popesku[2*], Danijel Pavlović[2]

[1]Independent researcher, Belgrade, Serbia
[2]Singidunum University, Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Belgrade, Serbia
[*] *jpopesku@singidunum.ac.rs*

Abstract

This paper uses the customer-based brand equity (CBBE) model to empirically evaluate the brand equity of Serbia as a tourist destination, its underlying dimensions and interrelated causal relations from the perspective of domestic visitors. The study is in line with the previous research findings and brings new insights into the destination's analysis; it shows that the Serbian domestic tourism market has not yet developed the critical area of destination image and empirically proves the importance of awareness as the most important dimension of the CBBE of the Serbian domestic tourism market. The implications of the Serbian domestic destination tourism market are evaluated, and future research avenues based on the outcomes are highlighted.

Key words: domestic destination; emerging tourism markets, Serbia, destination brand equity.

РАЗВОЈ БРЕНДА ДОМАЋИХ ДЕСТИНАЦИЈА: ПРИМЕР СРБИЈЕ

Апстракт

У раду се користи модел заснован на вредности бренда туристичке дестинације са становишта посетилаца да би се емпиријски проценила вредност бренда Србије као домаће туристичке дестинације, њених саставних елемената и узајамних релација из перспективе домаћег посетиоца. Рад је у складу са претходним истраживањима и открива нове детаље у вези са Србијом као дестинацијом, указујући на то да домаће туристичко тржиште није довољно развијено у кључном аспекту имица дестинације и емпиријски доказује значај спознаје, као најважнијег елемента модела вредности бренда Србије на домаћем туристичком тржишту. Рад разматра могуће импликације домаћег туристичког тржишта Србије и на основу резултата указује на правце будућих истраживања.

Кључне речи: домаћа дестинација, туристичке дестинације у развоју, Србија, вредност бренда дестинације.

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[a] PhD student

INTRODUCTION

According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC, 2018), the global domestic tourism spending is expected to grow for 4.1% in 2018 and 3.5% annually by 2028, contributing by 72.7% to the total global tourism GDP in 2017. By 2017, the size of the Serbian domestic tourism market reached €400 million euros (Kohlenberger, 2018). According to the *Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Serbia* (Statistical Yearbook, 2018), in 2017, Serbia was visited by 1.58 million domestic tourists who generated 5.1 million tourist nights. The Serbian domestic travel spending is expected to grow 3.5% annually by 2027 (WTTC Serbia, 2017).

Domestic visitors' travel behaviour, motives and perceptions are significantly different from those of the international visitors. Worldwide, domestic visitors tend to travel more often than foreign ones and benefit from the proximity and knowledge of a destination. Also, families, children, seniors, the disabled and modest-income families are more represented in domestic tourism (Deng & Ritchie, 2016). Similarly, Serbian domestic visitors are more aware of the Serbian brand identity as a tourist destination including history, national treasures, people, nature, media-bias and development (Novčić & Damnjanović, 2012). As a result, Serbian domestic visitors are interested in more diverse tourism activities and experiences.

Similarly, worldwide, international visitors are more concerned with safety, like to relax and have fun, prefer to visit landmarks and natural attractions, experience local culture, taste local food and explore the surroundings (Deng & Ritchie, 2016). According to Sheldon & Dwyer (2010), at the time of global economic crisis, when money is short and the time to travel is reduced, domestic tourism is a substitute for outbound travel. Domestic tourism has the capacity to create employment and generate income in the home economy and fill out the off-season capacity and increase the utilization of capital resources. However, very often potentials of the domestic tourism markets are considered subordinate to international markets by destination managers (Archer, 1978). Previous research on the Serbian domestic tourism points to a diversion of the resources intended for domestic tourism product development to the outbound market. Also, the past study suggests the importance of the residents' awareness of the Serbia's holidays as a domestic tourism opportunity (Dwyer, Dragićević, Armenski, Mihalič, & Knežević Cvelbar, 2014). Hence, there is a strong motive for private and public stakeholders, destination developers, planners and marketing strategists to develop the Serbian domestic tourism market.

The past research highlights the competitiveness of the Serbian diverse natural, cultural and created resources (Dwyer et al., 2014; Mulec & Wise, 2013), but the perceptual side of the domestic visitors remains largely unexplored. Most studies of Serbian tourism have failed to integrate the domestic visitors' perception of the Serbian domestic tourism market with domestic tourism strategies. This creates a gap in the scientific literature on

motives and impressions of Serbian domestic visitors and the assessment of the brand equity value of the Serbian domestic tourism market.

To address these gaps, this study analyzes the underlying perceptions and factors that impact them and explores the differences between various associations and their manifestations (recognition, recall, top-of-the-mind, repeat visitation and choice). Therefore, Serbia needs to carve out its own, unique position as a domestic tourist destination by implementing focused branding strategy (Dwyer, Knežević, Cvelbar, Dragicevic, Mihalič, 2015). The key objectives of the study are to assess from the Serbian domestic perspective: the applicability of the CBBE concept; causal relations among the underlying CBBE dimensions; and causality between the CBBE and its constituent elements.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand Equity Concept

Brand equity emerged as the most important marketing concept in the late 1980s, causing a proliferation of ideas on how to conceptualize and operationalize the brand equity paradigm. However, because of different methods and concepts, the only agreement was on the multidimensionality construct (Aaker, 1991; Erdem et al., 2006; Gartner, 2014; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007).

Adding greater value to the firm is considered a major asset behind brand equity, followed by commanding higher margins, increasing competitive advantage and improving trade leverage and brand extensions. Additional value to the firm by augmenting loyalty is provided by brand equity dimensions, such as awareness, image and perceived quality (Kladou, Giannopoulos, & Mavragani, 2015). Aaker (1991), defined brand equity as a set of assets and liabilities linked to a brand and proposed a model that captures image, assets, quality, awareness and loyalty as the main elements. Consequently, the CBBE model, conceptualized by Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) became the most recognized and commonly used paradigm by the research community and is used in this study (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007).

Destination Branding

Destination branding is a relatively new concept that is increasingly attracting the interest of the destination research community since it makes destinations different by means of name and brand symbols, associates unique positive experiences to tourism destinations, reinforces emotional relations between visitors and tourism destinations, and reduces research expenses and visitors' perceptions of risk (Blain, Levy, & Ritchie, 2005; Cai, 2002). Aaker's (1991) and Keller's (1993) concept of the CBBE offers destination marketers a tool for the performance evaluation of the scale and positioning in the marketplace (Pike, Bianchi, Kerr, & Patti, 2010).

The literature review reveals that tourism marketing researchers adopted the term 'destination brand equity' borrowed from the product and corporate brand literature (Aaker, 1991). Keller (1993) suggests that CBBE happens when customers are aware of the brand and exhibit strong, favorable and unique associations that can lead to repeat buying behavior that positively impacts brand loyalty. Likewise, high levels of brand equity may result in higher sales, price premiums and customer loyalty (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). The intricate nature of destination brands makes evaluation of the destination brand equity complex, rendering the measurement methods and the composition of the destination brand equity subject to debate (Ferns & Walls, 2012). This study uses four dimensions of the Aaker's model, indicating that besides image, it is important to consider loyalty, quality and awareness (Blain et al., 2005; Gnoth, 2002). The above leads to the research question 1: Do destination awareness, image, quality, and loyalty positively affect the destination brand equity of Serbia from the perspective of domestic tourists, and if so, how?

Destination awareness. Awareness is an important concept of the branding process because it shows the strength of the brand's stimuli (recall, recognition, top-of-the-mind) in a customer's mind and plays an important role in the destination selection process by impacting the affective elements linked to a destination (Im, Kim, Elliot & Han, 2012). According to Kotler, Haider, and Rein (1993), a traveler is aware only of the small portion of the destination options or "awareness set", from which the "choice set" is obtained for the final selection. This leads to the formulation of research question 2: Does destination awareness have a positive influence on the destination image, destination quality and destination loyalty of the destination brand equity of Serbia from the perspective of domestic tourists, and if so, how?

Destination image. A brief history of the image starts with Boulding (1956), who introduced the concept of image as a mix of cognitive, affective and conative elements. Konecnik & Gartner (2007) were the first to apply the image concept to define destination brand equity. Images, once conceived, do not significantly change over time in the absence of major events (Gartner, 2014). Major events may change some of the destination's image characteristics temporarily, but without reinforcement the image will return to the previous levels (Gartner, 1993). For destination development it is very important to understand that the short-term changes in a destination image can be easily erased and evaporated (Gartner, 2014).

Destination image can be defined as a set of associations that reside in the tourists' memory and represents the meaning of the brand (Farquhar & Herr, 1993; Keller, 1993) and is critical for defining the destination branding paradigm (Boo et al., 2009; Cai, 2002; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007). In 2013, Papadimitriou, Apostolopoulou and Kaplanidou's study of the tourism domestic market in Athens, Greece, confirmed that destination brand image influences attitudinal and behavioral destination brand loyalty. This leads us

to research question 3: Does destination image have a positive effect on destination loyalty of the destination brand equity of Serbia from the perspective of domestic tourists, and if so, how?

Destination quality. According to Zeithaml (1988), perceived quality stands for the customer's judgment of the excellence and superiority of a brand. The same author places quality as a part of brand equity, suggesting that high perceived quality leads to the selection of a brand. As suggested by Im et al. (2012), destination quality is different from the actual quality as it captures the perceived evaluation of a destination's total excellence. The analysis of the destination CBBE of Slovenia from the perspective of the Croatian and German markets showed that German tourists prefer quality while Croatian visitors prefer image (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007). This leads to the formulation of research question 4: Does destination quality have a positive effect on the destination image and destination loyalty of the destination brand equity of Serbia from the perspective of domestic tourists, and if so, how?

Destination loyalty. According to Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), the attitudinal aspect of brand loyalty is related to intentions in respect to the preferred brand (Atilgan, Aksoy, & Akinci, 2005), while behavioral loyalty is based on choice (Pappu, Quester, & Cooksey, 2005). In the tourism context, destination loyalty was found to impact tourism behavior during the choice process for selecting a destination (Um & Crompton, 1990) and represents the intention to visit and the possibility to revisit. Numerous studies point out that loyalty is a mediator between the image, awareness and quality and the total brand equity. (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007). This leads to the formulation of research question 5: Does destination loyalty have a positive mediating role in affecting the destination brand equity of the destination brand equity of Serbia from the perspective of domestic tourists, and if so, how?

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The conceptual model of the study is based on the Aaker's (1991) and Keller's (1993) CBBE paradigm, which consists of destination awareness, destination image, destination quality and destination loyalty. The study focuses on the specific four dimensions, rather than on a wider set of possibilities that could be inclusive in image, loyalty, and awareness (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007).

To address the research questions, the study uses a close-end quantitative research instrument designed and implemented in Google Forms. The measurement scale of the research instrument and the operationalization of variables were developed based on the earlier literature on destination CBBE (Chekalina, 2015; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Im et al.,2012). Initially, a semi-structured survey was conducted with (n=12) undergraduate students majoring in tourism. The findings from the interviews were incorporated into the questionnaire's final version.

Design of Survey Instrument

Following the literature review (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007), the 26-question research instrument was designed with a scale appraisal extending from 0 "absolutely no" to 10 "absolutely yes". The preference for a 0 to 10 scale over a 7-point Likert scale is given because of the wider variance range. The survey instrument is in line with the previous literature (Chekalina, 2015; Elliot & Papadopoulos, 2016; Im et al., 2012; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007). Data was collected during the four-day Serbian Tourism Fair 2018, which took place in Belgrade, Serbia, in February of 2018. The total of 302 valid results were obtained. The respondents were screened on residency, citizenship, last visit, and age. The obtained results were checked for missing data, outliers and normality. The overall Cronbach's alpha for the scale was 0.910 indicating robust internal consistency (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010).

Data Analysis

Destination awareness, quality, image, and loyalty were considered as dependent (latent) low-order variables, while the CBBE was considered as a dependent high-order variable (Konecnik & Garten, 2007), see Figure 1. The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using principal component analysis (PCA) as extraction method and Promax with Kaiser normalization as a rotation method, was conducted in SPSS, version 21. Suitability of the measurement model, composite reliability, convergent and discriminatory validity are proved by the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) conducted in AMOS, version 23 (Byrne, 2016). The causal relationships addressed in the research questions were confirmed using structural equation modelling (SEM).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographics of Respondents

Demographic characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table 1. Females (59.3%) represent most of the respondents while more than half of the respondents (63%) were under 40 years of age. Most of the respondents 78% have or are working towards undergraduate or higher degree, while 47% work in the private sector. On average, a domestic visitor in Serbia takes six domestic trips annually and stays five days. Also, the 2-day stay is more popular with women (12%) than with men (4%).

Table 2 shows means, standard deviations as well as minimum and maximum values for the model validation items of the n=302 respondents. The evaluation of the descriptive statistics shows a moderate difference (3.23) between the minimum and maximum means, indicating diversity of perceptions of the Serbian domestic tourists.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the respondents (n=302)

Socio-demo Profile	Frequency	Percentage	Socio-demo Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Gender			*Occupation*		
Male	123	40.7%	Civil	49	16.2%
Female	179	59.3%	Non-governmental	13	4.3%
Total	302	100.0%	Private	142	47.0%
			Other	98	32.5%
			Total	302	100%
Age			Educational level		
18−20	29	9.6%	Elementary school	3	1.0%
20−29	117	38.7%	High school	64	21.2%
30−39	44	14.6%	Undergraduate	164	54.3%
40−49	53	17.5%	Graduate	54	17.9%
50−59	39	12.9%	PhD	17	5.6%
60 or above	20	6.6%	Total	302	100%
Total	302	100%			

Table 2. Descriptive statistics (n=302)

Items	D	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Image					
Pleasant hosts	IM1	0.00	10.00	8.13	1.97
Good entertainment	IM2	0.00	10.00	8.50	1.94
Food and drinks	IM3	1.00	10.00	8.60	1.84
Beautiful scenery	IM4	0.00	10.00	8.43	1.90
Personal safety	IM5	0.00	10.00	7.64	2.00
Relaxing atmosphere	IM6	0.00	10.00	7.86	2.10
Pleasant weather	IM7	0.00	10.00	7.49	1.95
Diverse services	IM8	0.00	10.00	6.78	2.27
Excellent choice	IM9	0.00	10.00	6.99	2.37
Ideal for family	IM10	0.00	10.00	7.73	2.10
Preserved nature	IM11	0.00	10.00	6.17	2.36
Loyalty					
First choice to visit	LO1	0.00	10.00	3.23	3.13
Visit Serbia in 2018	LO2	0.00	10.00	5.53	3.31
Good value-for-money	LO3	0.00	10.00	6.24	2.54
Recommend Serbia	LO4	0.00	10.00	7.31	2.55
Number of visits	LO5	1.00	10.00	5.62	3.17
Length of stay	LO6	1.00	10.00	5.08	2.50
Vacation budget	LO7	0.00	10.00	5.96	2.26
Quality					
Quality of service	Q1	0.00	10.00	6.15	2.17
Accommodation quality	Q2	0.00	10.00	6.24	2.20
Unpolluted and clean	Q3	0.00	10.00	4.66	2.58
Low prices	Q4	0.00	10.00	7.20	2.27
Awareness					
Read about Serbia as TD	AW1	0.00	10.00	5.27	3.11
See ads on Serbia	AW2	0.00	10.00	5.27	2.73
Serbia is popular TD	AW3	0.00	10.00	6.37	2.40

D dimension of CBBE (AW awareness; IM image; Q quality; LO loyalty)

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Using the PCA method with Promax and Kaiser normalization rotation and eigenvalue greater-than-one criteria, four factors are extracted with 62% of the sum of square loading variances explained, see Table 3. The EFA reduced the number of variables from 26 to 16, see Table 3. The Kaiser−Meyer−Olkin measure of sample adequacy was (0.876) and the significant Bartlett's test of sphericity ($p < 0.001$) confirms the sample's significant correlations (Field, 2009). All commonalities show values above 0.5, suggesting good loadings.

The first factor, which explains 36.6% of the variances, is identified as "destination image" since it reflects the strength of the associations with a destination, such as entertainment, accommodation, food, scenery, safety and relaxing atmosphere, see Table 3. The Cronbach's alpha of 0.829 suggests good internal reliability. The findings confirm the previous research that strong tangible and intangible associations augment the image of a destination.

The second factor, marked as "destination loyalty", accounts for 11.06% of the variances, and reflects the visitors' behavioral and attitudinal aspects towards the destination. The 0.788 Cronbach's alpha indicates a good level of internal reliability, see Table 3. The findings are consistent with the previous research of destination loyalty which supports the intention to recommend, visit and "first choice". The non-perceptual variables such as date, number of visits, length of stay and budget proved insignificant.

The third factor, which accounts for 7.66% of variances explained, is marked as "destination quality" since it includes perceived values of what is traditionally expected of a tourist destination such as service, accommodation, reasonable prices, clean and unpolluted environment. The 0.762 Cronbach's alpha shows good internal reliability, see Table 3. The findings advocate the previous research and arguments.

The fourth factor, which accounts for 6.45% of the variances explained, is denoted as "destination awareness" and reflects perceived recall, recognition and knowledge about Serbia as a destination (Im et al., 2012). The Cronbach's alpha of 0.636 suggests acceptable internal reliability, see Table 3. The findings support the previous research suggesting the importance of promoting tourist destination features of Serbia (Dwyer et al., 2015).

Measurement Model

The CFA further reduces the number of variances from 16 to 9, see Table 3. The goodness-of-fit statistics show that all parameters are within the recommended values: chi-square/df = 1.582, p=0.047; goodness-of-fit index (GFI) = 0.978; adjusted goodness-of-fit (AGFI) = 0.950; normed fit index (NFI) = 0.966; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.987; p of close fit

(PCLOSE) = 0.604; and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.044. The measures show a robust fit between the estimated and proposed model (Hu & Bentler, 1998).

The reliability, discriminant and convergent validity are confirmed as shown in Table 3. Composite reliability (CR) shows an acceptable range

Table 3. Measurement model
*(Variable reduction: EFA: 26 to 16; CFA: 16 to 9)*

Factors	D	N	SL	EV	CA	VE%	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV
Image		2		5.86	0.83	36.61	0.79	0.66	0.24	0.17
Pleasant hosts	IM1		0.94							
Good entertainment	IM2		0.66							
Food and drinks (b)	IM3									
Beautiful scenery (b)	IM4									
Personal safety (b)	IM5									
Relaxing atmosphere (b)	IM6									
Pleasant weather (a)	IM7									
Diverse services (a)	IM8									
Excellent choice (a)	IM9									
Ideal for family (a)	IM10									
Preserved nature (a)	IM11									
Loyalty		3		1.87	0.79	11.71	0.80	0.58	0.24	0.17
First choice to visit (b)	LO1									
Visit Serbia in 2018	LO2		0.70							
Good value-for-money	LO3		0.81							
Recommend Serbia	LO4		0.86							
Number of visits (a)	LO5									
Length of stay (a)	LO6									
Vacation budget (a)	LO7									
Quality		2		1.23	0.76	7.67	0.82	0.70	0.39	0.29
Quality of service	Q1		0.79							
Accommodation quality	Q2		0.88							
Unpolluted and clean (b)	Q3									
Low prices (a)	Q4									
Awareness		2		1.03	0.64	6.45	0.63	0.46	0.39	0.30
Read about Serbia as TD	AW1		0.63							
See ads on Serbia (b)	AW2									
Serbia is popular TD	AW3		0.72							
Total variance explained						62.43				

TD tourist destination; D dimension of CBBE (AW awareness; IM image; Q quality; LO loyalty); N number of variables or items; SL standardized loadings; EV eigenvalue; CA Cronbach's alpha; VE variance explained; N number of variables; CR composite reliability; AVE average variance extracted; MSV maximum shared variance; ASV average shared variance; TD tourist destination; (a) item deleted after the exploratory factor analysis; (b) item deleted after confirmatory factor analysis.

(CR> 0.7) of between 0.824 and 0.628, pointing to a good internal consistency except for the destination awareness, which was 0.628, below the 0.7 threshold. Convergent validity was examined by average variance extracted (AVE), which shows values between 0.702 and 0.459, consistently greater than the 0.5 threshold, except for the destination awareness, which scored 0.459. Since CR and AVE values for awareness are close to their recommended thresholds, we can accept them arguing that adding more variables could alleviate the problem (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007). Discriminant validity is confirmed since maximum shared variance (MSV) is less than the AVE and average shared variance (ASV) is lower than MSV for all four constructs (Hair et al., 2010).

Structural Equation Modelling

The two-part SEM analysis is conducted to answer the proposed research questions. In part one, the CBBE is confirmed as a high-order factor while causal relations between the latent (unobservable) dimensions of the CBBE (destination awareness, destination image, destination quality and destination loyalty) are established in the second part.
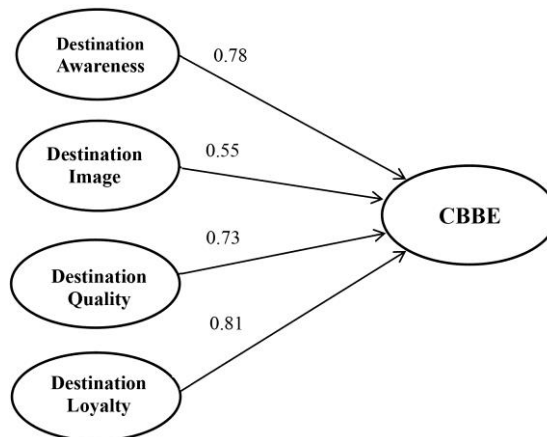
Figure 1. Higher-order path analysis of CBBE.
Note: All paths are significant at 0.001 level.

Part one. When low-order factors have high correlations, there is a possibility that all covariations of the low-order factors can be explained by the high-order general factor, in this case the CBBE (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007). The SEM analysis in Figure 1 shows that all four factors positively affect the CBBE and exhibit strong contributions to its value. The standardized path coefficient (0.81) shows that the destination loyalty has a dominant influence on the CBBE suggesting the importance of the repeat markets, word-of-mouth, and value-for-money.

The destination awareness (0.78) and quality (0.73) factors show a robust contribution to the CBBE, indicating the importance of promotion and quality standards. On the contrary, destination image shows the lowest impact on the CBBE with the path coefficient of (0.55) suggesting the weak perception of the destination brand equity. The path analysis addresses the first research question "Do destination awareness, image, quality, and loyalty positively affect the destination brand equity of Serbia from the perspective of domestic tourists, and if so, how?" The SEM analysis shows that all four elements positively affect the brand equity of Serbia from the perspective of the domestic market and confirms the CBBE concept, see Figure 1.
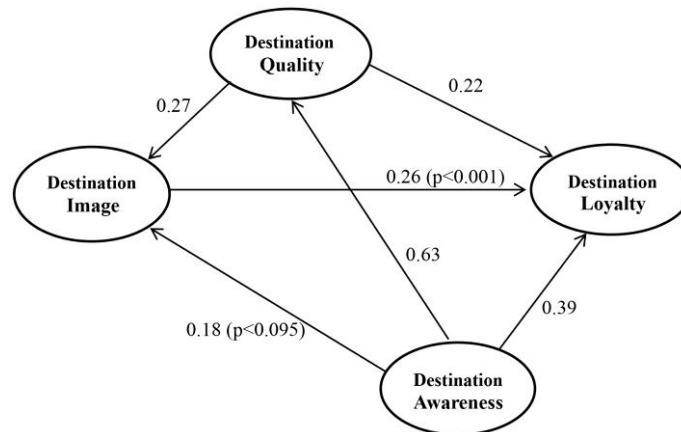

Figure 2. Path analysis of the CBBE dimensions.

Part two. The causal relations between the CBBE dimensions are shown in Figure 2. The SEM analysis confirms that destination awareness affects positively all other elements of the model showing significant influence on destination quality (0.63), suggesting that the Serbian domestic visitors rely on knowledge and promotions to make their domestic travelling decisions. On the other hand, the impact of awareness (0.18) and quality (0.27) on the image indicates lack of promotion and that accommodation and entertainment alone do not create a strong image of Serbia, see Table 3.

The second research question "Does destination awareness have a positive influence on the destination image, destination quality and destination loyalty of the destination brand equity of Serbia from the perspective of domestic tourists, and if so, how?" is answered by the analysis in Figure 2, which shows that destination awareness has a strong positive effect on destination quality (0.63), indicating that the expectations of excellence are drawn from the acquired knowledge. On

the other hand, destination awareness positively impacts destination loyalty (0.39) and image (0.18), suggesting the importance of information for intention to visit and creating associations about a destination in the tourists' minds.

The third research question, "Does destination image have a positive effect on destination loyalty of the destination brand equity of Serbia from the perspective of domestic tourists, and if so, how?", is answered in Figure 2, showing that the destination image has a positive effect on destination loyalty (0.26), but shows that accommodation and entertainment alone cannot have significant impact on loyalty.

Regarding the fourth question, "Does destination quality have a positive effect on the destination image and destination loyalty of the destination brand equity of Serbia from the perspective of domestic tourists, and if so, how?", the analysis confirms that destination quality influences destination loyalty (0.22) and destination image (0.27), however, the quality of service and accommodation are not enough to significantly impact both aspects, see Table 3 and Figure 2.

Finally, the fifth question, "Does destination loyalty have a positive mediating role in affecting the destination brand equity of the destination brand equity of Serbia from the perspective of domestic tourists, and if so, how?", is answered in Figure 2, showing that destination loyalty is positively affected by destination quality (0.22), destination image (0.26) and destination awareness (0.39). This is expected since the intention to visit and revisit is all about knowledge, satisfaction, and perception about a destination. Also, destination loyalty exhibits the strongest positive effect (0.81) on the destination brand equity (CBBE), see Figure 1. As a result, the mediating role of destination loyalty is confirmed, because it channels perceptions of excellent service, quality of accommodation, entertainment, and advertising into the set of loyalty variables (recommendation, affordability, and intention to revisit) as shown in Table 3.

CONCLUSIONS

Domestic tourism markets are important for extending the season, increasing utilization of capital investments, creating local jobs and income, and in the time of crisis, serve as a substitute to outbound travel (Archer, 1978). Successfully implemented branding strategies are what is behind the growth of domestic tourism. In this study, the research was carried out on the Serbian domestic tourism market and its implications on the elements of the destination brand equity of Serbia from the domestic tourists' point of view.

Past research suggests that branding strategies should be evaluated in association with the perceived dimensions of the CBBE, such as awareness, image, quality and loyalty, to develop more targeted and effective branding strategies. So far, few studies have used this information to develop a more

effective branding strategy for the Serbian domestic tourism market. This study confirms the findings of the past research that recall, recognition, top-of-the-mind, superiority, excellence and intention to visit and revisit, as well as the choice set, have significant impact on the value of the Serbian domestic tourism market, see Figure 2. On the other hand, the study exposes a weak image of Serbia, indicating the lack of strong perceptual associations between the unique and memorable Serbian domestic tourist features and domestic visitors.

The study shows that destination awareness strongly influences quality and loyalty, but exhibits little impact on image, indicating that the image of Serbia as a domestic tourist destination is undeveloped. This is in line with the previous research which shows that Serbia lacks promotion of its unique and memorable features that will create a strong association in visitors' minds, and that domestic visitors are price elastic (MTTT, 2016), prefer vouchers, discounts and lack positive strong associations and feelings about destinations in Serbia.

This is an important finding considering the diversity of tourism features that Serbia offers. First of all, Serbia needs to identify domestic destination features that are unique, memorable and attractive to domestic customers. Second of all, Serbia needs to develop and implement a continuous integrated promotional strategy to convince, impress, and make its prime destination features memorable and desirable to the domestic visitors. By doing that, Serbia will make the same features attractive to the foreign tourism market as well. Most importantly, Serbia needs to put the selected domestic destination features into the choice set of domestic visitors. Third of all, Serbia needs to execute this strategy on the national, regional, and local levels continuously and persistently, until the positive message is seeded in the minds of domestic visitors.

The research suggests several directions to investigate based on the findings and limitations of the study. Considering the fact that over 70% of the sample are those with higher education, the sample of the research may not be representative of the overall Serbian domestic visitors' segment, indicating that the study has methodological limitations, which in turn suggests that future refinements and advancements are needed (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007). The large diversity of the Serbian population limits the generalizability of the study.

The findings of the causal relationships between the Serbian brand equity dimensions allow future researchers to conduct similar projects in various contexts. Possibilities exist to conduct comparison studies between different ethnic, demographic, cultural and social groups to develop a more detailed understanding of the Serbian domestic tourism demand. Also, a causal order among proposed elements may exist, which could be confirmed in the subsequent research, see Figure 2.

Finally, future studies may include the importance of knowledge and how it impacts the perception of destination choices and travel behavior. Considering the lack of research on the brand equity of the Serbian domestic tourism market, the present outcomes represent a significant contribution to research and destination marketers in understanding the complex domestic tourism market in Serbia.

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РАЗВОЈ БРЕНДА ДОМАЋИХ ДЕСТИНАЦИЈА: ПРИМЕР СРБИЈЕ

Миливој Теодоровић[1][a], Јован Попеску[2], Данијел Павловић[2]
[1]Универзитет Сингидунум, Београд, Република Србија
[2]Универзитет Сингидунум, Департман за туристички и хотелијски менаџмент, Београд, Република Србија

Резиме

Циљ рада је да се анализира вредност туристичког бренда Србије са становишта домаћег туристе. Значај домаћег туристичког тржишта је у томе што у време економске кризе остаје стабилно и тиме доприноси максималном искоришћењу туристичких капацитета јер умањује ризик. То је изузетно значајно за стејкхолдере у туризму ако се узме у обзир да је удео домаћег туристичког тржишта у укупном глобалном туристичком промету 70%. Успешност домаћег туризма огледа се пре свега у ефектној имплементацији стратегије бренда туристичке дестинације. Познато је да дестинације са значајном позицијом на туристичком тржишту имају залеђину у добро спроведеној стратегији бренда дестинације.

Претходна истраживања потврђују да је за успешну стратегију брендирања дестинације потребно детаљно анализирати детерминанте вредности бренда према Акеровом и Келеровом моделу „вредности бренда са становишта купца", а то су спознаја, имиџ, квалитет и лојалност. До сада је урађен мали број студија на тему брендирања Србије као домаће туристичке дестинације. Истраживање у овом раду потврђује да су препознатљивост, присетљивост, врх свесности, супериорност и намера посете, као и скуп свесности – кључни фактори у одређивању вредности бренда Србије као домаће туристичке дестинације. У раду се такође указује на то да имиџ Србије, као домаће туристичке дестинације, није довољно развијен, што говори о томе да постоји слаба веза између јединствених и кључних карактеристика Србије, као туристичке дестинације, и перцепције домаћих посетилаца. Такође, у раду се потврђује доминантна улога спознаје у формирању јаке наклоности према квалитету и лојалности, али истовремено указује на то да има релативно низак утицај на имиџ. Резултати су у складу са претходним студијама које указује на недостатак јаке и свеобухватне промотивне активности најважнијих субјеката домаћег туризма у Србији. Указано је у раду и да је домаће туристичко тржиште у Србији еластично у погледу цена и да позитивно реагује на ваучере и попусте.

Научни допринос рада је емпиријска студија у изоловању имиџа као најслабије карике у ланцу бренда Србије, као домаће туристичке дестинације. Ово представља

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[a] Студент докторских студија

значајно откриће за туристички амбијент, који је у Србији изузетно разнолик. Да би изронила из ситуације у којој се налази, Србија мора да означи јединствене и искуствено незаборавне туристичке производе са гледишта домаћег туристе, да уврсти дате производе у интегрисану промотивну стратегију са убедљивим емоционалним акцентом на искуствени доживљај, да истакне пријатни осећај испуњености очекивања и да задовољи аспирационе тежње домаћег туристе. Најважније је да Србија успе да консолидује своје најатрактивније туристичке производе у скуп свесности домаћег туристе. Такође, потребно је да Србија спроведе стратегију брендирања на националном, регионалном и локалном нивоу дуготрајном и упорном кампањом како би се циљеви промоције успешно спровели. Овом промотивном кампањом Србија би својом туристичком понудом привукла и стране туристе.

На основу добијених резултата, студија отвара више праваца за даља истраживања. Чињеница да преко 70% испитаника припада групи са високим образовањем – указује на то да постоје одређена методолошка ограничења ове студије. То значи да су у будућим истраживањима на ову тему потребне додатне корекције и формулације. Резултати везани за међусобне односе између детерминаната вредности бренда Србије, као домаће туристичке дестинације, упућују на потребу за новим истраживања у овој области. Могућности постоје у поређењу резултата истраживања у односу на демографске, етничке, културне и социјалне сегменте потенцијалне домаће туристичке тражње.

На крају, будућа истраживања могу ићи у правцу анализе утицаја знања на перцепцију туристичких производа и понашања домаћих туриста. С обзиром на ограничен број истраживања у области домаћег туризма у Србији, резултати овог рада дају значајан допринос у истраживачком и маркетиншком контексту ка бољем разумевању сложености домаћег туристичког тржишта Србије.