

# TOURISM DESTINATION IMAGE FORMATION – THE CASE OF DUBROVNIK, CROATIA

## FORMIRANJE IMIDŽA TURISTIČKE DESTINACIJE – PRIMJER DUBROVNIKA, HRVATSKA

TRŽIŠTE

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### Tanja Kesić, Ph. D.

Professor, Marketing Department  
Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Zagreb  
J.F. Kennedy 6, 10000 Zagreb, CROATIA  
Phone: ++385 1 238 3314  
Fax: ++385 1 233 5633  
E-mail: [tanja.kesic@efzg.hr](mailto:tanja.kesic@efzg.hr)

### Ivana Pavlič, Ph. D.

Assistant Professor, Department of Economics and Business  
Economics  
University of Dubrovnik  
Lapadska obala 7, 20000 Dubrovnik, CROATIA  
Phone: ++385 20 445 923  
Fax: ++385 20 445 940  
E-mail: [ipavlic@unidu.hr](mailto:ipavlic@unidu.hr)

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### SAŽETAK

Konkurencija na turističkom tržištu postaje sve oštrija, i to ne samo među zemljama jedne regije nego i među regijama na svjetskoj, odnosno na globalnoj razini. Da bi se postigli što veći efekti, za turiste se bori veliki broj postojećih, ali i novih destinacija koji svoju prednost u odnosu na konkurenciju zasnivaju prije svega na percipiranom imidžu. Pri kreiranju politike turističke destinacije prijeko je potrebno staviti naglasak na formiranje pozitivnog imidža destinacije na ciljnim tržištima kako bi se mogla realizirati konkurentna prednost destinacije. U radu se analiziraju i istražuju elementi koji utječu na formiranje pozitivnog imidža destinacije na primjeru turističke

### ABSTRACT

Competitiveness in the tourism industry has become increasingly demanding, implying competition not only among the countries in close geographic proximity but also among regions and even competition at the global level. A large number of existing and new destinations are competing for tourists in order to enhance their results, with destination image being one of the key sources of competitive advantage. When planning destination development, an emphasis must be placed on the formation of a positive image of the destination in the markets it targets in order to achieve a competitive edge over competing destinations. This paper analyzes the

destinacije Dubrovnika. Cilj i svrha istraživanja jest utvrditi važnost formiranja pozitivnog imidža turističke destinacije koji je odlučujući čimbenik u kreiranju turističke politike. No on je isto tako važan i u procesu donošenja odluke o odabiru turističke destinacije. Provedeno je empirijsko istraživanje primjenjujući anketno istraživanje na uzorku od 355 slučajno odabranih turista koji su boravili u Dubrovniku. Rezultati dobiveni istraživanjem pokazuju dosadašnje zanemarivanje važnosti imidža kao presudnog čimbenika u kreiranju turističke politike Dubrovnika kao destinacije što dugoročno može imati negativne implikacije na njegovu konkurentnost. Stoga se radom upućuje na nužnost daljnjeg i kontinuiranog istraživanja determinirajućih čimbenika koji utječu na formiranje pozitivnog imidža turističke destinacije Dubrovnika.

elements that influence destination image. Research context is that of the city of Dubrovnik as a tourism destination. The objective of this research is to test a model of antecedents and consequences of a tourist destination's image. Empirical research was conducted, using a survey on a sample of 355 randomly chosen tourists visiting Dubrovnik. Its results indicate scarce importance of image as a deciding factor in the creation of tourism policies for Dubrovnik as a particular tourism destination, which might have negative implications on the competitiveness of this destination in the long run. For this reason, the paper also shows the need for further and continuous research of the determining factors that could have an impact on the formation of a positive image of Dubrovnik as a tourism destination.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Strong competition among tourism destinations forces them to emphasize their competitive advantages through destination image management, which might lead to positive perceptions among tourists and their choice of the tourism destination.

Therefore, the aim of this research is to analyze antecedents and how they affect the image of Dubrovnik as a tourism destination. The model aims at understanding the influence of independent variables (information-communication, demographic and motivation) on mediating ones (a cognitive evaluation that includes quality, attraction and value for money invested as well as affective evaluation) and, finally, on the dependent variable of the destination's overall image. The paper builds onto the destination image models presented in Baloglu and McCleary,<sup>1</sup> Beerli and Martin,<sup>2</sup> Kesić, Vlašić and Siničić Ćorić.<sup>3</sup> Such models are established to present a framework for studying the main factors that directly and indirectly affect the formation of the overall image. Therefore, the main purpose of this paper is to test the above mentioned model for the formation of the overall image of Dubrovnik as a tourism destination. Considering that the destination management model is still not being utilized in this particular destination, unlike in some other Croatian destinations, this paper will propose a model that can serve as a good basis and an instrument for the selection of appropriate policies of tourism destination management, as a necessity in the development of the overall destination.

## 2. TOURISM DESTINATION IMAGE - THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Increasingly pronounced globalization, affecting social, economic, political, technological and cul-

tural trends, has left a major imprint on the tourist market. It has resulted in growing competition among tourism destinations, which are aiming to find the optimal development strategy to deal with the changing context. Under contemporary tourism developments, a destination should be observed as a basic functional unit that can respond to the demands of the modern tourism market by using its uniqueness and individuality to create new, diversified products based on the specific features of certain tourism destinations.

The concept of destination started to be popularized in tourism forty years ago as a result of air traffic that used English terminology. That concept was at that time used to define the final destination of a tourist's travel. Today, the concept of destination is used to enable adaptation of relatively limited supply to the diverse set of tourist preferences.

Defining a destination is becoming a necessity in contemporary tourist contexts. Tourism destination represents an optimally combined area adapted to the market which consciously provides the prerequisites that will enable the achievement of competitive, long-term positive results by developing the destination's key elements.<sup>4</sup> Destination is perceived as an area which offers the tourism product and which, as a result of the original tourism supply, is currently or potentially marketable.<sup>5</sup> There are three aspects of tourism demand: transportation, supply and marketing.<sup>6</sup> Destination is also a recognizable area in which tourists spend and satisfy their needs, thereby ensuring adequate revenues for the local population.<sup>7</sup> Destination represents a flexible and dynamic area whose borders are determined by physical, political and even market boundaries, independently of administrative borders.<sup>8</sup> It is a place which attracts visitors to temporary stay, and can range from continents to countries, from states and provinces to cities, villages and resort areas.<sup>9</sup>

The deciding factor in the creation of tourism policies is the destination image that aims at relating growing demands by tourists and the

efforts of tourist supply to satisfy tourists' expectations. The image of a tourism destination responds to the needs of tourists seeking a choice within diversified tourist supply, but with a humane component that includes elements of the tourism destination's uniqueness. There is great need to develop a distinctive destination image as it is the foundation of the destination's positioning, providing it with particularities and differentiating it from competitors.

The notion of image is connected to the subjective perception of an objective reality that is formed in the consciousness of each individual, whose behavior is connected to the projected image. Image is considered to be a mental expression of the individual which has developed from a selected collection of impressions derived from an overall impression set. The scientific approach to defining image dates back to the mid-twentieth century and the authors who established that human behavior depends more on this formed picture of reality than it does on reality itself.<sup>10</sup> An image represents the known picture of a company, product, person, process or situation that an individual forms based on overall experiences, attitudes, opinions and perceptions that are more or less in line with real features.<sup>11</sup> The image of a certain country is a derived category based on civilizational, cultural, commercial, historical, geographical, political and sociological aspects, providing a measurable positive or negative outcome of the overall evaluation of the aforementioned aspects.<sup>12</sup>

Specifically, academics began to analyze the image of a tourism destination in greater detail thirty-five years ago. The image of a tourism destination can be defined as a reflection of beliefs, ideas and impressions that people have regarding the destination.<sup>13</sup> The image of tourism destination can be also defined as the reflection of all objective knowledge, impressions, prejudice, imaginations and emotional thoughts that an individual or group might have of a particular place.<sup>14</sup> It can be seen as an artificial imitation of a destination that includes identity, ideas and conceptions held individually or collectively of

the destination, where the presentation has to allow for the fact that it is generally a matter not of creating an image from nothing but of transforming an existing image.<sup>15</sup>

The definition of a tourism destination image is related to the individual and it is more important to understand the aspects of the image that were held in common with members of a particular group, which constituted a better market segmentation, and the development of appropriate marketing strategies.<sup>16</sup>

It is important that a tourism destination image is grounded in a true destination identity.<sup>17</sup> An unrealistic and overinflated image can damage the future of a destination.

### 3. FORMATION OF A TOURISM DESTINATION IMAGE

The formation of a tourism destination image provides the opportunities for developing the destination's competitive advantage in a highly competitive tourist market, as the formation of a positive image presents an overall impression that is highly important in attracting tourists to visit a destination. Basic features of a tourism destination's image are frequently considered to be complex, relative, multi-layered, and dynamic.<sup>18</sup> It is influenced by internal and external environments that are formed by a wide array of factors.<sup>19</sup> Destinations with a pronounced, convincing and positive image have a greater chance of being chosen by potential tourists, and have a valuable role in many diverse models regarding travel decisions made by tourists.<sup>20</sup> The destination image is a very important concept in understanding the tourist's destination selection processes.<sup>21</sup> When prices are comparable, image is the decisive factor for the holiday choice.<sup>22</sup>

A tourism destination's image affects the behavior of tourists in many ways, primarily as a key

factor in the decision-making process of where to travel, as in that phase potential tourists have limited information on potential destinations. Also, image greatly influences the post-purchase behavior and a tourist's satisfaction level, which in turn influences his/her willingness to return in the future. Taking the above into consideration, an image should generate interest, increase and maintain a person's attention in order to convince a tourist to visit. Therefore, image should be simple, unforgettable, significant and sincere. In its formation, attention must be paid to keeping an image relatively stable, bearing in mind that changes require making focused and long-term strategies.<sup>23</sup>

In forming a destination's image, the most important elements that must be taken into consideration are the destination's identity, which represents the results of promotional activity at national, regional and local levels, personal factors that include previous experience and expectations, and external factors.<sup>24</sup> A tourist forms an image of a destination through a process that has set stages, such as the accumulation of certain images and the creation of a unique image of the destination based on these images. The initial image is modified by additional information and the formation of a picture that is an incentive. This is followed by making a decision to visit the destination, visiting the destination, comparing it with competitors, returning home and reshaping the image on the basis of acquired knowledge.<sup>25</sup>

A tourism destination image should consist of the perceptions of individual attributes (such as climate, accommodation facilities and friendliness of the people) while also including more holistic impressions (mental pictures or imagery) of the place. Functional-psychological characteristics can be perceived either as individual attributes or as more holistic impressions.<sup>26</sup> Considering the attribute side, a tourist has numerous perceptions of individual characteristics of the destination (from functional to psychological). From a holistic perspective, the functional impression consists of the mental picture (or

imagery) of the destination's physical characteristics whereas the psychological characteristics could be described as the atmosphere or mood of place. A tourism destination image could range from the perceptions based on "common" features to those based on "unique" features. It has been suggested that holistic and unique images are important in categorizing a particular destination and are used to differentiate target markets.

A tourism destination image is an important factor because it also affects the level of satisfaction with the tourist's experience, which is critical in terms of encouraging positive word-of-mouth recommendations and repeat visits to the destination.<sup>27</sup> It is a function of brand and the tourists' and sellers' perceptions of the attributes of activities or attractions available within the destination area.<sup>28</sup>

Considering that the image of a destination can evolve and that it is important in the tourist's decision-making process regarding the visit and the possibility of returning to the destination in the future, image should be monitored and measured in order to be able to evaluate the actual image. The process of forming an image is characterized by three phases: an organic one that appears before tourists are presented with any kind of information, an induced one that appears when a desire to travel is formed and a complex one that includes gaining the experience of a destination.<sup>29</sup>

A destination that has a strong image is able to charge higher margins than a commodity-positioned destination. It can also provide greater added value and thus generate repeat visits and loyalty.<sup>30</sup>

A tourism destination's image considers that an image is formed by a tourist's rational and irrational interpretations, i.e. cognitive and affective interpretations. On the one hand, there is the formation of a tourism destination's image in which there is an emphasis on the importance of cognitive factors.<sup>31</sup> According to the analyzed

literature, the formation of a tourism destination image is formed by three factors: perception of the quality of the tourist experience, perception of tourist attractions or elements of the tourism destination that attract tourists and perception of the environment and the value created by that environment. The formation of such a cognitive tourism destination image does not only depend on the information gathered by an individual from various sources but also on its individual features.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, the affective component is also a highly important factor in the formation of a tourism destination image.<sup>33</sup> The affective component of a tourism destination's image is largely dependent on the cognitive evaluation, as tourists may develop a positive attitude towards a destination when they have an adequate level of positive attributes of the destination; otherwise, they develop negative attitudes towards the destination.<sup>34</sup>

Diverse information sources, age, education and socio-psychological motivation directly influence the affective component whereas the influence of perceptive-cognitive values is more pronounced than tourism motivation, as they state that the overall image is more influenced by affective than by cognitive components.<sup>35</sup>

Considering a differentiation between cognitive and affective evaluations leads to a greater understanding of how an individual's values affect image formations. That is, while the cognitive component reflects knowledge of the product's characteristics, affective components measure the emotional response to the destination product. These two aspects are at the two ends of a continuum along which the service experience can be evaluated and classified.<sup>36</sup> A conative component appeared as the third component, which is distinguished from the cognitive and the affective. This component is analogous to tourist behavior since it is the intent of the action component and it may be considered as the likelihood of visiting a destination within a certain time period.<sup>37</sup>

According to the analyzed literature, there are three main approaches to exploring a tourism destination image. All studies pointed out the cohesion between different variables, such as visit intention, impact of previous visit, geographical location, trip purpose, socio-demographic variables and destination image.

## 4. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

### 4.1. Sample and data collection

Research was conducted, on the one hand, in order to determine the importance of a tourism destination's image as a deciding factor in the creation of tourism policies, and on the other hand, as an important concept in the tourism destination selection processes. In order to identify the current situation in Dubrovnik as a tourism destination, empirical research was carried out using a sample survey among 355 randomly chosen (only foreign) tourists who stayed in the Dubrovnik. The research was carried out from April 1st to October 1st, 2009. In total, 355 questionnaires were administered personally to the respondents. A highly structured questionnaire, including six groups of questions, was used. The overall image was measured using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from extremely negative to extremely positive.

The results obtained from the survey were analyzed using different analytical tools, including the methods of analysis and synthesis, inductive and deductive methods, the method of generalization and specialization and different statistical methods. The aim of the research was to define the relationship among different relevant parameters and the image of a tourism destination. Therefore, in order to determine the direction and significance of the relationship, the hypotheses were tested simultaneously. A variety

of analytical tools were applied in the analysis, including the exploratory factor analysis and path analysis, which considers jointly all the hypotheses put forward. All manifest variables are allowed to have non-zero loadings on the factors in the model. There are two stages in the data analysis. First of all, the exploratory factor analysis was done to determine the suitability of the variables using the component method with a varimax rotation and also using the covariance matrix to test the convergent validity of the constructs used in subsequent analysis. The results of the exploratory factor analysis are supported with item reliability and average variance extracted. This method was applied to examine the dimensionality of the overall destination image. Then the path analysis was conducted in order to find out which variables have the greatest influence on the overall image of Dubrovnik as a tourism destination. This analysis has been applied to testing the consequences of the proposed causal relationship among a different set of variables that influences the overall image of Dubrovnik as a tourism destination and also to examine the relationship between each pair of variables, as suggested in the hypothesis. All statistical analyses were processed with the SPSS statistical package version 18.0 and AMOS.

Perceptual/cognitive evaluations (including the quality of experience, attraction, value and environment) and affective evaluations act as the mediators between exogenous variables and the final endogenous variable of the overall image.<sup>38</sup> Using the exploratory factor analysis, the first group of questions yielded three variables: quality of experience with 8 items (Cronbach's alpha  $\alpha=0.744$ ), attraction with 3 items (Cronbach's alpha  $\alpha=0.703$ ) and value/environment also with 3 items (Cronbach's alpha  $\alpha=0.588$ ). The second group of questions concerned the analysis of affective evaluation and was specified with four items (Cronbach's alpha  $\alpha=0.696$ ). The third group of questions regarded the analysis of travel motivation items that included relaxation/escape with five items (Cronbach's alpha  $\alpha=0.862$ ), excitement/adventure with four items (Cronbach's alpha  $\alpha=0.870$ ), knowledge with four

items (Cronbach's alpha  $\alpha=0.816$ ), social component two items (Cronbach's alpha  $\alpha=0.760$ ) and prestige with two items (Cronbach's alpha  $\alpha=0.723$ ) while the fourth group of questions dealt with the information sources that were used. The fifth group of questions concerned the information and experimental dimension of the destination familiarity index and the last group of questions represented the demographic profile of respondents. In the research, exogenous variables included information sources, socio-psychological travel motivations, age and education. Information sources are characterized by different sources of information which factored out into the following groups: sponsored communication with four items (Cronbach's alpha  $\alpha=0.726$ ), professional advice also with four items (Cronbach's alpha  $\alpha=0.712$ ) and word-of-mouth sources from friends and family (single item measure).

## 4.2. Research hypotheses

According to the theoretically accepted knowledge mentioned above, it is assumed that cognitive and affective evaluations influence the overall tourism destination image. Its validity will be tested on the image of the city of Dubrovnik as a tourism destination, using the following hypotheses:

- Information source has a positive impact on the cognitive evaluation of Dubrovnik as a tourism destination;
- Demographic variables (age and education) have positive impacts on the cognitive evaluation of Dubrovnik as a tourism destination;
- Demographic variables (age and education) have positive impacts on the affective evaluation of Dubrovnik as a tourism destination;
- Socio-psychological travel motivations have a positive impact on the affective evaluation of Dubrovnik as a tourism destination;
- Cognitive evaluations significantly influence the overall image of Dubrovnik as a tourism destination;



- Cognitive evaluations significantly influence affective evaluations of Dubrovnik as a tourism destination;
- Affective evaluations significantly influence the overall image of Dubrovnik as a tourism destination.

## 5. RESULTS

The descriptive statistical analysis of the questionnaire yielded the following respondent profile: 50.7% of the respondents were female and 49.3% were male. The age groups are represented as follows: 32.7% from 18-34, 32.4% from 35-49, 25.1%

from 50-64, 9.9% older than 65. In other words, 65.1.2% were young and middle aged (18 to 50) respondents, 56.9% were married, 32.1% traveled alone while 11% of them were divorced or widowed. The education structure showed that 78.6% of respondents completed high school and higher education, which in turn indicated that a large portion of the sample was well educated. The 60.3% majority of the respondents have annual household incomes ranging from €15,000 to €60,000. Table 1 shows the respondent profile.

The first stage of the analysis applied the Exploratory Factor analysis for the scales referring to the perceived cognitive and affective images, and also to tourist motivation and information sources for the purpose of dimension-reduction and identifying the factor structure.<sup>39</sup>

The result of the factor analysis of Dubrovnik's destination image is shown in Table 2.

Prior to implementing the Exploratory Factor analysis, an evaluation was made of the suitability of data for a factor analysis. An examination of the correlation matrix put most of the coefficients over 0.4. The KMO indicator value exceeded 0.6 for all the analyzed indicators, except for Value/Environment under the motivation indicators in the Social and Prestige group while the Barlett test of all elements achieved statistical significance, indicating factorability of the analyzed correlation matrices.

Reliability for each factor was obtained using the calculation for Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Table 2 also shows that Cronbach's alpha coefficients are low for the Value/Environment COG 3 and for the Social and Prestige in the factors of motivations. This could be due to the fact that number of items included in this analysis is limited (two in the case of Social and Prestige). Considering the suggestion by Peterson that the value of Cronbach's alpha of 0.6 is the criterion in use and when we connect Social and Prestige into one variable, we obtain the reliable indicators noted. Therefore, all the analyzed factors are acceptably reliable.<sup>40</sup>

**Table 1:** Respondent profile

Demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
18-34	115	32.7
35-49	115	32.4
50-64	89	25.1
65 and over	35	9.9
Gender		
Male	175	49.3
Female	180	50.7
Marital status		
Single	114	32.1
Married	202	56.9
Divorced/ widowed/separated	39	11.0
Education		
High school and less	74 215	20.8 60.6
College	66	18.6
Graduate school		
Annual household income		
under €15,000	56	15.8
€15,000-€29,999	115	32.4
€30,000-€44,999	99	27.9
€45,000-€59,999	50	14.1
€60,000-€74,999	23	6.5
€75,000-€89,999	7	2.0
€90,000 or more	5	1.3

Source: Research results



**Table 2:** Factor analysis of the cognitive image, affective image, motivation and information sources

Variables	Factors	Variance explained (%)	Cronbach's alpha	KMO	Barlett
<b>COGNITIVE EVALUATION</b>					
Quality of experience (COG1)		36.9	0.744	0.795	0.000
Standard hygiene and cleanliness	0.700				
Quality of infrastructure	0.655				
Personal safety	0.621				
Good nightlife and entertainment	0.612				
Appealing local food	0.600				
Suitable accommodations	0.583				
Great beaches/water sports	0.567				
Interesting and friendly people	0.504				
Attractions (COG2)		63.1	0.703	0.621	0.000
Interesting cultural attraction	0.821				
Interesting historical attraction	0.862				
Beautiful scenery/natural attraction	0.690				
Value/Environment (COG3)		51.1	0.601	0.570	0.000
Good value for money	0.728				
Unpolluted/unspoiled environment	0.799				
Good climate	0.604				
<b>AFFECTIVE EVALUATION</b>					
Pleasant country	0.774	52.7	0.696	0.666	0.000
Arousing country	0.728				
Relaxing country	0.724				
Exciting country	0.674				
<b>MOTIVATION</b>					
Relaxation/Escape (MOT1)		64.7	0.862	0.845	0.000
Relieving stress and tension	0.864				
Getting away from demands of everyday life	0.862				
Relaxing physically and mentally	0.776				
Getting away from crowds	0.772				
Escaping from the routine	0.740				
Excitement/Adventure (MOT2)		72.2	0.870	0.805	0.000
Doing exciting things	0.904				
Finding thrills and excitement	0.848				
Being adventurous	0.848				
Having fun, being entertained	0.796				
Knowledge (MOT3)		64.6	0.816	0.795	0.000
Learning new things	0.850				
Experiencing different culture	0.824				
Enriching myself intellectually	0.796				
Experiencing new places	0.740				

Variables	Factors	Variance explained (%)	Cronbach's alpha	KMO	Barlett
Social (MOT4)		80.6	0.760	0.500	0.000
Meeting people with similar interests	0.898				
Developing close friendships	0.898				
Prestige (MOT5)		78.43	0.723	0.500	0.000
Going places my friends have not been to	0.886				
Telling my friends about trip	0.886				
<b>INFORMATION SOURCES</b>					
Professional advice (INFO1)		54.4	0.712	0.703	0.000
Travel agents	0.619				
Airlines	0.837				
Tour operators	0.780				
Direct mail	0.695				
Sponsored communication (INFO2)		48.2	0.726	0.678	0.000
Brochures/Travel guides	0.365				
Advertisements	0.751				
Book/movies	0.787				
Articles/News	0.781				

Source: Research results

After this, the second stage of research was carried out and in it the defined hypothesized relationships were tested. According to Reisinger and Turner, Path analysis may be preferred to conventional statistical methods, for example, where multiple regression is required to test several dependent variables from the same test of independent variables simultaneously, particularly if it is possible for one dependent variable to simultaneously cause another.<sup>41</sup> Since the purpose of this research is to explore the relationships between different pairs of variables as a whole, in order to determine the direction and significance of these relationships, the path analysis was implemented. The fit indices satisfied the required levels, at least at the marginal levels CMIN=597,170;  $p=0.000$ ; RMSEA=0.112; GFI=0.913; AGFI=0.844; NFI=0.713; PNFI=0.521). Table 3 shows the results of regression weight estimates of the path model.

The cognitive dimension of a destination image is affected by the numerous information sources

that tourists consult. Those who rely to a greater extent on sponsored advice have more positive evaluations of the destination, professional advice influences the cognitive image (in the case of evaluation of value and environment) while WOM affects the evaluation of attractions. Table 3 shows that sponsored communication has a statistically significant relationship with the cognitive dimension of image (hypothesis H1 is partially accepted). Age and education do not affect significantly either the cognitive or the affective component of image (hypothesis H2 and hypothesis H3 are not supported). In analyzing the travel motivation variables, it is obvious that relaxation/escape and excitement/adventure have a statistically significant impact on the affective image components while Social and Prestige exhibit no statistically significant impact on the affective image. This could be due to the fact that the main motivation to visit Dubrovnik, as well as all of Croatia according to research made by the Croatian Institute for Tourism, is relaxation and the seaside (62%), followed by pleasure and

**Table 3:** Results of regression weight estimates of the path model

Variables	Standardized estimates	Critical ratio
Cog 1 ← Info 1	.039	3.178
Cog 1 ← WOM	.033	.560
Cog 1 ← Info 2	.044	2.249
Cog 2 ← Info 1	.044	.160
Cog 2 ← WOM	.037	1.372
Cog 2 ← Info 2	.050	4.845
Cog 3 ← Info 1	.040	-.019
Cog 3 ← WOM	.034	.735
Cog 3 ← Info 2	.046	3.905
Cog 1 ← AGE	.034	1.620
Cog 1 ← EDUCATION	.051	.310
Cog 2 ← AGE	.038	.246
Cog 2 ← EDUCATION	.058	-1.548
Cog 3 ← AGE	.035	1.021
Cog 3 ← EDUCATION	.053	-.163
Aff ← AGE	.041	1.457
Aff ← EDUCATION	.063	.416
Aff ← Mot 1	.038	4.400
Aff ← Mot 2	.034	2.948
Aff ← Mot 3	.038	1.979
Aff ← Mot 4	.030	.702
Aff ← Mot 5	.027	1.330
Aff ← Cog 1	.064	5.860
Aff ← Cog 2	.056	4.291
Aff ← Cog 3	.062	2.842
Image ← Cog 1	.081	-.318
Image ← Cog 2	.070	1.341
Image ← Cog 3	.077	2.809
Image ← Aff	.062	10.640

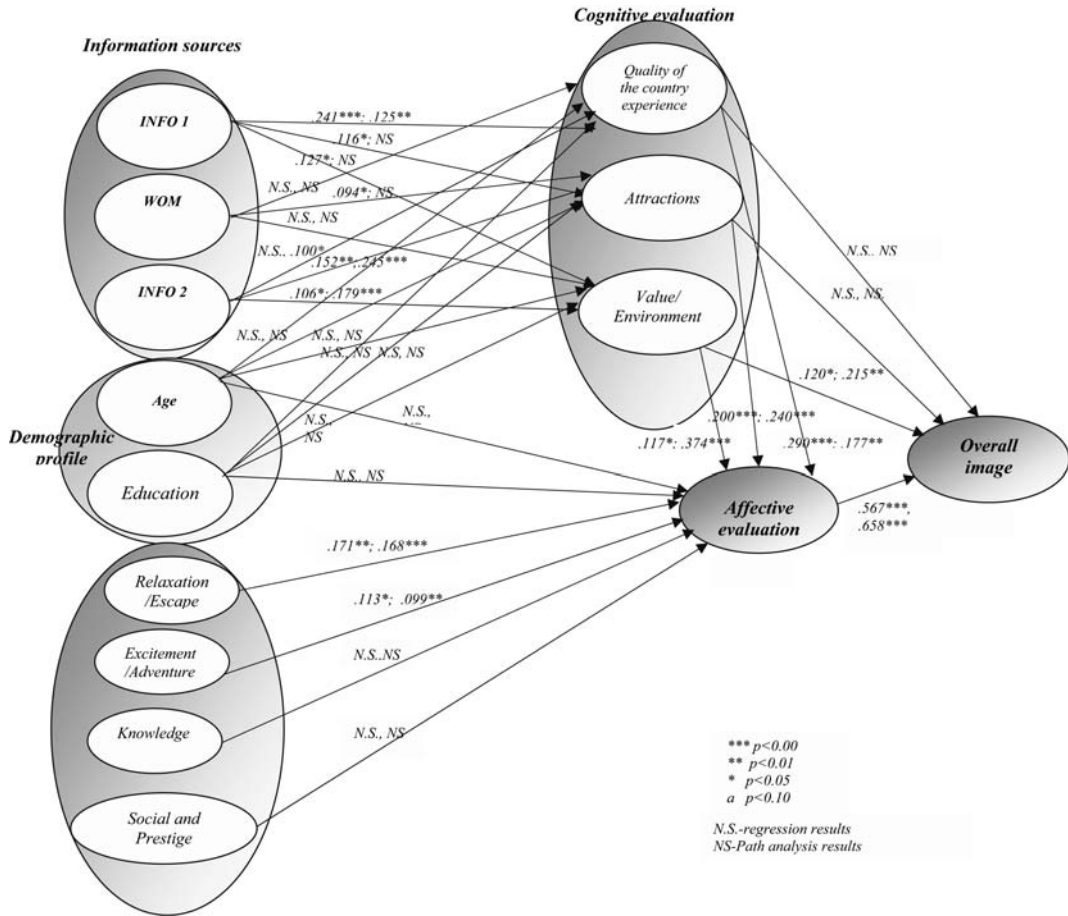
Source: Research results

fun (43%). For the above mentioned reasons, hypothesis H4 is partially accepted. Hypothesis 5 is accepted since every element of the cognitive image component has a positive impact on the affective dimension of the destination image while hypothesis 6 is partially supported since only value and environment have a statistically significant impact on the overall image. Therefore, the positive perception of value and environment of Dubrovnik as a tourism destination are likely to lead to more a favorable overall evaluation of Dubrovnik's image. The impact

of affective evaluation on the overall image is strongly supported (H7). Therefore, it can be concluded that tourists who had visited the Dubrovnik form a destination image primarily on the basis of feelings regarding the physical attributes of the destination.

To confirm the established hypothesis, the regression analysis was also carried out alongside the structural equation modeling. Figure 1 presents a model of Dubrovnik's image formation, providing both regression and SEM results.

**Figure 1:** Model of path analysis and regression for Dubrovnik



Source: Research results

Both statistical analyses yield comparable results. The only differences arise with regard to the impact of professional communication and

recommendations by friends and relatives on the perception of Dubrovnik's attractions. Table 4 summarizes the analyzed hypotheses.

**Table 4:** Summary of the hypothesis testing result

Hypothesis	Testing results	
<b>H1</b>		
Professional advice	Quality of experience	Supported
Professional advice	Attraction	Not supported
Professional advice	Value/Environment	Not supported
WOM	Quality of experience	Not supported
WOM	Attraction	Not supported
WOM	Value/Environment	Not supported

Hypothesis		Testing results
Sponsored communication	→ Quality of experience	Supported
Sponsored communication	→ Attraction	Supported
Sponsored communication	→ Value/Environment	Supported
<b>H2</b>		
AGE	→ Quality of experience	Not supported
AGE	→ Attraction	Not supported
AGE	→ Value/Environment	Not supported
EDUCATION	→ Quality of experience	Not supported
EDUCATION	→ Attraction	Not supported
EDUCATION	→ Value/Environment	Not supported
<b>H3</b>		
AGE	→ Affective evaluation	Not supported
EDUCATION	→ Affective evaluation	Not supported
<b>H4</b>		
Relaxation/Escape	→ Affective evaluation	
Excitement/Adventure	→ Affective evaluation	.038
Knowledge	→ Affective evaluation	.034
Social/Prestige	→ Affective evaluation	.038
<b>H5</b>		
Quality of experience	→ Affective evaluation	.030
Attraction	→ Affective evaluation	.027
Value/Environment	→ Affective evaluation	.064
<b>H6</b>		
Quality of experience	→ Overall image	.056
Attraction	→ Overall image	.062
Value/Environment	→ Overall image	.081
<b>H7</b>		
Affective evaluation	→ Overall image	.056

Source: Research results

## 6. CONCLUSION

Growing competition among tourism destinations emphasizes the role of marketing activities that work towards creating a favorable destination image. In the case of Dubrovnik, results show that image is an important factor of competitiveness and subsequent success although it has not been managed adequately so far. It must be pointed out that tourism policy makers in the case of Dubrovnik are still not aware of the fact that image can be a deciding factor in the creation of policies for a tourist destination, particu-

larly in order to increase its competitiveness in the market, as demonstrated by this research.

In the case of Dubrovnik, unfortunately, destination management has no adequate system in place yet to introduce quality improvements to the overall destination image. Hence, destination managers should adopt a serious approach in creating the overall destination image, taking special care of the image they are trying to communicate, along with the quality of the tourism product they are offering to potential tourists since this will affect satisfaction among tourists, their intentions and decision making in the future.

Even though it is not possible to control and manage all the factors that affect the formation of a destination's image, certain aspects such as professional communication and independent information sources, can (and should) be managed. In addition, an effort must be made to enhance the quality of tourist experience and the perceptions of attractions while also maintaining positive perceptions of value and environment. Current supply is not specialized to suit various segments of visitors, depending on their age and education. According to the research

carried out, cognitive evaluation of a destination influences through affective evaluation, but has no direct impact on the overall image (except for the value and environment). However, affective evaluation in turn strongly influences overall image perceptions of a destination.

Finally, it can be concluded that it is important to press on with research of all the relevant elements that could affect the formation of a positive destination image so as to understand the changing role of image components over time.

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