Tourism Branding Strategy of the Mediterranean Region

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This paper presents the influence of the future role of tourism, which is related to the branding strategy of the Mediterranean region. Developing the branding strategy in the period of global economic crisis between North (the European Union) and South (the Mediterranean coastal countries that do not belong to the European Union and non-member 'northern' countries – the Balkans) will be critical in the new global geostrategic situation. In this study we have identified current brand position related to the tourism aspect of the Mediterranean region, and future opportunities for developing a branding communication strategy for ensuring a better global market position. We have investigated opinions of young people from different regions (Italy, Serbia and Lebanon) and compared results about the Mediterranean (how do they perceive the region for tourism, do they have positive or negative associations, what is the first thing that they have in mind when someone says 'Mediterranean')? We suggest a framework for tourism offers related to elements of the branding strategy of the Mediterranean region: brand identity, brand positioning and brand image. The second part of the study should provide directions for better communication of the brand strategy of the Mediterranean region in order to secure a more stable global market position in tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Brand represents the connection that is made between a buyer and a brand (Schultz and Barnes 1999). When we interpret a brand, we use both our 'brain' (i. e., reference function) and our 'heart' (i. e.

emotional function). This is an important difference because intellectual explanation and emotional communication are in principle two ways of communicating a message (Urde 1999, 126). For David Jobber branding represents a process by which a company differentiates its offer from competitors (Jobber 2004). Brand differences are often related to attributes or benefits of the product itself (Kotler and Keller 2006). Leslie de Chernatony and Malcolm McDonald, as the most important thing in defining brand, mention added value that matches buyers' needs most closely: a successful brand is an identifiable product, service, person or place, augmented in such a way that a buyer or user perceives relevant, unique, sustainable added value which matches their needs most closely. Brand is mentioned as a place in this definition (Chernatony and McDonald 2003).

Geographic locations, like products and people, can also be branded. In this case, the power of branding is in making people aware of the location and then linking desirable associations. Increasing mobility of both people and business and growth in the tourism industry have contributed to the rise of place marketing (Keller 2003).

It is in the context of tourism that a geographic location is (or includes) a destination brand. A destination brand is defined as a 'name, symbol, logo, word or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the destination; furthermore, it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; it also serves to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of destination experience' (Kerr 2006, 277). The product of tourism, more complex than most products, is an experience rather than a tangible good (Gartner 1986, 643). According to Baker and Cameron, the effect of globalization has been that the place marketing (of a country, region, city) represents a very important strategic process, because of the existence of the competition between many destinations that wish to attract investors and visitors. Destination branding has a significant importance nowadays, because there is a need for a particular destination (a region, country, city) to be positioned in buyers' and stakeholders' awareness (Baker and Cameron 2008, 88). The author identifies a problem concerning destination branding. It refers to a claim that the same destination product can be

perceived differently depending on target groups (Hankinson 2005, 12).

The aim of this work is to define: (1) what are the main attributes of a brand image of the Mediterranean region that are important for the younger population (from 18 to 30 years old), as well as (2) what are the differences between the examinees according to the criteria of choosing a destination depending on the country they are living in, age, gender, employment, marital status and frequency of traveling, and (3) what ways of communication regarding the tourism offer are the most preferred by people from 18 to 30 years old?

THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION AND THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS

New locations appear on the global market, and they become appealing to the competitors, but also bring new possibilities. Considering the global competition, it is very challenging for the brand management of the Mediterranean region to attract investors and visitors.

The Mediterranean region includes the area of: European countries – Spain, France, Monaco, Italy, Malta, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania and Greece; Asian countries: Turkey, Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon and Israel as well as African countries: Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco.

The Mediterranean region is the leading touristic destination. Mediterranean countries traditionally presented special travel offers for their countries and competed between each other. Tourism is mainly concentrated in the coastal areas which receive 30% of international tourist arrivals. The most widely used tourism development model in the region is based on seaside summer holidays and the attainment of quantitative goals. International tourist arrivals (excluding domestic arrivals) in 1999 totaled 219.6 million (a 4.7% increase over 1998). Projections show that this figure could reach 350 million by 2020. 84% of the tourists in the Mediterranean come from Europe, mostly from northern and western countries. Germany is the largest market, followed by the United Kingdom, France and Italy. Altogether, Spain, France, Italy, and Greece receive almost 80% of Mediterranean tourism (Stefano 2004).

There are over 500 regions and 105,000 single communities in Eu-

rope competing for the scarce resource of investment, capital, talented people, visitors and residents. Over 300 regions in the world have over one million inhabitants (Rainisto 2003, 2). The current economic crisis is affecting countries, their 'nation brands' and is also affecting the Mediterranean region in the tourism industry. In 2008 international tourism achieved the number of 924 million tourists, and the estimated value of their spending is around 1000 billion USD. The decline in tourism is associated with the economic crisis. If we analyze the results of the international tourism in 2008, we can observe that there has been a growth of 1.8% in the number of people travelling internationally. The best results were achieved in Middle East countries, with a growth of 11.3%; then comes the African region with an estimated growth of 4.6%; and the American region with a growth of 3.6%. These three regions show better results in comparison with the world's average. On the other hand, the Asian and Pacific region marked the a of 1.6%; the European region had a growth of 0.1%. The economic crisis has influenced the changes in the behavior of tourists from Great Britain and Germany, who represent the largest part of the Mediterranean tourists. There is a certain stagnation of the Mediterranean countries. This especially relates to Spain, Greece, Italy and Cyprus (UNWTO 2009).

In the period between January and April of 2009 the growth of international tourism was negative in all regions of the world, except in Africa (+5%) which bucked the global trend (UNTWTO 2009, 3). Europe (−10%) and the Middle East (−18%) were the regions that were affected the most. Central and Eastern Europe (−13%) suffered the worst decline of European sub-regions. Southern Mediterranean Europe had lower growth than western Mediterranean, including Portugal, Spain, Andorra and Malta. Both Spain and Portugal appear to have lost to non-EU destinations, such as Turkey (−1.5%), Egypt and Tunisia (European Travel Commission 2009, 3).

Some regions create their image on the basis of images of particular companies and products. The process of mutual transferring image between two objects provides support for the place-product co-branding strategy (Azevedo 2004, 110). This strategy has decreased marketing costs and opened up new opportunities for transferring positive im-

ages for the whole region. There are certain differences in strategies for developing the brands of products and places. The goal of product branding is profit, meanwhile the goal of branding a location is connected with political success. Activities that are used for product branding are placement of the product on the market, while rebranding of the place image normally exists even in the absence of branding endeavors. The brand of the product is the property of the organization, meanwhile the property of the place is unknown (Pasquinelli 2009).

    Nations all over the globe have recognized the importance of collaborative efforts in fighting the current crisis with joint resources and partnerships. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, founded in 1995, was re-launched as the Union for the Mediterranean (UFM) at the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean in July 2008. The European response is the Union for the Mediterranean that requires increased economic coordination between regions and countries. The UFM emphasizes the importance of close coordination between the two shores of the Mediterranean, in order to help southern Mediterranean countries by supporting sectors at risk (Alessandrini 2009, 51). The common interests and problems of these counties would make it easier to reach and maintain agreements by using the cooperative branding approach. Considering the current world economic crisis it is crucial to unite the Euro-Mediterranean space. J. Piqué has come to the conclusion that integration may help the Mediterranean region to confront the challenges posed by the crisis, by allowing them to enlarge markets and to increase trade flows, investments and joint projects. Secondly, the creation of a common space will allow countries to play a common role, and it will strengthen the relations between them, by making a new balance in the region. All of the foregoing will contribute to a regional scenario of peace and stability, which is especially important for the world at large, not to mention its specific impact on the conflict in the Middle East (Piqué 2009, 50). According to Yorghos and Sevil it is necessary for countries to connect regionally in order to achieve a stronger position on the global tourism market (Yorghos and Sevil 200, 382).

    Caldwell and Freire have presented the difference between country

branding, region branding and city branding in their works. They explain that for country branding many variables regarding the region have to be included in the analysis. For example, the region does not have a political agenda or an independent army and economic events that on the other hand characterize every country (Caldvel and Freire 2004, 54). Certain studies indicate the concept of nation branding where the historical development of the nation is being respected and analyzed (Olins 2002, 243).

Exogenous changes are caused by factors beyond the control of destinations. For example, changes in fashion and consumer tastes can account for rise and fall from an exogenous demand perspective, as in the case of many spa and mountain resorts in Europe. Similarly, changes in transport technology can affect tourism flows from an exogenous supply aspect: many British seaside resorts entered into a phase of gradual but permanent decline when air transport enabled their sunlusting tourists to visit the Mediterranean region (Papatheodorou 2004, 220).

There are certain problems that have to be analyzed when it comes to branding a region. The Balkan region name has been changed into South Eastern Europe, because the former was considered as a negative term by the West because of the wars that took place in this region. (Hall 2001, 328). Every country tends to build its own country brand and because of that considers other countries its competitors. According to a study (Konecnik and Go 2008, 184) the biggest Slovenian competitors are countries including Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic and Hungary. Each of these countries offers similar tourism products and attempts to attract the same target tourism markets. Vitić and Ringer (2007, 127) examine the challenges and opportunities of promoting Montenegro as the destination for sustainable tourism in the post-civil war era of the former Yugoslavia, by giving the country unique branding status. The terms imaging and branding are of great importance especially for post war countries that have a negative past. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country that until recently was associated with war. To change their image Bosnia and Herzegovina should first distance themselves from their negative past (Duboroja and Mlivic 2008, 3). Croatia has a similar problem because it is perceived as a

pots-socialist, post-Yugoslav and post-war country (Martinovic 2002, 315).

Gilmore explains the example of successful Spain branding where a positioning diamond is used. The positioning diamond considers core competences for better brand positioning, it includes physical and human assets, according to which the Mediterranean region should focus on its sea and friendly people (Gilmore 2001, 287). The similar example of branding by people and place is presented in another study (Foley and Fahy 2004, 209). The message used to articulate this positioning is 'Ireland, an emotional experience.' Essentially, the image of a friendly host population ('people') and unspoiled and beautiful scenery ('place') are the 'core values' for Irish tourism.

DESTINATION BRANDING STRATEGY

Choosing a strategy for destination branding is a very complex strategic move. Place branding is an intricate activity and the chances of doing it successfully rest on a proper understanding of the factors that influence the outcomes (Gelder 2008, 5). The aim of this work is to formulate the strategy for positioning (the target group are young people from 18 to 30 years old) considering the criteria that are important for choosing a touristic destination as well as the communication channel for the Mediterranean region. In a previous study (Strizhakova, Coulter, and Price 2008, 62) the opinion of a younger population considering global brands was determined, and it was pointed out that in developing countries, research indicates that young consumers, who seek to better their economic position and that of their country are likely to embrace brands as a discourse of power and to believe that buying global brands enables them to participate in that global arena by empowering their own local companies and nations. According to Morgan, Pritchard and Piggott, young people look for new experiences and traveling to new destinations. Such consumers are often very web-wise, complementing other advertising and public relations media activity (Morgan, Pritchard and Piggott 2003, 294). Today's tourists are not asking 'What can we do on holiday?' but 'Who can we be on holiday with?,' they are increasingly looking less for escape and more for discovery, and that creates a basis for emotional connection (Mor-

gan, Pritchard and Piggott 2002, 338), There are many different studies
that analyze destination branding. The study of Dubai branding sum-
marizes a check list for destination branding that consists of six Ps:
Purpose: What is the objective behind destination branding? People:
Who will benefit (internal and external)? Performance: What is the
current status (s w o t)? Product: What portfolio of products will you
offer for which you need to create a brand strategy? Positioning: What
do your target customers value? and Process: What system change
do you need? (Balakrishnan 2008, 84). Certain authors see the sim-
ilarity between destination brands and corporate brands, concluding
that corporate brands, in contrast, share similarities with destination
brands and that they can be characterized by five underlying themes:
(1) the role of top management, (2) the influence of corporate cul-
ture, (3) departmental coordination, (4) stakeholder communications,
and (5) partnerships (Hankinson 2007, 251). Destination marketing
activities are synonymous with creating images and 'selling of places,'
while standard tourism marketing activities are creating state tourism
brochures and advertising campaigns (Jamrozy 2007, 117). Balakrish-
nan has identified the key destination branding components: vision
and stakeholder management, target customer and product portfo-
lio matching, positioning and differentiation strategies using brand-
ing components, communication strategies and feedback and response
management strategies (Balakrishnan 2008, 67). Other authors have
more thoroughly explained the brand components. Product portfolio
is presented in the work through the conceptual model of a desti-
nation product and it describes the connection between the environ-
ment, infrastructure, quality, value and the intention to return (Mur-
phy, Pritchard, and Smith 2000, 47–49). The Carmen study initiates
the need for destination branding: creating the image as the element of
a strategic stream and vision, the recognition — brand awareness, differ-
entiation, consistency as the elements of the positioning, brand mes-
sage as the strategic communication as well as creating expectations for
the target group (Carmen, Stuart, and Brent 2005, 335–36). Positioning
strategy and destination brand development can be explained with the
help of the terms brand image and brand identity. They are presented
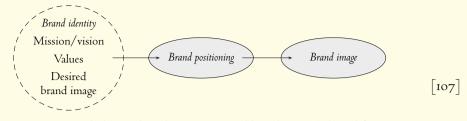in figure 1.

FIGURE 1   Brand identity, brand positioning and brand image (adapted from
Baker and Cameron 2008)

    Risitano explains that the destination brand identity is based on
six elements: brand culture, brand character, brand personality, brand
name, brand logos (and symbols), brand slogan (Risitano 2009, 7).
Previous studies suggest a model that conceptualizes the brand's iden-
tity in terms of its vision and culture, which drives its desired position-
ing, personality and the subsequent relationships, all of which are then
presented to reflect stakeholders' actual and inspirational self-images
(Chernatony 1999, 166). Brand image considers brand associations –
destination brand knowledge, the core of the brand equity perceived
by tourists (Risitano 2009). Images are the sum of beliefs and impres-
sions people hold about a place. Images represent a simplification of
a large number of associations and pieces of information connected
with a place (Kotler and Gertner 2002, 249). The study identified 11
categories of image attribute, where the first three are: activities and
facilities; history, heritage and culture and ambience – character of
the environment (Hankinson 2004, 9–10). Hosany, Ekinci and Uysal
(2006, 639) explain the difference between the brand image and the
brand personality in connection with a touristic destination.
    Positioning implies the identification of brand elements that are
important for a better position of the destination on the market as
well as the communication towards the target group. Tourism market-
ing typically involves 'mass marketing' approaches (e. g. media adver-
tising) by government and industry associations, and both mass and
more focused approaches (such as personal selling and incentives to
travel agents) by associations and individual firms (Papadopoulos and
Heslop 2002, 310). Because tourism embodies services and experiences
designed for travelers that cannot be evaluated prior to purchase, word

of mouth becomes an important factor when deciding which destinations to choose. In this respect, this finding is not surprising – personal and social communication channels are the source of trustworthy information about a potential destination (Sönmez and Sirakaya 2002, 195). Places are becoming increasingly substitutable and difficult to differentiate, and a slogan provides the link between the brand identity and the actual brand image (Pike 2005, 258). Based on the previously presented findings, it is necessary to determine the existing brand image of the Mediterranean regions as well as the prime brand associations, and based on this to improve brand identity and positioning strategy towards target groups.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to define the perceptions that young people aged from 18 to 30 years old have about the Mediterranean region as a touristic destination. The previous study report suggests that Euroconsumers could be segmented into three categories according to social grouping and behavioral patterns: young people, trend setters and European business people (Dalgic 1992, 36). The plan of the research was previously defined. All in all, 298 people responded in Italy, Serbia and Lebanon, 100 people in each country. Two questionnaires were incorrectly filled. 50% of the sample contains people aged from 18 to 24 years old, and the other 50% are people from the age of 25 to 30 years old. Italy and Serbia represent the European part of the Mediterranean region, while Lebanon represents the Asian part. The goal of the research is to define the similarities and the differences in brand associations with this region as a touristic destination according to the place of living of the people who took part in the questionnaire, as well as to define what the key factors for the young population are, and take these factors into consideration while developing brand strategies for the Mediterranean region.

The research was conveyed through questionnaires. The questionnaires consisted of some general question: gender, age, country of living, employment, marital status, the frequency of trips during a year. The second part of the questionnaire referred to more concrete questions which are connected with the object of the research. Using the

test of associations, where you write the first thing that pops into your head when you hear a certain word. People in the questionnaire were asked about their associations with the Mediterranean region, travel and touristic destination.

Previous researches have analyzed factors that are important when choosing the destination of your trip. Baker and Cameron have identified 33 factors that are crucial when branding a destination, and have divided these factors into four groups: strategic orientation, identification of the identity and the image of the destination, involvement of the stakeholders and the implementation and control of the branding process (Baker and Cameron 2008, 93).

According to other authors, factors that influence the choice of the destination can be classified into 5 groups: push factors (psychological motives, relaxation, value for money, education); pull factors (manmade, natural, social cultural and physical attractions); available time (amount of travel time and vacation time), total travel cost; exogenous factors (political and social environment, health threats, terrorism) (Orth and Tureckova 2001, 250).

The study by Chen and Gursoy took into consideration 17 variables for choosing the touristic destination, attributes of certain behaviors which have an influence on the loyalty to certain destinations; as well as the relation between the previous experience in travelling, attributes that influence the choice of the destination (security, transport, cultural differences) and loyalty to the destination (Chen and Gursoy 2001, 81). Three factors from this study were taken into consideration: price, accommodation and transport. Correia do Valle and Moço explain that specific behaviors exist when exotic destinations are in question (Correia, Valle and Moço 2007, 48). In this study seven factors are analyzed: the price of the touristic arrangement, destination, company of the people one is travelling with, accommodation, the way of paying for the touristic arrangement, transport and the total quality of the offer.

For this research Likert's scale was used and the ranking was from 1 to 5, where 1 meant strongly disagree and 5 was strongly agree.

Apart from this, in the research certain ways of communication that young people use when they want to get information on a certain

TABLE 1   Associations with the words that are given according to the frequency of their repetition

Words	Associations
Mediterranean region	Sea (50.7%), Greece (7.7%), Lebanon (6.7%)
Travel	Vacation (21.1%), tourism (8.7%), sea (6%)
Tourism destination	Greece (8.1%), Spain (7.4%), Paris (7.0%)

touristic offer were analyzed. In this research, only the ways of communication that are applied to advertizing tools are presented: global television, radio, newspapers, magazines. Ways of communication that are supported by the development of information technologies are also included: web sites, social networks: Facebook and MySpace. The third group of the ways of communication represents personal ways of communication: recommendation from a friend, organization of special events, tourism fairs, through the intermediary of the touristic agency. Questions were multiple choice.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The statistical analyses that were used in the research are T-test, Anova test as well as descriptive statistics. Using the test of associations for the words Mediterranean region, travelling and touristic destination, certain frequencies were defined, and are given in Table 1.

We were comparing the age factor with the criteria for choosing destinations so that we would be able to observe whether there is a statistically significant difference between the two age groups; for this criterion we used the statistical method called the T-test. The critical value for the level of significance was taken at 0.05. The T-test showed that the age groups have a significant difference when it comes to the way of paying (sig. = 0.43).

Another thing that was noticed was that for the criterion that concerns the people one is traveling with, the level of significance was at 0.71, which shows that if the level of significance of the test was to rise to 0.1 we could claim that, according to this criterion, there is a certain difference among the age groups. That is why we recommend that this field should be more thoroughly examined. Also we used the T-test to compare the gender factor with the criteria for choosing destinations

TABLE 2　Anova test choosing the destination and the country of people participating in the questionnaire

Dependent variable		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Price	Between groups	31.394	2	15.697	15.196	.000
	Within groups	304.727	295	1.033		
	Total	336.121	297			
Destination	Between groups	15.720	2	7.860	8.276	.000
	Within groups	280.176	295	.950		
	Total	295.896	297			
With whom to travel	Between groups	22.474	2	11.237	11.877	.000
	Within groups	279.100	295	.946		
	Total	301.574	297			
Accommodation	Between groups	19.350	2	9.675	8.724	.000
	Within groups	327.150	295	1.109		
	Total	346.500	297			
Way of payment	Between groups	1.281	2	.641	.525	.592
	Within groups	359.900	295	1.220		
	Total	361.181	297			
Transport	Between groups	44.862	2	22.431	18.080	.000
	Within groups	365.997	295	1.241		
	Total	410.859	297			
Total quality offer	Between groups	41.479	2	20.740	22.270	.000
	Within groups	274.726	295	.931		
	Total	316.205	297			

NOTES　Column headings are as follows: (1) sum of squares, (2) *df*, (3) mean square, (4) *F*, (5) sig.

and have come to the conclusion that a statistical dependence higher than the level of significance at 0.05 does not exist.

For the analysis of the people participating in the questionnaire from three different countries and the criteria for choosing the destination, we used the Anova test. The null hypothesis in this case is that there is no difference between the criteria for choosing the destination and those relating to people from Serbia, Italy, Lebanon.

For the level of significance we took the recommended value of $p = 0.05$. For the criteria for choosing the touristic destination (the price

of the touristic arrangement, destination, company of people one is travelling with, accommodation, transport and the total quality of the offer) except for the way of paying for the touristic arrangement, it was concluded that the answers of the people from three countries (Serbia, Italy and Lebanon) statistically differ greatly. Because of the fact that the level of significance is lower that 0.05 for five criteria for choosing the destination, we are declining the null hypothesis. Anova is limited because it does not show between which groups significant differences exist. That is why it is necessary to do the Post-Hoc test, thanks to which we will clearly see between which groups a significant difference does exist. Because of the fact that equal variances are not assumed in the further analysis we used the Tamhane т 2 multiple comparison.

We used the Anova test for researching the connection between the variable that is referred to the frequency of travel during the period of one year and the criteria for choosing the touristic destination. The null hypothesis is that there is no difference between the criteria for choosing the touristic destination when the frequency of travel is in question. For the level of significance we took the recommended value of $p = 0.05$. For the criteria for choosing the touristic destination (the price of the touristic arrangement, company of people one is travelling with, the way of paying for the touristic arrangement and the total quality of the offer) statistically they differ greatly, that is why the null hypothesis is declined. Using the Anova test it was concluded that a certain statistical difference between the criteria for choosing the touristic destination and the employment status does exist, and also that when transport is in question sig. = 0.30, as well as for criteria relating to whom you travel with sig. = 0.48. It was also concluded that there is no statistical difference between the criteria for choosing the touristic destination and marital status, because the level of significance (sig.) was higher than 0.05 for all criteria.

Ways of communication through which young people prefer to be informed about a certain touristic offer were also analyzed. The results of the research are given in table 4 in ascending order.

According to the results it is easy to notice that the first place goes to the the Internet sites (69.8%), after that we have events (69.7%) and in the third place we have recommendations from friends (66.1%).

TABLE 3 Multiple comparisons

Dependent variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Price	Serbia	Italy	.481*	.163	.010	.09	.87
		Lebanon	−.310	.130	.053	−.62	.00
	Italy	Serbia	−.481*	.163	.010	−.87	−.09
		Lebanon	−.791*	.140	.000	−1.13	−.45
	Lebanon	Serbia	.310	.130	.053	.00	.62
		Italy	.791*	.140	.000	.45	1.13
Destination	Serbia	Italy	.444*	.156	.015	.07	.82
		Lebanon	−.080	.120	.880	−.37	.21
	Italy	Serbia	−.444*	.156	.015	−.82	−.07
		Lebanon	−.524*	.137	.001	−.86	−.19
	Lebanon	Serbia	.080	.120	.880	−.21	.37
		Italy	.524*	.137	.001	.19	.86
With whom to travel	Serbia	Italy	.574*	.153	.001	.21	.94
		Lebanon	−.020	.127	.998	−.33	.29
	Italy	Serbia	−.574*	.153	.001	−.94	−.21
		Lebanon	−.594*	.134	.000	−.92	−.27
	Lebanon	Serbia	.020	.127	.998	−.29	.33
		Italy	.594*	.134	.000	.27	.92
Accommodation	Serbia	Italy	−.199	.158	.507	−.58	.18
		Lebanon	−.610*	.142	.000	−.95	−.27
	Italy	Serbia	.199	.158	.507	−.18	.58
		Lebanon	−.411*	.149	.019	−.77	−.05
	Lebanon	Serbia	.610*	.142	.000	.27	.95
		Italy	.411*	.149	.019	.05	.77

Some of the ways of communication that were not on the list, but that were mentioned by respondents, were Google Search, direct phone calls from agencies and information about offers, as well as information given in the faculties for the younger population that is still studying.

CONCLUSION

The sector of tourism is a sector which is employing a large number of people around the world. UNWTO's suggestions that concern the

TABLE 3   *Continued from the previous page*

Dependent variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Way of payment	Serbia	Italy	−.076	.177	.964	−.50	.35
		Lebanon	−.160	.144	.605	−.51	.19
	Italy	Serbia	.076	.177	.964	−.35	.50
		Lebanon	−.084	.149	.922	−.44	.28
	Lebanon	Serbia	.160	.144	.605	−.19	.51
		Italy	.084	.149	.922	−.28	.44
Transport	Serbia	Italy	−.108	.163	.880	−.50	.28
		Lebanon	−.870*	.152	.000	−1.24	−.50
	Italy	Serbia	.108	.163	.880	−.28	.50
		Lebanon	−.762*	.159	.000	−1.14	−.38
	Lebanon	Serbia	.870*	.152	.000	.50	1.24
		Italy	.762*	.159	.000	.38	1.14
Quality offer	Serbia	Italy	.523*	.154	.003	.15	.89
		Lebanon	−.390*	.120	.004	−.68	−.10
	Italy	Serbia	−.523*	.154	.003	−.89	−.15
		Lebanon	−.913*	.136	.000	−1.24	−.58
	Lebanon	Serbia	.390*	.120	.004	.10	.68
		Italy	.913*	.136	.000	.58	1.24

NOTES   Column headings are as follows: (1) country I, (2) country J, (3) mean difference (I–J) (4) std. error, (5) sig.; 95% confidence interval: (6) lower bound, (7) upper bound.

global economic crisis are: potential for tourism and travel sectors to support short-term stimulus actions, namely those aimed at creating and sustaining jobs, as well as transforming to the green economy.

It is feasible for the Mediterranean region to communicate the 'Mediterranean brand' to potential travelers and investors while managing to assure synergy in other marketing functions (distribution, pricing, promotion) globally (Yorghos and Sevil 2000, 388).

The crisis has also resulted in the increased focus on the importance of branding a region as a touristic destination, because of the decreased investments in place branding in comparison to the investments for brand positioning for each country. This is a very important fact because new trends are indicating that customers will be expecting

TABLE 4   How do you prefer to hear about specific touristic offer?

Media	Frequency	Percent
Internet site	208	69.8
Events	181	69.7
Recommendation from firends	197	66.1
Touristic agency form your country	196	65.8
Newspaper	196	65.8
Magazine	181	60.7
Global T V channel	178	59.7
Touristic fair	154	51.7
Facebook	145	48.7
By personal e-mail message	97	32.6
My space	88	29.5
Other	80	26.8

a higher number of touristic offers, despite the popularity of traditional resort tourism.

Through this research we have come to certain conclusions. First of all there are only positive brand associations when it comes to the words Mediterranean region, travel and touristic destination. Mediterranean region is mostly associated with the sea, and also with countries such as Greece and Lebanon. It is important to mention that 20% of the people from Lebanon who participated in the questionnaire relate the word Mediterranean with their own country.

Less frequent answers concerning the associations with the Mediterranean region are related to countries such as Italy, Spain, Montenegro – natural beauties, climate, beach; and feelings that are related to stays at touristic destinations – beauty, wonderfulness, pleasure and relaxation. It is interesting that a smaller number of people from Italy associate the Mediterranean region with the cuisine.

When travelling is in question, people mostly associate it with vacations, they often see travelling as tourism and they like to travel to the sea. Some other associations with travelling are entertainment, adventure, money and summer.

When a touristic destination is in question, there is a big diversity in answers. Most people associate a touristic destination with Greece

(8.1%) and Spain (7.4%), in the third place we have Paris (7.0%). Apart from this, the term touristic destination associates people with Italy, Cuba, Egypt and Turkey. A smaller number of people from Italy associates this word with Corfu, while a smaller number of people from Serbia (0.03%) associated a touristic destination with Cuba.

Second of all, if we analyze the criteria for choosing the touristic destination and countries of people taking part in the questionnaire we can conclude that a certain difference – when it comes to prices of touristic arrangements – does exist between Serbia and Italy, sig. = 0.010, Italy and Lebanon, sig. = 0.000, however the difference does not exist between Serbia and Lebanon sig. = 0.053.

If we analyze the criterion of destination using table 3, it is easy to conclude that a certain difference does exist between Serbia and Italy sig. = 0.015, Italy and Lebanon sig. = 0.001, but the difference does not exist between Serbia and Lebanon sig. = 0.880. While analyzing the criteria regarding total quality of the touristic offer, we have come to the conclusion that differences exist between Serbia and Italy sig. = 0.003, Serbia and Lebanon sig. = 0.004, Italy and Lebanon sig. = 0.000.

Thirdly of all, an adequate communication strategy can ensure a better positioning of the Mediterranean region as a touristic destination. The results of this study only point out the ways of communication that are necessary for brand positioning of a touristic destination.

The use of on-line communication tools is also noticeable: internet sites, Facebook, MySpace, for informing the younger population about the touristic offers. According to the results it is easy to notice that it is necessary to use the strategy of integrated brand communication which allows one to integrate advertising tools (Global TV, magazines); on-line ways of communication (Internet sites, social networks Facebook, MySpace); through intermediary of the touristic agency, through recommendations from friends, organizing special events and tourism fairs.

The further course of the research will include more age groups, if we take into consideration that in this study only the younger population was included, which represents a certain limit. It is possible to

define different aspects of communicating strategies including a strategic framework (Balakrishnan 2009, 621) for the purpose of building a brand for the Mediterranean region.
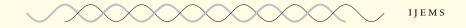
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