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## **CREATING A CITY BRAND AS A TOURIST DESTINATION IN THE SELECTED COUNTRIES OF ADRIATIC REGION**

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**ABSTRACT.** *This article examines and analyses the perception of 270 respondents (residents, tourists, tourist organizations) on the strength of the city's brand as a tourist destination in the selected countries of the former Yugoslavia: Montenegro, Croatia, and Slovenia. The subject of the study is Adriatic cities (Kotor in Montenegro, Dubrovnik in Croatia, and Porotroz in Slovenia. It is interesting not only to assess the city's brand as a tourist destination by selected countries but also to assess the difference between these three countries, and to achieve the knowledge about factors of influence. We started with the hypothesis that the following six factors: presence, place, pre-requisites, people, pulse, and potential in a certain degree had a direct and dominant impact on the creation of the city's brand as a tourist destination in the observed countries. We used both qualitative and quantitative techniques in our research. The initial hypothesis has been fully verified using a linear and multiple regression analysis. In addition, it has been shown that linear dependence explains well the studied functional dependencies and that the author correctly identified key independent variables (factors), which significantly impacted the dependent variable.*

**KEYWORDS:** brand, city as a tourist destination, regression analysis, marketing.

**JEL classification:** M30, Z30, B23, M31.

## Introduction

The brand (image) of a tourist destination is a very important concept regarding nations, cities, and regions. An image of a city as a tourist destination includes a number of associations, (memories), expectations, and other emotions. A strong brand, above all, raises awareness of the existence of a place.

Hankinson (2001) wrote that destination and place branding is a relatively new field of study. Kavartzis (2004), Ashworth, Kavartzis (2009) also expressed the same opinion. This characterized an apparent lack of empirical study (Caldwell, Freire, 2004). Anholt (2005) pointed out that clarity or agreement about definition or terminology is very low in destination and place branding. There is an agreement that concepts of place branding are rooted in marketing theories and corporate branding with necessary modification for the purpose. There are many definitions of the brand (or image), especially of the brand of a tourist destination in the literature (Păunescu, Moraru, 2018; Stankova *et al.*, 2019; Flisikowski, Kucharska, 2018; Ganushchak–Efimenko *et al.*, 2019; Bartosik-Purgat, 2018; Anand, Gaur, 2019). It is common for most to bind the idea of branding a tourist destination in order to identify key emotions. The theoretical part of the paper reviews the references in this field and sets out a theoretical model of research. After that, quantitative modelling is performed.

## 1. The Theoretical Approach

The debate regarding branding is extremely active and intriguing. Some authors believe that branding was developed as a result of “...humans [being] drawn together in patterns of interaction and exchange, cooperation and competition since earliest times” (McNeill, McNeill, 2003, p.34). Keller (2003, p.44) pointed out that “branding has origins in needs of craftsmen to identify the fruits of their labour from others”. Some authors (e.g. Low and Fullerton (1994, p.22) claim that modern branding started in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with “...the development of branded consumer products such as *Gillette* and *Quaker Oats*”. The study of place branding is a relatively new field. Undoubtedly, concepts of place branding have roots in corporate branding (Kavartzis, 2004; Bedradina, Nezdoyminov, 2019; Kosikova *et al.*, 2019).

Different models and metrics have been developed by many authors in an attempt to classify and measure various brand components. Some of the developed models focus on the emotional/symbolic and functional attributes (e.g. Cooper, 1979; de Chernatony, McWilliam, 1989). *BrandBox* method was a result of this concept (de Chernatony, Dall’Olmo Riley, 1997). It has been used to research city brand image attributes (Hankinson, 2005), organic (cultural and historical heritage), images as well as place and country differences (Caldwell, Freire, 2004; Pavlic *et al.*, 2019). One group of authors (e.g. Goodyear, 1993; de Chernatony, 1993; Mapa *et al.*, 2018) have been focused on brand typographies, exploring the development of a typical brand. Also, at the same time, the models which dominated by measuring certain aspects (brand equity, brand esteem, and brand potential) have been developed (Rajnoha, Lorincová, 2015). Impact of CSR on learning outcomes. *Management of Environmental Quality. An International Journal*, 29(6), 1026-1041. Kapferer (2003, p.97.) introduces models exploring such questions as “why?”, “when?”, “for whom?”, and “against whom”. They explore different brand aspects, for instance, a brand prism. Also, a brand hexagon has been developed in an attempt to research brand dimensions such as “self-image”, “personality”, “physique”, and “reflection”.

*The Brand Report Card* model was introduced by Keller (2000). It supports a practitioner's approach to brand building (Kotler, Keller, 2006, p.281). Some components of this model are: "salience", "performance", "judgements", "imagery", "feelings", "resonance", and other.

### **1.1 Destination and City Brand Literature Review**

The destination brand literature has complimented the above-listed models (Panfiluk, Szymańska, 2017; Chkalova *et al.*, 2019). Embacher and Buttle (1989) included the physical environment, weather and food, or the creation of a geographical marketing mix. A model of place improvement has been developed by Kotler *et al.* (2002, p.67) which considers a place as "a character, fixed environment, service provision and entertainment or recreational value". *The Relationship Network Brand* model was proposed by Hankinson (2004) for destination branding. The essence of this model is brand personality, containing elements such as consumer relationships, media relationships, brand infrastructure, and primary services. N. Morgan *et al.* (2005, p.71) have created a prism of "destination brand benefit" to consider "destination's advertising proposition". This model includes an assessment of "tangibles", "benefits to the tourist", "psychological rewards", and finally "the essential character" at the apex. Anholt, on the other hand, has created a destination brand hexagon (Anholt, 2005), and a city brand hexagon (Anholt, 2006) comprising presence, place, potential, pulse, people, and prerequisites (living standards and amenities). A summary of some of these brand-building instruments is given in *Table 1*.

**Table 1. Some of the brand-building models: a comparison**

<i>Authors</i>	<i>Components of Brand Building</i>					
Kapferer (2003)	Reflection	Physique	Culture	Relationship	Self Image	Personality
Hankinson (2004)	Brand infrastructure	Primary Services	Media relationships	Consumer relationships		Core Brand Personality
Morgan <i>et al.</i> (2005)	Benefits to Tourists	Tangibles	Value	Psychological rewards		Essential character
Kotler and Keller (2006)	Performance	Salience	Judgement	Imagery	Resonance	Feelings
Anholt (2005)	Tourism	Governance	Culture/Heritage	People	Investment/Immigration	Exports
Anholt (2006)	Potential/Prerequisites	Place	Presence	People		Pulse

*Source:* created by the authors.

The analysis of the theoretical approach to brand-building models seems to be developed for different purposes and is less appropriate in the context of place branding. Also, some of the models have clearly been designed for place branding. We use them to evaluate the brand strength of the selected cities as a tourist destination. *The Anholt-GfK Roper City Brands Index* (Anholt, 2006) is the most comprehensive model that meets the research goals of this paper.

## 1.2 The Anholt-GfK Roper City Brands Index

The starting point for selecting factors influencing brand strength as a tourist destination in observed countries is the *Anholt-GfK Roper City Brands Index* (Anholt, 2006). This index is evaluated by six factors (variables):

- **Presence:** the status and position of cities in the international environment, what attracts their attention and how they are managed. This aspect is measured based on the international status, the status of the city, and the global knowledge of the city. It also measures the city's global contribution to science, culture, and governance (Yerznkyan *et al.*, 2017).

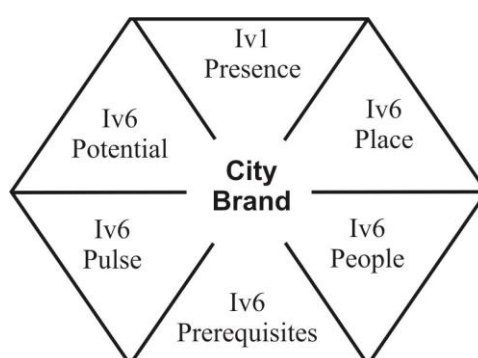
- **Place:** people's perception of the geographical characteristics and appearance of a city, its beauty, climate, location, and others. This aspect is measured by exploring people's perceptions of the physical aspect of the city in terms of climate friendliness, environment cleanliness, and the attractiveness of its facilities and parks.

- **Pre-requisite:** people's perception of what it would be like to live in that city, easily found and affordable accommodation, and general living conditions. This aspect determines how people perceive the basic qualities of a city; whether they are satisfactory and affordable; and how high is the standard of public facilities, such as schools, hospitals, transportation, and sports facilities.

- **People:** perceptions of the local residents, their hospitality, friendly or repulsive attitude, and others. This aspect reveals whether the residents of the city find themselves warm and welcoming, whether the respondents feel it would be easy to fit in a community that embraces their language and culture, and whether they would feel safe.

- **Pulse:** the excitement of a city, available leisure opportunities, the city's attractions. This aspect measures the perception of the existence of interesting things to spend a tourist's spare time, how exciting the city is, are there new things to discover.

- **Potential:** this aspect measures the perception of economic and educational opportunities in a city, for example, the ease of finding a job or how good a city would be for a place to live, work, and educate.



Source: created by the author.

Figure 1. Factors of Influence on the Brand of a Tourist Destination

Figure 1 shows the main variables of our model with the identified dependent variable and independent variables.

## 2. Methodological Approach

On the targeted sample, the impact of each of the above factors on the strength of the city brand as a tourist destination was determined using statistical methods. The sample consists of three target groups of respondents: city residents, tourists, and tourist agencies of the countries in the region, which introduce their cities as a tourist destination.

Our research is based on a comprehensive survey, which included 90 respondents (30 in each group) in Montenegro (MNE), Croatia (CRO), and Slovenia (SLO). The multiple linear regression model was used as the methodological basis for the quantitative analysis. All respondents were asked to evaluate the capacity of the city brand as a tourist destination (as a dependent variable) based of their knowledge, experience and/or intuition, and to evaluate the values of six factors that act as independent variables: presence, place, pre-requisites, people, pulse, and potential. In all cases, the Likert scale was used.

### 2.1 The Model of Multiple Hierarchical Regression Analysis

The collected data were evaluated on the 9-point Likert scale (1.0; 1.5; 2.0; 2.5; 3.0; 3.5; 4.0; 4.5; 5.0); 1.0 is the smallest value (influence), and 5.0 is the biggest influence. Descriptive analysis of the obtained data showed that the assumptions of normality and linearity of multi-correlation were met. This justifies the use of regression analysis of the first-order model. All extreme values and atypical points were verified, and they also meet the pre-requisites for applying the multiple linear regression model, for determining the relationship between the dependent variable, and the four independent ones. It is important to note that the correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) and the coefficient of determination ( $r^2$ ) are quite high (Table 2). This also justifies the use of a multiple linear regression model.

**Table 2. Coefficient of correlation ( $r$ ) and coefficient of determination ( $r^2$ )**

	<i>MNE</i>	<i>CRO</i>	<i>SLO</i>
$r$	0.861	0.902	0.758
$r^2$	0.791	0.834	0.712

Source: own calculations.

The aim is to determine the functional relationship of the dependent variable (the strength of brand –  $Y$ ) and independent variables in the model (respectively): the level of familiarity ( $Iv_1$ ), the perception of the place quality ( $Iv_2$ ), the level of preconditions created ( $Iv_3$ ), the level of human relations towards tourists ( $Iv_4$ ), the level of excitement of the city for tourists ( $Iv_5$ ) and the level of available potential ( $Iv_6$ ). The idea is to assess the expected mean value of the dependent variable ( $\bar{Y}$ ), based on the individual assessments of the respondents. After the evaluation of the dependent variable and their dependence on the variables ( $Iv_1$ ,  $Iv_2$ ,  $Iv_3$ ,  $Iv_4$ ,  $Iv_5$ ,  $Iv_6$ ), the regression coefficients can be determined:  $b_0$ ,  $b_1$ ,  $b_2$ ,  $b_3$ ,  $b_4$ ,  $b_5$ , and  $b_6$ . The coefficient of formula can be calculated using Eq. (1):

$$\bar{Y} = b_0 + b_1 Iv_1 + b_2 Iv_2 + b_3 Iv_3 + b_4 Iv_4 + b_5 Iv_5 + b_6 Iv_6 \quad (1)$$

where:

$\bar{Y}$  is the mean expected value of the dependent variable;

$b_0$  is Y-axis intercept, determined on the basis of the used sample;

$b_1$ ,  $b_2$ ,  $b_3$ ,  $b_4$ ,  $b_5$ ,  $b_6$  – are coefficients of the independent variables  $Iv_1$ ,  $Iv_2$ ,  $Iv_3$ ,  $Iv_4$ ,  $Iv_5$ ,  $Iv_6$ , which in fact represent the slopes of the corresponding straight lines.

Based on the above, the value of the dependent variable is calculated for each new value of the independent variable. It can be said that  $\bar{Y}$  is “average” assessed value since it is the mean value of the probability distribution of possible values of  $Iv_1, Iv_2, Iv_3, Iv_4, Iv_5$  and  $Iv_6$ .

To determine  $\bar{Y}$ , the least-squares method (Bertsikas *et al.*, 2008) is used. In fact, our goal here is to determine the coefficients:  $b_1, b_2, b_3, b_4, b_5$  and  $b_6$ , to minimize the sum of squared errors (SSE), which is represented by formula (2):

$$SSE = \sum_{k=1}^n (Y_k - \bar{Y}_k)^2 = \sum_{k=1}^n (Y_k - (b_0 + b_1 X_{1k} + b_2 X_{2k} + b_3 X_{3k} + b_4 X_{4k} + b_5 X_{5k} + b_6 X_{6k}))^2 \quad (2)$$

where:

$Y_k$  is the actual value of the dependent variable, given by the  $k$  respondents ( $k = \overline{1, n}$ );

$\bar{Y}_k$  is the assessed value of the dependent variable on the basis of the model, in the case of  $k$  respondents ( $k = \overline{1, n}$ );

$n$  is the total number of respondents (270 from MNE, CRO, and SLO).

The least-squares method is used to minimize the sum of vertical distances for each point of data (Balakrishnan *et al.*, 2007). That means the identification of a straight line which best fits the given set of points, by finding the corresponding value of intercept ( $b_0$ ), as well as coefficients ( $b_0, b_1, b_2, b_3, b_4, b_5, b_6$ ). In general, the optimum average value of the dependent variable is determined, based on the value of the independent variables ( $Iv_1, Iv_2, Iv_3, Iv_4, Iv_5, Iv_6$ ) and the dependent variable ( $Y$ , for  $\forall k, k = \overline{1, n}$ ), which were subjectively assessed by respondents.

## 2.2 Results and Discussion

The results of the regression analysis are shown in *Table 3*. In addition to coefficients:  $b_0, b_1, b_2, b_3, b_4, b_5, b_6$ , statistical parameters are listed: *standard error of the regression estimate (SE)*, *mean absolute deviation (MAD)*, *mean absolute percent error (MAPE)*, and *mean square error (MSE)*.

**Table 3. Corresponding statistical values of parameters for MNE, CRO, and SLO**

Parameters	Case 1: MNE	Case 2: CRO	Case 3: SLO
$b_0$	0.89169	0.09285	1.188406
$b_1$	-0.00066	0.129703	0.036915
$b_2$	-0.04816	0.58466	0.025461
$b_3$	0.00627	0.116916	0.639886
$b_4$	0.696055	0.108786	-0.01637
$b_5$	0.344797	0.121901	0.230118
$b_6$	0.002349	0.02081	0.002349
SE	0.125	0.081	0.302
MAPE, %	0.31	2.42	12.1
MAD	0.012	0.108	1.023
MSE	0.001	0.020	0.271

Source: own calculations.

Below is a description of the statistics listed in *Table 3*.

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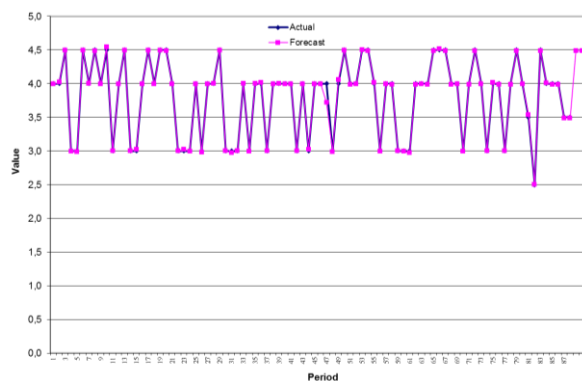
– *Standard error of the regression estimate* shows a numerical variation of the value of the dependent variable (obtained by the model). In this case, standard deviation has the following values: 0.125 in case MNE, 0.081 in case CRO, and 0.302 in the case of SLO. The conclusion is that the expected changes  $\bar{Y}$  are insignificant.

– *Mean absolute percent error* has the following values (respectively): 0.31%, 2.42%, and 12.1% for MNE, CRO, and SLO. The values show that the model is consistent;

– *Mean absolute deviation* obtained concrete values respectively as follows: 0.012, 0.108 and 1.023. It shows that the model reflects the perception of respondents to a great extent, and

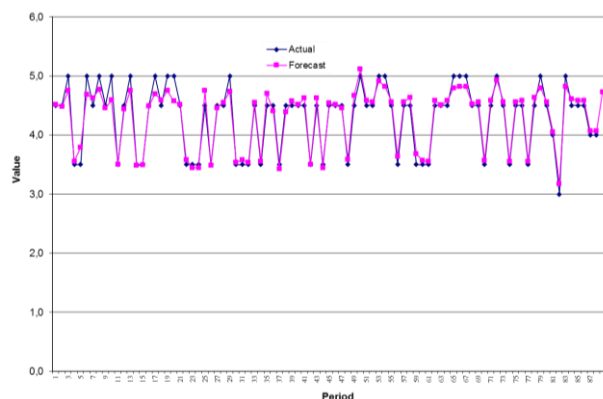
– *Mean square error* has the values 0.001, 0.020 and 0.27 respectively in the case of analysed samples in MNE, CRO, and SLO. The indicated values also show satisfactory matching of the model with the real data collected during the survey.

The following graphs (*Figure 2 to Figure 4*) show the actual value of the dependent variable Y, based on subjective estimates for 270 respondents from MNE, CRO, and SLO, as well as the estimated value of the dependent variable, calculated in the model  $\bar{Y}$ .



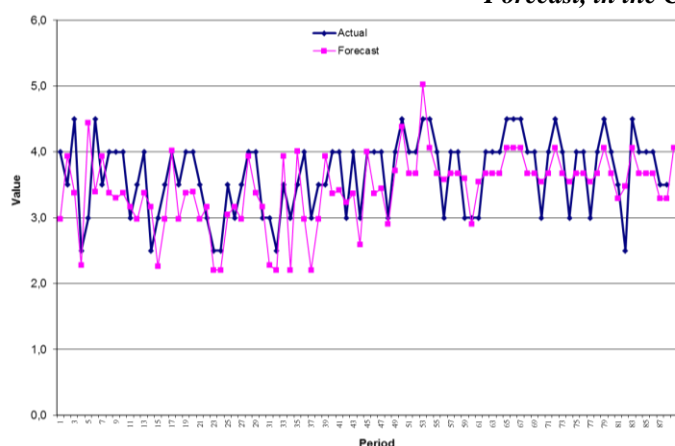
Source: created by the author.

**Figure 2. The Dependent Variables, Actual, and Forecast, in the Case of MNE**



Source: created by the author.

**Figure 3. The Dependent Variables, Actual and Forecast, in the Case of Croatia**



Source: created by the author.

**Figure 3. The Dependent Variables, Actual and Forecast, in the Case of Slovenia**

The analysis of the linear dependence between the dependent variable and the average values of the independent variables shows that the variables  $Iv_2$  and  $Iv_6$  have the greatest influence on the dependent variable in the case of Montenegro and Croatia. In Slovenia, the

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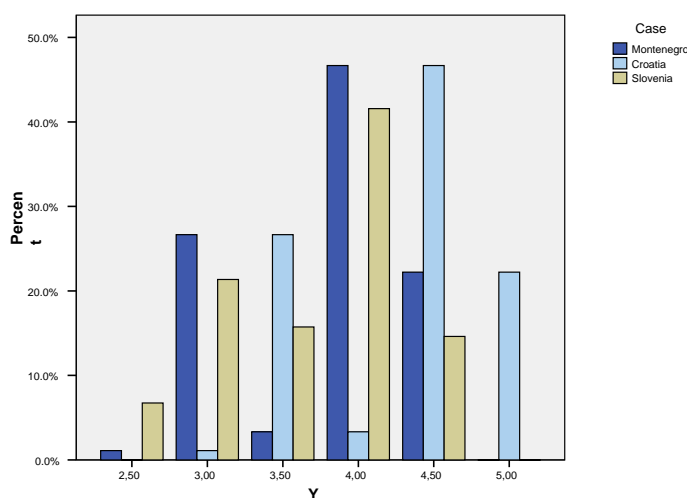
independent variables  $Iv_6$ , and  $Iv_1$  have the greatest influence on the dependent variable. In addition, the smallest impact of the independent variable  $Iv_5$  is noticed in all three countries. The obtained ranking of the influence of independent variables on the dependent variable is shown in *Table 4*. It is noticed that the impact rank is the same in Montenegro and Croatia, while there are exceptions in Slovenia.

**Table 4. Impact rank of independent variables**

Rank	Case 1: MNE	Case 2: CRO	Case 3: SLO
1	$Iv_2$ [4.227778]	$Iv_2$ [4.711111]	$Iv_6$ [4.161111]
2	$Iv_6$ [4.161111]	$Iv_6$ [4.161111]	$Iv_1$ [4.144]
3	$Iv_1$ [3.511]	$Iv_1$ [3.955556]	$Iv_2$ [2.961111]
4	$Iv_3$ [3.094444]	$Iv_4$ [3.666667]	$Iv_3$ [2.85]
5	$Iv_4$ [3.066667]	$Iv_3$ [3.522222]	$Iv_4$ [2.572222]
6	$Iv_5$ [2.788889]	$Iv_5$ [3.383333]	$Iv_5$ [2.08333]

Source: own calculations.

The average values of the dependent variable estimated by the respondents are shown in *Figure 5*, and expressed in %, for each of the analysed categories, i.e. MNE, CRO, and SLO. It is obvious that the highest percentage of respondents (over 40%) from all three countries' rated city brand (4–5).



Source: own calculations.

*Figure 5. The Percentage of Estimates from 1 to 5 in the Set of the Dependent Variable (Y)*

**Table 5. Summary of the model for all countries**

R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2
0.921(a)	0.874	0.718	0.2323

Source: own calculations.

Correlation coefficient values (R) are above 0.9 not only at the level of individual countries (*Table 1*) but also for all the samples (*Table 5*), suggesting strong linear dependence. Coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) indicates that  $\bar{Y}$  determined 87% by selected independent



variables, that means the regression predictions approximate the real data points, and that variation of  $\bar{Y}$  is 87% explained by changes of the selected independent variables.

## Conclusions

The paper presents a theoretical and methodological framework for the quantitative modelling influence of selected factors on the brand strength of the city as a tourist destination in the countries of the Adriatic region. For the modelling purposes, the statistical analysis, and the multiple linear regression method were used.

The functional dependencies between the dependent variable, and the aforementioned independent variables, were established. Based on the conducted analysis, it was found that the prevailing influence of selected factors to the city brand as a tourist destination. Based on the statistical modelling it has been shown that mean expected values of the dependent variable are: 3.81 (MNE), 4.31 (CRO), and 3.67 (SLO). Also, the influence of the rank of independent variables to the dependent variable has been established. According to the above stated, the starting hypothesis in the paper has been fully verified.

From the perspective of the development of cities in the Adriatic region as tourist brands, the findings of this research provide a reliable knowledge that these factors should be taken into account and their impact as the most important in promoting the city as a tourist destination. These factors, based on regression analysis, are significant elements of the city's brand as a tourist destination. They explain 87% of the variation in the dependent variable (coefficient of determination  $R^2 = 0.87$ ). If in the observed countries cities tend to develop as tourist destinations, the understanding of those factors is invaluable.

Despite some limitations, this research makes some notable contributions. First, it fills the void of a lack of research in this area. Second, the impact factor analysis is given with new insights from the previous research. Third, it provides a theoretical framework for further research.

Further research should be carried out in the direction of a deeper exploration of each studied factor. There are significant internal reserves for improving all independent factors in order to achieve the strongest brand of observed cities, especially in Slovenia.

In accordance with the average values of the independent variables in the model used (*Table 4*), it is concluded that in Montenegro and Croatia, the independent variable place has the greatest influence on brand strength. In Slovenia, independent variable potential has had the greatest impact. Moreover, respondents' perceptions showed that the lowest influence of the variable pulse was in all countries (in Montenegro 2.78, in Croatia 3.38, and in Slovenia 2.08).

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## **MIESTO PREKĖS ŽENKLO TURISTAMS KŪRIMAS PASIRINKTOSE ADRIJOS REGIONO ŠALYSE**

**Luka Uskoković**

### **SANTRAUKA**

Straipsnis skirtas aptarti 270 respondentų (gyventojų, turistų, turistinių organizacijų) suvokimo apie miesto prekės ženklo galią, siekiant pritraukti turistus pasirinktose buvusios Jugoslavijos šalyse (Juodkalnijoje, Kroatijoje ir Slovėnijoje), tyrimą. Aktualu įvertinti ne tik miesto prekės ženklą kaip turistų tikslą pasirinktose šalyse, tačiau ir nustatyti šių šalių skirtumus bei išsiaiškinti įtakos veiksnius. Iškelta hipotezė, kad šie šeši veiksniai – buvimas, vieta, reikalavimai, žmonės, nuotaika ir potencialas – tam tikru būdu darė tiesioginę ir dominuojančią įtaką miesto prekės ženklui turistams vystymuisi tiriamose šalyse. Atlikti kokybiniai ir kiekybiniai tyrimai. Pradinę hipotezę visiškai patvirtino linijinė ir kartotinė regresinė analizė. Be to, įrodyta, kad linijinė priklausomybė puikiai paaiškina tirtas funkcines priklausomybes. Nustatyta, kad buvo teisingai įvertinti pagrindiniai nepriklausomi kintamieji (veiksniai), kurie reikšmingai paveikė priklausomą kintamąjį.

*REIKŠMINIAI ŽODŽIAI:* prekės ženklas, miestas kaip turistų tikslas, regresinė analizė, rinkodara.