

## (RE)BRANDING AS A FUNDAMENTAL PREREQUISITE FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF MONTENEGRIN TOURISM

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### ARTICLE INFO

Available online July 2013

Key words:

Brand

Branding

visual identity

verbal identity

Montenegro

### ABSTRACT

Having on mind the fact that the name of the country and its logo and slogan are very important for destination branding and its positioning on the global market, this paper will be focused on the branding system of Montenegro. The main purpose of the paper is to identify main advantages and disadvantages of its branding system in order to create a coherent visual and verbal identity which differentiate Montenegro from the competition and position it as an attractive, unique, recognizable destination on the global market.

The paper is based on the survey research design because of the fact that it represents a very valuable tool for assessing opinions, attitudes and beliefs of not only tourists, but also local residents about the branding system of Montenegro.

The paper is based on the mixed research methods which involve both –collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data.

The paper represents mixed research approach which includes mixing quantitative and qualitative approaches in an interactive way at all stages of the investigation.

The main findings of the paper refer to the identification of the main associations on brand “wild beauty” and highlighting of its main advantages and disadvantages in order to point out the necessity of rebranding system of Montenegro.

The survey includes some topics about branding system of Montenegro which have never been carried in Montenegro before.

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### Introduction

WTTC suggest that Montenegro will enjoy annual growth in visitor exports of around 9.4% which will put it on the second position of WTTCs Global League Table Rankings and on the first position comparing to its regional competitors. It also predicts that:

- The contribution of Travel & Tourism to Gross Domestic Product is expected to rise from 20.8% in 2009 to 25.6% by 2019.
- The contribution of the Travel & Tourism economy to employment is expected to rise from 29,340 jobs in 2009, 17.8% of total employment or 1 in every 5.6 jobs to 41,320 jobs, 23.0% of total employment or 1 in every 4.3 jobs by 2019.
- Real GDP growth for Travel & Tourism economy is expected to be 0.7% in 2009 and to average 6.2% per annum over the coming 10 years.
- Export earnings from international visitors and tourism goods are expected to generate 39.6% of total exports in 2009, growing (nominal terms) to 50.1% of total) in 2019.

Having on mind all these facts, it is clear that tourism sector holds a key position in the overall economy of Montenegro, but it is also clear that the destination itself faces with some serious problems especially in

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terms of branding, regional development, seasonality, development of new products and markets and improvement of the existing ones and they these issues should be used as the starting point of the future development of tourism in Montenegro. In that sense, the branding of the destination itself will be the main issue of this paper.

## **1. Branding of tourist destination**

Simply defined, a brand is “a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of the competition” (Kotler and Gertner, 2002: 4-5). Country branding combines visual communication and marketing techniques to promote a country. As in the branding of commercial goods and services, specific rules govern the positioning of the brand, the way its reputation is built, how customer preferences are addressed and loyalty is achieved, and how the brand is managed (Marazza, Antonio). Branding not only helps countries to express its nature and beauty, to emphasize the main competitive advantages and to send key messages to customers, but also to potential tourists to make a clear image of the destination itself.

By analyzing slogans of the different tourism destinations, it may be concluded that most of them are connected with *nature* (such as Montenegro- *Wild Beauty*, Switzerland- *Get Natural* etc), *weather* (Spain- *Everything Under the Sun*, Ethiopia- *13 Months of Sunshine* etc), *geographical position* (Nigeria- *The Hearth of Africa*, Andorra- *The Pyrenean Country*etc), *treasures* (Cambodia- *A World of Treasures*etc), *food* (India- *We Add Spice to Your Life*, Costa Rica- *No Artificial Ingredients* etc), *discovery* (Canada- *Keep Exploring*, Kenya- *Experience a Different Safari Every Day* etc), *love* (Hungary- *A Love for Life*, Albania- *A New Mediterranean Love* etc), personal messages ( Israel- *No One Belongs Here More Than You*, Romania- *Come As a Tourist, Leave As a Friend...* etc) and so on.

The country logos usually include the country name and some other graphics that range from something *abstract* (such as The Bahamas, Brazil, Germany, Malta, Seychelles Islands, Slovenia etc) to something *concrete* such as *sun* (Cyprus, Egypt, Maldives, Spain etc), *water* (Argentina, Greece, The British Virgin Islands etc), *landscape* (Bosnia Herzegovina, Iceland, San Marino etc), *animal* (Australia, Barbados, Slovakia etc), *plant* (Albania, Costa Rica, England, Holland, Turkey etc), *heart* (Bosnia & Herzegovina, Denmark, Dubai, Hungary, Serbia, Slovenia etc), *flag* (Austria, Cuba, Czech Republic, Monaco etc), *country name* (Croatia, India, Israel, Italy etc) and so on.

The process of successful branding should imply the perfect synergy between verbal and visual elements which will emphasize the main competitive advantages of the destination as well as to create a unique and recognizable identity of the destination which will represent its competitive advantages on the global market.

## **2. Brand identity of Montenegro**

### **2.1. The research of branding of Montenegro**

#### **2.1.1. The main goal and objectives of research**

The main goal of this research is to understand and describe the beliefs, attitudes, needs, expectations and motivations of tourists and local people in Montenegro regarding to the existing brand “wild beauty” in order to improve the satisfaction of the tourists and residents as well as the quality of tourism in Montenegro itself.

The main objectives of the survey are:

- to obtain relevant information about the profile of visitors in Montenegro
- to identify the main competitive advantages of Montenegro
- to identify beliefs and attitudes of tourists and local residents about the brand “wild beauty”
- to identify the main strengths and weakness of the existing brand
- to suggest more appropriate solutions for the future branding of Montenegro

### **2.1.2. The description of the research and methodology**

The research was carried out from June to September 2012. The questionnaire has 31 questions and is divided into three parts. This paper is based on the analyze of the third part of the questionnaire which refer to the identification of the main advantages and disadvantages of Montenegro, as well as the beliefs and attitude of local tourists about the brand "wild beauty".

The surveys were conducted in English, Russian, Montenegrin/ Serbian and Albanian by interviewing 285 tourists in twelve municipalities in Montenegro (Budva, Kotor, Tivat, Herceg Novi, Bar, Ulcinj, Žabljak, Kolašin, Plav, Plužine, Podgorica and Cetinje). The respondents were randomly selected among all visitors. All surveyors were provided the same detailed instructions on how to identify respondents and conduct interviews.

### **2.1.3. The main characteristics of respondents**

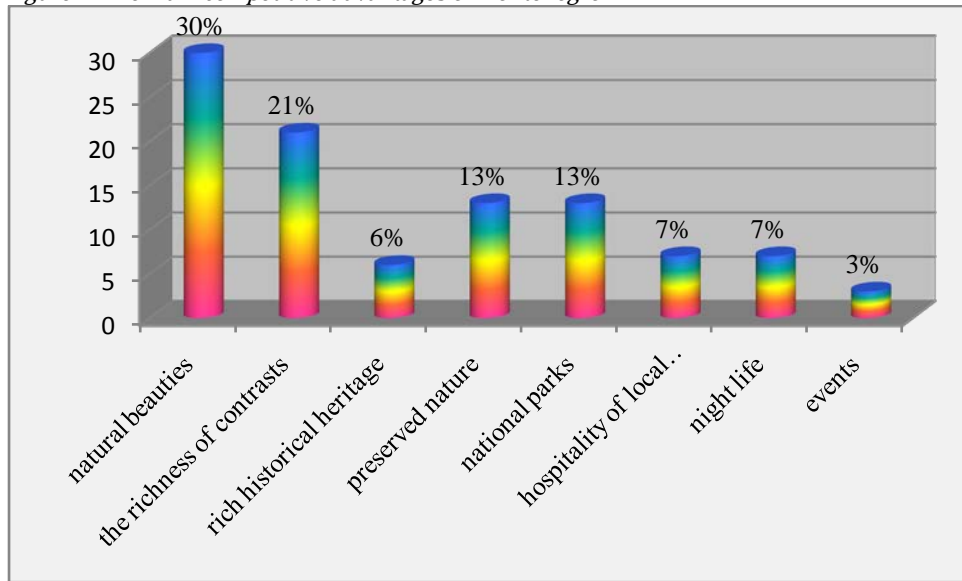
The subjects of research have the following characteristics:

- 52% of respondents are male and 48% female
- 25% of respondents are domestic tourists, 25% are from neighboring countries (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania) and 50% are from other countries. It is clear that the structure of respondents does not match the structure of arrivals in the last years, but it was led by the fact that Montenegro's international arrivals have positive trend, with tendency of future growth. Because of that, special accent in the research is put on the tourists from EU and some other markets such as the USA, China etc.
- 74% of respondents were interviewed in the South, 21% in the North and 5% in Central part of Montenegro. The structure of respondents does not match the share of arrivals in last years, because of the fact that the South region generates more that 95% share of arrivals, but it is based on the fact that future development of tourism should be based on diversification and usage of the huge potential of Northern region. That explains the fact that 21% of respondents are interviewed in the municipalities in the North. It is also important to point out that more than 5% of people were interviewed in Central part of Montenegro (especially in Cetinje), but these tourists are usually day-trippers who are stopping en route to or from the coast and the capital or the mountains.
- In the South part of Montenegro, 46% of respondents are international tourists, 28% are tourists from neighboring countries and 26% are domestic tourists. In the Northern region, 62% of respondents are international, 23% are domestic tourists and 15% are from neighboring countries. Regarding to the Central part of Montenegro, 85% are international tourist and 15% are tourists from neighboring countries.
- 7% of tourists are from 15 to 19, 26% from 20 to 29, 26% from 30 to 39, 19% from 40 to 49, 15% from 50 to 59 and 7% are more than 60 years old;
- The majority of tourists have high school diploma (40%) or university degree (40%), 18% have higher school diploma and 1% finished primary school;
- 71% are employed, 13% are students, 9% are pensioners and 7% are unemployed.
- 46% have average monthly income, 20% above the average, 15% significantly above the average, 11% below the average and 8% significantly below the average of their country.
- 74% of tourists are situated in the South, 21% in the North and 5% in the Central part of Montenegro

### **2.1.4. Key results of the research**

When asked to identify the main advantages of the destination itself, most respondents identified natural beauties, richness of contrasts, preserved nature and national parks (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The main competitive advantages of Montenegro

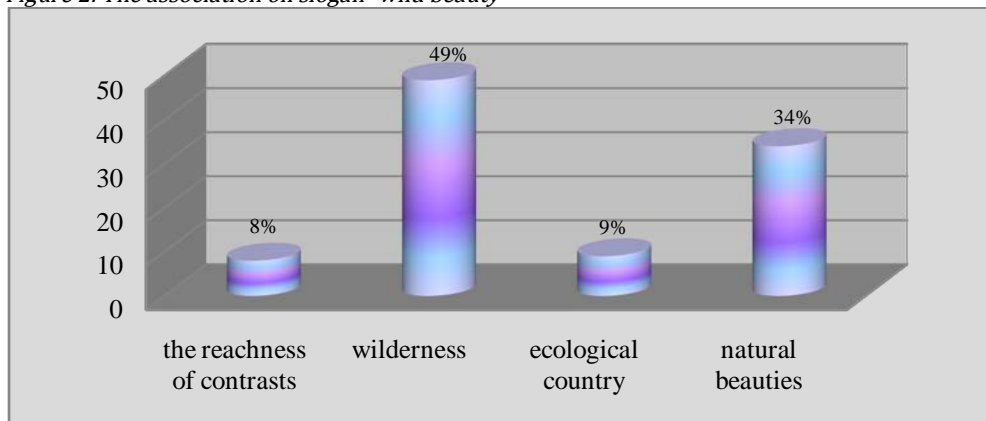


It is interesting to mention that all international tourists identified natural beauties and the richness of contrasts, while a large number of them identified preserved nature and national parks as the third competitive advantage of Montenegro. Domestic tourists and tourists from neighboring countries also identified rich cultural heritage and hospitality of local people, which was not recognized as competitive advantage by international tourists.

Having on mind the fact that brand should emphasize the main competitive advantages of the destination, the questionnaire also researched the beliefs and attitudes of tourists and local residents about the association on “wild beauty” in order to discover if the brand is appropriately connected with the main competitive advantages of the destination itself.

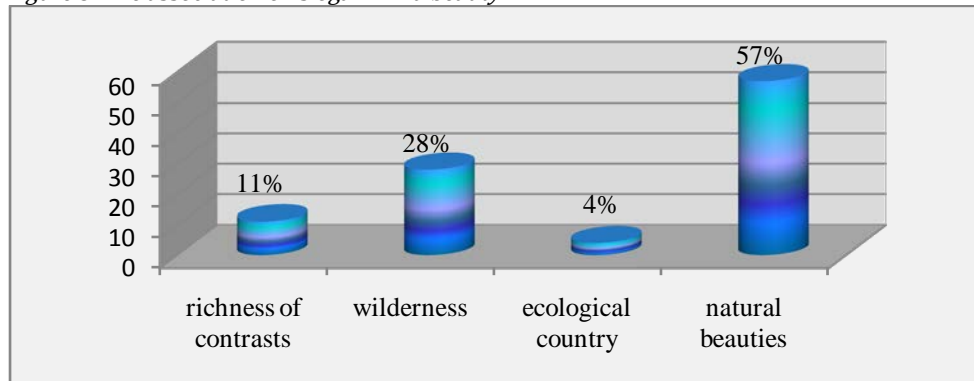
When asked about association on “wild beauty” most of the respondents declared that this slogan associates them on wilderness and natural beauties (Figure 2).

Figure 2: The association on slogan “wild beauty”



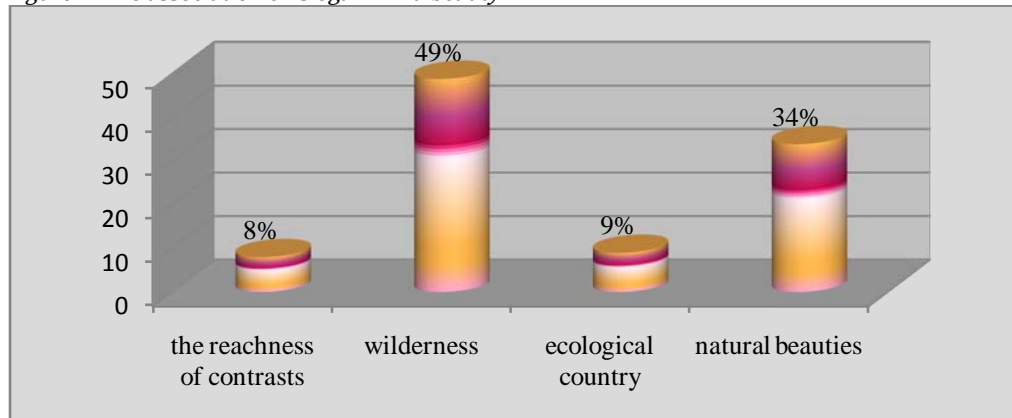
Domestic tourists usually associate “wild beauty” with natural beauties and wilderness (Figure 3).

Figure 3: The association on slogan “wild beauty”



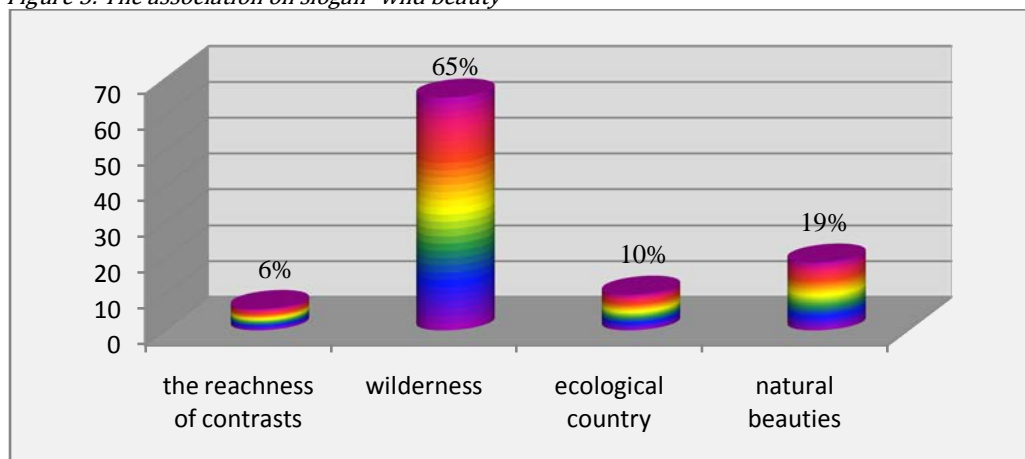
Tourists from neighboring countries usually connect “wild beauty” with wilderness and natural beauties (Figure 4)

Figure 4: The association on slogan “wild beauty”



When asked about the association on slogan “wild beauty” international tourists mostly identified wilderness as the main association (Figure 5).

Figure 5: The association on slogan “wild beauty”



**2.1.5. SWOT analyze of the brand “wild beauty”**

It is the fact that brand “wild beauty” has a numerous advantages regarding to visual and verbal identity, but it is concerning that 65% of international tourists connect “wild beauty” with wilderness which may lead to the conclusion that mentioned slogan does not represent the real nature of tourism products nor it highlights their main competitive advantages (Figure 6)

Figure 6: SWOT analyze of the brand “wild beauty”

| STRENGTHS  | WEAKNESSES  |
|--|---|
| strong visual identity   | inappropriate verbal identity   |
| visual association to diversity with an accent to the most important elements of tourist offer | message does not identify the main competitive advantages of the destination itself                       |
| clear and effective message  | disharmony between visual and verbal identity   |
| OPPORTUNITIES  | TREATS  |
| the government commitment to future touristic development                                      | the lack of agreement in interpreting and promoting the country’s diverse attractions to foreign visitors |
| the increase of the awareness of the importance of marketing - management strategies           | unwillingness of all stakeholders in tourism to improve tourist offer                                     |
| the awareness of the importance of branding process  | lack of innovation and willingness to respond challenges  |

Something that is for sure one of the great advantages of brand “wild beauty” is it visual identity (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Visual identity of brand “wild beauty”



The name of the destination is the part of the visual identity and is presented by natural language of colors – different nuances of blue are used in order to represent Adriatic sea, lakes, streams and rocks, green is used in order to present rich vegetation and preserved nature, golden for sandy beaches and dark blue and black for high rocky mountains. Visual elements also include a supporting character in form of underlining which stretches from mountains to bays, beaches and sea. The visual identity offers a sense of discovery in a manner that is simultaneously wild, romantic, impressive and personally challenging, but still simple and pleasant.

Opposite to the visual, a verbal identity is a little bit questionable. The slogan “wild beauty” it, without any doubt, clear and impressive, but it is the fact that the key message does not represent the main competitive advantages of Montenegro, which was clearly shown by the results of the research. Having on mind the fact that not only tourists, but also local residents identified natural beauties and the richness of contrasts as the main advantages of Montenegro and that they mostly associate slogan “wild beauty” with wilderness, it seems that there is a large disharmony between visual and verbal identity of the brand itself, as well as a huge misbalance between the main competitive advantages of Montenegro and the slogan “wild beauty”.

In other words, we suggest that the slogan should be based on main competitive advantages of tourism destination such as the richness of contrast, the diversity of natural and cultural resources etc. In that sense, we believe that slogans “experience diversity”, “enjoy diversity”, “pearl of Mediterranean”, “the place where beauty lives” or simply “the land of contrasts” would be more appropriate and more in accordance with the nature of tourism products of Montenegro.

## Conclusion

The results of the research clearly show that not only tourists, but also local residents perfectly identify the main competitive advantages of Montenegro. Respecting the fact that the process of successful branding implies the perfect synergy between verbal and visual elements which will emphasize the main competitive advantages of the destination, as well as the crucial fact that it should create its unique and recognizable image on the global market, it looks like that the brand "wild beauty" does meet mentioned requirements. In that sense, rebranding should be the starting point and the corner stone of the future strategy of positioning of Montenegro as an attractive, unique, desired, whole year destination with a recognizable image on the global market.

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