

MARKETING URBAN DESTINATIONS THROUGH FESTIVALS

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Abstract

Within the context of enormous competition on the international tourist market, destination branding is getting an increasing importance as a way to attract more tourists and visitors. There is an overall trend away from product features towards lifestyle or value systems which reveals that the consumer of today makes choices based on whether or not a product fits into her or his lifestyle and whether a destination represents a desirable tourist experience. After theoretical literature review on brand identity, the results of a festival visitors' opinion survey about "Include the city" festival's contribution to the brand identity of Burgas city are discussed. The survey methodology includes descriptive statistics, Z-score method in order to classify in groups visitor's opinion as well as content analysis of visitors' opinion. Three research hypotheses are checked and suggestions about the festival's marketing contribution in three aspects to the brand identity extension of urban destination Burgas are presented.

Key words: brand identity extension, cognitive and affective attitude components

JEL Classification: M31, M39

I. INTRODUCTION

Competition for the resources, for business relocation, for foreign investment, for visitors even residents is evident in today's world (Kotler et al, 1999). Recent studies predict that the level of competition may increase even further, thus making it more difficult for firms to grow and to increase their profits. Within the context of enormous competition on the international tourist market, destination branding is getting an increasing importance as a way to attract more tourists and visitors. Many studies report that destination image may be critical to favorably positioning a destination in relation to its competitors (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; Baloglu and McCleary 1999a; Laws, 1995; Mayo and Jarvis, 1981; Stringer, 1984).

Urban destinations throughout the world are shifting the focus towards city branding as part of their marketing strategy and are increasingly importing the concept and techniques of product and corporate branding. This process has deep roots in the shift from industrial economy to service economy when many traditional urban economic activities declined or disappeared and later in the fiscal and economic crisis in cities across Europe and North America. In combination, these forces provoked the emergence of a new "entrepreneurial" (Harvey, 1989) style of local economic development in which image promotion was privileged as being central by planners and politicians (Hannigan, 2003) and I would say regional marketers.

Local governments turned to businesslike strategies and marketing approaches and techniques to overcome the deficit of local and regional development ideas and strategies.

Although the conventional marketing process and the city marketing process may look similar, they have crucial differences. While a company may have the choice of developing a completely new product focused on what consumers are desiring and demanding, this is not possible for towns, cities and holiday resorts which physical product already exists. Fortunately the urban destination product can be developed and enriched through new attractions and events. This all happens on the third product level- the augmented product according to the Levitt's concept of product structure (Levitt, 1981) The events including festivals can extend both the product and the brand of the urban city. According to Keeley (1992) "there is an overall trend away from product attributes towards lifestyle or value systems." In addition, the consumer of today makes choices based on whether or not a product fits into her or his lifestyle; whether it represents an exciting new concept - a desirable experience (Schmitt and Simonson, 1997). And if the festivals fit to their experience expectations and values, they tend to choose this particular urban destination.

The other positive role which the festivals can play for the city destinations is the opportunity which they provide for season extension which is a huge problem of the tourism industry in Bulgaria where there are 2 short seasons- summer season in the Black sea resorts and winter season in the skiing resorts. Burgas as a city on the Black sea coast has short tourist season-

3 summer months and needs augmented through events product and stronger branding as festival city in order to extend its tourist season. Cultural events- festivals, concerts, arts exhibition can provide additional benefits to the visitors which they lack in their usual life. Visiting a city might “provide tourists with entertainment options and the benefit of excitement not found in their everyday lives. Tourists may also visit a city and attend a cultural performance to receive the benefit of a quality arts experience that is not available to them at home” (Kolb, 2006) Such events have been used with great success in many rural and urban areas as a means to attract visitors and tourists to regions and cities that traditionally have a seasonal tourist appeal. According to Getz (1997) events have the potential to generate a vast amount of tourism when they cater to out of-region visitors, grants, or sponsorships, of direct or indirect intent. Festivals and other cultural events are considered today to contribute significantly to the cultural and economic development of destinations.

Successful festivals build the society’s cultural confidence and image of elf-worth and identity. In this way it creates a synergistic relationship between the tourism industry and community development (Nurse, 2001). In this meaning the festivals have economic, social and marketing impact and consequences for the urban destinations.

The article discusses the problem for city destination branding through festivals but the stress is on local and other visitors’ opinion about the festival contribution to the brand identity of the city of Burgas. Brands are generally considered to be a marketer’s main tool to creating product differentiation. Brands differentiate products and they represent a promise of social and emotional value to users. They have personality and they speak to the user (Kotler and Gertner, 2002). Destination branding is a difficult and complex process and for this reason the first article part discusses the different views about brand identity, brand structure and how the visitor’s opinion and attitude fit to the branding concept. The analytical part of the paper is based on primary data from a survey with a random sample of 554 local people and visitors about their awareness of Burgas festival “Include the city” and their opinion about the different types of festival’s contribution to the brand image of Burgas as a festival destination. The survey is studying also the overall attitudes of the visitors toward the festival and its importance. The last part of the paper contains conclusions and suggestions about possible use of the survey output in the process of city brand identity expansion and brand strengthening through festivals and other events which are matching the city brand identity and values.

II. BRAND IDENTITY AND CITY DESTINATION

It is well known, that cities as destinations offer a complex product consisting of natural scenery, architecture, culture, attractions, services, catering facilities, people etc. Many cities have similar profile in terms of natural resources, services and buildings but they need to achieve differentiation from their competitors and this is not an easy task. The solution of this marketing problem is building a strong destination brand based on destination core and additional destination advantages. In this regard, the use of cultural heritage as a source of a sustainable competitive advantage for the destination has been well researched and described (Picard, 1997; Urry, 2001; Richards, 2002; Hughes & Allen, 2005; Su & Lin, 2014). Cultural heritage including a contemporary cultural production is in fact playing an even greater role in the process of creating a unique image of a tourism destination (Tomljenovic & Kunst, 2014) which in fact supports brand building. For the consumer brands reduce search costs (Biswas, 1992), minimize perceived risks (Berthon, Hulbert and Pitt, 1999), indicate high quality (Erdem, 1998), and satisfy consumers’ functional and emotional needs (Bhat and Reddy, 1998). Having in mind that tourists are consumers of destination’s products and building a strong destination brand can help tourists to find a tourist destination on reduced costs that matches better their complex needs- rational and emotional. Hanningan (2003) adds that branding has 3 interrelated dimensions. First, it requires instant recognition, hence the emphasis on “synergies” with the sports and entertainment industries; second, successfully branded leisure spaces play on our desire for both comfort and certainly, the attributes of the theme parks. Finally branded environments provide a point of identification for consumers in an increasingly crowded market place.

Academic research attention towards destination branding has only been reported since the late 1990s but using a brand when promoting a city usually has a number of advantages. It can be, first copyrighted, which means that it will remain unique to the city (Kolb, Bonita M. 2006). A strong brand can differentiate a product from its competitors (Lim K. & O’Cass, 2001) as brand elements, sometimes called brand identities, are those trademark able devices that serve to identify and differentiate the brand. One key to successful brand-building is to understand how to develop a brand identity – to know what the brand stands for and to effectively express that identity (Aaker, 1996). This is important for the city destinations too and can minimize perceived risks (Berthon et al.,1999) . When used over time, the brand achieves a role of reminding the potential tourist of all the benefits the city has to offer.

An increasing number of researchers discuss and support the view that brand identity is a

multidimensional construct consisting of 2 to 5 different dimensions: according to Aaker the brand has a core and expanded identity (Aaker, 1991). Core identity broadly focuses on product attributes, service, product performance and user profile. Extended identity is woven around brand identity elements organized into cohesive and meaningful groups that provide brand texture and completeness, and focuses on brand personality, relationship, and strong symbol association (Ghodeswar, 2008).

Kapferer (1992) has emphasized brand as an identity structure with six integrated facets of culture, personality, self-projection, physique, reflection, and relationship. Whilst some of these elements overlap with other definitions (e.g. personality and image), Kapferer's contribution is to stress the importance of the brand as more than the sum of parts. Other authors stress on the idea that the brand identity reveals what is the brand's essence and what makes it unique (Melin, 1999). The uniqueness of the brand is often based on the historical, social and cultural values of the host community (Boniface and Fowler, 1993; Hall, 1999; Lanfant, 1995; Oakes, 1993; Richards, 1996). Pike argues that the brand identity reflects the self-image (Pike, 2004), the desired image which is to be communicated to the potential consumers while the brand image is the really perceived by the consumers image of the given brand. According to Balmer's model which represents his view about the corporate identity but which can be applied for destination brand identity as well, the main elements in the brand identity analysis are 3: soul representing the main brand values and the organizational culture, thought, and voice (Balmer, 2001).

In their brand model, Heylen et al. (1995) insist that brand personality and brand identity are two antecedents of brand image. In fact, this conceptualization contrasts with Kapferer's (1997) identity prism, in which personality and self image are seen as antecedents of brand identity, along with physical, reflection, relationship and culture dimensions. Thus, the lack of theoretical frameworks has resulted in much confusion, and this impedes the establishment of managerial implications.

As mentioned above academic studies towards destination branding has been reported since the late 1990s. Ritchie and Ritchie (1998) describe tourism destination brand as something- name, symbol, logo etc. that both identifies and differentiates the destination; furthermore, it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination. According to Morgan, Pritchard and Pride (2004) when it comes to branding, perhaps the most difficult task facing any destination is the quest for true differentiation. By definition, city marketing plans and strategies have a goal to emphasize the attractive elements of the destination while simultaneously diverting attention from less interesting place features. The festival, with its connotations of sociability, playfulness, joviality and community

provides a ready-made set of positive images on which to base a reconstruction of a less than perfect city image (Quinn, 2005). The destination brand needs periodic refreshment as well through change of its logo, slogan and /or the association set in order for potential tourists to see more and different reasons to (re)visit it (Ivanov, Illum & Liang, 2010). According to Tomic and Bozic (2015) destination attractiveness is ranked as the second most popular factor for visit of urban destinations by young people. Festival visitors look for unforgettable and pleasant memories and experience and in this sense they are consumers of specific products- festival performances in the context of experience marketing of the city. Being participants in some of the festival performances they look like in their resort experience "for affective memories to create a holistic personal experience" (Ali, Hussain & Omar, 2016). Reasonably the topic of destination image and branding continues to enjoy a growing scientific attention (Gartner, 1989,1993; Gallanza, Gil & Calderon, 2002; Nadeau, Heslop, O'Reilly & Luk, 2008; White, 2004; Yuksel & Akgul, 2007; Ivanov & Liang, 2010; Anastassova, 2011) but at the same time there are not much studies what is the visitor's opinion about the festivals' contribution to the destination brand identity of the city.

The authors of the paper support the Aaker's concept that the brand has a core and expanded identity (Aaker, 1991). They believe that core identity is the central, timeless essence of the brand that remains constant and suggest that *the brand core of Burgas city is the historical and cultural heritage* but they also suggest that festivals can add value to the city brand and can expand the brand identity through their values and visitor's profile. Due to these assumptions we investigate and analyse the local population's and visitors' opinion about one particular festival's contribution to the brand identity which is the basis for building a stronger brand of Burgas as cultural destination.

The research aims are:

- To survey and analyze the local population's and visitor's overall attitude toward the festival "Include the city" and to analyze the differences in their attitude with regard to their socio-demographic characteristics.
- To investigate and analyze the cognitive and affective components of the respondent's attitude toward the festival and to analyze the differences in the attitude of the various socio-demographic groups.
- To investigate and analyze local and other festival visitors' opinion about the festival contribution to the brand image of the city.
- To draw conclusions about the role and importance of the festival for the brand identity expansion of Burgas city and the opportunities for brand image strengthening.

III.METHODOLOGY

The study is based on primary data from a survey with a random sample of 554 local and other visitors about their attitude the Burgas festival “Include the city” and about the festival’s contribution to the brand identity of Burgas city as festival destination. Of 1000 questionnaires that were distributed to a random sample of local people and visitors 554 filled-in questionnaires were returned representing a response rate of 55 per cent.

The attitude of the festival visitors- local and other- in our model has two components: cognitive and affective. The cognitive component consists of beliefs and knowledge about the object- in this case the festival. We use three five-point Likert scale items/questions to measure this component:

1. Knowledge about festival (overall)
2. Knowledge about events
3. Subjective evaluation of knowledge

The affective component in our model is emotional reaction toward the object and the affective component is measured by two five-point Likert scale items:

1. Feelings about Festival (overall satisfaction)
2. Feelings about specific attributes.

The hypotheses of the research are:

Hypothesis 1: The main hypothesis states that the expectations are for positive local people’s overall attitude toward the festival “Include the city”.

Hypothesis 2: The expectations are that the group of respondents with moderate high awareness of the festival is more than the half of the respondents.

Hypothesis 3: The majority of the respondents with positive feelings to the festival are relatively young people- under 40 and predominantly with higher than secondary education level.

The statistical methods that have been implemented are mainly descriptive- frequencies, cross tabulation but correlation analysis as well for identifying the impact of some variables on the local and other visitors’ opinion about the festival’s contribution to the brand image of the city destination. A content analysis of an open-ended question on respondents’ opinion about the festival’s contribution to the city brand image is conducted. Researchers regard content analysis as a flexible method for analyzing text data (Cavanagh, 1997). Content analysis describes a family of analytic approaches ranging from impressionistic, intuitive, interpretive analyses to systematic, strict textual analyses (Rosengren, 1981). Current applications of content analysis show three distinct approaches: conventional, directed, or summative. All three approaches are used to interpret meaning from the content of text data and, hence, adhere to the naturalistic paradigm (Hsie, Hsin-Fang & Shannon, 2005). In this case we implement the summative approach of content analysis which involves counting and comparisons, usually of

keywords or content, followed by the interpretation of the underlying context (Hsie, Hsin-Fang and Shannon, opp.cit.).

For the purposes of the survey a Z-score method was implemented in order to classify in groups visitor’s opinion. Z-score represents the number of standard deviation units above or below the mean, so that, e.g. a Z-score of 2 refers to a value that is 2 SD above the mean. Z-score and percentiles have a 1 or 1 equivalence in a normal distribution; any percentile can be translated to a Z-score and vice versa (Flegal & Ogden, 2011).

IV.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As far as the attitude of the respondents to the festival concerns it is possible to determine 3 different categories (positive, neutral and negative) based on the standard deviation data. The cognitive component of the respondent’s attitude measured by 3 Likert scale questions is transformed in a complex indicator and its Z-scores are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Z-score: Awareness/Information about the festival (Cognitive component)

Z-score	Frequency	Percent
-3.24492	17	3.2
-2.12547	16	3.0
-1.00603	92	17.3
.11341	287	53.8
1.23286	121	22.7
Total	533	100.0

The Z-score values are grouped in 3 categories: 1. Respondents who don’t know nothing about the festival. 2. Respondents who have a partial awareness of the festival. 3. Respondents who are well aware of the festival and its events. The results reveal that the group of respondents who are well informed about the festival is nearly one third of the sample - 31.2%, but at the same time the group with a partial awareness of the festival is bigger - 45.3% (Table 2).

Table 2: Awareness about the festival (Cognitive component) – Groups

Groups	Frequency	Percent
Respondents who don’t know nothing about the festival	130	23.5
Respondents who have a partial awareness of the festival	251	45.3
Respondents who are well aware of the festival and its events	173	31.2
Total	554	100.0

The correlation analysis reveals that there is no correlation between the age and the visitor’s awareness

about the festival and its events but the majority of the respondents which are well aware of the festival appeal and events are young people - between 25 and 35 years old. As far as the educational status concerns the most informed visitors are with college and university education - nearly 47% of this visitor's group.

The emotional component in the attitude model - the feelings toward the festival are classified in three groups too: 1. Negative, 2. Neutral, and 3. Positive feelings. The Z-scores of the transformed 2 Likert scale questions are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Z-score: Perception of the festival (Emotional component)

Z-score	Frequency	Percent
-1.33313	130	23.6
-.16875	251	45.5
.99563	132	23.9
2.16001	39	7.1
Total	552	100.0

According to the survey results the biggest is the group of respondents who are indifferent to the festival which means they are showing a neutral emotions (51.8%). The group with positive emotional incline is second biggest (25.6%). According to the survey data the majority of the visitors who experience positive feelings toward the festival belong to the younger age groups - 20-24 and 24-29 years.

Table 4: Perception of the festival (Emotional component) – Groups

Groups	Frequency	Percent
Negative	125	22.6
Neutral	287	51.8
Positive	142	25.6
Total	554	100.0

The survey data about the overall attitude toward the festival are classified in three groups depending on the valence of the attitude: negative, neutral and positive. As seen from Table 3 the majority of the respondents belong both to the group with positive attitude (35.2%) and to the group with neutral overall attitude (40.1%) which is to some extent a good basis for including the festival concept in the expanded brand identity.

Table 5: Attitude toward the festival – Groups

Groups	Frequency	Percent
negative	137	24.7
Neutral	222	40.1
positive	195	35.2
Total	554	100.0

The data obtained from the survey do not point out significant differences between the local people's attitude toward the festival and the attitude of the other festival visitors. For the purposes of the research a

content analysis was conducted on open-ended question about the contribution of the festival "Include the city" to the brand image of Burgas city. The results reveal that according to the visitors the main contribution is the increased attractiveness of the city - 26%, 18.2 % of the respondents are on the opinion that the festival contributes to the popularity and brand image differentiation from other cities and 16.4% of the respondents think that the festival contributes to the brand image with the fact that it is attracting mainly young, creative and open-minded people.

Table 6: Contribution to the city image

Contribution elements	Frequency	Percent
brings emotions	19	3.4
city development	27	4.9
brand differentiation	101	18.2
adds culture	41	7.3
enhances city attractiveness	144	26.0
attracts young, creative people	91	16.4

The content analysis reveals that the majority of the respondents who belong to the first and second group - that festival contributes to the city attractiveness and brand image differentiation- are people who are well aware of the festival and who have positive emotions toward the festival. With regard to the age groups of these respondents they are mainly from the age interval between 20 and 40 years.

V.CONCLUSION AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

As mentioned in the first part of the paper events including festivals can offer an opportunity for cities to create visitors and to make them loyal to the destination. An attractive festival can be the reason for first time visitors to discover a destination.

The data obtained from the survey point out that relatively big part of the visitors experience positive feelings toward the Burgas festival "Include the city" and are very satisfied with the festival and its various events. The majority of them are young people – between 20 and 29 years old and the satisfaction with the festival can create repeat visits in the next years. Except that the content analysis reveals that the local and other visitors are on the opinion that the festival contributes to the brand image in three main aspects: *it enhances city attractiveness, attracts young visitors and supports brand differentiation of the city as a festival destination.*

These conclusions can become the basis for brand identity expansion in addition to the brand core- the historical and cultural heritage of Burgas. The festival event "Include the city" can contribute to the tourism potential in the pre-season period of this Black

Sea destination. Apart from nature, landscape, heritage, other element that can provide local distinction in the globalised world is the cultural events calendar of the local management. The city has other successful festivals but “Include the city” festival is a special one with its philosophy and messages. It is necessary to involve in the city branding process the local population by stimulating the local people to become promoters of the festival through their Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest and other profiles in social media. This will attract other visitors from their referral groups and related interest groups. For this reason there is a need for opening in the municipal management structure of Burgas and the other Bulgarian city destinations a position of brand manager who will be responsible for strengthening the destination brand- its core and the brand expansion.

If the survey outputs will be incorporated in the city branding strategy which should be part of the destination marketing strategy targeted to the younger city visitors, it can create added value to the brand identity and contribute to the building of unique position of the city on the cultural tourism market.

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