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Effectiveness of Destination Branding. The Example of National Tourism Organizations

Mirosław MARCZAK
WSB University in Gdansk, Poland
mmarczak@wsb.gda.pl

Jacek BORZYSZKOWSKI
WSB University in Gdansk, Poland
jborzyszkowski@wsb.gda.pl

Abstract:

Branding is considered to be the most effective way to improve the quality of operations undertaken in numerous sectors of economy. It also plays an important role in creating images of many tourist destinations. National Tourism Organizations (NTOs) are responsible for that task in particular countries. The main aim of the article is an attempt at providing a simplified evaluation of effectiveness related to operations (or operation fields) undertaken by NTOs in the process of brand management at the national level, especially activities undertaken in favor of brand development. The main effectiveness measure is a medium-term rate of the change in the number of tourist visits in countries where the analyzed NTOs were operating in the years of 2007-2017. The analysis includes 81 organizations. The basic tool applied for the research is a questionnaire form and the whole process of data collection, data verification and the comparative statistical analysis is completed in six stages. The research indicates the significant role of branding among the operations undertaken by the analyzed organization. It also indicates the fact that branding is an efficient and indispensable element in the process of destination brand management at the national level. The results of the research confirm the fact that the analyzed organizations consider branding as one of their most effective activities aimed at encouraging the highest number of foreign tourists to visit their countries.

Keywords: effectiveness; branding; national tourism organizations; tourism destinations.

JEL Classification: L83; Z33.

Introduction

Although the notion of branding has been functioning for a relatively short period in the literature of the subject, branding has been justly recognized as a very effective way to obtain a possible improvement of quality, and to increase the rank and effectiveness of the selected tourist sectors (Marczak 2018a). Over the last two decades, branding has become an important element forming a marketing approach which consists in cooperation of many interested parties who should collaborate in order to achieve their intended results (Green 2005).

Generally, the assumptions of branding come down to activities undertaken to develop broadly understood awareness and familiarity with a brand in recipients' minds, including fixing a positive brand image in their memories. Modern destination branding is a multi-directional operation. It refers to numerous aspects related to the functioning of modern tourist destinations. In the process of destination brand management at the national level, branding performs various functions, the simultaneous implementation of which may contribute to the effective tourist destination management. It should be also emphasized that according to numerous modern

NTOs, branding has become not only a tool to develop brand awareness in recipients' minds but also a kind of operation philosophy followed by destination managers. The aim of such a philosophy is to achieve a desired level of destination brand awareness and brand familiarity and fixing them in recipients' minds through the stimulation of a positive brand image in which the unique attributes of a particular destination are applied (Marczak 2018b). According to A. Tan (2008), who shares this opinion, branding comes as a combination of philosophy related to destination brand management and methods of its implementation. The key role in that process is played by the quality of all the undertaken operations, which is directly translated into the value of the destination brand, and consequently, into the level of tourists' satisfaction from their visits in the particular places (Marczak 2019).

Furthermore, branding performs an important role in the development of competitive destinations. Generally, some particular entities, which are directly involved into tourism marketing of the destination country, are responsible for these are the tasks. It is assumed that in most countries such entities are National Tourism Organizations (NTOs) (Borzyszkowski and Marczak 2009). These are the following:

▪ organizations of public-private cooperation which are considerably funded by the State; they are mainly responsible for tourism marketing of the destination country and for other operational functions, including development of tourism products, tourist information (Borzyszkowski 2015);

▪ entities generally responsible for marketing of the country as a tourist destination (Pike 2008);

▪ entities responsible for formulation and implementation of the national tourism policy (Jayapalan 2001);

▪ public organizations funded by the government; most of their operations are undertaken on non-commercial basis (Witt, Broke and Buckley 2013).

Generally, it has been assumed that NTO-type organizations are responsible for the promotion of particular countries as attractive tourist destinations, whereas National Tourism Administrations (NTAs) take responsibility for the definition of the main lines for tourism policy and their implementation in their countries.

The main aim of the article is an attempt at providing a simplified evaluation of effectiveness related to operations (operation fields) undertaken by NTOs in the process of brand management at the national level, particularly operations undertaken in favor of brand development. In the article, there are two main research problems defined. They are formulated as the following questions:

▪ Which operations undertaken by the analyzed NTOs in the discussed process are statistically the most and the least effective?

▪ Considering the groups of the analyzed NTOs which referred to their organizational forms (government organizations, quasi-government organizations, non-government organizations), are there any fundamental differences in the statistical effectiveness of the particular operations undertaken in the analyzed process?

The motivation to achieve the main aim of the article springs from the fact that there is an important gap in specialist literature when it comes to the field of tourism destination branding (Berrozpe *et al.* 2019). Moreover, there are also no articles which refer to evaluation of effectiveness related to operations undertaken by such a high number of NTOs.

1. Review of Literature

1.1 The Concept of Branding

The concept of branding has become widely accepted as one of the key purposes of marketing efforts over the past several decades (Kotler, Bowen and Makens 2013). The interdisciplinary and multi-aspect character of the notion of branding and its actual market efficiency and effectiveness have triggered a lot of interest in numerous authors (among them Aaker 2002; Anholt 2009, 2010; Dinnie 2008; Govers 2009; Govers and Go 2009; Pike 2009; Pike and Page 2014).

According to Marland *et al.* (2017), we have to understand branding as a proactive act of bringing a brand to life through concerted, concentrated efforts from all key stakeholders. Moreover, branding is an active strategy ideally involving stakeholders throughout the process (Dinnie 2015), helping to create emotional connections to a place via a series of networked associations (Zenker, Braun and Petersen 2017).

The basic function of a branding strategy is to add value to a given product or service (Chow *et al.* 2017). The influence of branding on recipients is not only of instrumental nature. It can also come as an operational philosophy applied during the whole process of developing brand awareness and some positive influence exerted by the brand image on potential consumers' perception. Branding is the core of marketing and the core of marketing strategies; it is also a process aimed at increasing the value of a brand in recipients' minds and awareness. Hence, it comes as the main axis for marketing operations which determines the implementation of the particular initiatives related to the comprehensive process of brand development (Pike 2004). The role of such

operations is emphasized by the fact that "(…) branding is the biggest challenge in the tourism and hospitality industry" (Rai and Nayak 2019, 22).

1.2 Destination Branding

Branding is of universal nature. It can be applied at companies as well as at tourist destinations (regions or countries) and their tourism products. Some operations undertaken in these fields, including corporate branding, employer branding or internal branding, are oriented towards the private sector (also companies); some other operations, including national branding, destination branding, refer to the spatial aspect, understood as development of the awareness of the national brand, of the domestic brand or of a particular destination brand (Armstrong 2007; Giannopoulos et al. 2010).

Considering destination branding, it should be also mentioned that there are some related formulations applied as well, namely: place branding, city branding, city marketing, destination marketing, destination promotion and urban branding. These referencing terms distinguish aspects which refer to location types (destination, place, city and urban) and to broadcasting activities (branding, marketing, promotion) (Ma et al. 2019).

Destination branding comes as a complex process. It should be remembered that a number of stakeholders (e.g.: local residents, media, opinion leaders, governments, and entrepreneurs) are relevant in the process of branding tourism destinations (Ashton 2014). This, in turn, results in the fact that destination branding becomes a tool to integrate efforts made by various entities operating at a particular tourist destination in order to achieve common success. Such operations are undertaken to perform other tasks, such as the following: providing assistance in minimizing risk related to the choice of a particular destination, facilitating precise market segmentation, acting as a guarantor of a coherent and coordinated message and a guarantor of quality (Aziz, Kefallonitis and Friedman 2012).

1.3 Effectiveness in the Process of National Tourism Brand Management

The notion of effectiveness related to the above-mentioned operations is ambiguous. Effectiveness is a feature which is commonly considered to be a fundamental measure of efficient operation evaluated in terms of achieving goals which have been intended, and it comes as a basis for such an evaluation. An operation is effective when a particular entity has fully or partially reached its aims or when it has facilitated reaching those aims in the future. If the entity has not achieved its aims, the undertaken operations are considered to be ineffective, and if there have been any difficulties or the achievement of the intended aims has been excluded, the undertaken operations are countereffective. In some cases, an intended aim can only be achieved in full, and effectiveness is non-scalable. If an aim can be divided into elements, effectiveness becomes scalable. Hence, effectiveness is a category which can be identified, first of all, with advisability (Sułkowski and Wolniak 2013). In most published materials on management, effectiveness is interpreted in a similar way, namely: it refers to the problem of aim achievement. Under such an interpretation, evaluation of effectiveness comes down directly to the comparison of results and aims (Simons 2000; Pearce 2000).

The literature referring to problems of modern tourism includes articles on the issues related to effectiveness of operations undertaken by national destination marketing organizations in China (Li and Wang 2010), the United Kingdom (Pratt et el. 2010), Macedonia (Galovski 2017) and Zimbabwe (Basera and Kuranga 2019).

In this article, the medium-term rate of the change in the number of tourist visits in countries where the analyzed NTOs were operating in the years of 2007-2017 is assumed as the main effectiveness measure for the operations undertaken by the NTOs in the comprehensive process of national tourism brand management. At this point, it would be advisable to justify the choice of such a measure. Effectiveness is one of the fundamental measures for effective operation, evaluated in terms of a degree to which the intended aims have been achieved. Considering actual operations undertaken by the analyzed NTOs in destination brand management at the national level, their ultimate effectiveness (results which have been achieved) can be evaluated after they have been finished. Therefore, the Authors share the views expressed by V.T.C. Middleton (2011), Florek and Janiszewska (2015) and Case (2003) that effectiveness in the process of destination brand management brings numerous advantages, such as – first of all – attracting external investment, attracting higher numbers of tourists, increasing revenues gained on in-coming tourism, reliability and trust for investors, increasing national and international political influence, more productive global partnership with other regions, private and public research

centers and universities and private organizations, the country-of-origin effect, local communities' pride of images related to their own local tourist destinations.

Hence, considering the opinion of the above-mentioned authors, it seems that apart from some obvious aims related to the image of a particular location and positive associations related to that particular place, one of the basic aims in the process of development and management of the national tourism brand, and at the same time the ultimate result intended by the analyzed NTOs, should be effective encouragement of the highest possible number of tourists to visit that particular location (development of in-coming tourism) and achievement of the highest possible financial profit (revenues on tourism export). It is confirmed by Zavattaro and Fay (2019), who state that *within a tourism context, as is the case with this study, the goal of place branding and marketing is to increase overseas travel and spending to the place.*

2. Methodology

During the research, the process of data collection, data verification and comparative statistical analysis was implemented in six stages, as follows:

1. Stage 1 – the data on the functioning of NTOs were collected and verified. Additionally, some research was carried out with the use of a diagnostic survey method, based on a questionnaire form technique. The research tool was a questionnaire form including various types of questions (open-ended, closed-ended and mixed-ended questions). The questionnaire form was sent to the respondents' e-mail addresses. The respondents were people who were responsible for marketing at the particular NTOs[1]. The survey questions mainly referred to the definition of the basic aspects related to the functioning of the particular NTOs in terms of their legal, organizational, economic, financial and marketing aspects. The questions also referred to the definition of the main operations undertaken by the particular NTOs in the field of destination brand management and to the indication of the most and the least effective operations in that field[2];

2. Stage II – the particular NTOs were selected for the research;

3. Stage III – an attempt was made at defining the population of NTOs operating in the world. It was indicated that there were 111 typical NTOs operating in the world at the national levels and implementing their fundamental tasks, usually assigned to such types of organizations (including promotion of particular countries as attractive tourist destinations). There were 46 national NTO-type organizations operating in Europe and 65 NTOs operating on other continents.

4. Stage IV – the size of the research sample was defined, and it was proved that it was a representative sample. In order to define the minimal number of the sample, the confidence interval for fraction was applied. Considering the fact that the analyzed NTO population was a finite population (N=111), the random sampling scheme without replacement[3] was applied. In order to define the minimal number of the sample, it was assumed that the acceptable evaluation error should not exceed the d value which was predetermined as the set-point:

$$u_\alpha \cdot \sqrt{\frac{p \cdot (1-p)}{n}} \cdot \sqrt{\frac{N-n}{N}} \leq d$$

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[1] The e-mail addresses were acquired from the official websites of the NTOs and during the direct interviews with the representatives of the particular NTOs which took place at ITB Berlin in the years 2015-2018.

[2] The questions in the questionnaire form referred to various problems, including numerous aspects related to the functioning of modern NTOs. The questions also referred to the character of the operations undertaken by the particular organizations (including strategical, tactical and operational activities). Furthermore, some of the operation fields analyzed in the questionnaire form (especially those which referred to the characteristics of marketing operations undertaken by the NTOs) overlapped each other. It particularly referred to the NTOs' interest fields of branding and promotion. They overlap and complement each other most frequently. Hence, they are of complementary nature, and they are implemented simultaneously. Such a situation results in the fact that these two notions are identified with each other, although it does not seem appropriate. Having realized that fact, it was decided to let the NTOs speak freely, without any attempts at explaining the specificity of the particular types of operations which could be received as some kind of suggestion. Such an approach was aimed at achieving some reliable and actual information and at defining the actual opinion of the particular NTOs on the problems included in the questionnaire survey.

[3] The equation of the confidence interval for fraction in that scheme is as follows:

$$P\left\{p - u_\alpha \cdot \sqrt{\frac{p \cdot (1-p)}{n}} \cdot \sqrt{\frac{N-n}{N}} < \hat{p} < p + u_\alpha \cdot \sqrt{\frac{p \cdot (1-p)}{n}} \cdot \sqrt{\frac{N-n}{N}}\right\} = 1 - \alpha,$$

where: $\hat{p}$ – is an unknown, estimated fraction, p –is a fraction of elements distinguished in the sample, n – is the size of the sample, N –is the size of the population, $1 - \alpha$ – is a confidence level, the probability that the interval will include an unknown parameter, u_α – is the quantile of the $1-(\alpha/2)$ in the standard normal distribution.

This equation determined the minimal size of the n sample:

$$n \geq \frac{N}{1 + \dfrac{d^2 \cdot N}{u_\alpha^2 \cdot p \cdot (1 - p)}}$$

The p value in the above-mentioned equation is the estimated fraction of the pilotage research; however, a general case of p=0.5 for which n achieves the maximum value can be assumed, and it will always meet the assumption of the minimal size of the sample. Considering very small values of n, the sizes of the sample must automatically be relatively large. In such a situation, it is very hard to meet errors for fraction estimation which are applied in the research practice. The size of the sample which is 81 allows us to estimate a fraction with an error not exceeding d = 5% and the probability at the level of 80%. Considering the fact that it definitely comes as more than a half of the NTOs identified by the Authors, such a size of the sample was defined as representative. Finally, there were 81 national tourism organizations participating in the research process (73% of their total number assumed by the Authors) 39 of which (48.1%) operated in Europe and 42 (51.9%) were NTOs operating on other continents (America – 14 organizations, Africa – 10, Asia and Pacific – 15 and the Middle East – 3)[4];

5. Stage V – the analyzed organizations were grouped by a determined criterion which allowed the researchers to carry out a comparative statistical analysis. Considering the fact that the feature by which the analyzed organizations should be classified must characterize each of them and the fact that it should be a relatively constant feature (which should not be altered in a long period of time), it was decided to refer to the category of an organizational form. It was the feature which did not change very often for the particular NTOs. The choice of the above-mentioned criterion was suggested by the NTO division provided by Medlik (1995), who distinguishes three organizational forms of NTOs: government, quasi-government and non-government organizations. Assuming that criterion for the comparative analysis allowed the researchers to present their approach towards the problems related to destination brand management at the national level, organizations of typical government or non-government nature and organizations which are established by the government but which do not belong to its structures (quasi-government organizations). This research stage was concluded by the determination of the number of the NTOs which were included into the particular groups. It was determined that the statistical analysis would include 42 government NTOs (51.9% of the analyzed organizations), 23 quasi-government NTOs (28.4%) and 16 NTOs operating as non-government organizational forms (19.7%);

6. Stage VI – an attempt at providing a simplified evaluation of effectiveness related to operations (operation fields) undertaken by the analyzed NTOs in the field of destination brand management at the national level. Based on the assumed division of the NTOs, a comparative statistical analysis was carried out in order to define the most effective operations undertaken in that field. The process was divided into two parts:

▪ identification of the most and the least effective operations (operation fields) undertaken by the analyzed NTOs in the process of destination brand management at the national level – the aim of this stage was to determine the preliminary hierarchy for the effectiveness of such operations (based on the data provided by the NTOs);

▪ the analysis of interdependencies between the operations undertaken by the analyzed NTOs in the field of destination brand management at the national level and the assumed measure of their effectiveness evaluation. Assumed for the analysis, the effectiveness measure was the medium-term rate of the change in the number of tourist visits in countries where the analyzed NTOs were operating in the years of 2007-2017. The aim of this research stage was to determine (based on the results of the statistical analysis) the ultimate hierarchy for the effectiveness of the analyzed operations and to provide an evaluation of the level of its conformance with the effectiveness hierarchy determined at Stage I.

The starting point for the analysis was the indication of the most effective operations undertaken in the discussed process. The indication was made in the questionnaire forms by the analyzed NTOs. It was revealed that 73.4% of the analyzed organizations ran operations which were supposed to evaluate the effectiveness of the particular activities; however, they were not able to indicate any instruments used for such evaluation. Furthermore, only 23.5% of the organizations which claimed that they evaluated the effectiveness of their operations were able to provide some examples of the tools they applied. In most cases, these were the reports and various types of records related to the implementation of the particular tasks. Therefore, at that stage of data

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[4] The division is made based on the recommendations of the UNWTO which distinguishes 5 main tourism regions in the world, namely: the European Region, the American Region, the Asian and Pacific Region, the African Region and the Middle East Region (UNWTO 2017).

processing, the Authors tried to verify the obtained information. In order to do that some direct interviews with the NTO employees were carried out and an analysis of the source documentation related to the functioning of the particular organizations was performed.

3. Results

3.1 The Hierarchy of the Most Effective Operations in the Process of Brand Management – A General Approach

A preliminary hierarchy for the analyzed operations was based on the principle of allocating points under the particular categories. The most effective operations were given 5 points, whereas the least effective actions were given 1 point (Table 1). The analysis indicated that according to the analyzed NTOs, the most effective operations (operation fields) in the process of national destination brand management were all the initiatives related to the process of developing the added value of a destination brand at the national level. In accordance with the applied scoring method, this field of operations undertaken by the analyzed NTOs won the highest number of points (128 points). Another effective field of operations was related to strategies of destination brand management applied by the NTOs and definition of the methods used for the implementation of strategy assumptions (127 points). The third and the fourth place was taken by activities related to branding (including application of such initiatives in practice – 96 points) and a separate budget for branding operations (90 points). The following activities were indicated as the least effective operations: training and education activities (8 points) improving employees' qualifications (11 points), activities and initiatives undertaken to cooperate with regional and local partners (27 points) and using intelligent information carriers (35 points) – Table 1.

Table 1. The hierarchy of the most effective actions in the field related to the process of tourist reception area brand management, according to the NTOs

Activities indicated by the analyzed NTOs as the most effective	The number of points
Creating the added value of a destination brand	128
Having a strategy for national destination brand management and meeting the assumptions of that strategy	127
Operations undertaken under branding	96
Having a separate budget for branding	90
The geographical scope of the undertaken operations	66
Using social media	66
Identifying target tourism markets	64
Identifying USP and UEP of a destination	64
Positioning the national destination brand	64
Creating the image of a destination brand	62
Designing and implementing promotion campaigns	57
Monitoring and reviewing the results achieved by a brand	55
Using non-standard promotion forms	53
Classic promotion operations	50
Having branches/divisions abroad	48
Supporting the development of tourism brand products	44
Using intelligent information carriers	35
Cooperation with regional and local partners	27
Improving the NTO employees' qualifications	11
Training and education activities	8

Notes: the following scale was accepted: 1-5 points; 5 points were awarded for the most effective action and 1 point was awarded for the least effective action.
Source: Authors' own study.

3.2 The Hierarchy of the Most Effective Operations in the Process of Brand Management – An Approach by the NTO Organizational Form

A similar hierarchy of the most effective operations (operation fields) undertaken by the analysed NTOs was recorded with the consideration of the division of these entities by their organizational forms (Table 2). Considering government organizations, the most effective operation undertaken in the process of destination brand management at the national level were all the initiatives related to the development of the added value of a

destination brand (79 points). Moreover, the government organizations emphasized the significant effectiveness of the operations related to branding (having a separate budget for branding – 55 points, operations undertaken under branding – 44 points). In terms of effectiveness, using social media by the NTOs was also highly evaluated (47 points), as well as having a strategy for destination brand management at the national level with the indication of the methods applied to meet the assumptions of that strategy (44 points). Similarly, to the general results, the group of the least effective operations included improving employees' qualifications and training and education activities.

Considering the groups of the quasi-government and non-government organizations, the most effective operation was having a strategy for destination brand management at the national level and defining methods applied to meet the assumptions of the strategy (quasi-government organizations – 50 points, non-government organizations – 33 points). The differences in the effectiveness evaluation were observed at some other places. The quasi-government organizations emphasized significant effectiveness of operations undertaken under branding (38 points) and all the activities related to the development of the added value of a destination brand at the national level (36 points). The non-government NTOs considered positioning a destination brand at the national level as highly effective (20 points) along with all the activities supporting the development of tourism brand products (18 points) – Table 2. Considering the least effective operations, no significant differences among the groups of the analysed NTOs were observed.

Table 2. The hierarchy of the most effective actions in the field related to the process of tourist reception area brand management, by the organizational forms of the analysed NTOs

Activities indicated by the analyzed NTOs as the most effective	NTO organizational forms			Total number of points*
	Government (N=42)	Quasi-government (N=23)	Non-government (N=16)	
Creating the added value of a destination brand	79*	36	13	128
Having a strategy for national destination brand management and meeting the assumptions of that strategy	44	50	33	127
Operations undertaken under branding	44	38	14	96
Having a separate budget for branding	55	20	15	90
Using social media	47	11	8	66
The geographical scope of the undertaken operations	25	29	12	66
Identifying target tourism markets	33	15	16	64
Identifying USP and UEP of a destination	31	16	17	64
Positioning the national destination brand	36	8	20	64
Creating the image of a destination brand	26	20	16	62
Designing and implementing promotion campaigns	31	19	7	57
Monitoring and reviewing the results achieved by a brand	35	10	10	55
Using non-standard promotion forms	29	14	10	53
Classic promotion operations	25	12	13	50
Having branches/divisions abroad	31	12	5	48
Supporting the development of tourism brand products	16	10	18	44
Using intelligent information carriers	21	5	9	35
Cooperation with regional and local partners	16	11	0	27
Improving the NTO employees' qualifications	4	3	4	11
Training and education activities	3	3	2	8

Notes: the following scale was accepted: 1-5 points; 5 points were awarded for the most effective action and 1 point was awarded for the least effective action.
*- the highest values for the particular analyzed NTOs are presented in bold.
Source: Authors' own study.

While analyzing the distribution of the answers provided by the examined NTOs on the most effective operations undertaken in the process of destination brand management at the national level, it is possible to

notice some fundamental differences in the approach presented by the government, quasi-government and non-government organizations. In the approach presented by the government NTOs, the most effective operation is the whole process of creating the added value of a destination brand. Hence, it is possible to assume that government organizations are definitely closer to the modern model of added values. According to that concept, a brand is defined only by the added values it represents, irrespective of the product. It means that – theoretically – tourists, who choose a tourist destination brand, consider only its virtual elements which refer to some emotional arguments. Such an approach is confirmed also by a relatively low evaluation of effectiveness related to operations involving support given to the development of tourism brand products which are connected with a particular region and understood as a set of functional elements (*e.g.*: geographical location, climate, natural resources) and emotional elements (*e.g.*: prestige, emotions, attitudes, opinions, perception of a brand as a symbol of belonging in the context of psychological and social advantages). Hence, the approach presented by the analyzed organizations may indicate dominance of added values of a destination brand over tourist destination products. Among the government NTOs it is also possible to observe the fact that they emphasize the effectiveness of branding, involving operations aimed at the improvement of the level of familiarity and awareness of a tourism area brand in potential visitors' minds. According to the analyzed organizations, such operations must be supported with some adequate funds provided under a separate budget, earmarked for branding.

Considering the quasi-government and non-government organizations, it can be observed that they indicate strategic and planning activities as the most effective operations undertaken in the process of destination brand management at the national level. The analyzed organizations consider having a strategy for national destination brand management and some defined methods to meet the assumptions of that strategy as the most effective in that operation field. The approach presented by the analyzed NTOs allows the Authors to assume that the most important management function in the context of a tourist destination brand is planning.

3.3 The Hierarchy of the Most Effective Operations in the Process of Brand Management and the Changes in the Number of Tourist Visits

The next step in the research on the effectiveness of operations undertaken by the analyzed NTOs in the process of national tourism brand management included the analysis of statistical interdependencies observed between those operations and the measure assumed to evaluate their effectiveness (Stage VI). In order to define the above-mentioned correlations, the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) was applied. Then, based on the assumptions of the three-sigma principle[5], the activities were categorized into the assumed effectiveness classes. Considering the measure assumed for the evaluation of the effectiveness of operations undertaken by the analyzed NTOs in the process of national tourism brand management (i.e.: the medium-term rate of the change in the number of tourist visits in countries where the analyzed NTOs were operating in the years of 2007-2017), it has been indicated that in the case of all the analyzed NTO groups the hierarchy established for the most effective operations finds no confirmation in the hierarchy which takes the statistical interdependency of those operations into account with the assumed measure (Table 3).

In the group of the government organizations, the most effective operations are: supporting the development of tourism brand products, operations undertaken under branding and using intelligent information carriers (1st class of effectiveness). Among the quasi-government organizations, the statistically highest interdependency with the measure assumed to evaluate effectiveness refers to the following operations: creating the image of a destination brand and operations undertaken under branding. In this case, however, it should be emphasized that the latter field of operations undertaken by the NTOs was also considered by the analyzed quasi-government organizations as the one of the most effective in the process of destination brand management at the national level (the 2nd position in the preliminary hierarchy for effectiveness). Other operations undertaken by the quasi-government NTOs categorized under the 1st class of effectiveness are: positioning the national destination brand, designing and implementing promotion campaigns and cooperation with regional and local partners.

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[5] The three-sigma principle is strictly related to the standard deviation (s) and normal distribution. If the analyzed variable is characterised with normal distribution or distribution similar to normal distribution, it is possible to indicate the number of observations which are placed in a certain range measured by the standard deviation from the mean ($\bar{x}$). Hence, 1st class of effectiveness – the analyzed variable ($\bar{g}$) is in the range of $\bar{g} > \bar{x} + s$ – this group contains some non-typical values of the variable which are in the range above the typical values; 2nd class of effectiveness –the analyzed variable is in the range of $\bar{x} - s < \bar{g} < \bar{x} + s$ – this group contains some values typical for the particular distribution; 3rd class of effectiveness – the analyzed variable is in the range of $\bar{g} < \bar{x} - s$[5] - this group contains non-typical values of the variable which are in the range below the typical values.

Table 3. The comparison of the hierarchy for the most effective actions in the process of national tourist reception area brand management, according to the analyzed NTOs and according to the statistical interdependency of these actions in relation to the average dynamics of changes in the number of tourist visits to the states where the analyzed organizations operated in the years 2007–2017

The class of effectiveness	The hierarchy for the most effective operations in accordance with the analyze NTOs.		The hierarchy for the most effective operations in accordance with the average dynamics of the change in the number of tourist visits in the years 2007-2017.	
	Operation	The number of points	Operation	Average dynamics (in %)
Government NTOs				
1st class	Creating the added value of a destination brand	79	Supporting the development of tourism brand products	5.45
	Having a separate budget for branding	55	Operations undertaken under branding	4.85
	Using social media	47	Using intelligent information carriers	4.73
2nd class	Having a strategy for national destination brand management and meeting the assumptions of that strategy	44	Monitoring and reviewing the results achieved by a brand	4.20
	Operations undertaken under branding	44	Using non-standard promotion forms	4.19
	Positioning the national destination brand	36	Improving the NTO employees' qualifications	4.10
	Monitoring and reviewing the results achieved by a brand	35	Having branches/divisions abroad	4.09
	Identifying target tourism markets	33	The geographical scope of the undertaken operations	4.06
	Identifying USP and UEP of a destination	31	Designing and implementing promotion campaigns	3.97
	Designing and implementing promotion campaigns	31	Identifying target tourism markets	3.91
	Having branches/divisions abroad	31	Having a separate budget for branding	3.87
	Using non-standard promotion forms	29	Identifying USP and UEP of a destination	3.86
	Creating the image of a destination brand	26	Positioning the national destination brand	3.84
	The geographical scope of the undertaken operations	25	Creating the added value of a destination brand	3.71
	Classic promotion operations	25	Cooperation with regional and local partners	3.35
	Using intelligent information carriers	21	Using social media	3.30
	Supporting the development of tourism brand products	16	Creating the image of a destination brand	3.26
	Cooperation with regional and local partners	16	Having a strategy for national destination brand management and meeting the assumptions of that strategy	3.03
3rd class	Improving the NTO employees' qualifications	4	Training and education activities	2.13
	Training and education activities	3	Classic promotion operations	1.21
Quasi-government NTOs				
1st class	Having a strategy for national destination brand management and meeting the assumptions of that strategy	50	Creating the image of a destination brand	7.7
	Operations undertaken under branding	38	Operations undertaken under branding	6.49

The class of effectiveness	The hierarchy for the most effective operations in accordance with the analyze NTOs.		The hierarchy for the most effective operations in accordance with the average dynamics of the change in the number of tourist visits in the years 2007-2017.	
	Operation	The number of points	Operation	Average dynamics (in %)
	Creating the added value of a destination brand	36	Positioning the national destination brand	6.41
	The geographical scope of the undertaken operations	29	Designing and implementing promotion campaigns	6.23
	Creating the image of a destination brand	20	Cooperation with regional and local partners	5.52
2nd class	Having a separate budget for branding	20	Monitoring and reviewing the results achieved by a brand	4.31
	Designing and implementing promotion campaigns	19	Identifying target tourism markets	3.82
	Identifying USP and UEP of a destination	16	Having a strategy for national destination brand management and meeting the assumptions of that strategy	3.51
	Identifying target tourism markets	15	Classic promotion operations	3.33
	Using non-standard promotion forms	14	Using social media	3.31
	Classic promotion operations	12	Training and education activities	3.30
	Having branches/divisions abroad	12	Having a separate budget for branding	3.14
	Cooperation with regional and local partners	11	Improving the NTO employees' qualifications	3.00
	Using social media	11	The geographical scope of the undertaken operations	2.91
	Monitoring and reviewing the results achieved by a brand	10	Creating the added value of a destination brand	2.84
	Supporting the development of tourism brand products	10	Supporting the development of tourism brand products	2.81
	Positioning the national destination brand	8	Using non-standard promotion forms	2.41
	Using intelligent information carriers	5	Having branches/divisions abroad	2.30
3rd class	Training and education activities	3	Using intelligent information carriers	1.88
	Improving the NTO employees' qualifications	3	Identifying USP and UEP of a destination	1.57
Non-government NTOs				
1st class	Having a strategy for national destination brand management and meeting the assumptions of that strategy	33	Using non-standard promotion forms	6.84
	Positioning the national destination brand	20	Operations undertaken under branding	5.44
2nd class	Supporting the development of tourism brand products	18	Using social media	5.21
	Identifying USP and UEP of a destination	17	Having a strategy for national destination brand management and meeting the assumptions of that strategy	5.16
	Identifying target tourism markets	16	Designing and implementing promotion campaigns	5.15
	Creating the image of a destination brand	16	Creating the added value of a destination brand	4.89
	Having a separate budget for branding	15	Monitoring and reviewing the results achieved by a brand	4.70

The class of effectiveness	The hierarchy for the most effective operations in accordance with the analyze NTOs.		The hierarchy for the most effective operations in accordance with the average dynamics of the change in the number of tourist visits in the years 2007-2017.	
	Operation	The number of points	Operation	Average dynamics (in %)
	Operations undertaken under branding	14	Supporting the development of tourism brand products	4.61
	Creating the added value of a destination brand	13	Creating the image of a destination brand	4.44
	Classic promotion operations	13	Having branches/divisions abroad	4.09
	The geographical scope of the undertaken operations	12	Improving the NTO employees' qualifications	4.07
	Monitoring and reviewing the results achieved by a brand	10	Training and education activities	3.77
	Using non-standard promotion forms	10	Classic promotion operations	3.75
	Using intelligent information carriers	9	Identifying target tourism markets	3.62
	Using social media	8	Identifying USP and UEP of a destination	3.51
	Designing and implementing promotion campaigns	7	Having a separate budget for branding	3.49
	Having branches/divisions abroad	5	The geographical scope of the undertaken operations	3.13
3rd class	Improving the NTO employees' qualifications	4	Positioning the national destination brand	2.97
	Training and education activities	2	Using intelligent information carriers	2.61
	Cooperation with regional and local partners	0	Cooperation with regional and local partners	2.41

Source: Authors' own study.

In the group of the non-government NTOs the following activities are considered to be statistically the most effective: using non-standard promotion forms, operations undertaken under branding (1st class of effectiveness) and using social media (2nd class of effectiveness). Hence, considering the point of view assumed for the analysis of the measure applied to evaluate the effectiveness of the undertaken operations, the NTOs should simultaneously implement initiatives which combine activities directly related to a destination brand, promotion and development of local and regional tourism brand products in order to achieve the intended results. Such operations should be broadly advertised in, for example, social media.

While comparing the preliminary hierarchy established for the least effective operations undertaken by the analyzed NTOs in the process of destination brand management at the national level to the hierarchy which takes the statistical interdependency of such operations and the measure assumed to evaluate their effectiveness (i.e.: the average dynamics of the changes in the number of tourist visits in the countries where the analyzed organizations operated in the years 2007-2017) into account, it is possible to observe some similar phenomena (Table 3). For example, in the group of the government NTOs the least effective operations include training and education activities (the 20th position among 20 activities which were evaluated). It is confirmed by the evaluation of the statistical interdependency of those activities with the measure assumed to evaluate effectiveness. It turns out that training and education activities are categorized as the 3rd class of effectiveness (the 19th position; the average dynamics of the change in the number of tourist visits at the level of 2.13%). It means that statistically the interdependency of such initiatives and the number of tourists' visits is definitely lower than of other operations. The worse result is achieved only by classic promotion operations (1.21%). A similar situation can be observed in the group of the quasi-government NTOs (among others: using intelligent information carriers – the 18th and 19th positions in the hierarchy for operation effectiveness) and in the group of the non-government organizations (among others: cooperation with local and regional partners – in both rankings these operations take the last 20th positions).

Discussion

Modern (foreign and national) specialist literature offers very few studies on problems related directly to the effectiveness evaluation of operations undertaken by such a high number of NTOs functioning in the world. Usually, such research has been limited to just a few or a dozen of organizations operating on one continent, and mechanisms related to the evaluation of the effectiveness of the operations undertaken by those organizations have been scarcely discussed. It also refers to the comprehensive process of destination brand management at the national level and to some particular activities undertaken in that process (Zavatarro and Fay 2019). There are very few examples (Polska Organizacja Turystyczna 2017) of attempts made at analyzing the effectiveness of some initiatives undertaken by NTOs. They mainly refer to the effectiveness of some particular promotion campaigns which has been measured by the relation of the financial expenses to the final results. Hence, it is difficult to refer the results of the research presented in this article to the above-mentioned analyses.

Presented in this article, the results are the outcome of the Authors' own research. They come as a continuation of the research from the previous years when the same NTOs were analyzed and the measure assumed to evaluate the effectiveness of the operations undertaken by those NTOs in the process of destination brand management at the national level was, among others, the average dynamics of the change in the number of tourist visits in the countries where the analyzed organizations operated in the years 2005-2015 (Marczak 2018b; Marczak 2019). The obtained results mostly confirmed the previous findings. It was demonstrated that, generally, the preliminary hierarchy established for the effectiveness of operations undertaken by the analyzed NTOs in the process of national tourism brand management was not confirmed by the results of the statistical analysis. It referred to all the NTOs, regardless of their organizational forms, as well as to the particular groups (government, quasi-government and non-government organizations).

The only exception is the field of operations undertaken by the analyzed NTOs in relation to the use of branding, which takes the top positions in the preliminary hierarchy of effectiveness (the 3rd position; 96 points) as well as in the hierarchy which takes the interdependency of the undertaken operations and the measure assumed to evaluate their effectiveness into account (this operation is categorized as the 1st class of effectiveness for all the groups of the analyzed NTOs, in terms of their organizational forms). Therefore, it can be easily observed that in the light of the previous findings, the significance of branding has increased for the analyzed NTOs, along with a belief that it comes as a highly effective and indispensable element in the process of destination brand management at the national level. It has been confirmed by the results of the statistical analysis. Hence, it is possible to assume that, statistically, branding comes as the most effective operation which is intended to encourage the highest number of foreign tourists to visit a particular place.

It is also possible to observe another phenomenon characteristic for government, quasi-government and non-government NTOs, namely: very low evaluation of effectiveness related to monitoring and reviewing results and brand activities in the process of destination brand management at the national level. The obtained results are untypical, considering the fact that monitoring comes as one of the key functions in management, providing a lot of information required for fast response and avoidance of various mistakes in the future. It can be supposed that such a situation results from the fact that monitoring and reviewing operations related to a destination brand are one of the stages in the process of creating the added value of the tourist destination brand. Hence, the analyzed NTOs consider monitoring operations to be sufficient. However, such reasoning is erroneous because constant monitoring and reviewing results and brand activities are considered by numerous authors to be the key stages in the whole process of tourist destination brand management. These stages allow the interested parties to optimise planned and implemented brand activities (*e.g.*: under some limited budget for marketing). It is particularly significant for territorial brands which are analyzed in reference to many target groups at the same time.

Considering the comparison of the preliminary hierarchy and the ultimate hierarchy of effectiveness established for operations undertaken in the process of national tourism brand management, a completely different situation can be observed in the groups of the quasi-government and non-government organizations. In those NTO groups, there is no conformance between the preliminary and the ultimate hierarchy of effectiveness established for the operations undertaken in the analyzed process. Such a situation can indicate that the organizations which participated in the research are not always able to precisely identify operations which are the most or the least effective in terms of destination brand management at the national level. It may result from the above-mentioned fact related to the lack of initiatives undertaken by the analyzed NTOs in the field of monitoring and reviewing the level of effectiveness in the particular operations. The lack of monitoring results in the fact that

in many cases some ineffective (inadequate) activities are often multiplied. If some proper monitoring were implemented a lot of mistakes could be avoided.

Conclusion

The main aim of this article is to present an attempt at providing a simplified evaluation of effectiveness of operations (operation fields) undertaken by national tourism organizations in the process of brand management at the national level, particularly, operations undertaken to create such a brand. In the article, it is indicated which operations undertaken by the analyzed NTOs are statistically the most and the least effective in the process of destination brand management at the national level.

There are some limitations to the article. First of all, it should be observed that the research has not included all national tourism organizations. Moreover, the analysis presented in the article is of simplified nature. It does not allow the Authors to indicate the direct interdependency between operations which have been undertaken and the implementation level of the discussed process. Assumed for the analysis, the measure may certainly be viewed as one of the fundamental and quantifiable aim in the comprehensive process of national tourism brand management implemented by NTOs (the medium-term rate of the change in the number of tourist visits in the countries where the analyzed organizations operated in the years 2007-2017). It should be also observed that the Authors refer to subjective opinions and answers provided by the analyzed organizations.

At the same time, however, the Authors wish to emphasize the implications resulting from the presented analysis. The statistical analysis presented in the article is based on the division of the discussed NTOs in terms of their organizational forms. Assumed for the comparative analysis, this particular criterion allows the Authors to present the approach of government, quasi-government (established by the government but not included into its structures) and non-government organizations towards the problems related to destination brand management at the national level and, particularly, towards the evaluation of effectiveness of operations undertaken in the above-mentioned process. The differences which have been observed may become a starting point for the development of an efficient and universal (considering the specific character of the particular NTO groups) model of tourist destination brand management. At the same time, the obtained results indicate the significance of the particular operations undertaken by national tourism organizations, and they also present their preliminary hierarchy. Hence, they can come as a clear clue for other entities of such a character which operate not only at the national level.

The problem discussed in the article is important because operations undertaken in order to popularize and to promote tourism are particularly significant for numerous destinations. It results from the fact that tourism is an important and vital source of economic growth for many countries and their regions (Hiadlovský *et al.* 2016).

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