

# CROATIAN NATIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION – REALITY OF MARKETING AND BRANDING OF TOURIST DESTINATIONS

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## ABSTRACT

The establishment of national tourism organizations on the Croatian territory, before one and a half century, emerged on the enthusiasm of local visionaries, who at the very beginning recognized the occurrence and importance of tourism. These enthusiasts have realized the necessity for establishment of an organization that would define new forms of behaviour of local people, government and economy toward foreign tourists who visit the area.

Development and the role of Croatian national tourism organization depended on the socio-political and economic circumstances that were present in these areas. The establishment of the Republic of Croatia and the adoption of national tourism organization "Croatian Tourist Board" law, define the role of the national tourism organization in the concept of marketing and branding of tourist destination.

The paper starts from the fact that the role of national tourism organizations is oversized in the promotion and limited in marketing and branding of the tourist destination.

It is confirmed with the research of the attitudes of tourist boards members and representatives of the real sector and the tourism hospitality mediation at the tourist destination.

Research, conclusions and proposals for solutions that are defined in the paper, put in a realistic framework, role and possibilities of national tourism organizations in the design of marketing and branding of tourist destination.

## Introduction

National Tourism Organization (NTO) on Croatian territory has a tradition of one and a half century (Hygienic Society of Hvar 1868th). Development and operation of the NTO depended on the socio-political and economic circumstances that were present in these areas. With the implementation of Law of tourist boards and the promotion of Croatian tourism – NN 3/94, Croatian Tourist Board, the national tourism organization, was assigned a role for

promotion of tourism as a social and economic phenomenon, also between local population, landscaping of the resorts, providing information to tourists, marketing, tourism promotion and branding of tourist destination in the domestic and international tourism market.

Under that Act, Croatian Tourist Board is a national tourist organization. Croatian Tourist Board, the national tourism organization is established to create and promote the identity and reputation of Croatian tourism, to plan and implement the joint strategy and the conception of its promotion, proposal and execution of promotional activities of common interest to all operators in the tourism industry at home and abroad and raise the overall quality of Croatian tourism.

UNWTO (1999: 126) states that "NTO is an autonomous government body, sometimes a semi-state body or a body which has no official character, established or recognized by the state as a governing body, authorized at the national level for promotion, and in some cases, for marketing of international tourism".

The theoretical part of the paper specifically defines the term and meaning of NTO and functions of the marketing of NTO.

The main objective of this study, starts from the fact that the NTO is taking a very specific place in the tourist system from which derives its role in the development of tourism, marketing strategy and establishing certain relations in the tourism market.

The basic hypothesis in the present study is based on the recognition that large, mythical importance is given to the role of national tourist boards in promoting and branding of tourist destination, and in the same time, ignoring the real situation in development of tourism offer and in creating new tourism products in destinations. This study tries to establish the existence of different levels of understanding, from great mythical to the real meaning and role of the national tourism organization in marketing strategy, branding and promotion of tourist destinations. In existing system of tourist boards, promotion has an extremely mythical meaning. Promotion has the leading role in meaningful activities of national tourism organizations. For subjects of tourism economy along with promotion, in the strategy of marketing are included also joint marketing activities of NTO-s and tourism economy, increase of tourism quality and creation new tourism products of destination.

The aim of this paper is to point out the importance of the Croatian NTO in the development and promotion of Croatian tourism. Also, the aim of this paper is to emphasize the special methods of marketing and promotion that Croatian NTO applies in the world tourist market.

Research methods in this paper are based on field research-survey, which was conducted in tourist boards and economic entities of tourist economy throughout Croatian coastal counties.

Processing and analyzing data, confirms the premise of high importance of promotion as one of the dominant, sometimes exclusive activity of NTO-s in marketing strategy and branding of tourist destination in regard to economic subjects which perceive promotion, marketing strategy and branding of tourist destination in a different way. Research results encourage the initiative of establishing a more effective model of NTO that would, in its marketing strategy, besides the promotion, equally involve also the other elements of marketing (product, distribution channels, human resources).

### **The term and function of National Tourist Organization**

NTO is an organization that works in the public interest on the systematic development and promotion of tourism at the local, regional and national levels. The fundamental role of NTO is to provide advisory policy for

central government in relation to tourism (Jafari, 2000). NTO is an institution at the national level in the form of governmental or semi-governmental organization incharged for the commercialization of tourism destinations (Kotler et al., 2010). This is the official statewide organization that is responsible for improving the promotion, research and marketing in the tourism industry of the country (Koster, 1995). NTO has two marketing functions: a) to formulate and develop tourism product or product of destination; b) to promote the tourism product in the relevant market (Kotler et al., 2010). At the national level the NTO has two main purposes: a) the responsibility for the development of tourism products; b) the responsibility for the development of the tourism market (Toyler, 1994). From the above it can be concluded that the primary task of the NTO-s is to create preconditions: a) for the creation and development of tourism products in the area of its operations; b) for the promotion of tourism product in the relevant market (Midelton, 2001). NTO is defined in two special functions: a) the development of tourism in the entire tourist destination; b) the development of promotional activities according to individual holders of tourist services (Burkart, Medlik, 1974).

Based on the above, there are four basic functions of NTO: a) identify the market structure and tourists; b) establish communication with the tourist market; c) increase the number of tourist arrivals; d) to enhance image destinations (Seaton, Bennett, 1999). The specific role of NTO is to ensure a country the maximum economic and social benefits that can be generated from the tourism. However, the NTO takes care of social factors of tourism, such as protection of cultural heritage, the promotion of cultural and social values and preservation of the environment for future generations (Gee et al., 1997). NTO does not sell products directly to tourists and is not directly responsible for the quality of the product, although the main goal of the NTO is to improve the quality of tourism products (Midelton, 2001).

NTO is responsible for the following functions:

1. Collecting and synthesizing data on tourist traffic throughout the state level. NTO collects information on the number of visitors – tourists, the length of their stay in tourist destinations are the type of accommodation that tourists use, consumption of tourist products and other sectors of tourists

2. Representation in markets through its offices and offices abroad, presents tourism, but also presents the entire national community – the country abroad.

3. Organization of workshops and trade shows – NTO connects in one place producers of tourism products and representatives of travel agencies and tour operators that their distribution channels to penetrate potential customers – tourists. Throughout the exhibition space, promotional materials and appearance at the fair, potential tourists gain a comprehensive understanding and perception of one tourist destination and country.

4. Familiarization trips – for representatives of travel agencies, tour operators, travel journalists and writers. During the familiarization trip across the country, travel journalists and writers are acquainted with not only the tourist offer but also the entire social and cultural environment and the characteristics of the country. Their impressions are inserted in news articles, books, TV and radio shows, Internet blogs, and in this way they perform the promotion of the overall tourist destinations. By organizing a familiarization trip, tourist destinations and tourism products as well as the whole country is acquainted in its complexity. Through the media, it is presented to the international public.

5. Participation in joint marketing schemes and marketing program – every part of the national community and the subject of tourist destinations can be presented in the most appropriate way to to the public and the tourism market.

6. Support for entrepreneurial ventures in tourism – the NTO throughout incentives creates a positive situation for business and development in tourism nationwide.

7. Consumer assistance and protection tourist – with information system and information, national tourism organization helps consumers – tourists, to obtain relevant information about the tourist product. Information helps tourists to create a more complete picture of the tourist destination they intend to visit. Creating a code on the reliability of his information, the NTO-s creates general criteria that each tourist information at the state level should include, towards better informing, and better protection of tourists.

8. General education of its membership, but also of the population at tourist destinations and the country as a whole, refers to a better understanding of culture, tradition, economy and general living conditions in the countries from which tourists usually come (Kotler et al., 2010). Education of its members and the population at tourist destinations helps creating awareness of the close connection between tourism and the general state-level tourist destination and country.

In some countries, the NTO is the body responsible for the promotion and marketing of the country as a tourist destination. Accordingly, the function of the national tourism organization refers to:

- a) the study of the international market, especially the characteristics and trends in demand for individual and organized tourism;
- b) the constant observation of the development of demand from foreign tourists;
- c) the planning of joint national strategy for public and private operators;
- d) the collaboration with other stakeholders, eg government department for tourism, regional tourism department, the central public administration, offices, professional associations, manufacturers and trade in tourism services, hospitality, food manufacturers, public utility sectors;
- e) the identification and recruitment of the proper combination of different marketing tools such as:
  - multimedia communications,
  - advertising in the mass media,
  - production of promotional materials, especially in the print media, multimedia and audiovisual form,
  - distribution of information through traditional and electronic media,
  - distribution of promotional materials,
  - organization of business meetings between national offer side and demand side,
  - help in arrangement of visits to local tour operators abroad and foreign tour operators at home,
  - organization of appearances at fairs, exhibitions and numerous events at home and abroad,
  - operative assistance and advisory services to national tourism economy in planning the successful activities for the promotion of tourism products to foreign markets (Osti, Pechaner, 2001).

Tasks and objectives of Croatian NTO are based on the Act of Tourism Boards and the Promotion of Croatian tourism – NN 152/08. According to NN 152/08, Article 9, common goals of tourist boards are: a) to improve the general conditions of tourists stay, in particular to raise the quality of tourism and other complementary services, to preserve and create a recognizable and attractive tourist environment and to assure tourist hospitality for the area they were established; b) promotion of the tourist product of areas for which they were established in accordance with the system of promoting tourism and its specific and general tasks from the level of small town to the level of the Republic, and because of the involvement in European and international tourist trends; c) raising awareness of

the importance of economic, social and other impacts of tourism, need and importance of preserving and improving all elements of the tourism product of certain area, in particular the protection of the environment.

Special importance of tourism boards is reflected in the fact that the operation of tourist boards is based on the principles of general usefulness, and without realizing profit. The system of tourist boards operates on three levels: a) small towns and cities tourist boards ; b) the county tourist boards; c) The Croatian National Tourist Board.

In the system of tourist boards a special place and role belongs to the Croatian National Tourist Board. According to Croatian law the obligation of the Croatian National Tourist Board is:

- a) to care about the total Croatian tourist offer,
- b) to undertake measures and activities for the development of tourism in touristically less developed parts of Croatia,
- c) to suggest the Ministry of Tourism and Croatian government long-term concept and strategy for tourism marketing,
- d) to organize the research of tourism markets,
- e) to establish and implement programs for the promotion of the interests of Croatian tourism and to provide appropriate guidelines,
- f) to monitor the trends in the tourism markets and the effectiveness of promotional activities in general and certain advertising actions, to propose and to take appropriate measures and actions,
- g) to cooperate with the NTO-s in other countries and to take action to get involved in various multi-national and regional tourism promotion programs and projects,
- h) to promote and coordinate initiatives of tourist boards and all commercial and other entities that operate in the tourism industry, directly and indirectly, for the improvement and promotion of Croatian tourism.

According to the above mentioned, Croatian NTO has a mission to create and promote the reputation and identity of Croatian tourism, to plan, design and develop Croatian tourist product. Also, the Croatian NTO has a mission and purpose to plan, create and implement a strategy and concept of promotion of Croatian tourism product and to realize the promotional actions that are of common interest to all operators in the tourism industry in the domestic and international tourism market.

## **Marketing of national tourism organizations**

Course of development of tourism shows that tourism marketing begins to apply at the stage of development of tourism when facilities of tourist offer begin to surpass the needs of tourism demand.

It is sure that “the era of tourism marketing” as well as marketing concept in tourism, is based on the guidance of offer towards satisfying the identified needs of tourists – the customer or consumer. Kotler, Bowen and Makens (2010: 3) therefore state that “creating value and consumer satisfaction, are the heart of marketing in the hospitality and travel industry”.

However, in tourism, occurs some specificity in satisfying the needs of tourists with particular service. Tourist service accompanies tourist – consumer on his journey. In the tourism, the buyer or consumer travels to the point where the tourist service is provided, because it can be used only in that place. For marketing in tourism, it is possible to apply the principle as well as for marketing of services in relation to the marketing of products, and is distinguished by four fundamental principles: a) intangibility of the service; b) development of the standard and

quality of services; c) non-separability of customer and service; d) the inability to store the service (Kotler et al., 2010).

A special approach to marketing in the hospitality and tourist travel is determined by five separate elements: a) the use of more than four elements of marketing mix (product, channels of distribution, promotion and price), the hospitality and tourist trips are added four elements: people, packaging, programming and business collaboration; b) the great significance of the oral tradition in the advertising; c) greater use of emotional appeal in the promotion; d) increasing difficulties in testing of marketing concepts; e) an increase of the importance of business relationships with complementary organizations (Morrison, 1996). There are seven elements of marketing mix in tourism: cost, sales channels, product, promotion, people, physical facts and actions (Middleton, 2001).

It is sure that marketing in tourism has a key role because the customer rarely sees, feels and experiences the product that he intends to buy. To evaluate a product, customer must travel to a destination where the product is offered. Furthermore, marketing in tourism must focus on communicating with the consumer and, what is most important, on the value of the tourism product. Seaton and Bennett (1999: 27) state that marketing in tourism is "directly, target-oriented activity that offset the reality of travel destinations and interior suppliers with tourist needs". In accordance with the general principles of marketing in tourism, the main marketing activities of NTO-s are: 1. Promotion: a) advertising in relation with market share; b) participation in national and international fairs; c) the organization of study trips for journalists and representatives of tour operators and agents; d) maintenance of tourist-information offices in major tourist areas; e) the production and distribution of promotional materials; f) joint promotion with the tourist industry and with companies that are interested. 2. Researches: a) trends in the arrival of foreign tourists; b) the characteristics of tourist traffic and the share of certain emission markets; c) sources of information and reports in the media; d) the degree of satisfaction of tourists; e) the activities and behavior of tourists during a visit to a receptive country. 3. Cooperation with tourist industry: a) support for new and existing tourism economy; b) advice in product development; 4. Tourism information: a) organizing tourist-information centers at key locations in destination, such as at the airport and in the city center; b) sending tourist information to home address of a potential tourist (Weaver, Operman, 2000).

Marketing in tourism is a prediction of the changing desires of tourists. Retention and return of tourists is the essence of marketing in tourism that should be respected, but tourists want special value and new experiences.

Marketing activities of the NTO provides an extra dimension and the need for a new concept of NTO-s. Because of this, the essential function of the national tourism marketing organization is in promoting and communicating of brand and a tourist destination on the tourist market.

Destination branding relates to the integrity of the tourism product while taking into account all aspects of the site (Kozak, Balog, 2011). Brand of destination is defined as the perception of a place that reflects a shared memory of tourists (Cai, 2002). Ritchie and Ritchie (1998) define the destination brand, as a name, symbol, word or a graphic sign that creates the difference between tourist destinations, moreover, with the brand are transferred promised unforgettable experiences that are associated with the destination and which also serve to establish and strengthen the remembrance of pleasant memories and experiences relating to tourism destination. Branding a tourist destination is a set of marketing activities, such as: a) support for creation of names, symbols, logos, type fonts or bullets that are easy to recognize and distinguish the destination; b) transferring the expectations consistent, memorable and unique travel experiences that are associated with the destination; c) could be used for the consolidation and strengthening emotional bonds between visitors and destination; d) reducing the costs for

research of consumers' desires and understanding of the risk (Kozak, Balog, 2011). Overall, these activities serve to create the image of a tourist destination that has a positive effect on consumer choice destination (Blain et al., 2005).

**Table 1.** New trends in the tourism market, tourism marketing and national tourism organization

Tourism market

Before	Now
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- market driven by demand</li> <li>- the power of agent</li> <li>- the importance of brochures</li> <li>- booking in advance</li> <li>- packages</li> <li>- few available destinations</li> <li>- travel focused on relaxation and rest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- market driven by supply</li> <li>- increase of direct sales</li> <li>- new tools: cd-rom, internet, etc.</li> <li>- last-minute bookings</li> <li>- passive holidays</li> <li>- a lot of available destinations</li> <li>- holiday focused on experience</li> </ul>

Tourism marketing

Before	Now
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- individual tourism business</li> <li>- few differentiated products</li> <li>- the offer based on accommodation</li> <li>- offer created by intermediaries</li> <li>- homogenous market</li> <li>- the main objective is the sale/distribution</li> <li>- the importance of advertising and promotional materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- more tourism business</li> <li>- differentiation and specialization of products</li> <li>- the offer based on the experience</li> <li>- locally generated tourist offer</li> <li>- more market segments</li> <li>- consumers as a major goal</li> <li>- the importance of new technologies</li> </ul>

NTO

Before	Now
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the importance of the tourism sector</li> <li>- low investment control</li> <li>- public sources of income</li> <li>- promotion and communication of geographical/administrative units</li> <li>- etc..</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- closer cooperation with the private sector</li> <li>- greater control of investment</li> <li>- higher contribution from the private sector</li> <li>- promotion and communication of brand and products</li> <li>- etc..</li> </ul>

Source: systematization of author's.

Pike (2005: 259) states that “destination branding is a more complex process than other products and services for several reasons”. First, the destination consists of multidimensional and diverse offerings, secondly, there are numerous participants and policy-making in destination marketing organization (DMO) which is funded by the state and tour operators.

Modern trends in tourism define new tasks and objectives of the marketing of NTO: a) increase in foreign tourist arrivals; b) higher spendings of the tourists; c) the reduction of seasonality (extension of the tourist season); d) 'import' tourism to areas that until now have not been very touristic; e) improve the image of destinations; f) amortize the impact of individual circumstances which are very important for tourism, which can occur frequently, such as terrorism, epidemic diseases (UNWTO, 2003). Instruments for the realization of the objectives of the national tourism marketing organization are based on: a) the international destination marketing; b) the promotion of tourism in the pre-season; c) the compliance of regional development, marketing and promotion; d) a greater use

of the media, promoting product brands; e) the environmental protection measures; f) on study trips of media and tour operators.

According to the above mentioned, marketing of the NTO can be defined as activities with which the NTO identifies its tourists, actual and potential, communicates with them because of cognition and the impact on their desires, needs and motives at the local, regional, national, and international level, and consequently formulate and adapts certain tourism products with the aim of satisfying tourists but also reaching own goals.

## Methodology and research results

The study was conducted during the month of December 2012, through a questionnaire on a sample of 37 representatives-executives from tourist boards and a questionnaire on a sample of 30 representatives-executives in tourist industry (hotels and tourist mediation), throughout coastal counties – Dalmatia, the most important tourism region of Croatia.

Results of the research indicate that representatives of tourist boards consider promotion of the tourist destinations as the most important role of the tourist community, because 59.5 percent of the representatives of tourist boards highlighted promotion of tourist destinations in the first place (out of 9 given roles). Second most important role of the tourist board is branding of tourist destination, because 18.9 percent of the representatives of tourist boards believes that branding of tourist destination is one of the priorities of a tourist board. The concept of marketing of tourist destination is the third most important role of the tourist board. However, none of the representatives highlighted marketing as a priority (first) role of the tourist boards. Creation and promotion of new tourism products in the tourism market is the fourth most important role of tourist boards according to directors of the tourist boards. Only one representative from the tourist boards has put promotion and affirmation of new tourism products in the tourist market in the first place as the main role of tourist boards. In fact, this activity is the basis for the marketing strategy of tourist destination. Informing tourists is the fifth most important role of tourist boards, because 10.7 percent of the tourist board directors considered that the primary role of the tourist boards is informing visitors. Sixth most important role is creating a touristic climate in the tourist destination because 8.1 percent of tourist boards directors consider this role as the primary role of tourist boards. The improvement of the tourist offer of destination is the seventh most important role of tourist boards. It is indicative that none of the representatives of tourist boards consider that the improvement of quality tourism offer of destination is one of the primary tasks of the boards as a base of strategy of tourism destination marketing. The eighth-ranked role is expanding tourist culture and hospitality of local people, and the ninth is, the role of tourist boards in arranging tourist destinations. The reason for the low ranking of two proposed roles is that none of the survey participants consider educational function of tourist board in the design of marketing of tourist destinations as preferred. It is also proven by the next stage of research when it was tested, among the representatives of tourist board, the role of tourism board in the concept of tourism destination marketing. In first place is the role of boards in promoting tourism destinations, because 75.7 percent of examinees considered promotion as the main role and activities of the tourism board in the concept of marketing of tourist destination.

Creating a new tourism destination product is in the second place in the “hierarchy” of roles of tourist boards. However, only 8.1 percent of surveyed believe that the creation of new tourism products is a primary role of tourism board in the concept of marketing of tourist destination. Connection of tourism supply and demand is the third most important role of tourism board in the design of marketing of tourist destination. Only 5.4 percent of surveyed from

tourism boards believe that with the establishment of a new organization of tourist boards (DMO) is created a new link between travel supply and demand as well as new concepts of marketing of tourist destination in which tourist board operates.

48.7 percent of the representatives think that the role of the tourism boards in defining the concept of marketing of tourist destinations is very important, 56 percent of the surveyed think that the role is significant, and 5.3 percent of the representatives think that the role of tourism boards in concept of marketing of tourist destination is of minor importance.

Exploring the process of how tourism board contributes to the branding of its tourist destinations, tourist boards' representatives expressed their attitude; 35.1 percent said that the use of new promotional tools (web and social networks) is the most important, 35.1 percent of representatives have put investment in the promotion of the destination in the second place, 24.3 percent have put the increase in the quality of tourist offer in the third place, and 5.4 percent have put educated and hospitable locals and tourism workers in the fourth place. Especially important in the research are the attitudes towards the question: how does the local environment respects thinking and actions of tourist board in branding of tourist destination. 75.7 percent of the representatives of tourist boards believe that the local community partially respects the opinion and activities of tourist board in branding of tourist destination while 16.2 percent fully respect the opinions and activities of tourist board in branding tourist destination. At the same time, a research-through-the questionnaire which was attended by 30 senior representatives of the tourist industry (hotels and tourist mediation) was conducted. Results of the research indicate that the tourist industry representatives, 26.7 percent, believe that the most important role of tourist board is branding of the tourist destination, and 23.3 percent of the representatives from the tourist industry believe that the second most important role of tourist boards is promotion of tourism destination. The creation of marketing of tourist destination, according to the attitudes of representatives of tourism economy, is the third most important role of tourist board (13.3 percent). The fourth most important role of tourist boards is the joint marketing activities of the tourist boards with tourist economy (6.7 percent). Arrangement of tourist destinations is the fifth most important role of tourist boards and creation and affirmation on the market of new tourism products is the sixth. None of the participants in the tourist industry listed these answers in priority roles of tourist boards. The seventh most important role of tourist boards is the improvement of the offer of tourist destination. Informing tourists is the eight most important role of the tourism boards. The lowest in the ranking, according to the examinees attitude, are these two roles of the tourism board: expansion of the tourism culture and hospitality among the local population and tourism workers, and creating an atmosphere of tourism in the tourist destination.

Primary attitude (46.7 percent) of the representatives in tourism industry about the role of tourism boards in concept of marketing of tourist destination refers to the promotion of destination. Joint activities of the tourist board with economy of tourist destination in the concept of marketing of tourist destinations is the second most important role according to the representatives from tourism industry (30 percent). Creation of a new tourism destination product is the third most important (13.3 percent) role of tourism board in concept of marketing of tourism destinations. Fourth most important role is connecting tourism supply of destination and tourism demand. According to attitudes of representatives from the tourist industry increasing of the quality of tourists stay is the lowest role in ranking in concept of marketing of tourism destination.

For 60 percent of the representatives from the tourist industry, the significance of tourism boards in the concept of marketing of tourist destination, is very high, for 23.3 percent of them is high and for 16.7 percent of

representatives boards have no particular meaning and according to them, tourism would take place in destination without tourist board.

40 percent of the representatives from the tourist industry think that the branding of tourist destination is the most important role, and it is reflected through joint promotional activities with the tourist industry. The second most important role (26.7%) of tourism boards in branding of tourist destination is based on greater financial investment in promotion of destination. Increase of the quality of tourist offer is the third most important role (20.0%) of tourism boards in branding of tourist destination. Education and increase in hospitality of local population and tourism workers is the fourth most important role (10.0%), and the use of new promotional tools (web and social networks) is the fifth most important role (3.3%) of tourism boards in the branding of tourist destination.

Tourist economy (with high percentage 83.3%) partially respects the opinion and actions of tourist boards. With 13.3 percent always and completely, and with of 3.4 percent, tourist economy respects minimally opinions and activities of tourism boards in branding of tourist destination.

## Discussion

Studies show that 75.7 percent of the representatives from tourist boards expressed the view that the promotion of tourist destination is the primary role of tourist boards. For 18.9 percent of surveyed in tourist boards, branding of tourist destination is the second most important role of the tourist board. In contrast, none of the representatives from tourist boards believe that the creation of marketing a tourist destination is one of the most important roles in the functioning of the tourist board.

Creation and recognition of tourism products in the tourism market is for only 2.7 percent of representatives from tourism boards a primary role of tourist board. Improvement of the offer of tourism destination is the seventh most important role of the tourist boards. Based on the responses from the first question, where representatives of the tourism boards ranked very low the role of tourism boards in creation and promotion of tourism products in the tourist market as well as improvement of the offer of tourism destination, it is possible to determine the activities of the tourist boards and NTO-s that are insufficient in design of marketing of tourism destinations. Without improvement of tourist destination offer and creation of new tourism products and their affirmation in the tourism market it is certainly difficult to think about the concept of marketing of tourist destination.

Expansion of the tourism culture and hospitality of the local population is at the bottom of the priority list of actions and roles of tourist boards. Without the hospitality and the general culture of local population, with professionalism of tour operators, it is very difficult to build a development and marketing concept of the tourist destination because the human resources are the most important element "living element" of tourism destination. Connecting tourism supply and tourism demand is for only 5.4 percent of the representatives of tourist boards a primary role of tourism boards in the concept of marketing of tourist destination. It is certain that in the system of tourist boards and NTO-s, members still do not think about new forms of organization (DMO), that would become a link between tourism supply and tourism demand towards the new marketing strategy of tourism destination. The study revealed that in the branding of tourist destination the role of tourist board is the most important in the application of new promotional tools (web and social networks), 35.1%, and the second most important role (35.1%) is in the investment in promotion of the tourist destination and third most important role is increasement of quality of the tourism product destination. Research also indicates that 75.7 percent of the representatives of tourist boards believe that the local community only partially respects the opinion and activities of tourist board in branding of

tourist destination. Precisely, these results suggest the disparity of attitudes and activities of tourist boards and the actual role of NTO in the marketing of tourist destinations. For the tourist economy the most important role (26.7% of representatives) of tourist boards is branding of tourist destination and the second most important (23.3%) is the promotion of tourist destination. However, it is indicative that for the representatives of the tourist industry the third most important role of tourist boards (13.3%) is to create a marketing for tourism destination and the fourth most important (6.7%) is the role of joint marketing activities with the tourist industry. These results are best illustrated by the fact that the tourist economy (with a high percentage of 83.3%) partially respects the opinion and actions of tourist board in branding of tourist destination, what indicates that there are bigger opportunities for mutual respect and joint activities between tourism boards and the real sector, in the creation of marketing of tourist destination. The research confirmed the assumption of high “mythical” meaning of promotion, in the strategy of marketing of NTO. At the same time, a supporting role of NTO-s was proved in the creation and affirmation of new tourism products in the tourism market, and what should be the basic function of the marketing strategy of the NTO.

## Conclusions

NTO had an important role in development of Croatian tourism so far. The role of the NTO has changed over time, depending on its position in the tourism system and the position of tourism in the economic policy. By defining the concept and functions of the NTO, the chronology of development of NTO is determined, from a theoretical and practical stand. Through definition of marketing of NTO, and the basic principles of marketing in tourism, the position and role of national tourist boards in creating the marketing strategy of tourism is determined, at the local, regional and national level.

The starting point in the study is based on the fact that the big, mythical importance is given to the role of national tourist boards in promoting and branding of tourist destinations, and at the same time, ignoring the real situation in the development of tourism offer and in creation and promotion of new tourism products in the market. These facts have been proven in this paper. Representatives of tourist boards and representatives of the tourist industry stated in research that the promotion and branding of tourism destinations are two primary roles of tourist boards. However, research shows quite opposite opinions when it comes to marketing strategies in tourism destinations. The role of tourism board is secondary in design of marketing strategy of tourist destination because none of the representatives of the tourism boards in research indicated the strategy of marketing of tourist destination as the main role of the tourist board. For the representatives of tourist boards primary role in branding of tourist destinations have new promotional tools (internet, social networks) and additional investments in promotion of tourist destinations. For the representatives of the tourist industry creation of marketing strategies of tourism destination is one of the most important roles of the tourist board. In fact, the research confirmed that the most important role of the NTO is to promote the destination. For the representatives of the tourist industry, joint promotional activities between tourism economy and tourism boards, and increasing the quality of tourism, are the main preconditions for successful branding of tourist destination while representatives of tourist boards think that the main precondition is promotion, but promotion through new promotional tools (internet and social networks). The research puts the role of NTO in the marketing strategy of tourist destination in realistic framework. However, it provides incentives for more thorough research of the role and place of the NTO in the entire tourism system.

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