

CHAPTER 12



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THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURAL TOURISM ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE VRNJAČKE SPA BRAND

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Summary: The subject of this paper is the analysis of the brand with a view to marketing tools that could be used to position Vrnjačka SPA both on the domestic and international markets. The goal of the work is to find out how recognizable the brand of Vrnjačka SPA is. The most important task is the connection between consumers and the brand, so the authors decided on Vrnjačka SPA. It is known that the image of the brand represented a certain product, so the price was determined based on that. In modern conditions, when IT technology is represented, the brand has greater importance and the availability of information is at a high level. That's why we can say that the brand today represents the values and beliefs of consumers, on the basis of which the image is created. The brand appears in all forms and has been around for centuries. As such a name, its identity creation must involve a large number of experts. Namely, competition is increasingly present for most tourist destinations because they provide the same or similar services, and therefore branding is one of the primary goals of marketing. By branding tourist destinations, numerous economic goals are achieved in such a way as to increase the number of tourists and encourage investment, and for this reason the authors decided on one of the most famous tourist destinations in Serbia. The literature that is available is not represented in sufficient, so there is a need for research. The research was conducted in May 2023. using the survey method, questionnaire technique, on a sample of 150 respondents. Based on the collected data, an analysis was performed using the SPSS program, and the obtained results were presented. The paper gives further guidelines on how the management of Vrnjačka SPA can be used for better and better positioning of Vrnjačka SPA.

Key words: Brand, personal branding, marketing, tourist destination, research and Vrnjačka SPA.

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1. Introduction

Great market competition in the field of tourism is expanding and developing more and more. So the branding of a tourist destination represents an important challenge in the market competition in the tourist market. Branding a tourist destination is a concept that has been applied since the end of the 20th century. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, within the field of marketing, the term »brand« stands out, which is simply interpreted as a desirable consequence of investing in marketing activities with the aim of creating product recognition in target markets (Dašić et al., 2021). Namely, the brand combines all the potentials of a certain tourist spot into a single whole, which conveys a recognizable identity that sets the destination apart from other competitors (Tsaour et al., 2016). The role of branding a tourist destination is to create a perception of recognition and uniqueness of a tourist destination in the world of tourists (Mandarić, 2016). In the literature, we can find a large number of works dealing with the branding of a tourist destination (Bigović, 2016). As for scientific works related to the branding of health tourism, there is a very small number of them (Boga et al., 2011). According to data from the World Tourism Organization and the European Travel Commission, health tourism is an important segment of tourism and is the basis for travel to improve health and prevent certain diseases (World Tourism Organization and European Travel Commission, 2018). Health tourism consists of two elements: wellness and medical (World Tourism Organization and European Travel Commission, 2018). The wellness tourism offer has the task of providing disease prevention, general health, a holistic approach to health and spiritual balance (Sziva et al., 2017). so that wellness represents a healthy balance between mind and body and thus improves the human condition (Smith et al., 2006). Branding of tourist destinations in Serbia is an under-researched area, so this paper is based on the research of branding of tourist destinations with special reference to Vrnjačka SPA.

2. The relationship between the brand and the tourist destination

A brand implies a promise that a seller makes to customers, so it is considered one of the most important tasks of the marketing department (Armstrong et al., 2014). The most significant and one of the most acceptable definitions of a brand

is the one proposed by the Marketing Association in 1960, which defined a brand as a name, term, sign, symbol or design set of the above that aims to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to make them difference compared to other competitors (Wood, 2000). The Serbian market was influenced by the world economy and enabled the growth of tourist companies and products. The use of marketing tools enables a better financial result, and tourist companies operate in the long term because they achieve certain financial values. The brand is a source of competitive advantage, creates value for consumers and significantly enables the position of the brand in relation to the competition. In order to build a successful brand, it is necessary to use marketing activities continuously and for a long period of time, so that way the management will adopt the decision to invest in the brand (Milisavljević et al., 2004). Every brand aims to be customer/consumer oriented. In order to attract consumers, it is necessary to identify the need for the brand. Need is a condition in people that arouses emotional and physical dissatisfaction, and for these reasons tension is created. So the satisfaction of needs creates enjoyment, and enjoyment is the need that almost all human efforts revolve around (Živković, 2011).

The effectiveness of the brand represents what consumers see, hear, learn, think and feel about the brand over time, that is, from the emotions that are created in their consciousness and experiences with the brand. Based on the above, it is the basis of the value of the brand, as well as its construction in the future (Gobe, 2006). While Kotler believes that in order to build and enable brand expansion, it is necessary to establish three dimensions: clarity, consistency and leadership that adapts to environmental conditions with special attention to competitors and monitoring new technologies that are used in marketing (Kotler, 2006).

It is known that tourists are not satisfied only with a lower price, warm sea or excellent food. Tourists today are looking for additional value in the tourist offer, undiscovered destinations as well as exciting experiences. It is expected that international tourism will increase in the future by as much as it was in the 50s of the last century. Expectations are that there will be around 1.8 million tourists in 2030 (www.unwto.org).

Organizations themselves can be the subject of branding (Kasapi et al., 2017). branding of tourist destinations was not implemented until the end of the twentieth century. The authors of one study integrated the concept of branding and tourist destinations in late 1998 (Pritchard et al., 1998). After the completion of this work, the concept of branding a tourist destination becomes the subject of research by other authors, and the meaning itself is extended to other segments, so terms such as the study of the origin of countries and brand loyalty were combined in research on the branding of tourist destinations (Papadopoulos, 2004).

3. Tourism destination branding strategies

Syllables and certain phrases that are unique and attractive in appearance represent an important study that a tourist destination possesses (Gali et al., 2016). So the logo design must contain the organization's name, design, slogan and various symbols that are part of the branding strategy of a number of organizations (Foroudi et al., 2014). If the logo design itself is analyzed, it does not have a significant impact on the decision to choose a certain tourist destination, so branding cannot be based only on the logo design (Blain et al., 2014). Certain authors Seraphin, Pilato & Platana (2017) emphasize that now tourist destinations are increasingly moving away from a strategy based on universal stereotypes of strategies applicable to all marketing elements.

When choosing a branding strategy, it is of great importance to incorporate elements that are important for social identity, the community within the destination, and its sustainability (Dioko, 2015). In order to choose the best branding strategy, it is necessary to have the basis of the tourist destination that is being branded (Seraphin et al., 2018). Brand strategy is built on the following elements: positioning, mission, value proposition, promise and architecture (Kotler, 2006). While De Freitas Santos, Vareiro, Remoaldoi Cadima Riberio (2016) point out various benefits of large cultural events, namely: improving the image of the city, influencing the sense of belonging, increasing trust and cooperation in the community, attracting tourists and investors and economic growth. During the design of the brand strategy, a precise and concise interpretation of the results of the previous brand analysis is achieved. For all destinations, it is necessary to choose an appropriate branding strategy (Bianchi et al., 2011). If it is a tourist destination with a negative image, tourists who do not live there and do not know anyone who lives there get information through the media and nowadays through social networks. The information and image that was built in such a way cannot give a realistic picture of that tourist place (Seraphin et al., 2016). But if there is already a negative impact related to a certain tourist destination, it is necessary to correct that negative image and form a new one (Chacko et al., 2008). In today's conditions, the creation of a brand is formed based on the opinions and satisfaction of consumers in tourism (Štetić et al., 2014). Below is a table of overviews of research into the branding of tourist destinations by years when certain innovations were introduced.

Table 1. Overview of research in the field of destination new SPAper branding

Authors	Year	Summary
Seraphin, Yallop, Capatina and Gowreesunkar	2018	Branding or rebranding strategies implemented by tourism organizations must contain the core of the destination itself
Platania, Pilato & Seraphin	2017	Destinations are increasingly moving away from strategies based on universal stereotypes to strategies applicable to all situations
Richards	2017	Events contribute to the creation of places/ destinations
Gali, Camprubi & Donaire	2016	The importance of slogans and other segments of the logo
Kladou, Kevaratzis, Rigopoulou & Salonika	2016	A logo alone is not enough when it comes to branding a destination
Seraphin, Ambaye, Gowreesunkar & Bonnardel	2016	A branding strategy should require a multifaceted approach
De Freitas Santos, Vareiro, Remoaldo and Cadima Ribeiro	2016	The role of major cultural events in improving the image of the destination
S�eraphin, H., Butcher, J. & Konstanje, M.	2016	Identifying adequate branding is of utmost importance for destinations with a negative image
Dioko	2015	Social identity, community within the destination and sustainability of the same efficiency of the same
Foroudi, Melewar & Gupta	2014	Key elements of the logo
Blain, Levy & Ritchie	2014	Tourism organizations focus on logo design despite its low effectiveness
Stubbs	2012	Purpose of branding strategy
Pike & Mason	2011	Defining a successful branding strategy for tourism organizations
Bianchy & Pike	2011	A successful branding strategy can lead to customer loyalty
Saraniemi	2010	The branding strategy of the destination should be a joint creation of all stakeholders
Chako & Marcell	2008	Strategy for repositioning the destination
Park & Petrick	2005	Benefits of branding for a specific destination
Marti	2005	Logo benefits

Source: S eraphin, H., Zaman, M., Olver, S., Bourliataux-Lajoinie, S., & Dosquet, F. (2019).

4. Branding of the Vrnjačka SPA

The basic task of branding Vrnjačka SPA is observed through the stages of guiding tourists through the place in order to get to know the destination, and later on they make a recommendation and they make a repeat visit. In order to achieve this goal, it is necessary to differentiate Vrnjačka SPA from other SPAs, first of all by developing the awareness of recognizing new consumers and forming a new positive image in the light of a strong and convincing brand.

In order to create the brand of Vrnjačka SPA in the best possible way, you need marketing knowledge and an understanding that different places attract different tourists. Managers dealing with marketing should determine what tourists want and what their expectations are, and then their travel motives. Some tourists have an adventurous spirit and have a desire to be different from others, some are tired of everyday life, some want to establish a personal and emotional balance, some want to acquire new skills and find out what is offered in different environments.

Branding the Vrnjačka SPA is a real challenge because it stands out from other SPAs in terms of features and values, and the further direction of development is reflected in health, wellness and forest tourism. The plan that the management must form in order to promote it is reflected in the following: development of SPA tourism in the said SPA, investment in infrastructure, better economic standard of the municipality's residents, promotion on the domestic and international market and provision of other manifestations during the summer period. The most important brands have teams, a large number of experts who are able to design and realize their visions following the reaction of the domestic and foreign markets.

In order to better define the strategy for Vrnjačka SPA, it is necessary to carry out certain steps, namely: plans, ensure joint investments, good communication, organize cultural and sports events, organize transportation services especially with the countries that are in the region, organize extensive hiking, and all with the aim of making the place as attractive and attractive as possible. Also, we should not ignore the fact that the management of the municipality understands the need for branding as part of the strategy, and therefore it is necessary to define it for further direction and development. Only in this way can Vrnjačka SPA realize its mission and meet expectations.

The content of branding as well as the sustainable development of tourism in Vrnjačka SPA represents a thoughtful balancing and application of economic, social, cultural and ecological principles. The management of Vrnjačka SPA must know that no one has the right, nor a monopoly, to adopt decisions on the tourist

development of the municipality of Vrnjačka SPA at their own discretion, but must take into account the goals and interests of current and future generations.

In the continuation of the work, the authors will present the research that was done in order for the management of Vrnjačka SPA to get more precise information about what its users think about branding.

4.1. Work methodology

The total research sample consists of 150 respondents of both sexes, of different ages and educational levels. The research was conducted in the period from the beginning of May to the end of May 2023 in the way that respondents were given a questionnaire to fill out. The subject of the research is the analysis of the brand in order to use the positioning of Vrnjačka SPA both on the domestic and foreign markets. Hypotheses of the research: H0 Vrnjačka SPA is a recognizable brand based on the opinions of users. H1 The main association for Vrnjačka SPA is the SPA, i.e. Banking tourism. H2 Price is a satisfactory factor according to users. H3 Vrnjačka SPA has distinctive health tourism according to users.

In relation to the gender of the respondents (Table 1), more than half of the sample consists of female respondents (59.3%) and male respondents make up 40.7% of the entire research sample. The sample is approximately uniform according to the gender of the respondents.

Table 2. Structure of the sample in relation to the sex of the respondents

Gender	f	%
Male	61	40,7
Ladies	89	59,3
Total (Σ)	150	100,0

Source: Authors

When it comes to the age of the respondent (table 2), most of the respondents are in the age category of 35 to 45 years (36.7%). This is followed by respondents aged 45 to 55 (30.0%) and respondents older than 55 (28.7%). The smallest part of the research sample consists of respondents aged 25 to 35 (4.7%), and respondents younger than 25 are not represented in the survey.

Table 3. Structure of the sample in relation to the age of the respondents

Age	f	%
From 25 to 35	7	4,7
from 35 to 45	55	36,7
From 45 to 55	45	30,0
Across 55	43	28,7
Total (Σ)	150	100,0

Source: Authors

In relation to the level of education of the respondents (Table 3), most respondents from the research have completed higher education (46.7%). Respondents with a university degree (master's degree, doctorate) are in second place in terms of number, and they make up 42.7% of the entire research sample. The smallest part of the sample consists of respondents who have completed secondary education (10.7%).

Table 4. Structure of the sample in relation to the level of education of the respondents

Education	f	%
SSS	16	10,7
College	70	46,7
Faculty (master's degree, doctorate)	64	42,7
Total (Σ)	150	100,0

Source: Authors

When it comes to the social status of the respondents (Table 4), respondents who are employed (79.3%) and respondents who are retired (20.7%) participated in the research. The survey does not include respondents who are studying, are not employed or entrepreneurs.

Table 5. Structure of the sample in relation to the social status of the respondents

Social status	f	%
Employed	119	79,3
Pensioner	31	20,7
Total (Σ)	150	100,0

Source: Authors

In relation to the monthly income of the respondents (Table 5), the majority of respondents, almost half of the entire research sample, earn monthly from 251 to 450 euros (48.7%). In addition, 23.3% of respondents earn from 451 to 600 euros per month. Respondents who earn up to 250 euros (5.3%) or more than 600 euros per month (6.0%) are represented in a much smaller percentage. Also, 16.7% of respondents did not want to disclose their monthly income.

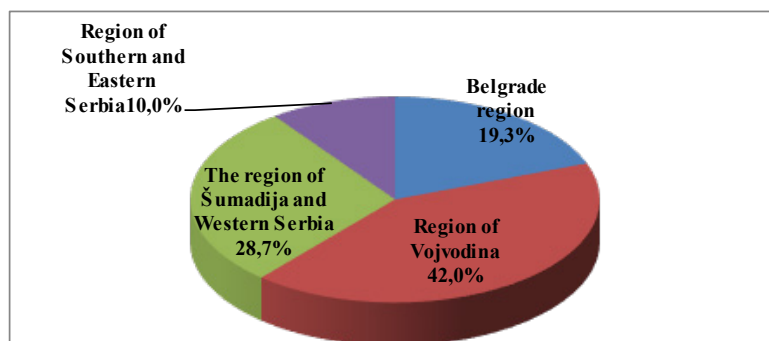
Table 6. Structure of the sample in relation to the monthly income of the respondents

Mesečni prihodi	f	%
up to 250 euros	8	5,3
from 251 to 450 euros	73	48,7
from 451 to 600 euros	35	23,3
over 600 euros	9	6,0
I don't want to say	25	16,7
Total (Σ)	150	100,0

Source: Authors

When it comes to the respondent's place of residence (Graph 1), the majority of survey respondents live in the Vojvodina region (42.0%). Respondents residing in the region of Šumadija and Western Serbia (28.7%) are in second place in terms of number, and respondents living in the Belgrade region (19.3%) are in third place. The smallest part of the research sample consists of respondents with a place of residence in Southern and Eastern Serbia (10.0%), and respondents with a residence in Kosovo and Metohija are not represented in the survey.

Graph 1. Structure of the sample in relation to the respondents' place of residence



Source: Authors

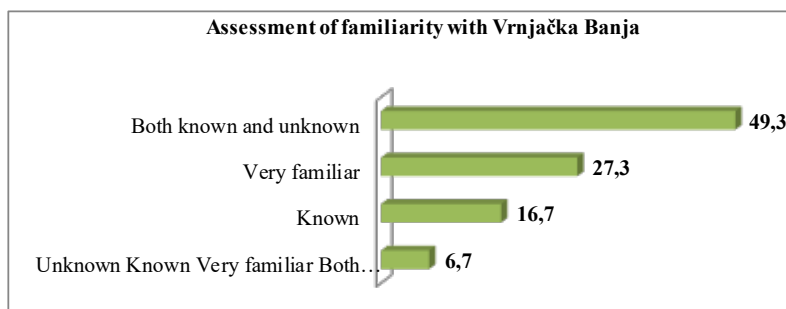
4. 2. Research results

The aim of this research was to examine the Vrnjačke Banje brand, that is, to examine the knowledge of the Vrnjačke Banje brand. In order to carry out the research, a questionnaire was created that consisted of one scale, several closed-ended questions and a section related to the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, which aimed to collect data about the brand of this SPA. The scaled part of the questionnaire consists of 10 Likert-type questions, with respondents' answers ranging from 1- I do not agree at all to 5- I completely agree. The questionnaire used also contains 3 questions related to the self-assessment of knowledge of this SPA, followed by questions about the associations that respondents have when they think of Vrnjačka SPA and their reasons for visiting this SPA.

4.3. Knowledge of Vrnjačka SPA

When it comes to the self-assessment of knowledge of the Vrnjačka Banje brand, the average rating at the level of the entire sample of respondents is $AS=3.65$, $SD=0.956$. The lowest score was 2 and the highest was 5. The findings indicate that the respondents believe that they have an above-average knowledge of Vrnjačka SPA, which is shown in the graph below (Graph 2).

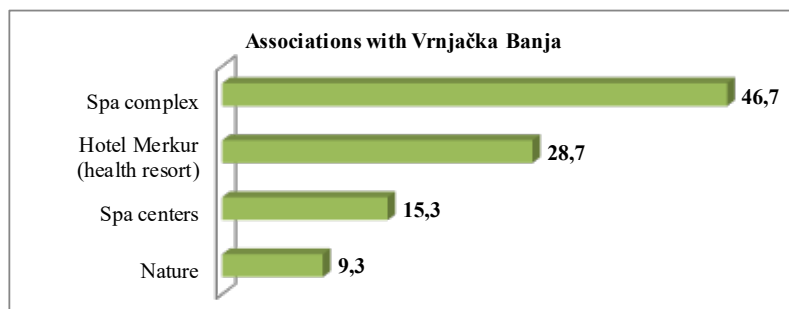
Graph 2. Assessment of familiarity with Vrnjačka



Source: Authors

Half of the respondents (49.3%) gave a score of 3 (Both known and unknown) and more than a quarter of the sample (27.3%) gave a score of 5 (Very familiar). Grade 4 (Known) was given by 16.7% of respondents and grade 2 (Unknown) by 6.7%. In the research, there were no respondents who rated their knowledge of Vrnjačka SPA as 1 (Very unknown).

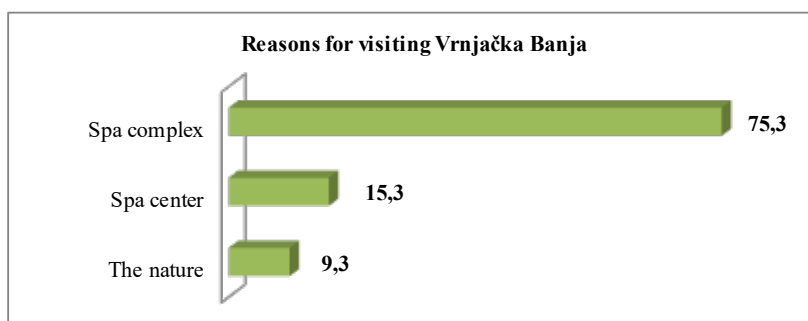
Graph 3. Associations to Vrnjačka SPA



Source: Authors

To the question “When you think of Vrnjačka SPA, what does it remind you of?”, the respondents mostly gave the answer SPA complex, which was chosen by almost half of the respondents (46.7%). The next association is Hotel merkur (28.7%), and to a lesser extent, respondents cited SPA centers (15.3%) and nature (9.3%) as associations with Vrnjačka SPA. It is interesting that no respondent chose the answers medicinal springs or clean air, which were also offered as a possibility (Graph 3).

Graph 4. Reasons for visiting Vrnjačka SPA



Source: Authors

When it comes to the reasons for visiting Vrnjačka SPA (Chart 4), three quarters of respondents chose the Banjski complex (75.3%) as the reason. A significantly smaller percentage of respondents chose SPA centers (15.3%) and nature (9.3%) as the reason. The Vrnjačke SPA (BVB) brand scale, as already mentioned, consists of 10 Likert-type statements. All statements have a direct direction and the average at the level of the entire scale is obtained by adding all statements

and dividing by the number 10. The theoretical range of the scale ranges from a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 5.

Table 7. Reliability of the BVB scale

Scale	Cronbach's coefficient (α)	Number of claims
PBVB	0,719	10

Source: Authors

When it comes to the reliability of the BVB scale (Table 6), it was confirmed that the scale has acceptable reliability ($\alpha > 0.70$). A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of $\alpha = 0.719$ was obtained at the level of 10 items.

Tabela 8. Izražženost skorova na skali PBVB

Scale	MIN	MAX	AS	SD
PBVB	3	5	4,55	0,213

Source: Authors

In relation to the expressiveness of the results on the BVB scale, the obtained results showed that there is a very high expressiveness on the Vrnjačka SPA brand scale (Table 7). Namely, an average of $AS = 4.55$, $SD = 0.213$ was obtained, which approaches the theoretical maximum. The empirical minimum is 3 and the maximum is 5.

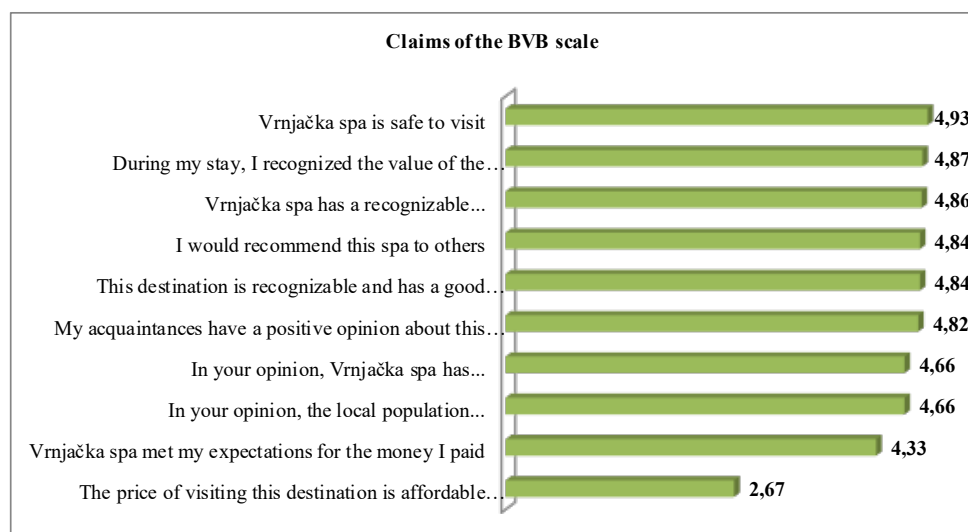
Table 9. Expression of BVB at the level of claims

Claims of the BVB scale	MIN	MAX	AS	SD
In your opinion, the local population of VB is friendly	3	5	4,66	0,516
In your opinion, VB has unique and recognizable attractions that are known in Serbia and in other countries	3	5	4,66	0,516
The price of visiting this destination is affordable compared to others	2	5	2,67	0,596
VB met my expectations for the money I paid	3	5	4,33	0,525
My acquaintances have a positive opinion about this SPA	3	5	4,82	0,403
This destination is recognizable and has a good reputation	3	5	4,84	0,479
During my stay I recognized the value of VB	3	5	4,87	0,372
I would recommend this SPA to others	3	5	4,84	0,435
Vrnjačka SPA has distinctive health tourism	3	5	4,86	0,367
VB is safe to visit	3	5	4,93	0,286

Source: Authors

When it comes to the expression on the statements of the BVB scale (Table 8), a very high expression was obtained on almost all the statements of the scale. The highest score was obtained for the claim that Vrnjačka SPA is safe for visits (AS=4.93, SD=0.286). A very high level of expression was also obtained for the claims During my stay I recognized the value of Vrnjačka SPA (AS=4.87, SD=0.372) and Vrnjačka SPA has recognizable health tourism (AS=4.86, SD=0.367). By far the lowest expression was obtained for the statement The price of a visit to this destination is affordable compared to others (AS=2.67, SD=0.596). The empirical minimum for this statement is only 2 and the maximum is 5. For all other statements of the BVB scale, a very high expression was obtained (Chart 5).

Graph 5. Expression of BVB at the level of claims



Source: Authors

In addition to examining the level of expressiveness of scores on the BVB scale at the level of the entire sample, the research also examined the existence of differences in the expressiveness of scores in relation to the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents: gender, age, level of education, social status, amount of monthly income of the respondents and in relation to the respondent's place of residence. In relation to the gender of the respondents (Table 9), it was confirmed that there are statistically significant differences in the expression of scores on the BVB scale ($t=2.035$, $p=0.044$).

Table 10. Differences in the expression of BVB in relation to the gender of the respondents

Scale	Gender	AS	SD	t	p
BVB	Muški	4,59	0,216	2,035	0,044*
	Ženski	4,52	0,206		

$df=150$; $p<0,05^*$; Source: Authors

The obtained difference is significant at the significance level of $p<0.05$ and indicates that male respondents ($AS=4.59$, $SD=0.216$) have on average better knowledge of the Vrnjačke SPA brand compared to female respondents ($AS=4.52$, $SD=0.206$). When it comes to the age of the respondents (Table 10), it was confirmed that there is a statistically significant difference in the expressiveness of the scores on the BVB scale ($F=2.920$, $p=0.036$). The obtained difference is significant at the significance level of $p<0.05$.

Table 11. Differences in the expression of BVB in relation to the age of the subjects

Scale	Starost	AS	SD	F	p
BVB	From 25 to 35	4,33	0,482	2,920	0,036*
	From 35 to 45	4,58	0,204		
	From 45 to 55	4,55	0,187		
	Across 55	4,54	0,169		

$df=3$; $p<0,05^*$; Source: Authors

Subsequent analysis showed that respondents aged 25 to 35 years ($AS=4.33$, $SD=0.482$) have a significantly lower score on this scale compared to respondents aged 35 to 45 years ($AS=4.58$, $SD=0.204$), respondents aged 45 to 55 ($AS=4.55$, $SD=0.187$) and respondents aged over 55 ($AS=4.54$, $SD=0.169$). In relation to the level of education of the respondents (Table 11), the existence of a statistically significant difference in the expression of BVB was also confirmed ($F=8.062$, $p=0.000$). The obtained difference is high and significant at the significance level of $p<0.01$.

Table 12. Differences in the expression of BVB in relation to the level of education of the respondents

Scale	Level of Education	AS	SD	F	p
BVB	SSS	4,36	0,405	8,062	0,000**
	College	4,55	0,175		
	Faculty (Mr., Dr.)	4,59	0,155		

*df=2; p<0,01**,*; Source: Authors*

Subsequent analysis (LSD) showed that the respondents with completed secondary school (AS=4.36, SD=0.405) have significantly lower scores both in relation to respondents with completed higher education (AS=4.55, SD=0.175), and in relation to respondents with a university degree (AS=4.59, SD=0.155) (Table 12).

Table 13. Comparative analysis of VBV in relation to the level of education of the respondents

vs	F	p
College	0,001**	
Faculty (Mr., Dr.)	0,000**	0,267

*df=2; p<0,01**; Source: Authors*

When it comes to the social status of the respondents (Table 13), no statistically significant difference in the expression of BVB was confirmed ($t=-0.106$, $p=0.916$). A somewhat higher expression was obtained in respondents who are retired (AS=4.57, SD=0.186) compared to respondents who are employed, in whom a lower expression was obtained on the BVB scale (AS=4.53, SD=0.220). As already mentioned, these are minimal differences that did not show statistical significance.

Table 14. Differences in the expression of BVB in relation to the social status of the respondents

Scale	Social status	AS	SD	t	p
BVB	Employed	4,53	0,220	-0,106	0,916
	Pensioner	4,57	0,186		

df=150; Source: Authors

When we talk about the monthly income of the respondents (Table 14), the existence of a statistically significant difference in the expression of BVB was confirmed ($F=4.249$, $p=0.003$). The obtained difference is high and significant at the significance level of $p<0.01$.

Table 15. Differences in the expression of BVB in relation to the amount of monthly income of the respondents

Scale	Monthly income	AS	SD	F	p
BVB	up to 250 euros	4,79	0,173	4,249	0,003**
	from 251 to 450 euros	4,57	0,164		
	from 451 to 600 eura	4,49	0,289		
	over 600 euros	4,51	0,183		
	I don't want to say	4,50	0,183		

$df=4$; $p<0,01^{**}$; Source: Authors

Subsequent analysis (Table 16) confirmed that respondents with incomes up to 250 euros ($AS=4.79$, $SD=0.173$) have significantly higher scores on the BVB scale in comparison to respondents with incomes from 251 to 450 euros ($AS=4.57$, $SD=0.164$), respondents with incomes from 451 to 600 euros ($AS=4.49$, $SD=0.289$), respondents with incomes over 600 euros ($AS=4.51$, $SD=0.183$) and respondents who do not want to reveal the amount of their monthly income ($AS=4.50$, $SD=0.183$). In addition, subsequent analysis showed that respondents with incomes from 251 to 450 euros have a significantly higher BVB compared to respondents with incomes from 451 to 600 euros.

Table 16. Comparative analysis of VBV in relation to the age of the respondents

vs	do 250	251 do 450	451 do 600	Više od 600
251 to 450	0,005**			
451 to 600	0,000**	0,040*		
More than 600	0,006**	0,395	0,740	
I don't want to say	0,001**	0,127	0,790	0,889

$df=3$; $p<0,01^{**}$; $p<0,05^{*}$; Source: Authors

In relation to the respondent's place of residence (Table 18), no statistically significant differences were confirmed in the expressiveness of scores on the BVB scale ($F=0.130$, $p=0.942$). The highest score on the scale was obtained by respondents living in the region of Šumadija and Western Serbia ($AS=4.56$, $SD=0.173$) and the lowest by respondents from the Belgrade region ($AS=4.53$, $SD=0.344$) and the region of Southern and Eastern Serbia. ($AS=4.53$, $SD=0.163$).

Table 17. Differences in the prevalence of BVB in relation to the respondents' place of residence

Scale	Place of living	AS	SD	F	p
BVB	Belgrade region	4,53	0,344	0,130	0,942
	Region of Vojvodina	4,55	0,170		
	The region of Šumadija and Western Serbia	4,56	0,173		
	Region of Southern and Eastern Serbia	4,53	0,163		

$df=3$; Source: Authors

5. Discussion of results

The aim of this research was to examine the knowledge of the Vrnjačka SPA brand. In addition, the research also examined the associations that respondents have when they think of Vrnjačka SPA and their reasons for visiting this SPA. Also, the research examined differences in the expression of BVB in relation to the sociodemographic characteristics of the sample of respondents: gender, age, level of education, social status, level of monthly income and place of residence of the respondent.

The obtained findings confirmed that the self-assessment of knowledge of Vrnjačka SPA is above average. More than a quarter of the respondents gave the answer Vrnjačka SPA is very famous, and slightly less than half of the respondents gave the answer both known and unknown. The most prominent associations in VB are the SPA resort and Hotel Merkur, and the main reasons for coming to Vrnjačka SPA are to the greatest extent the SPA complex and SPA centers.

When it comes to the Brand Vrnjačke SPA scale, it was confirmed that the scale has acceptable reliability. In addition, the obtained findings confirmed that the respondents have a very positive attitude towards the Vrnjačka SPA brand.

The average at the level of the entire research sample is close to the theoretical maximum of 5, and the empirical minimum of 3 is the maximum of 5. In relation to the expression on the claims of the BVB scale, the highest score was obtained for the claim that Vrnjačka SPA is safe for visits. The obtained finding is very significant because SPA tourism is primarily reserved for elderly people and families with children, i.e. a population for whom it is very important that they feel safe when visiting a tourist place. A very high level of expression was also obtained for the claims During my stay, I recognized the value of Vrnjačka SPA and Vrnjačka SPA has recognizable health tourism. The lowest expression was obtained for the claim The price of a visit in this destination is affordable compared to others. This finding is also very important because price is a factor that decisively influences the choice of a destination for vacation and/or recreation. When it comes to expression on the BVB scale in relation to the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents, statistically significant differences in expression were obtained in relation to gender, age, level of education and amount of monthly income of the respondents. The differences in the expression of BVB in relation to the gender and age of the respondents are significant at the level of $p < 0.05$, and the differences obtained in relation to the level of education and the amount of monthly income are high and significant at the level of significance of $p < 0.01$. In relation to the social status of the respondents and the place of residence, no statistically significant differences were confirmed in the expressiveness of the scores on the BVB scale. In relation to the gender of the respondents, it was confirmed that male respondents have a significantly higher level of knowledge of the Vrnjačke Banje brand than female respondents. when it comes to the age of the respondents, the subsequent analysis showed that respondents aged 25 to 35 have a significantly lower level of knowledge of the Vrnjačka SPA brand compared to respondents aged 35 to 45, respondents aged 45 to 55 and respondents aged over 55 year. This finding indicates that SPA tourism is primarily reserved for the older population, which is also more familiar with the Vrnjačka SPA brand than the younger respondents.

When we talk about the level of education of the respondents, the obtained findings showed that respondents with completed secondary education have a significantly lower knowledge of the Vrnjačka SPA brand, i.e. a significantly lower score on this scale compared to respondents with a completed higher school and respondents with a completed university degree (master's or doctorate). Also, as already mentioned, statistically significant differences in expression on the BVB scale were also confirmed in relation to the monthly income of the respondents. Subsequent analysis showed that respondents with lower incomes (up to 250 euros) have a significantly higher score compared to all other respondents (with

incomes from 251 to 450 euros, with incomes from 451 to 600 euros, respondents with incomes over 600 euros and respondents who they don't want to reveal their monthly income). Also, the subsequent analysis showed that respondents with incomes from 251 to 450 euros have a significantly higher score on the BVB scale compared to respondents with monthly incomes from 451 to 600 euros.

Conclusion

The branding of Vrnjačka SPA plays a key role in its development and recognition on the tourist market. Through the analyzes so far, we can conclude that the branding of Vrnjačka SPA has already achieved significant success, but that there are still potentials for improvement. Vrnjačka SPA has numerous natural resources and significant tourist attractions that need to be used in order to create a recognizable identity and brand. Focusing on specific elements, such as healing waters, rich history, beautiful parks and surrounding nature, can help create an authentic image of a destination.

Second, digital branding plays a key role in modern tourism. Activities on social networks, creation of inspiring content, online campaigns and presence on relevant platforms can attract new audiences and strengthen the existing image of Vrnjačka SPA. Cooperation with local communities, the private sector and tourism stakeholders is key to successful branding. Through joint efforts and support, Vrnjačka SPA can create a synergy that will contribute to a better positioning on the market and create a positive impression among tourists. Preserving the authenticity of the destination should be at the center of branding. Creating experiences based on local culture, tradition and gastronomy will help build long-lasting connections with visitors and create a recognizable image that is different from the competition.

Continuous monitoring of results and feedback from tourists will enable adequate adjustment of the brand strategy. Continuous analysis and evaluation will be essential to ensure that the branding of Vrnjačka SPA follows changes in the needs and wishes of tourists. In conclusion, the branding of Vrnjačka SPA is a key factor for the development of tourism in this region. Correct positioning, focus on authenticity, cooperation with the community and constant monitoring of results will enable the destination to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage in the tourist market.

Hypotheses in this research H0 Vrnjačka SPA is a recognizable brand based on users' opinions was confirmed. H1 The main association for Vrnjačka SPA is the

SPA, i.e. Banking tourism is also confirmed. H2 Price is a satisfactory factor in the opinion of users in this research was not confirmed because for users the prices are still high. H3 Vrnjačka SPA has recognizable health tourism, according to the user's opinion, in this survey it was confirmed.

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