



MASTER THESIS

DESTINATION BRANDING THROUGH WEDDING TOURISM:

THE CASE OF THE CARIBBEAN

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INTRODUCTION

“We challenge you to find a more serene, beautiful or romantic destination for your dream wedding or honeymoon than the islands of the Caribbean. Glorious beaches, azure waters, lazy palm trees and tropical climates abound” (Hilton Caribbean, 2015).

“There is no place more romantic than the Caribbean. You arrive as prince and princess and leave as a king and queen. Caribbean all-inclusive resorts practically invented destination weddings, and most certainly have perfected them” (Caribbean journal, 2013).

“The Caribbean – two words but so many islands, each with its own unique outlook, beauty and character, but all with the same charm and allure that makes it a popular wedding destination” (Kuoni, 2015).

These impressive quotes taken from websites and magazines aim to represent Caribbean as a perfect wedding tourism destination in order to attract couples to celebrate their weddings and honeymoons in the region. Even though wedding tourism is considered a relatively new phenomenon, in recent decades it demonstrates a significant growth. As wedding-based tourism is currently thriving, it brings many benefits for the host destinations. Such tourism segment generates economic, social and environmental advantages, as well as marketing benefits, for example, enhancement of destinations brand and image (Del Chiappa & Fortezza, 2013). But let's start from the beginning.

Today majority of tourism destinations worldwide offer wide variety of attractions, superior hotels and resorts, as well as promote such attributes as beautiful landscape, distinctive flora and fauna, friendly local community, white-sand beaches, turquoise waters, beautiful architecture and declare unique culture and heritage. Tourism destinations are difficult to differentiate because they do not represent unique identities and offer same or similar attributes as most of the places worldwide. Due to that many destinations become easily substitutable in competitive tourism industry. In order to avoid such problem, tourism destinations are in a constant search of unique and not so widely prevailing tourism segments.

Wedding tourism is recently emerging tourism trend still in its development phase compared to sea-sun-sand or cultural and heritage tourism segments. After realizing potential benefits lying in the phenomenon, destinations commenced employing wedding-based tourism. Thus destination marketers began marketing and branding destinations as perfect places for weddings and honeymoons.

In terms of academic literature destination branding topic is widely popular. Most of the destination branding articles investigated branding through event-based tourism and cultural tourism. However, no research was conducted on destination branding via wedding tourism. Since today wedding tourism is rapidly emerging sector, there is an existing demand for a relevant theoretical study. The research question was formulated due to the existing gap within academic studies as it does not provide any knowledge about wedding tourism influence on destination branding. The Caribbean region was chosen for the thesis research due to its prominence as a wedding tourism destination. Therefore, the thesis is aimed at answering the following research question “How does wedding tourism influence branding of the Caribbean region?”.

The purpose of this dissertation is to study branding elements of the Caribbean destinations to analyse wedding tourism influence on destination branding. To achieve this, the following objectives of the thesis are formulated:

- introduction of destination branding concept;
- introduction of wedding tourism phenomenon;
- combination of two aforementioned concepts and development of a new conceptual model to guide the analysis process;
- conduction of the analysis, based on the developed conceptual model;
- provision of general results about the Caribbean region.

In the theoretical part the thesis introduces the previous research within the field and afterwards focuses on presenting destination branding and wedding tourism concepts in depth, based on the relevant academic literature. Furthermore, a new conceptual model based on both concepts is developed and explained. The following part of the thesis elaborates on the methodology of the research – the chosen case, empirical data collection and analysis methods. Meanwhile, the analysis part presents analysis of destination branding elements in each Caribbean destination separately. Lastly, the conclusion is drawn about the Caribbean region in general.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Previous Research

The review of existing academic literature of branding identified the gap – up to the present day no academic research was conducted on wedding tourism and its influence on destination branding. However, scholars have conducted equivalent studies to explore other tourism segments and their contribution to destination branding. Academic journals provide many

studies that was conducted on destination branding through event-based tourism, simultaneously followed by destination branding through film-induced tourism.

Firstly, thesis reviews scholar work on destination branding via event tourism. Events are recognised as successful attractions in destinations (Getz, 2005; Marzano & Scott, 2006; Trošt, Klaric & Ružic, 2012) and as vital tools for differentiation (Simeon & Buonincontri, 2011). Thus today many destinations increasingly develop event portfolios as their strategic initiatives. Due to widely emerging trend, scholars' interest in the phenomenon rise and it resulted in academic studies conducted on branding through event-based tourism, with a particular concentration on mega sport events.

Studies on destination branding through event based-tourism revealed that host destination brands are affected by various kind of events. Majority of the studies were conducted on destination branding via large scale events, wherein scholars mainly analysed mega sport events, such as the Olympic Games (Zhang & Zhao, 2009; Bodet & Lacassagne, 2012; Li & Kaplanidou, 2013) and World Championships (Allen, Knott & Swart, 2013; Lee, 2014), as well as diverse cultural celebrations and festivals (Lee & Arcodia, 2011; Simeon & Buonincontri, 2011; Trošt et al., 2012; Peter, Anandkumar & Peter, 2013; Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2014).

All aforementioned studies could be divided into two groups based on their research methodology. First group consists of studies that utilised quantitative research methods. Such studies conducted investigations on certain groups of individuals to analyse their perception of host destination brands prior and after the events. For example, Li & Kaplanidou (2013) analysed impacts of 2008 Beijing Olympic Games on China's destination brand based on American travellers' perception, while Bodet & Lacassagne (2012) conducted similar research analysing views of British travellers. Additionally, Yu, Wang & Seo (2012) analysed Chinese travellers' perception of Shanghai, the host destination of 2010 World Expo, whereas Lee (2014) investigated 2009 World Games influence on host city Kaohsiung brand awareness and image. To analyse influence of mega events on brands of host places, these scholar studies utilised survey as the research method.

The second group of studies chose qualitative approach to receive a necessary data. Allen et al. (2013) analysed the role of 2010 FIFA World Cup on host destination South Africa's brand. However, majority of qualitative studies on destination branding through event tourism are conducted on various cultural events. Lee & Arcodia (2011) analysed the role of Australian regional food festivals in host destinations branding. Moreover, Trošt et al. (2012) conducted a study on two cultural events in Croatia to determine the impacts and influence of events on host destination brands. Furthermore, Peter et al. (2013) analysed the role of

shopping festivals in branding of United Arab Emirates. In order to collect qualitative data, majority of studies utilised semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires. However, such single research methodology in qualitative studies is quite poor. In order to investigate the influence of events on destination brands more research methods should be employed. For example, investigation by Blichfeldt & Halkier (2014) analysed Mussels festival contribution to brand of rural North Jutland region in Denmark. Scholars not solely utilised semi-structured interviews, but additionally analysed official documents of festival, as well as official destination and event websites. Utilisation of more than one research method could provide scholars with more extensive knowledge and strengthen the acquired primary information. On another hand, there could be some restrictions to approach relevant strategic documents, however, official event and destination websites are easily accessible to everyone.

It is acknowledged that events could become a significant contributors to host destination brands. However, literature review demonstrated that there is no unified outcomes that events tend to have significantly positive impacts on destination brands. Even though, no study discovered negative impacts of events on host destination brands, however, some of academics outlined not so substantial results. For example, two studies on 2008 Beijing Olympic Games suggested that there were solely limited impacts on Beijing's brand (Zhang & Zhao, 2009; Bodet & Lacassagne, 2012). Meanwhile, World Cup in South Africa significantly contributed to country's branding, as well as to the brand of whole Africa's continent (Allen et al., 2013). Thus scholars research demonstrates that event tourism plays a vital role for host destinations branding, in some cases even manages to re-brand a whole region or a country.

In addition, there is a noticeable gap in the field. Academics fail to investigate destination branding via reoccurring or annual events. There are many prominent annual festivals worldwide, such as Carnival of Venice, Carnival of Rio de Janeiro, St Patrick's Day in Ireland, The Festival of San Fermin in Pamplona, Oktoberfest in Munich, Feria de Abril in Seville, Cannes Film festival, F1 Gran Prix and many more. Destination marketers should exploit those festivals in the creation of destination brands, since such annual events are closely linked with their host destinations. Academic research should be conducted to analyse whether destinations utilise such opportunities to achieve differentiation in the competitive tourism market. Academic studies would provide valuable knowledge and perhaps introduce cases of best practise. Thus such research could serve as guidelines for places that are still in the development phase in terms of destination branding and help them to create their unique selling proposition.

Another emerging topic among destination branding studies investigates destination branding through film-induced tourism. Scholars have investigated contribution of film-induced tourism, to featured destinations' branding, marketing and image creation. Academic sources

support an unarguable fact that movie tourism has a significant impact on destination's brand and image formation (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006a; Hahm & Wang, 2011; Connell, 2012), in some cases movies are even capable of re-creating the image and brand of the destination (O'Connor, Flanagan & Gilbert 2008). However, academic work in this field is not highly extensive as the above-mentioned one.

Studies exploring influence of film tourism on destinations' branding utilised a case study approach, investigated either particular filming locations (O'Connor, Flanagan & Gilbert 2008), or explored cases of specific movies and their featured destinations (Piggott, Morgan & Pritchard, 2004; Hudson & Ritchie, 2006b; O'Connor & Bolan, 2008; Assadourian, 2011; Rodríguez Campo, Brea & Rodríguez-Toubes Muñoz, 2011). As case study method focuses on one particular case, it produces results solely applicable to that case. Thus the findings are not generally representative. It means that only assumptions could be made that other destinations receive similar benefits from film-induced tourism on their branding. In addition, destination branding and film tourism studies mostly utilised qualitative data collection method – interviews. However, case study methodology should utilise multiple research methods to collect rich data. But majority of interview samples encompassed not solely tourist officials of destinations (O'Connor & Bolan, 2008; O'Connor et al., 2008), they also included business owners, tour operators and agents, as well as hotel employees and local residents (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006b; Assadourian, 2011) to acquire different points of view on the phenomenon.

O'Connor, et al. (2008) analysed branding of location featured in TV series. As the case study authors chose Yorkshire county, the filming location for many English TV series. The outcome of the study revealed that film tourism has reinforced county's brand, despite the fact that Yorkshire Tourism Board does not strategically prioritise film-induced tourism. Additionally, Assadourian (2011) analysed contribution of film tourism to the destination branding of Greece, particularly focusing on movie "Mamma Mia". The results showed that Greece's tourism has significant benefits from movies, even though, tourism authorities fail to promote and brand film-induced tourism destinations. Oppositely, another study by O'Connor & Bolan (2008) conducted analogical research, but this time as a case study Northern Ireland and the first "The Chronicles of Narnia" movie were chosen. The results demonstrated that Northern Ireland acquired many branding possibilities due to the movie, and, unlike in the first two researches, Northern Ireland's Tourism Board portrays the place as a film tourism destination. Thus, the assumption could be made, that despite marketing or branding efforts, movie tourism still significantly influences destinations' brands.

Academic literature provides some more destination branding studies conducted from the perspective of other tourism segments. Scholars investigated destination branding through food tourism, also known as gastronomy tourism. Some of previously discussed festivals are

based on food culture (Lee & Arcodia 2011; Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2014). Moreover, academics provided some specific studies on branding via food tourism, such as rural destination branding through food tourism (Boyne & Hall, 2004), as well as research on gastro tourism as destination branding (Williams, Williams & Omar, 2014). Thus branding through food tourism is becoming more visible within academic literature. Other studies were conducted on branding via medical tourism (Viladrich & Baron-Faust, 2014), literary tourism (Hoppen, Brown & Fyall, 2014) and sport tourism (Basińska-Zych & Lubowiecki-Vikuk, 2011). All above-mentioned studies state that various tourism segments influence branding of destinations.

This literature review demonstrates that destinations are mainly branded through event-based tourism with a particular focus on mega sport events, particularly on Olympic Games, simultaneously followed by cultural tourism which is perceived as an umbrella covering film-induced tourism and gastronomy tourism (O'Connor & Bolan, 2008; Lee & Arcodia, 2014). Generally, academic findings suggest that due to positive outcomes, destinations tend to increasingly incorporate various segments of tourism into their branding campaigns.

1.2 Destination Branding

Originally branding was developed not for destinations, but for companies to differentiate their products and services (Aaker, 1991; Wood, 2000; Kotler 2002; Caldwell & Freire, 2004). Therefore, before immediately immersing into a destination branding concept, it is important to start from the beginning and get acquainted with general notion of branding and only then discuss branding concept application to destinations.

Widely recognized brand definition provided by Aaker (1991) states that brand generally has “a distinguishing name and/or symbol (such as a logo, trademark, or package design) intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers” (p. 7). The American Marketing Association agrees that the brand is “a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of these, intended to identify the goods or services ... to differentiate them from those of competitors” (in Kotler, 2002, p. 188). Moreover, brand serves as a shorthand for a product or service (Chalip & Costa, 2005). In addition, brand combines functional and emotional values which stimulate relationships between seller and buyer and appeal to customer’s emotional needs (Dos Santos & Campo, 2014).

Brands are considered the major assets that represent offerings of companies (Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Kotler & Armstrong, 2012) and guide their marketing focus (Chalip & Costa, 2005). Academics state that branding is one of the most powerful weapons of marketing (Caldwell & Freire, 2004; Dos Santos & Campo, 2014), thus nowadays almost everything is branded, including destinations.

As tourism market is becoming highly crowded, destinations are struggling to create their competitive advantages and unique selling propositions in order to differentiate themselves to increase tourist visits and spending. Therefore, increasing competition in the tourism industry, together with changing tourist expectations and habits leveraged tourism destinations to apply branding concept (Naidoo & Ramseook-Munhurrin, 2012). Thus branding techniques and procedures previously solely utilised in companies, has been copied and highly accepted among destination marketers (Caldwell & Freire, 2004; Pike, 2005; Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009; Schaar, 2013; Dos Santos & Campo, 2014; Marcoz, Mauri, Maggioni & Cantu, 2014). Tourism goods and services are being branded (Cai, 2002), however, destinations are considered to be the biggest brands within the tourism industry (Morgan, Pritchard & Piggott, 2002; Pike, 2005).

Moilanen & Rainisto (2009) state that destinations are capable of developing their brands in the same way as companies. The branding principles are the same but the process is more complicated for destinations in comparison to products and services (Park & Petrick, 2006). Products and services are usually produced to satisfy unmet consumers demand, hence, marketing solely connects company's supply with the existing demand. Whereas destination marketers cannot allow such luxury, as main destination features, such as climate, landscape, historical sites, culture are inherited and cannot be changed according to customer needs (Schaar, 2013). However, some exceptions are possible. Destinations are able to create and add new products as hiking trails or theme parks which would contribute to existing product base and target new tourist markets. For example, cities of Las Vegas and Dubai managed to create new and artificial products that are not in coherence with true destinations' values and culture. Both cities successfully utilise those products in their destination branding. However, such introduction of new products when they completely change destinations in short to medium term are rare (United Nations World Tourism Organisation [UNWTO], 2010).

To sum up, destinations apply branding concept to stand out in the highly competitive tourism environment. However, they need to adapt original branding process in order to brand countries, cities or other geographical entities, due to their complex nature. The issue of destinations complexity is discussed below in the chapter, together with destination branding concept and destination brand elements.

1.2.1 Destination terminology

Before elaborating on destination branding concept it is important to understand the meaning of the term "destination". To begin with, Caldwell & Freire (2004) state that generally the term "destination" is quite vague in academic literature. Some researchers use it while talking

about countries, others about regions or cities. Nevertheless, Leiper defined destination as “a place towards which people travel and where they choose to stay for a while in order to experience certain features or attractions” (in Simeon & Buonincontri, 2011, p. 386). Cooper, Fletcher, Gilbert, Shepherd & Wanhill define it as the focus of services and facilities created to satisfy tourist needs (in Simeon & Buonincontri, 2011, p. 386). Moreover, Buhalis (2000) suggests that destination is a blend of tourism products. These descriptions demonstrate a strong link between destination and tourism, as all above-mentioned academics refer to them as to tourism entities. Such perception is proven by Hanna & Rowley’s (2008) study on the use of various place terminology, as their outcome states that “destination“ solely indicates tourism.

It is important to mention that destination could also be perceived as a perceptual concept, meaning that it could be interpreted in a subjective way by consumers and highly dependent on their travel plans, purpose of visit and cultural background (Buhalis, 2000). Hence, “destination” understanding varies between each consumer individually, and it could be any geographical area, such as country, region, city, town, island, resort or even few of those combined together (Buhalis, 2000; Hanna & Rowley, 2008). Therefore, throughout the thesis, term “destination” is used to name a country, a region, a city, a town or any other tourism related geographical entity.

The same applies to the branding studies. According to previously discussed meaning of “destination”, its branding could be perceived as an umbrella covering terms as country branding, city branding, region branding and nation branding, since academic literature does not solely contain term “destination branding”. Many destination branding studies are conducted on particular countries, cities and other geographical entities (O’Connor & Bolan, 2008; Alexe & Tapardel, 2013; Heslop, Nadeau, O’Reilly & Armenakyan, 2013; Allen et al., 2013; Lee, 2014), wherein abovementioned concepts are utilised.

In addition, “place branding” is used to generally name branding process in various geographical entities, such as location, destination, country, region, city and town (Hanna & Rowley, 2008; UNWTO, 2010). Therefore, the term “place” is broader than “destination”, however, also serves as an umbrella covering all previously mentioned entities and is used as such throughout the thesis.

1.2.2 Notion of destination branding

As many tourism destinations promote similar attributes and offer similar products, there is an increasing need for destinations to demonstrate their competitive advantages to generate more

tourist visits or target new markets. To achieve such objective, original branding concept of physical products was adjusted and applied by destinations.

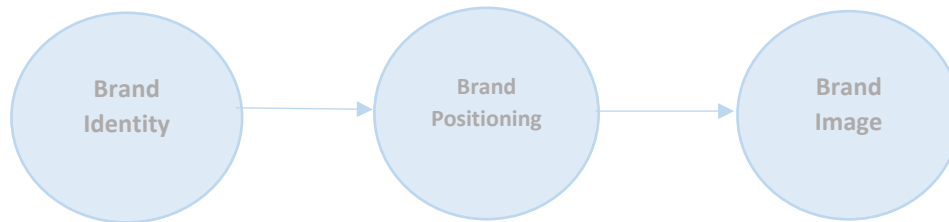
Aaker (1991) stated that two main functions of destination branding are identification and differentiation. One of the earliest definitions provided by Ritchie & Ritchie supported differentiation idea by stating that destination brand is “a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the destination” (in Blain, Levy & Ritchie 2005, p. 329). According to Morrison & Anderson, destination branding is a communication of a destination unique identity in order to differentiate it from competitors (in Qu, Kim & Im, 2011, p. 466). Moreover, Morgan, Pitchard & Pride state that by selecting a consistent element mix destinations try to differentiate themselves by building positive image (in Park & Petrick, 2006, p. 262). It is noticeable that definitions of destination branding tend to emphasize the idea of differentiation. Hence destination marketers aim to occupy a niche market within the industry to reduce substitutability (Morgan et al., 2002).

Nonetheless, differentiation is not the only purpose of destination branding. Academics present other objectives, such as creation of emotional link with tourists (Ekinci, 2003; Park & Petrick 2006; Marzano & Scott, 2009), the promise of a memorable travel experience (Blain et al., 2005), influence of consistency and recognition (Park & Petrick, 2006; Schaar, 2013), as well as the creation of desirable image (Marzano & Scott, 2009). It is important to emphasize that destination branding builds and enhances destination image (Blain et al., 2005; Qu et al., 2011).

Destination image is “the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination” (in Ekinci, 2003, p. 22) or perception about the place as reflected by the associations held in tourist memory” (in Schaar, 2013, p. 3). Hence image reflects holistic impression of many associations and pieces of information connected with a destination (Damnjanovic, Kravic & Razek, 2009). Image is essential to the success of a destination, since it is recognized as the key factor influencing purchasing behaviour of tourists (Blain et al., 2005; Mazano & Scott, 2009; Naidoo & Ramseook-Munhurrin, 2012).

According to Marzano & Scott (2009), destination brand is a powerful tool that is able to create emotional appeal and image. Figure 1 demonstrates how destination image is formed. It all commences with brand’s identity, which is established by marketers and based on brand’s culture and personality (Schaar, 2013). Then the brand is positioned, meaning that important brand elements are identified and communicated towards the target groups. Finally, destination brand knowledge is perceived by tourists (Damnjanovic et al., 2009).

Figure 1: Formation of Destination Image



Source: Damnjanovic et al., 2009; adapted from Baker & Cameron (2008)

Academic literature tends to outline the close relation of destination branding and destination image. There is even an existing dispute between academics whether both concepts have the same meaning and could be utilised as synonyms (Chalip & Costa, 2005; Schaar, 2013). However, both concepts are completely different. The brand, created by marketers, projects the brand's identity for consumers. Meanwhile, image, as stated in above-mentioned definitions, is perceived by consumers in their mind. Thus, both concepts are different, as one is generated by supply-side and another one is received by demand-side (Qu et al., 2011). Therefore, herein image concept is not perceived as a synonym of branding, more likely as one of the branding objectives.

As was mentioned previously, due to their complex nature destinations have to adjust the original branding concept. It is mainly caused by multi-dimensional nature of destinations (Pike, 2005; Schaar, 2013). During vacation time people stay in hotels, dine in restaurants, participate in activities, visit sites, observe landscape etc. Tangible (geographical features, historical sites) and intangible (culture, history, traditions) assets of destinations, together with tourist services (accommodation, transportation, catering, entertainment) create the destination product (Schaar, 2013; Marcoz et al., 2014). Since those products contain many components it is difficult to achieve consistency in branding, as every component is a separate entity with a different objective (Schaar, 2013), whereas consumers expect concise message from destination, involving solely few brand associations (Pike, 2005). Another big issue, which complicate destination branding process is a wide range of stakeholder groups (Pike, 2005; Park & Petrick, 2006; Schaar, 2013), such as entrepreneurs, local residents, government and tourists. Those stakeholders have different interests, thus often destination marketers are struggling to satisfy all their needs while branding the place (Schaar, 2013).

In brief, differentiation is the key objective of destination branding which helps to increase tourist numbers and generate more expenditure. However, it is not so easy to achieve, since multi-dimensional nature of destinations and various stakeholder groups bring many challenges to destination marketers. Meanwhile customers prefer to receive concise message from destinations that incorporates only few brand associations in order not to get confused and lost about the place's identity.

1.2.3 Elements of destination branding

Destination branding is also defined as a selection of a consistent element mix, wherein brand elements are various brand components, which identify and differentiate (Hem & Iversen, 2004) products, services and destinations.

In the 1.2.2 section definition of destination branding by Ritchie & Ritchie demonstrated that brands consist of a name, symbol, logo, as well as verbal and graphical elements (in Blain et al., 2005, p. 329). Park & Petrick (2006) agrees that logo and slogan are the elements of brand. In addition, Cai (2002) states that “a brand element comes in the form of a name, term, logo, sign, design, symbol, slogan, package or combination of these” (p. 722). Keller adds that the most powerful elements are names, logos, slogans, jingles, characters and packages (in Hem & Iversen, 2004, p. 85). Furthermore, Lehto, Lee & Ismail (2014) state that slogans, logos and other such tools capture the essence of the brand. However, it is important to mention that elements such as packages or jingles is not applicable in the context of destination branding. Despite that academics agree with above-mentioned composition of destination branding, however, some of them do not directly state that those elements are a brand, but rather they represent the brand.

UNWTO (2010) states that a logo, slogan, imagery, a design style and a marketing campaign are not a brand. Such idea is supported by Chalip & Costa (2005), since they agree that name, logo, slogan, or other marketing devices are not a brand as well. However, both sources have a common agreement that all aforementioned elements are representing the brand. In addition, Kaplanidou & Vogt (2003) outline that verbal and visual elements of destination brand represent values and identity of a destination. Briefly, those elements flow from the destination brand and are utilized in destination marketing. Hence destination marketing activities should be in compliance with a destination’s brand and reflect it in their imagery and tone (UNWTO, 2010).

After investigation of academic literature on destination branding composition, the thesis agrees that name, logo, slogan, imagery, design and verbal elements represent the brand of a particular destination. It is important to emphasize that all those elements should be coherent in order to enhance each other and simultaneously create a coherent destination brand (Hem & Iversen, 2004).

A name could be a debatable element when it comes to destination branding, however, its complete neglect is impossible, since tourism practice provide some real life examples. According to Cai (2002), the name is the foremost reference in terms of branding, however, it is absent in destination branding studies. In terms of destination branding, name does not provide clear associations of the position which destination seeks in tourism market, since the

name of destination is fixed by the authentic geographical name of the place (Cai, 2002; Pike, 2005). However, some rare examples of destination name changes could be found in practice, when destinations aim to target and become more appealing for potential tourists. In the 1930s a place called Elston was renamed to Surfers Paradise, to target a desirable tourist segment. Moreover, Hog Island in the Caribbean was named Paradise Island, to target the cruise ship sector (Pike, 2005). However, the change of destination's name is a significantly difficult process politically, also, it is a highly inappropriate step to rename solely due to tourism purposes (Cai, 2002; Pike, 2005).

Another important element that represents the destination brand is logo. Logo is considered to be a crucial element, which should always be in coherence with other brand components (Hem & Iversen, 2004). Logo is a graphic design with or without destination name attached to it (Hem & Iversen, 2004; Blain et al., 2005) or a symbol, visual shorthand which represents a destination and achieves its recognition through consistent application over time (UNWTO, 2010). According to Rodriguez, Asoro, Lee & Sar (2012) the main characteristic of logo should be simplicity, meaning the ability to capture and portray essence with a few design elements. UNWTO (2010) emphasizes that no more than three facets of destination should be embedded in destination's logo, otherwise it will be cluttered and confusing. Briefly, logo communicates identity of destination and could be perceived as destination's signature, which is based on place's material. Destination logo usually evokes meanings, associations and images of a destination (Blain et al., 2005).

Another important brand "carrier" is slogan, which usually accompanies a logo (UNWTO, 2010). According to Supphellen & Nygaardsvik (2002) slogans are "short phrases that communicate descriptive or persuasive information about a brand" (p. 386) and capture the essence of a multi-dimensional destination succinctly, in a way that it is meaningful for target markets and effective in differentiating the destination (UNWTO, 2010; Lehto et al., 2014). Slogans usually represent solely one facet of a destination (Lehto et al., 2014). Ideally destination slogans encapsulate the image of the destinations in a few words, wherein word power and word play are the key to success. Those words should be appropriate to capture attention, trigger interest, leave a desirable impression and remain in customers' memory (Khan, 2014). In short, slogans are aimed at building brand image and awareness (Supphellen & Nygaardsvik, 2002; Lehto et al., 2014).

Following components are imagery, design and verbal elements that play an important role in conveying destination's identity and essence, as well as creating a feeling of a particular place (UNWTO, 2010). According to Buck, the tourism industry is particularly based on imagery (in Khan, 2014, p. 28), therefore, destinations should guide the imagery, such as photographs, images and other graphics, to create a representative brand. Meanwhile, design style should

makes destination marketing communications inviting and accessible (UNWTO, 2010). Briefly, visual and verbal elements should portray identity and values of a destination (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2003; UNWTO, 2010).

To sum up, a name, logo, slogan, imagery, design style and verbal elements represent the identity of destination brand. It is utmost importance that branding elements would be coherent in order to create a successful brand of a destination. And since destination brand is embedded in all of the brand elements, they are utilised in destination marketing campaigns.

1.2.4 Role of Destination Marketing Organisations

UNWTO (2010) outlines that destination marketing should always reflect the brand of a destination. Wahab, Crampon & Rothfield describes tourism destination marketing as a management process, wherein Destination Marketing Organisations (hereinafter DMOs) communicate with their target tourist markets in order to influence their wishes, needs and motivations (in Pike & Page, 2014, p. 204), while UNWTO outlines that destination marketing is operational activities undertaken in the highly competitive businesses to attract visitors to those destinations (in Pike & Page, 2014, p. 202). Today, due to rising competition within tourism industry and increasing customer expectations, destinations experience increased demand for destinations marketing (Soteriades, 2012). Hence DMOs are considered as critical components of tourism industry that market and manage tourist destinations (Rita, 2000). Destination marketers are responsible for coordination of marketing efforts on behalf of a particular destination (Sharma, 2013) and aim to enhance destination competitiveness within congested tourism market (Pike & Page, 2004).

DMO could be either governmental, corporate or non-profit business entity (Sharma, 2013). According to Rita (2000), they are mostly public non-profit organizations that receive government funding to promote a destination through tourism marketing strategies and marketing campaigns. Generally jurisdiction of DMOs cover a country, state, province, region, city or town. Marketing organization within cities or towns are named Convention and Visitor Bureaus (hereinafter CVBs) (Blain et al., 2005). Rita (2000) emphasizes three tiers of DMOs that vary according to their geographical scope. First, National Tourism Office (hereinafter NTO), which encompasses the whole country, second, regional or state DMOs and, finally, local tourist offices or CVBs. The first ever CVB was established in Detroit, USA in 1896, while world's first National Tourism Office (NTO) was established in New Zealand, in 1901, followed by the establishment of the first State Tourism Office in Hawaii, in 1903. In 1980s – 1990s DMOs number started to increase significantly, as destinations had realised the importance of marketing. Today there are more than 10,000 DMOs worldwide (Pike & Page, 2014).

DMOs are necessary to tourism communities due to the fact that tourism industry is filled with small or medium enterprises competing with each other. DMOs function as impartial coordinators that incorporate destination resources to create wider collective impact within the market (Pike & Page, 2005). The main role of DMOs covers implementation of marketing efforts, as well as coordination of long-term destination planning and management (Klimek, 2013). In addition, more objectives of DMOs encompass improving competitiveness of destination tourism industry, increasing attractiveness of a destination, managing the tourism system, enhancing destination performance and increasing marketing effectiveness (Soteriades, 2012).

To address competitive tourism market, destination marketers try think forward and minimize mass marketing, instead trying to ensure provision of experience visitors want (King, 2002). However, DMOs are struggling to find resources that will provide competitive advantages for destinations, as there are plenty of tourist places offering similar or same attributes. Thus DMOs are widely applying branding concept to achieve differentiation. For DMOs branding has become a key pillar in destination marketing (Pike & Page, 2014).

To sum up, majority of destinations worldwide have established their DMOs to survive in the competitive environment, as the main responsibility of DMO is design and implementation of destination marketing strategies based on its resources. Additionally, destinations constantly seek for their unique selling propositions, thus their DMOs increasingly apply branding concept that has become a key pillar of destination marketing.

1.3 Web-based Destination Marketing and Branding

Rapid development of Information and Communication Technologies (hereinafter ICT) made a substantial impact on tourism industry. Such technologies have facilitated travel planning process, as well as significantly contributed to visitors' attraction, as travellers increasingly utilise World Wide Web to obtain knowledge about destinations (Seebaluck, Munhurrin, Naidoo & Rughoonauth, 2015). In addition, the Internet is highly effective tool for destination branding in terms of its cost effectiveness and market penetration (Lee, Cai & O'Leary, 2006). Therefore, the Internet is an increasingly important mean of destination marketing, widely utilized by DMOs.

Usage of Internet within tourism industry generates important benefits, such as decrease of marketing cost, expansion of the customer base, improvement of communication with customers and partners in a cost-effective way, removal of intermediaries, but most importantly, it became an essential mean for marketing communication (Matikiti, Afolabi & Smith, 2012; Soteriades, 2012). Internet marketing, also known as online marketing or web-

based marketing, demonstrates a continuing increase. It is considered a vital platform to market and brand tourism destinations (LI, 2013).

World Wide Web is becoming increasingly important destination marketing tool for tourism organisations, such as NTOs, state tourism offices or CVBs (Lee et al., 2006). The internet provide a significant assistance for DMOs by enabling them to approach existing and potential visitors in more effective manner. Due to the Internet, destination marketers are able to provide information, implement marketing and promotional activities, conduct market research, as well as develop their brand by communicating an image about the particular destination (Rita, 2000). Thus today, majority of DMOs have established official tourism websites to promote their travel and tourism destinations, as tourism websites hold an important role within destination marketing. Furthermore, websites are recognised as vital destination branding channels (Lee et al., 2006; LI, 2013). Hence DMOs utilise their official websites wherein consistent mix of brand elements facilitate the creation of positive image (LI, 2006).

To sum up, ITC development has a significant influence on tourism industry, thus web-based marketing increasingly becoming vital part of DMOs overall marketing efforts. Tourism businesses and organizations, including DMOs, utilize Internet as an efficient and low-cost marketing tool globally. Thus it is important to outline that Internet fundamentally redefined tourism industry in terms of marketing.

1.4 Wedding Tourism

To begin with, wedding falls under the general term “event”, which is temporal “occurrence”, “happening” or “experience”. To specify, weddings are recognized as planned events and belong to private events domain, together with parties and socials events (Getz, 2005; Getz 2008). Private events are not for masses, they are organized for individuals, families and social groups. Generally events are known as significant motivators of tourism. The concept of event tourism is described as “a destination development and marketing strategy to realize all the potential economic benefits of events” (Getz, 2005, p. 23). Such type of tourism tend to facilitate the communication of destination image, as well as enhance marketing and co-branding with destinations. Event tourism encompasses planned events (Getz, 2008), hence, weddings are a part of event tourism, as previously was mentioned that weddings are recognized as planned events. After emphasising the positioning of weddings, the 1.5 chapter of the thesis elaborates on wedding tourism phenomenon more in-depth.

1.4.1 Wedding tourism phenomenon

Today wedding tourism is a booming sector within the tourism industry (Major, McLeay & Waine, 2010; Seebaluck, et al., 2015) increasingly attracting more couples to celebrate their weddings in new places. Though destination wedding is not the only component of wedding tourism. Honeymoon travel is recognised as an important part as well (Rogerson & Wolfaardt, 2014). Honeymoons have been prominent for decades, whereas destination wedding concept has emerged comparatively recently.

To begin with, wedding tourism, also known as wedding-based tourism, is defined as international travel to get married or to celebrate the wedding (in Durinec, 2013, p. 1). However, such description is limited, since tourism is considered a people movement outside their usual environment to countries and places (UNWTO, 2015). This tourism definition has no particular indication that tourism is relevant solely to foreign locations. It means that tourism could occur in the home country of an individual, as long as he is travelling outside his regular environment. In terms of wedding tourism, domestic travellers with the purpose of getting married or celebrate their wedding are considered as equal part of wedding tourism as international wedding travellers. Therefore the following definition provided by Del Chiappa & Fortezza (2013) is approved throughout the thesis, as it states that wedding tourism is “tourist flows that arise from the participation to a destination wedding that is held in a place that is different from where both the bride and groom’s, or just one of them, live” (p.412). However, this definition is not complete. It does not indicate honeymoon as a part of wedding tourism, while in reality, destination weddings and honeymoons are the main components of wedding tourism. Therefore, the thesis acknowledge that wedding tourism is a domestic or international travel of couples with a purpose to get married or celebrate the wedding.

Honeymoon, or wedding travel, is a trip undertaken by a newlywed couple, immediately after the wedding ceremony, to celebrate their marriage (Lee, Huang & Chen, 2010; Moira, Mylonopoulos & Parthenis, 2011; Winchester, Winchester, Alvey & Harper, 2011). It was already mentioned that honeymoon is not a new concept. Such travels of newlyweds have particularly old roots. Arguably first traces of such travel were spotted in ancient Greece. Back then the term “bridal tour” was utilized to describe a tradition of a married couple’s tour around Acropolis in Athens in a horse-drawn carriage or a few days trip to a place near-by their home (Moira et. al, 2011). However, honeymoon travel, as known today, occurred in early 1820s – 1830s (Daniels & Loveless, 2013).

Honeymoon travel has been a popular newlyweds’ tradition for many years, especially in the Western world (Lee et al, 2010). For example, U.S. market contains approximately 1.4 million honeymoon travellers per year (Breslow Sardone, 2015). Moreover, the phenomenon is spreading and current honeymooners’ statistics demonstrate rapid growth of the wedding travel worldwide, but especially among Asian countries (Lee et al, 2010). Today with a rise of

destination wedding phenomenon more and more businesses realised the potential of wedding and honeymoon travel combination. Thus destinations that are recognised as honeymoon places, nowadays increasingly adjusting their products and services to be able to compete for the destination wedding market as well (Moirá et al., 2011; Daniels & Loveless, 2013).

Destination weddings are considered marriage ceremonies that is celebrated outside couples' usual environment. Compared to honeymoon concept, destination wedding is a recent phenomenon. It started penetrate the market when couples realized that destination weddings could be easily combined with honeymoon travel in a cost efficient way (Schumann & Amado, 2010). Destination wedding tourism is divided into few market segments that could be distinguished by their features and motivations. Wedding tourism comprises of first time marriages, re-marriages, renewal vows, as well as commitment ceremonies and same sex marriages (Figure 2). Re-marriages are the core market of wedding tourism. Couples getting married for the second or third time have already had traditional wedding and are willing to celebrate with less guests. First time marriages are usually held by experienced travellers who are seeking for unusual destination and are willing to experiment. Vow renewal ceremonies are becoming increasingly popular and are held with the purpose to celebrate the marriage once again, in different setting, together with children and grandchildren, while same sex marriages and commitment ceremonies commenced after the introduction of The Civil Partnership Act (Major et al., 2010) and today comprise an increasing market.

Figure 2: Composition of Destination Wedding Phenomenon



Source: Major et. al., 2010, p. 252

Destination wedding sector comprises out of various suppliers, including venue and accommodation providers, caterers, photographers, make-up and hair artists, as well as wedding planners and travel agencies that help to organize the celebration and honeymoon (Del Chiappa & Fortezza, 2013; Kim & Kim, 2013). Hence wedding tourism brings many

development opportunities for wedding related businesses. The growing importance of the sector among such businesses could be confirmed by the establishment of annual Destination Wedding Planners Congress. The event is notably fresh, as the very first edition took place in Greece in 2014, while the second one was held in Mauritius in 2015. The Congress is aimed to provide the platform to meet new partners, such as venue and accommodation providers, as well as designers and entertainers (Destination Wedding Planners Congress, 2014). As destination wedding planners seek to expand their network of suppliers, it demonstrates a growing need for better service quality.

Wedding tourism encompasses not solely international honeymoon and destination wedding trips, but domestic ones as well. Also, guests of destination weddings could be indicated as part of wedding tourism. Couples together with their guests, after the wedding ceremony become regular tourists who stay in hotels, dine in restaurants, use transportation, visit sites and admire the landscape. Thus, the wedding tourism sectors plays an important role within tourism industry, since it generates impressive amounts of money and continues to demonstrate positive growth.

1.4.2 Growth of wedding tourism

It was previously mentioned that wedding tourism is a looming part of tourism industry. Various reasons influence couples to travel and hold their wedding ceremonies and receptions out of their usual surroundings, as well as have post wedding vacations. Previous section emphasised that wedding tourism encompasses domestic and international wedding travellers, however, the following reasons are mainly applicable to travels abroad.

One of the most essential reasons that justifies growing popularity of honeymoon and destination wedding tourism is the provision of convenient travelling options. (Major et al., 2010; Schumann & Amado, 2010; Del Chiappa & Forteza, 2013). Air travel is recognised as a key stimulus for tourism development worldwide. In recent decades, it became more convenient and affordable, especially with an establishment of low cost carriers. For example, in 2001 low cost airlines covered 5% of Europe's market share, while in 2011 it accounted for 26% (UNWTO, 2012). Thus today travelling is more available than ever before and people tend to utilise such opportunities.

Even though destination wedding phenomenon is relatively new, it managed to usurp substantial position within tourism industry. First and foremost, due to the significant difference between domestic and destination wedding costs. Destination wedding is much cheaper, mainly because of notably lower number of guests (Major et al., 2010; Schumann & Amado, 2010; Del Chiappa & Forteza, 2013; Seebaluck et al., 2015). For example, in 2008

destination wedding cost was seven percent less than the traditional one held at home (Schuman & Amado, 2010).

Another important nudge towards destination wedding occurs due to couples wish to get married in unique, exotic and memorable settings (Del Chiappa & Forteza, 2013), as well as longing for an intimate wedding ceremonies, away from their families and friends (Major et al., 2010; Del Chiappa & Forteza, 2013). For example, in Japan weddings once used to be a family-oriented celebration, while now is increasingly becoming a couple-oriented ceremony (Schuman & Amado, 2010), as couples want to avoid any social responsibilities.

Other important reasons affecting wedding tourism growth are following. Couples try to utilise the possibility to combine wedding ceremony with honeymoon travel (Del Chiappa & Forteza, 2013). Today travel agencies provide numerous tourist packages made for couples which seek to get married and have a wedding voyage abroad. For example, few Greek travel agencies offer a function to adapt its regular tourist packages for couples with an intention to get married (Moirá et al., 2011). Furthermore, destination wedding segment keeps increasing due to decrease of religious wedding ceremonies and emergence of new trends, such as civil marriages, second or third time marriages (Major et al., 2010) as well as same sex marriages (Del Chiappa & Forteza, 2013).

In brief, wedding tourism, as well as any other form of tourism, is mainly being pushed forward due to more affordable and convenient air travelling. Meanwhile destination wedding sector is favoured against traditional home wedding due to financial reasons and appealing opportunity to celebrate wedding in exotic and unique places in more intimate environment, only with few family members and friends or no one at all.

1.4.3 Wedding tourism destinations

Couples mostly seek for warm and exotic places with quality service for their wedding ceremonies and honeymoons. However, only limited number of destinations contain necessary attributes and resources to employ wedding tourism and generate profit from it.

Academic sources present general tendencies of attributes that determine the choice of wedding tourism destinations. 3S factor (sea, sun and sand) is considered one of the most important determinants in choosing wedding tourism place. Furthermore, it is emphasised that combination of sunshine, beaches and quality service are highly desirable. In addition, idyllic and exotic wedding place, gastronomic experience, together with wide supply of wedding tourism services are among determinant attributes as well (Major et al., 2010; Seedbulck, 2015). In addition, affordability of the location plays an important role, however, it is not the

final determinant among couples, as they are willing to spend more for their honeymoon in comparison to regular vacation (Winchester et al., 2011).

Another important factor determining couples choice is efficient legal procedures applied in destinations. Couples that plan overseas weddings have to acquire marriage licences, resident permits and other required documentation. Perfect example, illustrating the importance of efficiency of the legal system, could be Spain and France. Both countries are not highly prominent in the context of wedding tourism due to their strict and complicated legal procedures for foreign couples. Spain and France contain many necessary attributes to become a favourable wedding tourism destination, however, countries fail to utilise such opportunity and are outshined by other European wedding tourism destinations, such as Greek Islands, Italy and Cyprus, as they have simplified legal procedures for destination newlyweds (Major et al., 2010).

Few research studies were conducted on determinant attributes on particular wedding tourism destinations. Lee et al. (2010) conducted a research on attributes that determine the choice of Taiwan as honeymoon destination. The results provided 10 attributes which demonstrated that honeymoon travellers particularly choose Taiwan due to safety, accommodation quality and reasonable travel cost. Also, study indicated other attributes of medium and low importance, such as beautiful scenery, accessibility, good weather, romantic place, possibility to shop, nightlife entertainment, as well as culture and history assets. Meanwhile other analogous study was carried out by Seedbaluck et al. (2015). Academics conducted a research on push and pull motives which determine the choice of Mauritius as destination to hold weddings in. The results of push motives demonstrated that couples choose Mauritius mainly because of 3S – sea, sun and sand combination. In addition, couples took into consideration general appeal of the destination, meaning they were looking for exotic and safe place. Whereas pull motives showed that demand of reasonable pricing in terms of wedding venue, availability of wedding services, as well as uncomplicated wedding legal formalities are important attributes determining the choice. Moreover, researchers state that marketing, promotion and branding activities of Mauritius played a vital role of destination choice as well (Seedbaluck, 2015).

Destination trends vary depending on newlyweds' residence place. For example, US couples give priority to Las Vegas, Hawaii, the Caribbean, Mexico Canada, Fiji, Europe and even Disneyland and Disneyworld resorts as destinations for their marriage ceremonies, and Hawaii, Tahiti/Bora Bora and Italy for honeymoon travel. Meanwhile, Japanese couples choose Hawaii, Australia, other destinations in Oceania region for destination wedding ceremonies, and Hawaii, Oceania and Europe for honeymoon vacation (Lee et al., 2010; Schumann & Amado, 2010). It is obvious that choice of both markets differ significantly, having in common solely Hawaii and Europe for wedding tourism purposes.

General wedding tourism trends portray that couples are willing to celebrate their wedding in places like Hawaii, the Caribbean, Mexico, Fiji, Seychelles, Maldives, Mauritius, Jamaica, Bali, New Zealand, Europe continent, particularly Italy, Greek Islands and Cyprus, as well as US cities – Las Vegas and New York (Major et al., 2010; Del Chiappa & Fortezza, 2013; Seedabulck et al., 2015). Majority of aforementioned destinations contain 3S factor which is known as one of the most desirable by couples. Furthermore, there are some existing niche markets which does not provide sunshine and beach. Some couples prefer “white wedding” destinations and ceremonies held on cruise ships. Austria, Iceland and Lapland provide services for couples willing to marry in cold climate surrounded by snow (Major et al., 2010) Another increasingly growing market is cruise ship wedding travel which is mainly chosen by older couples who are planning to get married for the second or third time (Major et al., 2010; Schumann & Amado, 2010).

To sum up, destinations with sea, sun and sand combination are the winners in terms of wedding tourism. In addition such destinations contain other important attributes as exotic landscape and wide supply of wedding services, together with quality provision. Thus islands with tropical climate such as Hawaii, the Caribbean, Seychelles, Maldives, Mauritius, Greek Islands, Cyprus are the most dominant destinations among couples. In addition cities as Las Vegas, New York and even Disneyland resorts are desirable places and venues. Moreover, there is a growing demand for such niche markets as cruise ship weddings and honeymoons, as well as winter destination wedding.

1.5 Destination Branding through Wedding Tourism

The thesis previously reviewed literature which studied destination branding through different segments of tourism. Academic literature provides studies on destination branding via event tourism, film-induced tourism, gastronomy tourism and even shopping tourism. However, no former research investigated influence of wedding tourism on destination branding. Such gap in scholarly research should be eliminated, since wedding tourism is rapidly emerging tourism sector widely favoured by destinations. Therefore, firstly this chapter discusses the interrelationship between destination branding and wedding tourism concepts and afterwards establishes a model to investigate destination branding through wedding tourism.

1.5.1 Interrelationship between destination branding and wedding tourism

Wedding tourism generates various impacts on host destinations. It causes a significant economic impact on places employing such segment of tourism (Del Chiappa & Fortezza, 2013). Destination wedding couples together with their guests become tourists as they use accommodation facilities and transportation, buy food & beverages, visit attractions or seek

entertainment. In addition, honeymoon travellers are tourists as well (Durinec, 2013) on average spending more than during regular vacation (Lee et al., 2010). Thus wedding tourism benefits destinations in terms of income. In addition, couples rent venues and hire local wedding planning services to organize events such as rehearsal dinner, wedding ceremony and after-wedding ceremony reception and in this way reinforce local wedding-related businesses (Durinec, 2013). Therefore, wedding tourism significantly contributes to the economic development of host destinations. Other impacts include social and environmental, as wedding tourism benefits destinations in terms of increased visitor numbers, exploitation of destinations' heritage, authenticity and identity (Del Chiappa & Fortezza, 2013).

Another significant impact is related to marketing. Wedding tourism phenomenon provide a possibility to enhance destination brand and image (Del Chiappa & Fortezza, 2013; Durinec, 2013). It is valuable because brand and image communicates the identity and differentiation of destinations, as well as influence tourist purchasing behaviour. Thus wedding-based tourism has been recognized as a promising opportunity for destinations to uniquely position themselves in crowded international market (Durinec, 2013). The latter statement could be reinforced by Seebaluck et al. (2015) research that investigated push and pull motives for choosing Mauritius as wedding destination. The study approved the significance between both concepts, as findings suggested that branding, together with marketing and promotion activities are among the most important pull motives influencing couples choice of mentioned destination for wedding tourism purposes (Seebaluck et al., 2015).

Destination marketing organisations increasingly apply wedding tourism phenomenon and communicate it through their marketing and branding activities. For example, countries as Thailand, Malaysia, Oman and city of Dubai receive great numbers of Indian tourists every year. After noticing increasing trend among Indians to celebrate weddings and spend honeymoons abroad, previously mentioned destinations realised the lying potential to engage wedding tourism, particularly targeting Indian market. For instance, tourism boards of Dubai and Oman brand the destinations as wedding and honeymoon tourism places, particularly targeting Indian market (Sen & Sharma, 2013).

In brief, wedding tourism generates various beneficial impacts on destinations, including significant marketing possibilities for destinations to enhance their brand and image. Thus destinations increasingly apply wedding-based tourism to differentiate themselves in competitive tourism market.

1.5.2 Research model design

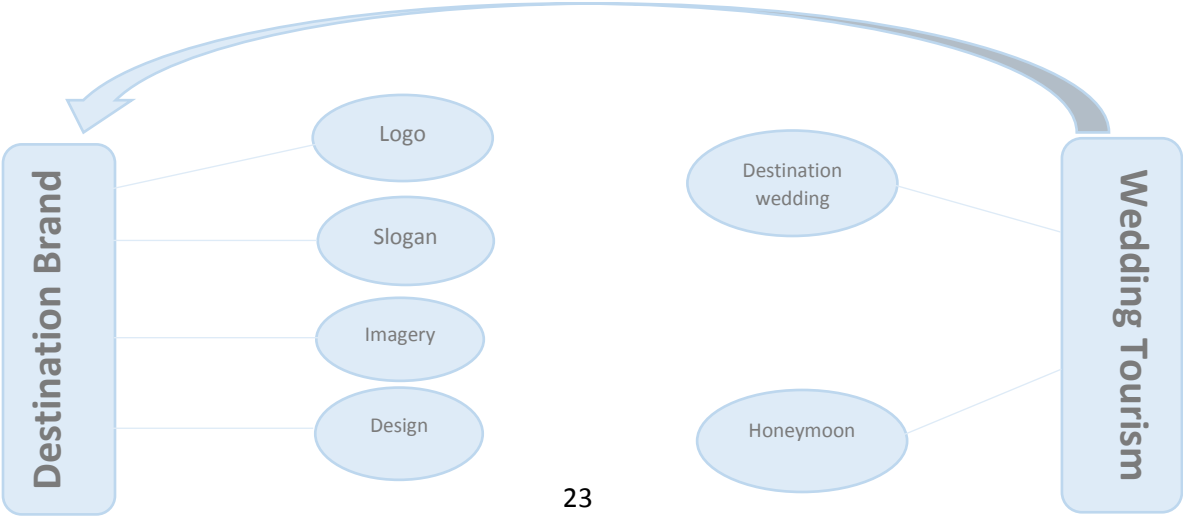
In order to analyse destination branding through wedding tourism there is a necessity to design a tool, since no equivalent research was conducted in the past and no relevant model exists. The research instrument for further analysis was established based on the previously introduced destination branding and wedding tourism concepts.

Section 1.2.3 presented composition of a brand, wherein thesis has acknowledged that the main destination brand components are name, logo, slogan, imagery, design and verbal elements. Even though thesis agrees that name could be an element of destination brand, as some real examples occurred in the past when islands were renamed due to tourism purposes, the current research eliminates component “name” from the model. It states that in terms of destination branding, destination’s name does not provide clear associations of the position which it seeks in tourism market thus could not reflect the brand of destinations. Due to that name element is absent in the designed tool. Despite that thesis suggests that the rest of elements capture the essence of destination and represent its brand.

Another concept used in the instrument design is wedding tourism. The thesis have already presented the phenomenon by stating that such form of tourism encompasses destination wedding and honeymoon travel. Moreover, destination wedding term serves as an umbrella for first-time marriages, re-marriages, renewal of the vows and same sex marriages together with commitment ceremonies, as it was presented previously in the Figure 2.

The model has combined both aforementioned concepts and is presented below (Figure 3). It is designed to guide the research on destination branding via wedding tourism. The top arrow of the model demonstrates that in order to investigate how wedding tourism influences destination branding, it is vital to analyse every element of destination brand and examine whether wedding tourism elements are transferred to destination brand elements.

Figure 3: The Model of Destination Branding through Wedding Tourism





Source: Developed by the author (2015)

To sum up, destination branding through wedding tourism model has been designed based on destination branding and wedding tourism concepts and their elements, as it is presented in academic literature. To determine the influence of wedding tourism on destination branding every element of destination brand is investigated for any trace of wedding tourism.

2. RESEARCH QUESTION

Research question was formulated due to the existing gap in the academic literature which does not provide any knowledge about wedding tourism influence on destination branding. Such research is necessary because wedding tourism is increasingly emerging tourism sector widely utilized by destinations for differentiation purposes. Thus thesis is aimed at analysing the Caribbean region's branding elements and answering the following research question "How does wedding tourism influence branding of the Caribbean region?".

The main purpose of the thesis is to study branding elements of the Caribbean region to explore the integration of wedding tourism within its destination branding. To achieve this aim, the conceptual model of destination branding through wedding tourism (Figure 3) was established to guide the process in order to analyse whether wedding tourism elements are transferred to destination brand elements.

3. THE CASE OF THE CARIBBEAN REGION

According to Veal (2006), selection of the research case is a highly important step. The author distinguishes between four case selection types. First, purposive type includes multiple cases with the aim to compare and contrast them. Second is illustrative type, wherein singular or multiple cases are chosen deliberately to illustrate a particular proposition. Third, typical or atypical type that includes either typical case of the phenomenon or deliberately chosen atypical case. Finally the fourth type is called pragmatic, mostly chosen when the researcher has access to the information, when he/she is an employee of the relevant company (Veal, 2006).

The master thesis employs typical type of the case selection in order to generate new findings about the phenomenon and its contribution to the destination branding. The thesis research is concentrated on the Caribbean region which is acknowledged as a prominent destination for wedding tourism (Lee et al., 2010; Major et al., 2010; Schumann & Amado, 2010; Del Chiappa & Fortezza, 2013; Seedabulck et al., 2015).

To begin with, the Caribbean is a region that constitutes of the Caribbean Sea, its islands and the surrounding coasts. There are approximately 7000 islands in total, but it mainly includes uninhabited islets, cays and reefs. 13 islands in the Caribbean region are independent island countries, while others are dependencies of the Netherlands, France, Great Britain and the USA. (World Atlas, 2015).

Tourism in the Caribbean are among major economic sectors, together with mining and agriculture (Caribbean Traveler, 2009a). In 2013, the Caribbean region received 21.2 million international tourist arrivals and had 12.6 percent of total tourism arrivals share in the world (UNWTO, 2014). The most prominent Caribbean tourism destinations are Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, St Barthelemy, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos, US Virgin Islands, as well as Venezuela (Caribbean Travel, 2015).

The region is highly likeable by tourists because it has natural and untainted beauty including white sand beaches, turquoise water and sunshine. In addition, each Caribbean destination offers broad array of various attractions, such as unique wildlife, tropical rainforests, active volcanos, natural springs, valleys, desert oasis and many others. Moreover, the region contains a mix of history, culture and architecture due to European, Spanish, Hispanic and African heritage, as well as provides various offers for adventurer tourists. The main tourism activities of the Caribbean region include beaches, cruises, honeymoons & weddings, diving, snorkelling and other water sport activities, as well as natural attractions, casinos, golf, hiking and fishing (Caribbean Traveler, 2009a).

Weddings and honeymoons are mentioned among the main tourism segments of the Caribbean tourism. Marriage ceremonies are held at luxury resorts and hotels, private estate and beaches, as well as wedding chapels. Caribbean hotels employ wedding coordinators and planners to organise marriage ceremonies and in contribution with tour operators provide honeymoon travel opportunities (Caribbean Traveler, 2009b). Even though wedding tourism statistics in the Caribbean region is non-existing, the sector is recognised as an important part of the general tourism in the region.

4. METHODOLOGY

The aim of the thesis is to investigate wedding tourism influence on the branding of the Caribbean region. In order to answer the research question, qualitative research approach was chosen. The qualitative approach describes research methods and techniques of analysis that collect and analyse the qualitative data. Qualitative research seeks to collect rich data about relatively few cases, unlike quantitative research that usually collects limited information from large number of cases (Veal, 2006).

The study is inductive due to its qualitative nature, as such studies are mainly associated with inductive approach. In addition, the research is aimed at generating new theory, rather than testing the theory, as it is usually done by deductive studies (Greener, 2008). Inductive research is known as theory-building, thus such studies aim to refine, improve and extend the knowledge (Bhattacharjee, 2012).

4.1 Research Paradigm

According to Guba (1990, p.17), paradigm is “a basic set of beliefs that guides action, whether of the everyday garden variety or action taken in connection with a disciplined inquiry”. Design and conduct of the research is formed by the mental models of references that people use to organise reasoning and observations. These mental models, or so called belief systems are paradigms (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Positivism paradigm, which is based on quantitative methods, is a dominant one in tourism and leisure studies, thus there is a need for more qualitative research based on interpretive paradigm (Veal, 2006). This research is designed and conducted under the interpretive paradigm, as it adopts inductive approach and relies on qualitative data (Veal, 2006; Bhattacharjee, 2012).

4.2 Triangulation

The thesis applies triangulation approach. Triangulation is a method that involves more than one research approach in a single study to acquire broader understanding of the research questions (Veal, 2006). There are four different ways to employ triangulation within academic studies, namely, data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation and methodological triangulation. The thesis utilizes methodological triangulation which involves the employment of several data collection methods (Jennings, 2010).

Validity is “the extent to which the data collected truly reflect the phenomenon being studied” (Veal, 2006, p. 117). Hence, triangulation is considered as an alternative for validation due to the fact that no single method adequately solves the problem (Jennings, 2010). Triangulation approach measures the object of the study from two different positions, wherein the object is

considered the third point of the triangle. In addition, utilized methods in a single case are often complementary or overlapping, meaning that they strengths and weaknesses fulfil each other (Veal, 2006). Thus triangulation method is employed within the thesis due to the fact that it improves the research validity.

4.3 Empirical Data Collection

As the thesis applied qualitative approach, qualitative data collection methods are utilised. Mostly utilised qualitative data collection methods include interviews, focus groups, Delphi techniques, case studies, participant observation, documentary method and etc. (Veal, 2006; Jennings, 2010). The thesis was aimed at conducting semi-structured interviews, as well as utilising documentary and visual methods.

These methods were chosen to address different aspects of the research question. The model of destination branding through wedding tourism demonstrates that it is vital to analyse every destination brand's element in order to determine wedding tourism intervention. The destination brand elements include logo, slogan, imagery, design style and verbal elements. Relevant knowledge about these five components cannot be collected by solely one research method. Thus triangulation approach was applied. Logos and slogans could be analysed by personal interpretation, however then there is a high risk of bias due to the subjective perception and opinion of the researcher. Thus to avoid any deviation, information about logos and slogans is acquired at the primer level. Whereas documentary and visual methods aimed at collecting data about imagery, design and verbal elements.

The qualitative methods utilised within the research are presented and discussed in-depth below.

4.3.1 Primary data collection

The questions were developed based on relevant academic literature and two previously conducted equivalent qualitative studies on destination branding through event tourism: the study on destination branding via two cultural events in Croatia (Trošt et al, 2012), and the research on destination branding through regional food festivals in Australia (Lee & Arcodia, 2011). Both studies featured the analogical research question about event tourism influence on destinations branding. One of the studies utilized interviews to collect empirical data, while another one employed structured open-ended questionnaire. According to Shenton (2004), the research methods should be adopted from previous successful studies to enhance credibility. Thus due to such resemblance to the current thesis research, these two studies are utilised as the framework in developing the questions in order to ensure the reliability of the research. Previously mentioned studies have distinguished questions between general and specific.

General questions were aimed at acquiring information about the general destination brands and branding efforts, whereas specific ones aimed to answer questions about event tourism and its branding.

The initial idea was to conduct semi-structured interviews with marketing managers and officials from DMOs. However, the potential respondents were more willing to provide answers in writing. Thus open-ended questions were distributed among marketing managers and officials, as well as branding specialists of DMOs in different Caribbean destinations. Such methodology was taken from the analogical research of Trošt et al (2012) to ensure the research credibility.

The purpose was to acquire the information about the meaning of destinations' logos and slogans to analyse two out of five destination branding elements. Questions were divided into two parts, namely, general and specific. The general questions were aimed to gather information about the current brands of the Caribbean destinations, their most popular tourism segments and the meaning of the logos and slogans. The general questions are enough to investigate logo and slogan elements of destinations, however specific questions were developed in order to obtain information from the primary source about wedding tourism and its branding. Specific questions could provide information that would have a positive impact on the analysis, as it gives broader perspective on branding of wedding tourism in the Caribbean region. Thus specific questions were aimed at gathering knowledge about wedding tourism importance and its branding efforts among the Caribbean destinations. Appendix A presents the developed open-ended questions.

The respondents were recruited using non-probability sample. As the typical model of case selection was chosen, the research needs to be conducted on the destinations that actually employ wedding tourism. Thus websites as www.destinationwedding.com (2015) and www.mywedding.com (2015) were consulted to distinguish the most popular wedding tourism destinations in the Caribbean region. According to the websites, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Barbados, Bahamas, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Curacao, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Saint Kitts, Turks & Caicos and US Virgin Islands are the most prominent ones in terms of wedding tourism. In order to investigate how the Caribbean region is branded through wedding tourism it is necessary to investigate every destination separately and then provide general patterns and results about the region.

Each Caribbean island and destination have its own DMO that are considered as the main marketing body of their destinations. Due to that DMOs were chosen as the research subjects. The purposive sampling approach was chosen, wherein the researcher subjectively decides upon the most appropriate sample (Jennings, 2010). Thus the questionnaires were sent to

marketing manager and officials, as well as branding specialists working in DMOs of the Caribbean destinations as they hold the knowledge about their destination branding.

A total of 14 DMOs were targeted and ten agreed to participate, while other four haven't replied at all. However, three out of ten DMOs that demonstrated a wish to join the research, did not provide any answers, even though reminder messages were sent multiple times. Thus the thesis analysed seven Caribbean destinations in total. Managers and officials were found through professional social networking site LinkedIn and contacted either directly on the LinkedIn or by their e-mail provided on the official DMOs' websites. The research was conducted in April-June of 2015. The answers of the respondents are provided in the appendices.

4.3.2 Documentary method

As this thesis adopts methodological triangulation approach more than one research method should be utilised. Documentary analysis is often combined with other qualitative research methods (Bowen, 2009).

Documentary method belongs to qualitative data collection methods. It is a systematic procedure for reviewing and evaluating documents. It aims to elicit meaning and develop empirical knowledge (Bowen, 2009). Documents are mainly associated with written texts. However, they include much broader scope than just text-based items. Examples of documentary sources include newspapers, magazines, photographs, Internet multimedia, websites, advertisements, brochures, press releases, video clips, diaries and etc. (Bowen, 2009; Jennings, 2010). The main advantage of such method is non-intrusive nature of the research process (Jennings, 2010). Additionally, such model is recognised as efficient in terms of timing, available, as most of the documents are in the public domain, as well as cost-effective (Bowen, 2009).

In the Figure 3 the model of destination branding via wedding tourism demonstrates that imagery, design and verbal elements are a significant part of destination brand composition. However, the data concerning these elements could not be gathered through the open-ended questions. According to Bowen (2009), document method is utilised when new data collection is not feasible. Thus the thesis employs document method to investigate three previously mentioned branding components to evaluate wedding tourism elements transfer to the destination brand elements. UNWTO (2010) states that brand is embedded in all marketing activities, including websites. Therefore, in order to investigate and generate findings whether wedding tourism elements are transferred to destination brand elements, the official websites of DMOs are analysed.

4.3.3 Visual method

Visual methods are underutilised, as written texts have been the priority of academics. However, such methods are slowly gaining better positions within academic research as they could bring a significant value for tourism studies. Visual methods mainly focus on photographs. However, there are much more than that: two-dimensional and three-dimensional visual materials, virtual and digitised material, videos, maps and even visual observations in everyday life are recognised as visual materials (Knoblauch, Baer, Laurier, Petschke & Schnettler, 2008; Jennings, 2010). Thus visual method is mainly utilised due to its complementarity to the aforementioned empirical data gathering methods.

4.2 Data Analysis

In order to analyse collected empirical data and generate new knowledge content analysis method was chosen. Content analysis is “any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics of messages” (in Prasad, 2008, p. 2). Conducting the content analysis the researcher should be able to interpret and explain the meaning of the content based on the social setting or context from which it was drawn (Jennings, 2010). The subjects for the content analysis can be texts, symbols, documents, interview transcriptions, websites, images, advertising material, newspaper and magazine content etc. (Veal, 2006; Prasad, 2008; Bowen, 2009).

When conducting content analysis it is necessary to balance between description and interpretation. Description needs to provide readers with the background, while interpretation represents personal and theoretical understanding of the phenomenon by the researcher (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

In content analysis coding or categorising of the information is important. In some cases categorising scheme could be developed prior the analysis based on the theory (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). The thesis aims to analyse destinations branding of the Caribbean to determine wedding tourism influence. Thus in order to analyse wedding tourism elements transfer to destination branding it is necessary to analyse every destination branding element. The elements of destination branding are logo, slogan, imagery, design style and verbal elements, hence the categories are developed based on these five branding elements.

To analyse design, verbal and imagery elements the following sub-categories were developed. According to UNWTO (2010), the design element should make destination information accessible. Thus in order to evaluate the design element, wedding tourism placement within main menu, as well as on the website in general should be investigated. In order to evaluate

verbal element, textual information on the homepage, general descriptions of the destination, as well as the textual information on each section and sub-section should be analysed. Slogan could be perceived as part of a verbal elements as well, but slogan is analysed as a separate destination branding element, thus it is not included. Lastly, to investigate imagery element it is necessary to analyse the homepage imagery, as well as gallery of the website and imagery illustrating different sub-sections.

Logo and slogan elements of destination branding were analysed by conducting the content analysis of answers to open-ended questions, while design, verbal and imagery elements were investigated by conducting a content analysis on the official DMOs websites. Additionally, memos were utilised. Memos are one of the qualitative data interpretation methods and usually takes form of messages that researchers make to themselves. Memos assist in the data analysis process (Jennings, 2010), thus they were taken during the analysis of the websites.

5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Before the beginning of the analysis section it is necessary to emphasise the research question once again. The research question of the thesis is “How does wedding tourism influence branding of the Caribbean region?” which is aimed to examine whether wedding tourism elements are transferred to Caribbean destinations brand elements. In order to guide the analysis process the model of destination branding through wedding tourism (Figure 3) was developed.

The objectives of the analysis encompass investigation of all five destination branding elements of Caribbean destinations separately to look for wedding tourism elements transfer, as well as provision of general results about the Caribbean region in terms of destination branding through wedding tourism.

This chapter provides analysis and interpretation of five destination branding elements in Caribbean destinations. Afterwards the acquired knowledge of each destination will be systemised and general results about the Caribbean region will be provided.

5.1 Jamaica

Jamaica is an independent country which covers 10,830 km² and is one of the most prominent destinations in the Caribbean region (World Atlas, 2015b). During the year of 2014 it has received 2,080,181 tourist arrivals and that makes Jamaica the third most visited destination in the Caribbean after Dominican Republic and Cuba (Caribbean Tourism Organisation, 2015). The main tourism body is Jamaica’s Tourist Board which was founded in 1955 and is fully

funded by the government of the country. Jamaica's tourism authority is responsible for worldwide marketing and promotion of Jamaica and aims to keep the country as one of the premier destinations in the region (Linkedin, 2015a).

To begin with, the respondent of Jamaica's Tourist Board elaborated on the main tourism segments in Jamaica. The cultural tourism was named as the main pull factor of the country. To specify, cuisine and events are among the main tourism attractions. Jamaican cuisine is known as a diverse ethnic mix, while events encompass various musical, sport and literary occasions. Additionally, the interviewee stressed that Jamaica is known as a place for nature and adventure tourism, as the destination offers beaches, waterfalls, dolphin parks, as well as many various adventure activities, such as hiking, rafting, caving, snorkelling, zip lining, bird watching, horseback riding etc. This demonstrates that Jamaica's brand encompasses cultural tourism, with a focus on cuisine and music, as well as nature and adventure tourism.

Despite the fact that wedding tourism was not named among the main tourism segments in Jamaica, the interviewee stated that wedding and honeymoon segment is one of the key niche markets in the country. Respondent has provided 2014 tourism statistics which stated that 74,1 percent of Jamaica's visitors came to have their vacations and 8,8 percent came to visit their friends and relatives. The third most common purpose of visitation is destination weddings and honeymoons with 6,1 percent of overall tourist visits. Despite the fact that wedding tourism is responsible for solely a niche market, it holds a very important position in Jamaica.

After discussing current Jamaica's brand and most prominent tourism sectors, the five destination branding elements are analysed below.

Jamaica's logo is quite simple – the name of the country is actually a logo (Figure 4). According to the respondent, the white lettering in the Rhodamine red background symbolises strength, boldness, attractiveness and a big personality of the country. Academic literature states that logos usually evoke associations and images of their destinations. Jamaican logo communicates the destination it belongs to, however it fails to represent any associations what people can expect in the destination, as none of tourism segments, including wedding tourism, are incorporated into the logo. Thus Jamaica's logo is not influenced by wedding tourism.

Jamaica's slogan is "Home of All Rights". Interviewee has stated that it encapsulates the ultimate feeling of "All Right" that can only be experienced in Jamaica, as the essence of "All Right" can be found in Jamaican people, beaches, sand, waterfalls, rivers, air and cuisine. Basically slogan communicates that Jamaica is a place for rest and relaxation, thus it is appealing for people who want to travel with a purpose of vacation. Hence, the slogan of Jamaica has no inclusion of wedding tourism.

Figure 4: Logo of Jamaica's Tourist Board



Source: Official website of Jamaica's Tourist Board (2015)

In order to analyse design, verbal and imagery elements of Jamaica's branding, the official Jamaica Tourist Board's website (2015) was reviewed.

The homepage contains drop-down menu with main sections of information about Jamaica's tourism. The menu is placed on the top of the webpage, wherein information is easily noticeable and accessible. The sections are "things to do", "feel the vibe", "your travel guide", "where to stay", "weddings & honeymoons" and "conventions". It is important to emphasise that "weddings & honeymoons" section is placed in the main menu along with the most important information regarding accommodation and activities in the country. It was mentioned previously that cultural tourism, together with nature and adventure tourism are considered the main tourism segments in Jamaica. However, the official Jamaica's website designed to foremost focus on wedding tourism. Thus the design element is definitely influenced by wedding tourism, as information regarding the phenomenon is placed at the top of the homepage with the most important information sections about Jamaica and its tourism. Meanwhile most popular tourism segments are not even included among the main sections of the drop-down menu.

Another analysis is held on verbal element of the destination branding. To begin with, sub-sections of the drop-down menu provide practical information on Jamaica's cuisine, events, music, sport, active tourism, people, relaxation, family vacations, but, as it was mentioned previously, the drop-down menu contains a whole separate section dedicated solely to wedding tourism. It is quite informative section, wherein five sub-sections are introduced – "getting married", "honeymoon activities", "honeymoon attractions", "wedding resources" and "wedding concierge". In these sub-sections all the practical information is provided, but additionally Jamaica is interchangeably referred to as the island of love, island of "One love", one of the most romantic spots on Earth, lovers' paradise and a romantic place. All these names give an indication that Jamaica is a romantic destination for couples with a reference towards wedding tourism. Moreover, the homepage presents shifting concise descriptions about Jamaica. They refer to sandy beaches and crystal clear water, as well as hint towards adventure tourism, but do not contain any indications about weddings and honeymoons. Even though concise descriptions about Jamaica does not mention wedding tourism, the website

dedicates a significant amount of textual information to wedding tourism. Thus verbal elements are influenced by the wedding tourism phenomenon.

The verbal information on the website is highly supported with imagery. The homepage presents changing animated images of Jamaica. Two of them portray sandy beaches and turquoise water, while the third one depicts a mountain view. Thus the imagery of the homepage promotes Jamaica's nature tourism. The gallery of the website contains multiple photos of Jamaican beaches and water, as well as adventure tourism activities, and solely singular ones portraying cuisine, art and golf. Furthermore, two pictures depict couples – watching a sunset and riding a motorbike. Hence, the gallery is mainly focused on enhancing nature and adventure tourism. It is important to mention that none of the photos in the gallery portray marriage ceremonies. However, photos with couples could be interpreted as the ones depicting honeymoon travellers. In addition, sub-sections of “weddings & honeymoons” support textual information with relevant photos that portray wedding ceremonies on the beach wherein couples wear wedding clothing and hold hands, as well as couples enjoying their honeymoon – newlyweds walking on the beach and experiencing Jamaica's nature. So the website contains photos not solely of marriage ceremonies, but honeymoon travellers as well. To sum up, even though general Jamaica's gallery has limited photos depicting possible honeymooners, the imagery of the website is still influenced by wedding tourism.

Additionally, the respondent of Jamaica's Tourist Board was asked about the branding of Jamaica as a wedding tourism destination. The interviewee elaborated that Tourist Board participates in bridal shows in multiple source markets, as well as features Jamaica and its wedding tourism in printed and online bridal magazines, such as “Brides”, “Today's Bride” and honeymoon.com. Such endeavours contribute to placing Jamaica as a wedding tourism destination. Moreover, according to the respondent, tourism authority of Jamaica organise familiarisation tours for tourism agents operating within bridal market.

To sum up, wedding tourism is not the main tourism segment influencing Jamaica's brand, however it still plays an important role. Even though Jamaica's logo and slogan do not incorporate any wedding tourism elements, the country's brand is still significantly influenced by the phenomenon. Influence of wedding tourism was detected on the design and verbal elements, as weddings and honeymoons are included as a separate section in the main menu of the website, wherein the most important tourism segments of Jamaica are excluded. Meanwhile influence on imagery could be perceived as limited, since general gallery of the website mainly portrays nature and adventure tourism. Despite that, the website contains fair amount of photos depicting newlyweds and honeymoon travellers, hence imagery element is affected as well. Wedding tourism influences three out of five branding elements, thus wedding tourism segment influences the branding of Jamaica.

5.2 Aruba

Aruba is an island of 193 km² in area located in the Southern Caribbean Sea, as well as dependency which belongs to the Netherlands (Aruba Travel Guide, 2015). According to the statistics, in 2014 Aruba has received 1,072,082 tourist arrivals and that makes the island the fourth most visited destination in the Caribbean after Dominican Republic, Cuba and Jamaica (Caribbean Tourism Organisation, 2105). The main tourism body within the island is Aruba's Tourism Authority, which is a government department funded by public funds. The authority has been managing tourism marketing activities and promoting Aruba for over 50 years (Linkedin, 2015b).

To start with, according to the respondent, beach vacations are considered the most prominent reason for visiting Aruba, as tourists are able to relax and enjoy good weather all year around. The following popular tourism segments are honeymoon and wedding tourism, family vacations, active tourism and cruise tourism. Regarding the family vacations, Aruba offers various activities for all generations, while active tourism gives opportunities to experience jeep safari, hiking in the national park, mountain biking, as well as learn to kite and wind surf. Meanwhile couples come to the island to celebrate their destination weddings, have their honeymoon vacation, as well as renew the vows or celebrate the anniversary. Couples choose Aruba due to crystal clear ocean with turquoise waters, white sand, beautiful sunsets and warm temperatures. According to the interviewee, wedding tourism is a significantly important tourism segment in Aruba and it continues to grow.

After discussing most prominent tourism sectors in Aruba, the five destination branding elements are analysed below.

Aruba's logo is presented in the Figure 5. According to the interviewee, the logo encompasses six colours and two elements – letters and a star. The red star portrays a compass rose, which was adopted from the national flag of Aruba. The compass symbolises the meeting point for people from all around the world, as more than 90 nationalities live in the island. The coloured letters of word “Aruba” stand for sky, ocean, sea, aloe and iguana, having in mind flora and fauna of the island. Meanwhile the playful display of the letters hint towards the happy feeling that comes while staying in Aruba. Therefore, Aruba's logo mainly focuses on nature, with a particular emphasis on water, as two out of five colours represent ocean and sea. Thus it could be interpreted that logo portrays beach vacation segment. However, no elements of weddings and honeymoons are incorporated into the logo, hence Aruba's logo is not influenced by wedding tourism.

Figure 5: Logo of Aruba's Tourism Authority



Source: Official website of Aruba's Tourism Authority (2015)

The slogan of Aruba is “One happy island” that positions the destination as such by campaigns called “shortcuts to happiness”. Thus the slogan hints towards the state of mind of being happy while vacationing in Aruba. Moreover, the respondent stated that Aruba sponsors events that are connected with happy experiences, such as music, culinary, culture and sport. Hence, Aruba's slogan does not concentrate on particular tourism segment, rather it promises the feeling of happiness that would be experienced by the island visitors. To sum up, Aruba's slogan has nothing in common with wedding tourism.

In order to analyse design, verbal and imagery elements of Aruba's branding, the official Aruba Tourism Authority's website (2015) was reviewed.

The website's homepage contains a menu, wherein sections “Aruba vacations”, “where to stay”, “things to do”, “our island” and “travel to Aruba” are provided. Unlike in Jamaica's case, official Aruba's website does not include any particular tourism segments into the main menu, but solely provides general and most important information options. Moreover, heading towards the bottom of the page, the island's highlights are presented with three options – “happy returners”, “events calendar” and “beaches”, while, the very bottom of the page features four more options – “summer music festival”, “Aruba hi-winds”, “one happy honeymoon” and “one happy family”. Such separate sections of the website promote Aruba's music, active tourism, family tourism and honeymoons. However, no indications are found about destination weddings in Aruba, thus the homepage solely contains honeymoon element of the wedding tourism phenomenon. The homepage is designed in a way to mainly provide practical information for tourists with scarce information for honeymoon travellers at the bottom of the homepage. Thus the design element is solely limitedly influenced by wedding tourism.

In order to analyse verbal element, every section and sub-section of the menu was reviewed. To begin with, the homepage contains a concise description of Aruba, wherein the island is introduced as destination of white-sand beaches, warmth and friendly people. Thus the description is focused on communicating the beach tourism, as well as promoting friendly and welcoming environment of the island. The sub-section “happy returners” provide thoughts of return travellers. Visitors mainly mention warm climate, tranquillity and suitability for family vacations as reasons for reoccurring visitations. Additionally, four out of ten cases include

weddings and honeymoons. This sub-section plays an important role, as it describes the destination and communicates word of mouth which could be highly convincing. Thus such provision of positive opinions of former newlyweds and honeymooners contribute to Aruba's branding. Meanwhile, another sub-section "deals and offers" promote the island as a perfect destination for family vacations, as well as a place for romantic holiday. The textual information provides such statement "if you've been stung by the love bug, there is a wide assortment of romantic selections to choose from". Moreover, another sub-section "why Aruba?" provides the main tourism segments and activities in the island. Among beaches, sunshine, weather, family vacations, diving, national park and adventure tourism, such segments as romance, weddings and honeymoons are presented as well. Following descriptions regarding wedding tourism of Aruba are utilised on the website: "perfect paradise for dream destination wedding", "home to world-class wedding professionals", "perfect Caribbean wedding" and "honeymoon paradise". All these titles give an indication of Aruba as the perfect destination for weddings and honeymoons. In addition, the statement about world-class wedding professionals hint towards high quality provision which is one of the most desired features of wedding travellers. Hence, even though the homepage does not make information on wedding tourism easily accessible, the verbal element of destination branding is still influenced by wedding tourism, as sub-section providing the most prominent tourism segments of the island includes information about weddings and honeymoons. Thus even though verbal element is significantly based on the beach vacation segment, it is still influenced by wedding tourism as well.

Speaking about the imagery of the webpage, the background consists of three different photos, namely, crystal clear water with sandy beach, the sea view from the cliff and the sky during the sunset. Thus homepage imagery brands Aruba as a beach destination and does not include any wedding tourism elements. Furthermore, website's gallery "take 2 min in Aruba" presents ten animated photos. The images are focused on portraying turquoise waters, white-sand beaches, palm trees and warm climate, and solely one photo depicts a destination wedding setting on the beach. Thus general gallery brand Aruba as a beach destination with a pleasant climate, but it still demonstrates the possibility to celebrate a destination wedding. Additionally, every tourism segment, whether it is beach vacation, family tourism, adventure activities are illustrated with relevant images. Wedding tourism is not an exception. The section about weddings and honeymoons contain images that depict couples during the marriage ceremonies, as well as honeymooners. Hence, website's imagery is influenced by wedding tourism.

Additionally, the respondent of Aruba's Tourism Authority was asked about the branding of Aruba as a wedding tourism destination. The interviewee stated that Aruba focuses on the unique selling proposition – warm and sunny climate all year around and the fact that Aruba is

outside the hurricane belt opens up possibilities to have Caribbean wedding in Aruba at any time of the year. Furthermore, the respondent emphasised that the destination tries to promote uncomplicated legal procedures for destination weddings.

To sum up, beach vacations are featured as the main tourism segment within Aruba's branding. However, wedding tourism still manages to influence the islands brand. Aruba's logo and slogan does not incorporate any wedding tourism elements, but the influence of the phenomenon was found on other three elements of destination branding. Verbal and imagery elements are influenced by wedding tourism phenomenon, as website contains a fair amount of information about weddings and honeymoons in Aruba, as well as include destination wedding image into the general gallery which is mainly focused on portraying sandy beaches and crystal clear waters. Solely limited influence of wedding tourism was discovered on the design element, as the website contains only one section relevant to honeymoon travel placed at the bottom of the homepage. To sum up, wedding tourism influences three out of five destination branding elements, hence wedding tourism segment influences the branding of Aruba.

5.3 Turks & Caicos

Turks & Caicos are British overseas territory which consists of 40 islands and cays, but only eight of them are inhabited (Turks & Caicos Islands, 2015). The islands cover 616 km² in area. According to the tourism statistics, in 2014 Turks & Caicos have received 368,164 tourist arrivals (Caribbean Tourism Organisation, 2015). The main tourism body of the islands is Turks & Caicos Tourism Board which is responsible for marketing and branding the destination.

According to the interviewee, Turks & Caicos are famous for the sun, sand and beaches, also known as 3S segment which is the biggest attraction in the islands, due to turquoise Caribbean water, white-sand beaches and warm climate all year around. Other important tourism segments include active tourism, particularly water activities – snorkelling, scuba diving and sailing, weddings and honeymoons tourism, as well as unique attractions as caves and plantations. Hence, the respondent stressed the importance of 3S tourism, as well as stated that wedding tourism is one of the most prominent tourism segments of Turks & Caicos.

After discussing most prominent tourism segments in Turks & Caicos, five destination branding elements are analysed below.

Turks & Caicos logo is presented in the Figure 6. The logo is actually the name of the destination. According to the interviewee, the letters designed to reflect the relief of waves and plants. Furthermore, blue and green colours represent Caribbean Sea and green nature. Thus

destination logo demonstrates that Turks & Caicos islands offer water and nature activities. Hence, no wedding tourism elements are incorporated within the logo of the islands.

Figure 6: Logo of Turks & Caicos' Tourism Board



Source: Official website of Turks & Caicos Tourism Board (2015)

Turks & Caicos slogan is “Beautiful by nature”. The respondent stated that it is self-explanatory, meaning that the islands’ biggest treasure is beautiful natural resources – beaches and green nature. The most prominent activities of the islands are based on natural resources: water activities – beach vacation, scuba diving, snorkelling, sailing, boating, fishing, as well as nature activities – hikes, golfing and various excursion to the caves and plantations. Thus, Turks & Caicos slogan is not influenced by wedding tourism, but rather by beach and nature tourism segments.

In order to analyse design, verbal and imagery elements of Turks & Caicos islands’ branding, the official Turks & Caicos Tourism Board website (2015) was reviewed.

The homepage contains drop-down menu with sections “about TCI”, “latest news”, “our island”, “travel info”, “where to stay”, “what to do”, “weddings” and “investing in TCI”. The menu contains all important information about the destination and its tourism, as well as separate section dedicated solely to weddings in Turks & Caicos. No other tourism segment has a separate section within the top menu, solely wedding tourism. It makes weddings regarding information easily accessible, as well as emphasizes segments’ importance. Hence the menu is designed to communicate Turks & Caicos as a wedding tourism destination. Furthermore, the bottom of the homepage contains sliding bar, wherein direct links to diving and snorkelling, dreamy weddings, cruise tourism and island hopping topics are provided. Thus wedding tourism significantly influences design element, as wedding tourism is the only tourism segment included in the drop-down menu and the information regarding the segment is easily accessible via the homepage of the website.

The homepage contains a short paragraph defining what to expect in Turks & Caicos. The emphasis in the text are put on water and its activities, stressing that Turks & Caicos are home for the best beach in the world. Additionally, it introduces the islands as a place for relaxation and serenity. However, the description does not include wedding tourism. Furthermore, every section of the main menu was reviewed, particularly the section “weddings” to analyse verbal

element. “Weddings” section contains five sub-sections, namely, “TCI weddings”, “license requirements”, “wedding planners”, “photography” and “spa/salons”. These sub-sections are mainly focused on providing practical information and giving directions to wedding related businesses. Solely “TCI weddings” sub-section provides a description about weddings in Turks & Caicos, wherein the islands are presented as “the perfect destination for marriages and honeymooners”. Additionally, it presents a possibility to organise various marriage ceremonies according to couples’ wishes, from small and intimate ceremonies, to the shore or boat weddings. Hence, even though weddings and honeymoons information is mainly practical, regarding legal requirements and organisational issues, the website still communicates that Turks & Caicos is a perfect choice for wedding tourism. Therefore, wedding tourism has influenced verbal branding of the islands.

Speaking about the imagery of the website, the homepage contains shifting photos that portray beaches, turquoise waters, diving activities and carnival celebration, but without any wedding tourism indications. Thus homepage’s imagery does not include wedding tourism elements. Furthermore, the section “weddings” is supported with relevant imagery that depicts newlyweds. In addition, the sub-section “TCI weddings” has a video dedicated solely to weddings in Turks & Caicos. The video presents slideshow of photos, wherein multiple images portray marriage ceremonies, wedding settings, newlyweds clothing, photoshoots on the beach, rings, flower arrangements, bridesmaids etc. Thus the verbal information within the mentioned section is highly enhanced with visual material. Moreover, the general gallery of the website contains many photos depicting white-sandy beaches, turquoise waters, boats, diving, kayaking, parasailing and paddle boarding. But most importantly, the first four photos in the gallery depict wedding ceremonies – newlyweds in the background of sunset, wedding setting, as well as two photos with newlyweds on the beach. Furthermore, one more photo portrays couple taking a walk on the beach, giving a hint of possible honeymoon or anniversary vacation. Thus, gallery of the webpage give the biggest attention to wedding tourism, outshining the beach and nature segments, which means that imagery of Turks & Caicos are significantly influenced by wedding tourism.

To sum up, beach and various water activities are the most popular attractions of Turks & Caicos, but wedding tourism are considered a very important segment as well. Even though the islands’ logo and slogan are not influenced by wedding tourism, the rest of three elements receives a significant influence. The drop-down menu contains weddings among the most vital information sections, excluding other tourism segments, as well as most of the photos within the gallery are wedding or honeymoon related and placed at the very beginning of the gallery. Moreover, the verbal information emphasizes that Turks & Caicos are a perfect destination for wedding tourism. Thus wedding tourism significantly influences three out of five elements of

destination branding, which means that Turks & Caicos branding is influenced by wedding tourism.

5.4 Antigua and Barbuda

Antigua and Barbuda is so called twin-island country which consists of two inhabited islands and a bunch of smaller ones and cover the area of 443 km² (World Atlas, 2015b). According to the statistics, during the year of 2014 the country has received 249,316 tourist arrivals (Caribbean Tourism Organisation, 2105). The main tourism body of the country is Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority which manages and markets the destination.

The respondent from the Tourism Authority stated that the current brand of the country is luxurious destination with a broad choice of beaches. Interviewee stressed that visitors are quite spoiled as they get to choose from the most prestigious beaches, as Antigua and Barbuda has 16 miles, 365 in total, of pink and turquoise beaches. The most prominent beaches are Fort James beach and Diana, Princess of Wales, beach. Thus Antigua and Barbuda is famous for beach vacations. Furthermore, the country has a variety of activities for nature lovers. Visitors can visit Stingray City, wherein they would be able to pet and feed stingrays or snorkel around tropical fish and coral reefs. Moreover, another popular attractions are Frigate bird sanctuary and Two foot bay national park. Additionally, the respondent mentioned an interesting and rich historical heritage, fine local cuisine and very popular Summer Greatest Carnival. To sum up, Antigua and Barbuda's most prominent tourism segments include beach vacations, as well as nature tourism, with a strong emphasis on flora and fauna.

Despite the fact that wedding tourism was not named among the main tourism segments of Antigua and Barbuda, the interviewee stated that wedding tourism is still important, because it is one of the driving forces of economic growth, as number of visitors come to Antigua and Barbuda with a specific purpose to get married. Also, she added that the country is being branded as the most romantic destination. The respondent emphasised that even though wedding tourism is considered as a niche market in Antigua and Barbuda, it is still a good way to market the country and increase the revenue through romance destination branding.

After discussing most prominent tourism sectors in Antigua and Barbuda, the five destination branding elements are analysed below.

Antigua and Barbuda's logo is presented in the Figure 7. It portrays the name of the destination with incorporates palm tree as one of the letters. The interviewee stated that logo is symbolic to the country's wide supply of beaches. Additionally, white and blue colours of the logo strengthens the image of Antigua and Barbuda as a beach destination even more. Thus

the logo hints towards beach tourism popularity within the country but has no indications of wedding tourism.

Figure 7: Logo of Antigua & Barbuda's Tourism Authority



Source: Official website of Antigua & Barbuda's Tourism Authority (2015)

The slogan states “the beach is just the beginning...”. According to the respondent, the slogan aims to demonstrate that beach is solely the small part of what Antigua and Barbuda has to offer for their visitors. The suspension points leave a place for interpretation, as anything could be expected from the destination. Even though slogan solely directly addresses one tourism segment, it indirectly hints towards many other possibilities, for example, cultural, nature or family tourism, might even wedding tourism segment.

To analyse design, verbal and imagery elements of Antigua and Barbuda's branding, the official Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority's website (2015) was reviewed.

The homepage of the aforementioned website contains a drop-down menu with sections “island guide”, “island vibes”, “discover”, “plan your trip”, “get social” and “map”. From the first glance it is possible to state that the menu does not present any tourism segment as a separate section. The information in the menu is mainly focused on the most necessary items, such as general introduction of the islands, main attractions, accommodation and transportations within the country, as well as map. Furthermore, there are colourful rectangulars in the centre of the homepage that contain names as “Antigua live”, “Antigua's Top 20”, “Caribbean adventures”, “extraordinary nature”, “unspoilt Barbuda”, “sailing Antigua” and “paradise romance”. Those rectangulars direct straight to sections with broader information regarding most visited attractions. Most of the shapes represent different tourism segments, such as adventure, nature, sailing and romance. The romance, to be more specific, provides information about weddings, renewal of the vows and honeymoons. Even though the main menu does not promote any of the tourism segments, the homepage contains links directing to the information regarding nature, adventure and wedding tourism. Hence, the website is designed to easily access wedding tourism information, thus wedding based tourism significantly influences design element of Antigua and Barbuda's branding.

To analyse verbal element, every section of the main menu was reviewed. First of all, instead of standard section providing general description what to expect in the destination, Antigua and Barbuda's official website provides letters from Minister of Tourism and CEO of Antigua

and Barbuda's Tourism Authority. Both letters portray the country as a destination of wonderful beaches and nature, as well as emphasize its unique culture and cuisine. In addition, the CEO calls Antigua and Barbuda the "romance capital in the world" and "ideal place to exchange your vows or to celebrate your honeymoon and anniversary". Thus the country is branded not solely as beautiful nature and beach place, but as romantic wedding tourism destination as well. Moreover, the sub-section "paradise romance" provides all the vital information about wedding venues, formalities and honeymoon options. However, the section is dedicated to inform, not to brand Antigua and Barbuda as a wedding tourism destination. The rest of the webpage is focused on other tourism segments, such as beach vacation, unspoilt nature, adventure tourism, local cuisine options and etc. However, since the general description of the country, in the form of tourism official letter, states that Antigua and Barbuda is a perfect wedding tourism destination, it is clear that this tourism segment influences verbal element.

Speaking about the image element, the homepage contains five shifting photos as the background. It is important to emphasize that all of the images contain sea element. First two photos portray turquoise water and white sand, while others depict sunset, sailing and the port. Thus the homepage brands Antigua and Barbuda as a perfect place for beach vacation, as well as gives insights to adventure tourism – sailing, and romance – sunset. Moreover, it is important to say that the website does not have an image gallery, thus wedding tourism inclusion compared to other tourism segments could not be evaluated. Furthermore, the sub-section providing important weddings and honeymoons information is highly supported by relevant images, depicting marriage ceremonies and wedding settings. Even though the homepage does not contain a clear image portraying wedding tourism, solely a romantic sunset view, the sub-section of wedding tourism contains number of relevant images, thus image element is influenced by wedding tourism.

Additionally, the respondent of Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority was asked about the branding of the country as a wedding tourism destination. The interviewee stated that wedding tourism has a positive impact on Antigua and Barbuda's branding. First of all she mentioned that the country is labelled as the romance capital in the Caribbean. Furthermore, the interviewee stated that the country tries to emphasize the fact that the process of getting married in Antigua and Barbuda is fairly simple and they try to promote it.

In conclusion, beach and nature are considered the most important attractions of Antigua and Barbuda. Meanwhile, wedding tourism is a niche market, however it has a significant impact on the country's branding, as it is called the most romantic destination in the world. Even though Antigua and Barbuda's logo and slogan does not contain wedding tourism elements, the country's brand is still influenced by the phenomenon. Significant influence of wedding

tourism was detected on the design and verbal elements, as the website is designed to make wedding tourism information easily accessible from the homepage and verbal information presents the country as romance capital and ideal place to get married, as well as celebrate anniversary or honeymoon. Meanwhile influence on imagery could be perceived as limited, since homepage mainly portrays beach tourism, but the sub-section on weddings and honeymoons is fairly illustrated with relevant amount of photos. Wedding tourism influences three out of five branding elements, thus Antigua and Barbuda's branding is influenced by wedding-based tourism.

5.5 Curaçao

Curaçao is a Caribbean island which covers 444 km² and has a dependence to the Netherlands (World Atlas, 2015b). During the year of 2014 the island has received 158,354 tourist arrivals (Caribbean Tourism Organisation, 2015). The main tourism body of the destination is Curaçao Tourism Board which was established in 1948 by the Government of the island (Linkedin, 2015c).

To begin with, the respondent of Curaçao's Tourism Board elaborated on the main tourism segments in the island. 3S sun-sea-sand factor was named as the main attraction of Curaçao. According to the interviewee, the destination offers sun all year around, turquoise sea and beautiful beaches. In addition, active and sport tourism, together with culinary, culture and wellness activities are important tourism segments as well. Speaking about active tourism it is mainly based on water, thus such activities as diving, snorkeling, boating, windsurfing, sailing and kayaking are very prominent in the island. The respondent summed up that Curaçao offers very diverse holiday experience.

After discussing most prominent tourism sectors and activities in Curaçao, the destination branding elements are analysed below.

Curaçao's logo portrays the name of the destination with incorporated images of the sun and wave (Figure 8). According to the respondent, the blue colour represents water, whereas yellow and red – the sun. The logo of Curaçao gives indications that the destination offers beach vacation and sunshine. Thus the logo represent 3S segment, however, does not incorporate wedding tourism elements.

Figure 8: Logo of Curaçao's Tourism Board



Source: Official website of Curaçao's Tourism Board (2015)

The slogan element of destination branding in Curaçao could not be investigated, because according to the interviewee, Curaçao does not have a slogan. Thus the destination misses a chance to enhance their branding via slogan element.

In order to analyse design, verbal and imagery elements of Curaçao's branding, the official Curaçao Tourism Board's website (2015) was reviewed.

The website's homepage contains a menu, wherein sections "your Curaçao", "discover", "do", "taste", "stay", "events" and "plan" are provided. Thus official Curaçao's website makes general and most important information about the island visible and easily accessible. The sections "taste" and "events" could be interpreted as the ones emphasising the importance of food and event tourism. The interviewee distinguished culinary among the most important activities of the island, thus such proposition is reinforced by the presence of the relevant section in the website's menu. However, the information regarding wedding tourism is not provided in the menu. Solely a sub-section called "getting married" exists, however, it is not visible on the homepage. To sum up, the website is designed in a way to brand culinary and event tourism. No wedding tourism elements were found within the design element, hence wedding tourism does not contribute to the branding of the island.

In order to analyse verbal element of Curaçao's brand, all sections and sub-sections of the menu were reviewed. Section "your Curaçao" provides brochure of the destination. The general description in the brochure encompasses such activities as culture, cuisine, heritage, beaches and diving. Also, brochure provides more in-depth information on water activities and nature, as well as includes a short section about destination weddings in Curaçao. The brochure states that Curaçao holds "all of the ingredients for an unforgettable wedding" and "connect couples with the heart and soul of Caribbean gateway". Thus the brochure contains wedding tourism elements that slightly contribute to the branding of Curaçao as a wedding tourism destination. Furthermore, section "plan" contains a sub-section called "getting married". It contains information about destination wedding planning and honeymoons. However, the information is very limited and mainly regards practical knowledge, rather than try to convince couples to choose Curaçao as their wedding tourism destination. Nevertheless, the biggest emphasis are put on water activities in the island, as well as culture and cuisine experiences, whereas wedding tourism information holds solely a small part within the

webpage. Thus verbal element of Curaçao's branding contains very limited influence by wedding tourism.

Speaking about the imagery of the website, homepage's background consists of a collage, wherein the island is depicted as a place for beach vacation and diving. Furthermore, the homepage contains a video which presents nature and culture of Curaçao, as well as demonstrates variety of water activities, with particular emphasis on diving. Additionally, part of the video shows a young couple dining on the beach during the sunset. Such scene could be interpreted as portraying a couple on a honeymoon vacation or celebrating the anniversary. The website's gallery contains images of nature landscapes and architecture of Curaçao's cities, but most importantly the gallery is mainly focused on portraying Curaçao as a beach destination with particular emphasis on diving, as multiple images depict people exploring Curaçao's underwater. Thus website's gallery does not include any photos relevant to wedding tourism. The sub-section "getting married" contain four photos depicting couples enjoying water and wellness activities. However, none of the images capture marriage ceremonies despite the fact that almost all information regarding wedding tourism is about destination weddings in Curaçao with very limited facts about honeymoon options. Thus wedding tourism influence on imagery of Curaçao is very limited.

To sum up, wedding tourism is not the main tourism segment influencing Curaçao's branding. Additionally, the respondent stated that it is just a niche market. The island is branded as a beach destination with a strong emphasis on diving activities. Curaçao's logo, slogan and design elements do not incorporate any wedding tourism elements, meanwhile verbal and imagery elements contain solely limited influence from wedding tourism. Wedding tourism slightly influences two out of five branding elements of Curaçao. Thus the island does not utilize an opportunity to brand itself as a wedding tourism destination despite the fact that general Caribbean weddings and honeymoons websites include Curaçao among most popular wedding tourism destinations in the Caribbean region.

5.6 Dominican Republic

Dominican Republic is an independent country which is among the most popular destinations in the Caribbean region. It covers 48,730 km² of area (World Atlas, 2015b). According to the statistics, in 2014 Dominican Republic has received 5,141,377 tourist arrivals and that makes the country the first most visited destination in the Caribbean (Caribbean Tourism Organisation, 2105). The main tourism body within the country is Ministry of Tourism of the Dominican Republic. It is responsible for managing and promoting tourism industry of Dominican Republic, as well as taking control of the country's brand (Linkedin, 2015d).

According to the respondent, the current Dominican Republic's brand is not focused on a single segment, as it offers broad variety of activities and sights for all type of public, starting with families and couples, ending with singles and groups of young people. The interviewee distinguished sea-sun-sand tourism among the most important ones in the country. Furthermore, Dominican Republic is known as a top adventure and ecotourism destination, wherein national parks and scientific resorts cover over 25 percent of the island. Moreover, the country has one of the best beaches in the world for surfing, windsurfing and kite boarding. Weddings and honeymoons were mentioned among most popular tourism segments as well, together with business travel and leisure segment. Moreover, the interviewee mentioned culture, nature and golf as important part of Dominican Republic's tourism. Even though Dominican Republic's tourism is highly supported by 3S factor, it is not the only important segment of tourism industry within the country.

After discussing most popular tourism sectors and activities in Dominican Republic, the destination branding elements are analysed below.

Dominican Republic's logo is presented in the Figure 9. It portrays such elements as the sun, sea, green land, birds and ship sails. Thus the indications towards 3S segment, as well as nature and adventure tourism could be seen. However, no wedding tourism elements are incorporated into the logo of Dominican Republic.

Figure 9: Logo of Ministry of Tourism of the Dominican Republic



Source: Official website of Ministry of Tourism of the Dominican Republic (2015)

The slogan of Dominican Republic is "Has it all". As was mentioned by the interviewee, the country does not focus on a single market because it has many various options to offer for various kinds of tourists. Thus the slogan conveys such message that Dominican Republic is the country where any person will find activities according to their demand. Thus it could be said that wedding tourism, just like any other tourism segments are a part of the slogan, however, the slogan specifically does not distinguish or stress any of the tourism segments.

In order to analyse design, verbal and imagery and elements of Dominican Republic's branding, the official website of Ministry of Tourism of the Dominican Republic (2015) was reviewed.

Official website of Dominican Republic is designed in a modern way. The drop-down menu contains solely two sections, namely, “about DR” and “discover DR”. The latter section provides the list of top destinations within the country, as well as the most prominent activities. “What to do” sub-section contains such segments as meetings & conventions, weddings & romance, golf, excursions, adventure & ecotourism, beaches, water sports, baseball, family, landmarks & culture, dining & nightlife, shopping. Thus the website is designed to promote wedding tourism among most popular activities in Dominican Republic. However, the information regarding wedding tourism, just like any other tourism segments in Dominican Republic, is not easily accessible, as it is not placed on the website’s homepage. Thus wedding tourism has only limited influence on the design element.

Another analysis is held on a verbal element of Dominican Republic’s branding. The homepage contains shifting pictures of different locations in the country, which are supported by concise descriptions of the particular place. The description mainly emphasize the beauty of nature and friendliness of locals, solely the description of Punta Cana states that it is full of romantic settings. Meanwhile, the destination of La Romana is illustrated with newlyweds’ photo, however, the description does not contain any indications of wedding tourism. It was already mentioned, that drop-down menu contains a sub-section “discover DR”, wherein topic of weddings & romance are presented more in-depth, where in textual information introduces Dominican Republic as a “highly rated wedding and honeymoon destination”. Furthermore, sub-section contains the practical information about legal requirements, venues and event planners, as well as provide weddings guide. Such guide not solely provides the practical information, but presents convincing information to choose Dominican Republic as a place for wedding tourism – “unique and fairytale-like weddings and honeymoons”, “pure bliss for honeymoons and destination weddings”, as well as enhance the image of the country by stating that Dominican Republic was “named one of 20 “Best honeymoon destinations in 2011””. Thus verbal information provides not solely practical knowledge about weddings and honeymoons in the destination, but enhances the image of Dominican Republic by presenting it as a wedding tourism destination.

It was already mentioned that homepage contains changing images of Dominican Republic as a background of the webpage. It contains five photos portraying different locations of the country. Solely one destination, La Romana, is depicted as a wedding tourism destination, because the image portrays photoshoot of newlyweds in front of a small chapel. Meanwhile, the other four images depicts turquoise waters, white-sand beaches, people kiting and a carnival celebration. Thus website’s homepage succeeds in branding Dominican Republic as a wedding tourism destination. Furthermore, in order to analyse the imagery element, photo gallery of the website was investigated. Photo gallery is separated into different categories according to the locations and tourism segments of Dominican Republic. The gallery contains

such tourism segments as beaches, carnivals, culture, golf, water sports and weddings. The category of weddings contains solely few pictures portraying wedding setting, newlyweds, as well as interior and exterior of a small church made of stones. Additionally, the sub-section „weddings & romance” is supported with the same images provided in the general photo gallery. It is important to mention, that all of the photos are illustrating either wedding ceremonies or newlyweds, whereas none of the imagery was found depicting honeymooners or couples celebrating the anniversary. Wedding tourism related imagery is included not solely in the homepage of the website, but general gallery as well, thus imagery element is highly influenced by wedding tourism.

To sum up, wedding tourism is an important segment for Dominican Republic’s tourism industry. Even though country’s logo and slogan does not contain any wedding tourism elements, the country’s brand is still significantly influenced by the phenomenon. Significant influence was found on the imagery and verbal elements, as wedding tourism is depicted in the general gallery of the webpage, as well as included in the shifting background on the homepage and introduced as a perfect wedding tourism destination by verbal information. Meanwhile, design element has solely limited influence as there are no indication of weddings and honeymoons on the website’s homepage, solely a sub-section dedicated to weddings and romance, thus wedding tourism information is not easily accessible. Wedding tourism influences three out of five branding elements, wedding tourism segment influences the branding of Dominican Republic.

5.7 Bonaire

Bonaire is an island in the Caribbean Sea which covers 294 km², as well as a special municipality which is a part of the Netherlands (World Atlas, 2015b). According to the statistics, in 2014 Bonaire received 130,000 tourist arrivals (Info Bonaire, 2015). The main tourism body within the island is Tourism Corporation Bonaire which is a governmental agency responsible for marketing managing the brand of Bonaire (Linkedin, 2015e).

To begin with, the respondent stated that Bonaire is mainly branded as a diverse paradise and eco-friendly destination. She stressed that the most important tourism segment in the island is active tourism, with a particular emphasis on diving. According to the interviewee, despite diving, such water activities as snorkelling, kitesurfing, windsurfing, boating and sailing are popular as well. Furthermore, eco-friendly activities are prominent too – biking, hiking, birdwatching, caving, horseback riding, golfing and rock climbing. Thus Bonaire is known as adventure tourism destination, with popular water and eco-friendly activities.

After discussing most popular activities in Bonaire, the destination branding elements are analysed below.

Bonaire's logo is presented in the Figure 10. According to the interviewee, the logo contains three elements – wood, flamingo and the sun. Driftwood that is utilised as the background of the logo is a common case in Bonaire. Flamingos are considered the signature birds of the island, furthermore, Bonaire has one of the few flamingo breeding sites in the South of the Caribbean. Whereas the sun portrays warm temperatures as well as warmth of local people of Bonaire. The logo portrays typical items of the island. The sun could be perceived as a reference to sea-sun-sand tourism segment and flamingo represents a part of local fauna. Despite that no other tourism indications could be found incorporated into the logo, including wedding tourism.

Figure 10: Logo of Bonaire's Tourism Corporation



Source: Official website of Bonaire's Tourism Corporation (2015)

The slogan of Bonaire is “Once a visitor always a friend”. According to the respondent 40 percent of tourists visiting Bonaire come back to the island and become more than just visitors. Moreover, depending on number of visitations, guests of the island could become the ambassadors of Bonaire. Thus it is clear that slogan does not try to target any tourism markets or communicate any particular tourism segment, but rather demonstrate the welcoming and hospitable environment of the island. Thus no wedding tourism elements are incorporated into the slogan of Bonaire.

In order to analyse design, verbal and imagery elements of Bonaire's branding, the official website of Bonaire's Tourism Corporation (2015) was reviewed.

The drop-down menu in Bonaire's official website contains sections “about Bonaire”, “where to stay”, “diving”, “activities & events” and “vacation deals”. Thus the menu makes the general information about the island, its accommodation and possible activities easily accessible. Furthermore, diving and event tourism are the only tourism segments provided within the main menu, as no others are included. Such positioning enhances the words of the respondent that Bonaire is a prominent diving destination. Speaking about wedding tourism, it is not placed within the menu, or anywhere on the homepage of the website. Information regarding the phenomenon could only be found under the sub-section “special vacations”.

Thus such information is not visible and easily accessible, hence wedding tourism does not influence the design element.

Speaking about a verbal element, the homepage provides the description of the island. The text mainly presents Bonaire as the destination of natural beauty, as well as a place of friendly and warm people. Furthermore, the description brands Bonaire as an active tourism destination with significant emphasis on diving, because it includes the statement that the island is number one diving destination in the Caribbean region. Thus verbal information of the homepage introduces Bonaire as an active tourism destination. Moreover, to analyse verbal element of Bonaire's branding, all sections and sub-sections of the menu were reviewed. In the section "about Bonaire" it mainly repeats the homepage's description, as well as outlines the importance of nature, including flora and fauna. The website presents water sports, eco adventures, sightseeing, beaches, events, dining, wellness, shopping and special vacation, wherein information regarding weddings and honeymoons are provided. However, the information is solely practical, concerning legal requirements, or supply of venues and contact details of event coordinators. The verbal text does not include any convincing information to choose Bonaire as a wedding tourism destination. Thus, even though the websites contains information about wedding tourism, it is very concise and solely regarding practical details. Furthermore, wedding tourism does not have a separate sub-section, as it is placed under the name "special vacations". Hence, wedding tourism does not influence the verbal element of Bonaire's branding.

The homepage of the website contains shifting images portraying Bonaire's nature, water activities and culture. Furthermore, the image gallery provides 44 photos and none of them illustrate wedding tourism phenomenon. The majority of the pictures depict diving, as well as other water activities, such as kitesurfing, windsurfing, snorkelling and kayaking. Moreover, there are images illustrating Bonaire's nature, particularly its flora and fauna, including flamingos – the signature bird of the island. Even the information about weddings and honeymoons are very poorly supported by relevant images. There are solely two photos portraying a couple getting married on the beach and couple snorkelling. Thus, as image gallery and website homepage does not contain any wedding tourism photos, and solely the wedding tourism information is supported with two relevant photos, the influence of wedding tourism on Bonaire's imagery is practically non-existent.

The analysis of the website only proves the words of the respondent that Bonaire does not brand itself as a wedding tourism destination. Even though destination wedding and honeymoon websites name Bonaire among the most popular wedding tourism places in the Caribbean, the destination fails to employ such tourism segment, despite the fact that it has all the necessary attributes.

To sum up, according the respondent, wedding tourism in not an important segment of the Bonaire's tourism, despite the fact that it is promoted as such in destination wedding and honeymoon websites of the Caribbean. There was found solely few small items indicating that wedding tourism is a part of Bonaire's tourism. Thus branding of Bonaire is not influenced by wedding tourism.

6. CONTRIBUTION

It was already mentioned that no academic studies were found on wedding tourism and its influence on destination branding. Most of destination branding researches were focused on event tourism, particularly on sport events, as well as film-induced tourism and food tourism. Thus the thesis exploring destination branding through wedding tourism moves forward the discipline of marketing, as it provides new findings and knowledge about the phenomenon which has never been studied before. The findings prove that wedding tourism influences Caribbean destinations branding. However, the influence could be perceived as limited, since logo and slogan elements of seven different Caribbean destinations do not include any wedding tourism elements. Meanwhile, wedding tourism influence is evident on design, verbal and imagery elements. In some Caribbean destinations, e.g. Turks & Caicos, Jamaica, Antigua & Barbuda, wedding tourism demonstrates a significant influence on those three elements.

Furthermore, in order to conduct the research on destination branding through wedding tourism, the relevant conceptual model was established based on destination branding and wedding tourism concepts, since no equivalent research was performed in the past and no relevant model exists. The model could be utilised by future academic studies as a research base. Thus the thesis contributes to the academic field by developing a new conceptual model to guide the analysis process and has a significant scholarly value by establishing new sub-field of destination branding, since no other research investigated wedding tourism influence on destination branding.

Furthermore, the thesis could be of interest not solely for the academic world, but for industry world as well. It might be of interest to DMOs, particularly in destinations which are still in the development phase in terms of tourism. Destination marketers intend to differentiate destinations, however nowadays it becomes increasingly harder to do so in the globally competitive market. The thesis provides knowledge that might encourage destination marketers to leverage wedding tourism as a lucrative product that could become a significant mean of destination branding.

7. LIMITATIONS

To begin with, in order to investigate design, verbal and imagery elements, solely the website case was selected due to its importance as a branding instrument. Other marketing communications, such as commercials, advertisements, published brochures, social media sites, PR activities were eliminated.

The initial idea was to conduct semi-structured interviews with marketing managers and officials from DMOs to gather the primary data. However, the potential respondents were more willing to provide answers in writing rather than answer them via phone. The interview method could have provided more extensive information, as the possibility to encourage respondents to speak longer, as well as opportunity to ask additional questions exists. However, most of the respondents asked to contact them in case of the need to ask additional questions. Such opportunity was utilised to clarify some of the answers and to ask additional questions.

St Kitts island is considered among the most popular wedding tourism destinations within the Caribbean region. The destination branding of the island is significantly based on wedding tourism, as its logo and slogan contain wedding tourism elements. However, the destination could not be investigated, as St Kitts Tourism Authority was not reachable. Multiple communication channels were utilised multiple times, however the Authority has not demonstrated any interest to participate in the research. The provision of information from St Kitts DMO could have slightly impacted the thesis findings, since its logo and slogan contain wedding tourism elements, while analysis of seven Caribbean destination did not find any influence on logo and slogans elements.

The thesis distinguished 14 most important tourism destinations in the region, however four of them, including St Kitts, were impossible to get in touch with. Meanwhile, three more destination agreed to participate but did not provide any answers. The destination of Grenada was the first one to agree upon the participation. The respondent reviewed the questions and promised to answer in the following few days. However, the answers were never provided, despite the fact that multiple reminder messages were sent. The same event occurred with Barbados and Cayman Islands. The DMOs agreed to participate in the research, however did not send their answers despite the reminder messages.

Furthermore, since solely wedding tourism destinations in the Caribbean was investigated, the findings are considered applicable solely for this regions. No results generalization about destination branding trough wedding tourism could be made for other destinations.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the thesis was to investigate wedding tourism influence on branding of the Caribbean region. In order to do so, multiple Caribbean destinations were analysed. To conduct the analysis, the conceptual model of destination branding through wedding tourism was developed based on destination branding and wedding tourism concepts. Collected data was utilised to determine wedding tourism influence on branding of the Caribbean region.

During the analysis process each destination branding element was investigated separately in seven Caribbean destinations. Existence of wedding tourism influence on each destination branding element is presented in the table in the Appendix I. None of logos and slogans in analysed Caribbean destinations contain wedding tourism elements, thus wedding tourism influence is non-existent on both components. Meanwhile the research demonstrates that wedding tourism has influence on design, verbal and imagery elements of destination branding in the Caribbean. Design element that make wedding tourism information visible and easily accessible on the official destination websites was analysed. Destinations such as Jamaica, Turks & Caicos and Antigua & Barbuda dedicate a separate sections solely to wedding tourism in the main menus of webpages to make such information stand out and emphasize the importance of the tourism segment. The biggest influence was detected on verbal element. All analysed destinations provide practical information regarding weddings and honeymoons, whereas six out of seven analysed places promote themselves as wedding tourism destinations by utilising attractive epithets or storytelling method to convince couples to choose Caribbean. Lastly, imagery element demonstrated a significant wedding tourism influence as well. Majority of the destinations include wedding or honeymoon related photos into the general galleries of websites, in some cases even present such images on homepages to immediately attract the attention of potential visitors. Thus wedding tourism influence manifests through design, verbal and imagery elements of the Caribbean branding. Even though the influence of wedding tourism on Caribbean destinations branding could be perceived as limited, since logo and slogan elements do not include any wedding tourism elements, the phenomenon still significantly influences design, verbal and imagery elements.

Wedding tourism might not be the most important tourism segment influencing branding, however, it is the one adding an important value to the overall destinations branding in the Caribbean region. Additionally, wedding tourism keeps demonstrating continuous and rapid increase in the past few decades, thus there is a possibility that conduction of equivalent research in a decade or two could demonstrate different results than today.

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APPENDICES

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Appendix A: Master thesis open-ended questions

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for taking your time to answer the questions. Your feedback is very important.

I am a student of European Master in Tourism Management, an integrated program tailor-made by three partner universities in Denmark, Slovenia and Spain.

Currently I am working on the master thesis about destination branding through wedding tourism with a focus on the Caribbean region. The purpose of the research is to investigate how wedding tourism contributes to destination branding.

It will take approximately **15 min** to answer **6 questions**.

The questions were developed to gain better understanding about the current brand of destination X, as well as acquire insights about wedding tourism role within destination X branding.

1. What is a current brand of destination X?

2. What are the main tourism segments in destination X?

3. What does destination X logo symbolize?

4. What is the meaning of destination X slogan?

5. Please describe wedding tourism role in destination X?

6. How does wedding tourism affect branding of destination X? (please elaborate how destination X is branded as a wedding tourism destination)

Appendix B: Answers of Jamaica Tourist Board

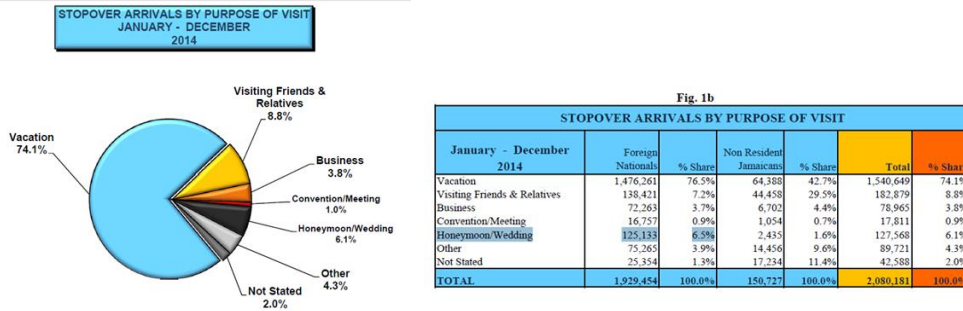
from: LGreen@visitjamaica.com
to: Rūta VIDAUSKAITĖ <rutavid@gmail.com>
date: Tue, May 12, 2015 at 8:52 PM
subject: Branding and Wedding Tourism in Jamaica

Lucretia Green, Public Relations Officer/Writer, Jamaica Tourist Board

1. A description of the brand is summarized in the mission statement of The Jamaica Tourist Board: To develop and market the tourist industry so that Jamaica remains the premier Caribbean tourism destination.
2. From the cuisine to the music, from the performing arts to the mega events, Jamaica's culture continues to be a pull factor for visitors to the island. Jamaica's tourist industry utilizes these assets in marketing the island. For instance, the island's cuisine is a melting pot of a diverse ethnic mix. Add to that its diverse accommodation menu, which includes All-Inclusive Resorts, Luxury Hotels and Villas, Boutique and Business Hotels, Guest Houses and Bed and Breakfasts. Events are another big part of the brand, and Jamaica plays host to numerous music and literary festivals and sporting events. The island also has over 150 attractions, which includes soft adventure activities. Some of the attractions are: Ziplining, Caving, Snorkeling, Historic Sites, Bird Watching, Beaches, Waterfalls, Great Houses, Dolphin Parks, River Rafting, River Tubing, Horse Back Riding, Hiking, golf, Music festivals (Home of Reggae Sumfest and Jamaica Jazz and Blues Music Festivals), nature/adventure tourism, sports, Duty Free Shopping and cruise travel are among the main attraction in Jamaica. However the most important part of the brand is the warm affable people who are always willing to go the extra mile to ensure that visitors enjoy their stay.
3. The Jamaica Tourist Board is the government agency responsible for marketing destination Jamaica. JAMAICA is the logo and the name of the country. The lettering represents strength and boldness. The logo is strategically placed at the edge of the page to signify cutting edge. It is Rhodamine Red in colour and depicts boldness, attractiveness and big personality.
4. **JAMAICA Home of All Right** is Destination Jamaica's marketing tag line. It encapsulates the ultimate feeling of 'All Right' that can only be experienced in Jamaica. This essence of 'All Right' can be found in the Jamaican people, in the sand, in the pristine beaches, waterfalls and rivers, in the delectable cuisine and in the air. There is just one place where 'All Right' can be enjoyed, in **JAMAICA Home of All Right**.
5. The Weddings and Honeymoon Segment is one of Jamaica's key niche markets. Jamaica is ranked as the number one wedding and honeymoon destination in the English Speaking Caribbean. The data below represent the number of persons who travelled to the island in

2014 for weddings and honeymoons. Visit the Jamaica Tourist Board information website (jtbonline.org) at the following link for additional information:

<http://www.jtbonline.org/statistics/Monthly%20Statistics/Monthly%20Statistical%20Report%20December%202014%20Vol%20xxiv%20No%2012.pdf>



6. The Jamaica Tourist Board participates in bridal shows in multiple source markets, as well as advertise in bridal magazines (including online publications). These publications include: Brides, Today’s Bride and honeymoon.com The Jamaica Tourist Board also has an online wedding concierge Wendy, who provides all the necessary information for couples and their guests. We also facilitate familiarization tours for agents specializing in the bridal market. We work closely with large bridal memberships like ABC (American Bridal Corporation) and Destinationweddings.com. Additionally, the Jamaica Tourist Board facilitates brand placement and promotional giveaways in competition with online bridal publications as well as print and electronic media. So important is the wedding market that many visitors seek after hotel wedding packages including coordination, marriage officers, chapels and all things needed for tying the knot.

Additional question: why do couples choose Jamaica for their wedding and honeymoons?

Getting married in Jamaica is easy and hassle free. Visitors can be married 24 hours after arriving in Jamaica, providing prior application has been made for a marriage license to the requisite agency. There are so many options of locations and themes from which to choose for a destination wedding and honeymoon in Jamaica. Experienced wedding planners provide expertise for a seamless and unforgettable wedding and honeymoon experience. All elements from ‘will you” to “I do” are carefully planned to taste and budget. Hotel wedding offerings are a hit with bridal parties as the hotel is a one-stop shop for all their needs and desires. There are many other locations to tie the knot, for example: at a Great House, Rafting on the River, on the beach, on a private island, in a church or a chapel. Honeymoon options can include indulging in the many outdoor activities available at the myriad attractions across the island or just simply get pampered at the hotel of choice. Jamaica’s diverse tourism product has something for everyone, and activities are not limited to the bride and groom, but extend to every member and guest of the couple.

Appendix C: Answers of Aruba Tourism Authority

from: Karin Swiers <k.swiers@aruba.com>
to: Rūta VIDAUSKAITĖ <rutavid@gmail.com>
date: Wed, May 6, 2015 at 10:41 PM
subject: Re: Aruba's branding
mailed-by: aruba.com
signed-by: aruba.com

Karin Swiers, Branding Specialist, Aruba Tourism Authority

1. Aruba's branding is affiliated with the tagline 'One happy island' and positions itself as such.
2. People visit Aruba mainly for the following reasons: 1. Beach / beach vacation / relaxation in great the sun (great weather year-round); 2. Honeymoon / Wedding / Romance (anniversary, renewal vows, beach wedding, etc); 3. Family vacation (many things to do on Aruba for all generations); 4. Active vacation (learn to kite/wind surf, jeep safari, hiking in national park, ATV off road adventure, mountain biking, etc); 5. Cruise vacation.
3. The logo consists of 6 colors and 2 elements (letters and a star, called 'compass rose'). Each color in the logo has a different meaning. The colored letters of Aruba stand for: Sky, Ocean and Sea, Aloe and Iguana (local flora and fauna). The playful display of the letters displays the happy feeling that comes with being in Aruba. The compass rose (red star) is an element that was adopted from the national flag and symbolizes a meeting point for people from around the world (over 90 different nationalities live in Aruba).
4. The slogan "One happy island" positions destination as such by campaigns tied in with "shortcuts to happiness" and sponsoring events that connect with a happy experience on island such as music, culinary, cultural and sports festivals.
5. Yes, it's an important and ever-growing market, since the beach weddings often deliver once-in-a-lifetime, priceless experiences and Aruba has all the perfect conditions for it – soft white sands, beautiful sunsets, crystal clear ocean with turquoise waters, constant warm temperatures and easy access from a variety of international airlines and airports.
6. In branding Aruba as a wedding destination we focus on the Unique Selling Points (USP) of the island. One of the USP which is the warm and sunny weather year round, and the fact that Aruba is outside of the hurricane belt is an advantage as this opens up to possibilities in having Caribbean Weddings all year round. As a wedding destination we also focus heavily on how easy it is for brides to have weddings in Aruba. Besides having many award-winning resorts that have their in-house wedding planners, we have a reliable network of wedding professionals that make the planning process a breeze. Additionally

Aruba is full of things to do for new couples and their guests making it the perfect combination for a wedding and a honeymoon.

Appendix D: Answers of Turks & Caicos Tourism Board

RE: Turks and Caicos' branding

Pamela Ewing

April 28, 2015, 9:27 PM

Pamela Ewing, Regional Marketing Manager, Turks & Caicos Tourism Board

1. Luxury High end, with affordable options.
2. Sun, Sand and Beach because Turks & Caicos has to offer crystal water, white beaches and perfect climate all year. Active tourism is also very popular, especially water activities such as snorkeling, scuba diving, sailing. Weddings and honeymoons are also important. The islands also offer unique attractions such as caves and plantations.
3. The Tourist Board's Logo is the name of the Turks & Caicos. Letters of the title are designed to represent relief of sea waves and plants. Such image is reinforced with blue and green colours of lettering.
4. I think it is self-explanatory "Beautiful By Nature". The islands value its nature and the most popular tourism activities are based on natural resources – beach, water activities, plantations, caves etc.
5. Wedding tourism is very important segment in the islands and it continues to grow. Turks & Caicos has all the important attributes to offer for couples for their destination weddings and honeymoons so the islands are very attractive for wedding tourism.
6. We are the perfect wedding destination due to the following: Laws- Weddings are legal throughout the world; Proximity- Most of our tourist are Americans and we are only 1 hour 15 minutes from Florida; Currency- we have US dollar as our currency, so it is not necessary for exchange

Appendix E: Answers of Antigua & Barbuda Tourism Authority

from: **Charmaine Spencer** <charmaine.spencer@aandbtourism.com>
to: Rūta Vidauskaitė <rutavid@gmail.com>
cc: "Colin C. James" <colin.c.james@aandbtourism.com>
date: Tue, Jun 23, 2015 at 9:39 PM
subject: RE: branding of Antigua and Barbuda

Charmaine Spencer, Marketing Manager, Antigua & Barbuda Tourism Authority

1. Antigua and Barbuda is known as a luxurious destination, its beaches will have you spoiled for choice, with 16 miles of pink sand and turquoise beaches. We have the right to be boastful of having some of the world's most prestigious beaches.
2. Antigua and Barbuda is famous for beach, nature, flora and fauna and cultural heritage. The main attraction of Antigua are Fort James Beach, Stingray City, The Museum of Antigua and Barbuda, Shirleys' Height, Nelsons Dockyard, Betty's Hope; the main attractions in Barbuda are Frigate Bird Sanctuary, Diana, Princess of Wales Beach, Two Foot Bay national Park, Martello Tower, Dark Cave.
3. Antigua and Barbuda's Logo is symbolic to our beaches where it is only the beginning of what we have to offer, but it doesn't end there... Along with our 365 beaches, Antigua and Barbuda have an interesting and rich historical heritage, which ties in with the warmth and friendliness of our people, fine local cuisine and we are also the host of the Summer Greatest Festival, Carnival!
4. The motto of Antigua and Barbuda "the beach is just the beginning" means that beach is just a very small part of islands supply.
5. There are a number of visitors who visit our Islands solely to get married. We have been branded as the most romantic destination for a reason. Thus, I think it plays a pivotal role in the tourism product. As a driving force of economic growth, it is imperative that we tap all aspects of tourism and remains as a niche market is a good way to market our destination and thereby increasing revenue through romance destination branding.
6. Weddings have had a positive impact on our destination as a brand. We've been labeled as the Romance Capital in the Caribbean. The process of getting married here is fairly simple, most hotels offer wedding packages and honeymoon deals. Couples also have a choice to hire a professional Wedding Coordinator or if it's a spur of the moment nuptial, they are able to contact the Ministry of Legal Affairs with the required documents and a small fee, a Marriage Officer will be appointed to conduct the ceremony at a venue of the couple's choice.

Appendix F: Answers of Curaçao's Tourism Board

from: **Bettina Meléndez | CTBE** <b.melendez@ctbe.nl>

to: Rūta VIDAUSKAITĖ <rutavid@gmail.com>

date: Fri, May 15, 2015 at 11:39 AM

subject: Re: branding of Curacao

Bettina Meléndez, Marketing Professional, Curaçao's Tourism Board

1. We position ourselves as a lifestyle brand. Very diverse with fascinating happy people.
2. The umbrella attraction is definitely sun, sea and beautiful beaches with all year round good weather. Next to that we have many active, sportive, culinary, cultural and wellness activities to offer a diverse holiday experience. Water based activities are very popular too – diving, snorkeling, boating, sailing, kayaking, surfing, boarding. So the island offers very diverse holiday experience.
3. The logo is the name Curaçao. Two symbols – sun and sea. Blue colour means the water and yellow with red the colours of the sun.
4. We don't have a slogan.
5. It is a great wedding destination for a wide range of budgets and experiences, underwater weddings, beach weddings, wedding on a boat. Curaçao offers many possibilities for a perfect island wedding.
6. It is quite a small niche market that does not have major effect on our branding.

Appendix G: Answers of Ministry of Tourism of the Dominican Republic

RE: branding of Dominican Republic

Ana Marina Silverio

May 7, 2015, 5:17 AM

Ana Marina Silverio, Marketing Analyst, Ministry of Tourism of the Dominican Republic

1. I do not consider that the Dominican tourism is focused on a single market. Dominican Republic offers different activities, hotels, sports, landscapes... For all types of public and of different ages (families, singles, groups of young people, couples, children, elderly). It is a country where you can relax, enjoy nature, party, do a sport, inspired you if you when you need it or even when you need time alone... Dominican Republic: Has it all. Dominican Republic has been preparing to cover all lines of tourism.
2. SEA, SUN AND SAND (We have one of the best beaches in the world to Surfing: Playa Encuentro at Carabete. Also, you can do kite boarding, boggie boarding and windsurf near to Playa Encuentro). We do the ESPN Billfish Xtreme Tournament, in Punta Cana Resort & Club. With a mixture of culture, nature, scenic beaches and accommodating resorts, as well as very good air connections, the Dominican Republic is highly rated as a wedding and honeymoon destination. Marry with the blessing of ceremonies performed in the historic churches in the Colonial City of Santo Domingo. Or choose the backdrop of the aging stones of Altos de Chavón's St. Stanislaus Church. The memories will endure. The Dominican Republic is known as one of the world's most desirable destinations for business travel and leisure. The Dominican Republic's ideal tropical climate favors the golfer all year round. But don't kid yourself. The tropical breezes have a way of kicking up at the many coast-fronting golf courses making or breaking any player's game. Rounds of golf are played in the scenic surroundings of Punta Cana, Puerto Plata, Playa Grande, La Romana, Juan Dolio, Jarabacoa, Santiago, Bonaio and Santo Domingo. By Caribbean standards, the Dominican Republic is a big island: more than 18,533 m² (48,442km²) in size. Tourists landing at one destination will want to see the others. A range of excursions makes this possible. Independent travelers can always explore alone and do most of the excursions on their own. But as is the case all around the world, tour companies in the Dominican Republic have packaged all the 'what to see / what to do' attractions to make things easy for visiting tourists. There are all-day tours, water tours, adventure tours, horseback tours, dune buggy tours, Segway tours, SUP tours, catamaran tours, cultural tours – you name it. It is best to check at your hotel tour desk to find out which will include transportation to and from your hotel. The Dominican Republic wins the title of top adventure and ecotourism destination in the Caribbean hands down. The second biggest

island in the region, national parks and scientific reserves cover 25% of the landscape. Most have visitor facilities. Surrounded by sea and ocean, crisscrossed by rivers and lakes, covered in rain and dry forest and a central spine of high-rising mountains, the country's sheer diversity makes all the difference. The tropical climate lends itself to outdoor activity all year round. The Dominican Republic has the highest and lowest points above and below sea level in the region. Duarte Peak rises 10,125 feet (3,087 meters) within the Cordillera Central mountain range, while Enriquillo Lake is 15 feet (42 meters) below sea level.

3. The logo has elements of sun, water, fauna (birds), land and ship sails.
4. The motto is Has it all. Because Dominican Republic truly has everything to offer for various type of tourists. Please check the answer 2.
5. Every year increases couples visiting the Dominican Republic for wedding ceremonies or honeymoon. We are making emphasis on that. Please visit this link (It may help you): <http://www.travelweekly.com/Caribbean-Travel/Dominican-Republic-tops-in-Caribbean-tourism-and-growing/>

Appendix H: Answers of Bonaire Tourism Corporation

from: **Crystel Pourier** <crystelpourier@tourismbonaire.com>
to: rutavid@gmail.com
date: Tue, May 5, 2015 at 10:14 PM
subject: Re: FW: branding of Bonaire
mailed-by: tourismbonaire.com

Crystel Pourier, Online & Product Marketing Officer, Bonaire Tourism Corporation

1. We mainly brand the island as a divers paradise, that's what most of the tourist come and do. Further also as an eco-friendly destination.
2. Bonaire mainly focuses on diving and active tourism. Also other water activities are popular too – snorkeling, kitesurfing, windsurfing, boating, sailing. Eco friendly activities – biking, hiking, birdwatching, horseback riding, golfing, rock climbing,
3. The logo shows the Flamingo which is our signature bird and the sun that shows the perfect warm temperature we have and also the warmth of our people. The driftwood is found on the island as well.
4. 40% of Bonaire's visitors visit the island more than one time, so they become more than a visitor. Depending on how many times they visit; they will become Bonaire Ambassadors.
5. We don't promote Bonaire as a wedding destination even though we have a section about it on our website. You can look it up under Activities & events, special vacations. Bonaire is chosen for weddings and honeymoons, because of the warm weather, the magical undersea world we have and the amazing food/restaurants.
6. Bonaire is branded as a diving destination and is named as one of the best in the Caribbean. So we currently do not brand Bonaire as a wedding destination.

Appendix I: Existence of wedding tourism influence on destination branding elements

Destinations	Elements					
	Logo	Slogan	Design	Verbal element	Imagery	General Wedding Tourism Influence in the Caribbean
Jamaica	X	X	✓	✓	✓*	✓*
Aruba	X	X	✓*	✓	✓	✓*
Turks & Caicos	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓*
Antigua & Barbuda	X	X	✓	✓	✓*	✓*
Curaçao	X	---	X	✓*	✓*	✓*
Dominican Republic	X	X	✓*	✓	✓	✓*
Bonaire	X	X	X	X	X	X
General Results	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓*

X – no influence; ✓ - influence; * - limited influence