

Use of stereotypes and styles used for the Marketing Strategy of Serbia:

The burden of ineffective and negative stereotypes

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Preface

This research examines the stereotypes used in promotion of Serbia as a tourist destination. Particularly, it seeks to make a link between the issues of the usage of negative stereotypes and the “turbulent history” of Serbia of the last two decades. The research problem will be addressed by use of content analysis research technique. In this process, the text and imagery content of the National Tourism Organization of Serbia, as one of the most representative organizations for the tourism promotion of the country, will be analyzed, with particular emphasis on the frequencies of occurring stereotype categories. Results of the analysis are used as the basis for the evaluation of traits of the marketing strategy of the website and to terminate the discussion with the recommendations for further website development, whereby stressing the critical aspects that contribute to the ineffectiveness of the marketing strategy and strength of the brand image of Serbian tourism.

The outcome of the content analysis process indicates that the National Tourist Organization of Serbia mainly relies on the stereotypes related to culture, history and art, but also natural resources and leisure and recreation in the formation of the projected destination image of Serbia. Positive stereotypes lead in terms of the frequency of their usage on the website, partially portraying the projected destination of Serbia as unrealistic, due to the absence of comments regarding the Serbian history of the last two decades and expression of attitudes to the events that happened in that particular period.

The results of this research indicate that the National Tourist Organization of Serbia does not exploit the opportunities of the “turbulent history” of Serbia that could help in creating a unique selling proposition for Serbia. In addition, the results of the analysis led to the recognition of an ineffective communication of negative stereotypes and omission of mentioning of some important traits of the destination. Therefore, this paper provides recommendations for the modification of marketing strategy in order to create a differentiating and unique destination image.

1. Introduction and objectives

1.1 Research problem definition

The research problem was identified after a visit to the website of the National Tourism Organization of Serbia (www.serbia.travel). This is one of the most representative websites for tourism promotion of the country. The idea behind the problem is to discover which kind of stereotypes the National Tourist Organization of Serbia uses to represent Serbian tourism and Serbia as a travel destination.

The choice of Serbia as the case study makes the analysis of stereotypes of particular interest, since the country has recently suffered from war, attacks and national conflicts which were portrayed in the mass media with criticism. Seeing that it carries a dark shadow of the last two decades there is a need to actively work on its tourism image and destination image by the right choice of stereotypes.

During the Balkan Crisis, after the civil war in ex-Yugoslavia and the government of Slobodan Milosevic, Serbia was intensely represented in the international mass media as a dangerous place confronted with many problems. Although the crisis is buried in the past, negative portrait in the media created stereotypes which still have an effect on the brand image of Serbia not only as a country, but also as a tourist destination.

A turbulent past does not necessarily have to be a burden for tourism marketers. Destinations like Berlin, Bucharest and Budapest transformed the traces of communist heritage and wars into the stereotypes that formed their destination image and became important source of revenue (Light, 2000).

The fact that Serbia encountered a crisis in recent history is not mentioned on the website of the National Tourism Organization of Serbia. This fact made it particularly interesting to investigate whether the management of the Serbian Tourist Organization tends to promote only pure neutral information on tourist regions, but ignore addressing negative stereotypes still held by many.

One of the uses of marketing is to influence target groups and facilitate creating changes in awareness, knowledge, attitudes of tourists to accept the offer or

tourism product (Gronhaug and Heide, 1992). The decision on the content and format of the message is of crucial importance as it symbolizes how the stereotypes, both deriving from the media or from the tourism marketing organization, can be used to modify the image of the destination.

Stereotypes are publicly held, common mental picture of a destination (Pearce, 1988). They can be used as a marketing tool to develop desirable destination image in the minds of travelers. Pearce (1988) points out that a destination image is formed in form of a long-term memory of scenes and symbols, panoramas and people. In this research it will be considered that words and images, which carry the same meaning, form one stereotype group. These stereotype groups are attributes which influence (Table 1.1) and form a perceived destination image of visitors of this particular website.

Stereotypes that marketers try to communicate are reflected on the website as images and text which hold the majority of the overall website content. Images and text meanings belonging to the same dimension form one group of stereotypes. These group categories should promote the typical and most representative traits of the destination, also referred to as stereotypes. On the other side, we will look at stereotypes as dimensions which are combined altogether to form a destination image. They are presented with the purpose of delivering the wanted image and emphasize certain traits of the country, so that they are perceived by the visitors of the website in the same way.

1.2 The role of different factors in the image formation process

There are a number of articles which help get a general introduction into the meaning of stereotyping and destination image formation from a marketing perspective. Gronhaug and Heide (1992) explain the notion of stereotyping, its conceptual framework and try to assess the extent to which the advertising of a country can affect the image of a destination in the minds of first time visitors. Beerli and Martin, (2004) provide a model of attributes which determine the destination image formation process (Table 1.1) and differentiate the information sources and personal factors which influence individuals in forming perceptions. Hall (1999)

examines the relationship between the destination branding and image projection in Central and Eastern Europe.

The image forming process in tourism can be influenced by different information sources: a) advertising of tourist organizations of the destination in mass media, internet on official websites, b) using celebrities in the destination promotion and related articles, c) autonomous information sources including mass media broadcasting news, documentaries, films, television programs, d) information from friends or relatives which is based on their knowledge and experience, e) visit to the destination (Gartner , 1993, quoted by Beerli and Martin, 2004) .

Established theories on destination image formation process proved that the destination image as a concept is formed by the consumer's reasoned and emotional interpretation as the consequence of two interrelated components: perceptive/ cognitive evaluations referring to the individual's own knowledge and beliefs about the destination and affective appraisals relating to an individual's feelings towards the destination (Beerli and Martin, 2004).

Table 1.1 Dimension/Attributes Determining the Perceived Destination Image (Beerli and Martin, 2004)

<p>Natural Resources:</p> <p>Weather (temperature, rainfall, humidity, hours of sunshine) Beaches (quality of seawater, sandy or rocky beaches, length of beaches, overcrowding of beaches) Wealth of countryside (protected nature reserves, lakes, mountains, deserts, etc.) Variety of unique flora and fauna</p>	<p>General Infrastructure:</p> <p>Development and quality of roads, airports and ports Private and public transport facilities Development of health services Development of communications Development of commercial infrastructure Extent of building development</p>	<p>Tourist Infrastructure:</p> <p>Hotel and self catering accommodation (number of beds, categories, quality) Restaurants(number, categories, quality) Bars, discos and clubs Ease of access to the destination Excursions at the destination Tourist centers Network of tourist information</p>
<p>Tourist Leisure and recreation:</p> <p>Theme parks Entertainment and sports activities(golf, fishing, haunting, skiing, scuba diving, etc.) Water parks Zoos Trekking Adventure activities Casinos Night life Shopping</p>	<p>Culture, History and Art:</p> <p>Museums, historical buildings, monuments, etc. Festivals, concerts, etc. Handcraft Gastronomy Folklore Religion Customs and ways of life</p>	<p>Political and Economical Factors:</p> <p>Political Stability Political tendencies Economic development Safety (crime rate, terrorist attacks) Prices</p>
<p>Natural Environment:</p> <p>Beauty of the scenery Attractiveness of the cities and towns Cleanliness Overcrowding Air and noise pollution Traffic congestion</p>	<p>Social Environment:</p> <p>Hospitality and friendliness of local residents Underprivileged and poverty Quality of life Language barriers</p>	<p>Atmosphere of the place:</p> <p>Luxurious Fashionable Place with a good reputation Family-oriented destination Exotic Mystique Relaxing Stressful Fun, enjoyable Pleasant Boring Attractive or interesting</p>

1.3 Aims and objectives of the research

The primary goal of this research is to highlight different groups of stereotypes used by the National Tourist Organization of Serbia (NTOS) when promoting Serbia as a travel destination. The second goal is to assess which are the most commonly used ones. The key objective is to discover the percentage of presence of each group of stereotypes extracted from the Beerli and Martin model (Table 1.1). These findings will provide us with the information about which kind of traits of Serbia the NTOS considers to be the most reliable ones and as a potential to strength the development of Serbian tourism.

Also, it is crucial to establish whether the NTOS uses only positive stereotypes, or also negative stereotypes, trying to turn them into potential tourist attractions, as some other countries which suffered political crisis had done.

For the purpose of this research, positive stereotypes shall mean stereotypes presented in a positive context by the usage of different positive and superlative word attributes, or that are connected to the associations that usually carry a positive meaning. On the other hand, negative stereotypes can be described as those carrying a meaning of things that are widely and most commonly perceived as negative or not likely to be pleasing to most. In order to classify stereotypes in one of the two groups (positive or negative) it is necessary to perform a qualitative analysis and evaluate if the particular stereotype is mentioned in the positive or negative context.

The objective is also to understand and analyze the marketing strategy of Serbia and evaluate if the marketing style is predominantly active or passive. Active marketing in this research shall mean a more aggressive style, trying to persuade potential guests of the presence of positive traits and the quality of a destination. Likewise, passive marketing style shall mean the one where marketers use just pure facts about the product, in this case a travel destination, without adding any special or distinctive attributes and without using positive stereotypes to promote the country.

After completing all the analyses of the website, its content, stereotypes used and overall marketing styles, conclusions and recommendations shall be made for the future development of the Serbian tourism promotion throughout this website.

1.4 Methodology and structure of the research

The study focuses on the website of the National Tourist Organization of Serbia (NTOS). As means of promotional communication, The NTOS is the most representative body for the marketing of tourism in Serbia. The NTOS was founded in 1994 by the Government of Serbia. Primary mission of the organization is promotion, advancement and development of the Serbian tourism product, both nationally and internationally. On its homepage, the NTOS defines its main strategic goals: orientation to international tourism market, positioning of Serbian tourist product, creation of new positive brand image of Serbia as a destination, creating awareness of the Serbian tourism product, presenting Serbia as a suitable area for foreign investment and increase of volume and structure improvement of tourist flows and consumption (<http://www.serbia.travel/cms/item/info/en/Mission.html>).

Content analysis is the methodology suitable for the achievement of stated objectives. Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or meaningful matter to the context of their use) (Krippendorff, 2004).

Krippendorff (2004) and Weber (1990) explain the basics of content analysis and provide an overview of its methodology. In his book Krippendorff explains the term “other meaningful matter” as the works of art, images, maps, and sounds (signs symbols may be included in the data). Content analysis is a research technique where research questions are targets of analysts’ inferences from texts. The questions asked by the researcher through content analysis must be answered through the inferences from the established sample. Krippendorff summarizes the process of content analyses consisting of six steps:

1. Unitizing - the process of distinguishing of segments of text and images.
2. Sampling - the process of limiting the observations to the sample of interest.

3. Recording - the process following the previously established instructions.
Process of coding can be accomplished by putting the wide variety of different word patterns into a same category.
4. Reducing data to manageable representations - which involves the process of summarizing and simplifying data.
5. Abductively inferring contextual phenomena - connecting the gap between descriptive accounts of texts and what they mean, refer to, entail, provoke, or cause.
6. Narrating answers to content analysis questions - making the results comprehensible to others and explaining the practical significance of the findings.

The research consists of three parts. The first part consists of qualitative analyses, with separate analyses of images and text. The qualitative part will be done so that each image and word meaning present on the website will be observed and classified into different types of previously established stereotypes groups (Appendix 1). Each destination image dimension group will be considered as one stereotype category. In order to classify a meaning of recording units into one stereotype group they have to carry the most relevant traits of this group in its meaning.

For the purpose of formation of the category definitions for content analysis of images and text the Beerli and Martin model will be used in this research (Table 1.1). This model addresses the topic of destination image formation and classifies dimensions which determine the perceived destination image. Accordingly, it will be possible to classify types of images and text and therefore recognize stereotypes used in the website chosen for this paper. According to Beerli and Martin (2004) there are nine dimensions determining the perceived image of a tourist destination: 1. general infrastructure, 2. culture, history and art, 3. social environment, 4. tourist infrastructure, 5. political and economic factors, 6. atmosphere of the place, 7. natural resources, 8. tourist, leisure and recreation, 9. natural environment. Each of the dimensions consists of a number of sub-dimensions which will be considered as single attribute categories (stereotype groups) in the process of content analysis.

As the aim of the research is to analyze the existence and usage of positive vs. negative stereotypes in the marketing strategy of the NTOS, a need to adapt the Beerli and Martin model in the sense that particular destination images dimensions will be divided into positive and negative aspects, was recognized. The modification will be achieved by the characterization of the stereotypes that have the ability to exist in both forms, e.g. safety- destination image stereotype, a sub- component of the political and economical dimension, is recognized to be able to occur in two forms: 1) positive form, in the case where the meaning of the stereotype appearing in the text and images content communicates peace, good level of safety and non-existence of wars, low level of crime rate, and 2) negative form, in the situations where wars, criminality, conflicts and low level of safety is mentioned. However, not all stereotypes can occur in both structures, as for some of them an explicit meaning is already established by their nature, e. g: luxurious, fun, interesting, pleasant, etc., are stereotypes that are most widely accepted as positive, or e. g: boring, poverty, stressful, etc. are most widely perceived as stereotypes carrying a negative meaning. These additional modifications lead us to the adapted layout of the Beerli and Martin model for the purpose of delivering the research objectives (Appendix 1.).

The second stage of research will include quantitative analyses of the website content, also separating text and imagery. This will help to get an overview on the groups of stereotypes used for the promotion of Serbian tourism, thus making it possible for the quantitative analyses stage to evaluate their representation share on the whole website.

The collected qualitative and quantitative information of the Serbian NTOS website will then be critically evaluated and comments will be provided regarding the stereotypes used by the organization with the intention of forming a destination image, and on the possible arguments for that particular stereotype projection. The last stage will compare the advantages and disadvantages of using the negative and positive stereotypes for the image formation.

Some articles provide examples of how other countries which were affected by crisis found effective solutions for tourism development and recovery (Light, 2000; Hall, 1999). These examples are compared to the case of Serbian tourism marketing strategy and the stereotypes it promotes in the design of the website of the NTOS.

2 Serbia in historical perspective: a comprehensive review of past and present

Before the illustration of results, a recent brief history of Serbia will be provided in this chapter, in order to better understand the meaning of the content being analyzed.

2.1 Political background

After the termination of the Second World War, Serbia (at the time called the Socialist Republic of Serbia) was part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, a republic established by a communist regime headed by the leader of the Yugoslavia's Communist Party, Josip Broz Tito. This Republic, whose key policy was "brotherhood and unity", was made up of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, Macedonia, and Montenegro, experienced a tragic disintegration, accompanied suffering, death, displacement, and war trauma, suffered by a great share of its' citizens.

The year 1991 will be remembered as the start of fragmentation of the former Yugoslavia. That was the year when the war in Croatia began, and conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina followed in May. This later event caused the civil war which lasted for three years. Croatia became independent from Yugoslavia in 1992, but the conflicts continued until 1995. The Dayton Peace Agreement, signed in November 1995, ended the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. After the disintegration of Yugoslavia into independent states of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro formed a new federation called the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which promoted democracy to replace communism (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yugoslav_Wars).

In the period of 1998-1999 there were conflicts between the Serbian military and police forces and the Albanian terrorists (Kosovo Liberation Army), followed by the NATO bombing of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from March 24 until June 10, 1999.

Despite defeats in wars for Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo, international isolation and impoverishment of the citizens of Serbia, President Slobodan Milosevic remained in

power for more than a decade. His regime came to an end after a population revolt on October 5, 2000 and was replaced by a Democratic Party headed by the new President, Vojislav Kostunica. Although it seemed that this political development finally put an end to the manipulation of the law and the legal system as well as illegal conduct of those close to the regime, on March 12, 2003 Serbia suffered another blow when the Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic was assassinated in front of the Serbian Government building. This caused not only a great shock for Serbia, but also a strong reaction in the world media implying that crime is still strongly rooted in Serbia and that Serbia is still confronting security and political issues which continued to post a threat to the country's integration in the European Union at the same time damaging its image as a tourist destination. In June 2004 new presidential elections took place and the victory of the leader of the pro-Western Democratic Party was greeted with relief by the Western countries. After a three year union of Serbia and Montenegro, in the May 2006 referendum Montenegro voted for independence which was afterwards recognized by Serbia and other Western countries (Woehrel, 2006).

In 2008, members of Kosovo Assembly in Pristine declared Kosovo independence. Until now, the Government of Serbia is boycotting this declaration, naming it illegal and asking for support of the International Court of Justice.

2.2 Serbia at present: political and economic changes

When it took over the country from Milosevic's regime in 2000, the democratic leadership faced major economic burdens of economic mismanagement in the past, economic isolation and the post-effects of NATO bombing in 1999.

Thus, the new government started implementing its economic reform program that included fiscal and monetary policies and eventually the trade regime was liberalized, too. These actions of the new government led to radical economic growth.

At the moment, the sector of tourism is one of the most progressive in the economy. After the political changes in 2000, the income from foreign tourists experienced an exponential growth, from a very low income of 17.9 million dollars in 1999 to 77.3

million dollars in 2002. In the period between 2000- 2002 the share of foreign tourists doubled. It was evaluated that it is possible to augment the total tourist income to 441 million dollars until the end of 2010 (Woehrel, 2006).

Current political leaders and ruling parties put strong emphasis on developing and maintaining good international relations, especially with western countries, building a positive image of Serbia as a country and tourist destination, too. Finally, after a long period of being isolated both in terms of inbound and outbound tourism as a consequence of very strict visa requirements, Serbia got a chance to promote its tourism by hosting some important world events such as the Eurovision Song Contest 2008 and the 2009 Summer Universiade (<http://www.universiade-belgrade2009.org>).

3 Marketing strategy of the National Tourist Organization of Serbia (NTOS): usage of stereotypes to attract tourists

As already stated in the chapter on aims and objectives, the goal of this research is to investigate which groups of stereotypes are used by the NTOS with the purpose of tourist promotion of Serbia and their share on the website of this organization. In order to find out more about the type and quantitative appearance of certain stereotype groups that the NTOS uses for its marketing strategy to communicate a destination image, in the next section we will try to make inferences on the content of the online communication channel of the NTOS.

3.1 Content analysis of the website of the NTOS

Content analysis is a technique that helps draw conclusions about the sender of the message and the message itself. It can be used for many purposes, and in this case it will be used to identify the intentions and other characteristics of the online marketing strategy message of the NTOS sender, detect the existence of propaganda and reflect patterns in the choice of stereotypes. The rules of this inferential process vary with the theoretical and substantive interest of the investigator (Weber, 1990).

One of the fundamental steps in starting the content analysis is to define the recording unit. Recording units are units that are distinguished for separate description, transcription, re-cording or coding. (Krippendorff, 2004) For the purpose of the analysis of the website we will take one semantic unit constituted of set of words, as a recording unit. The possibility that words or images that can be sorted in one group of stereotype categories according to their literal form will not always be encountered reclined this determination. To classify each semantic unit, their meaning would be encoded according to the context in which they exist. This meaning is dependent on the content of the phrases and the meaning of the attributes standing next to the single word. Attributes accompanying the key words can significantly influence the meaning of the semantic unit, and therefore the category to which the stereotype will be classified. Also, this choice of the decoding unit is especially suitable for the website of the NTOS as the sentences that constitute the text content are formed in the way that they contain more than only one key word. Additionally, many semantic units consist of words and their attributes that, when broken into separate single units, lose their primary meaning. The semantic unit consists of the key word that represents one stereotype and the attributes that apply to that word giving it an additional meaning and possibility to appoint it into an extra stereotype category. Thus, for this research we will not separate the words and their descriptive attributes, but evaluate them as an entity. This decision allows obtaining a more detailed impression, insight and analysis on the text content of the website of the NTOS.

The second step is determining the categories. Categories are encoding groups to which recording units should be classified. As the stereotype categories a modified list of the original sub- dimensions (Appendix 1) extracted from the Beerli and Martin model (Table 1.1) of dimensions shaping the perceived destination image provided will be taken. In order to get detailed results for the percentages of various categories mentioned on the website the rule of exclusiveness will not be valid. In short, it will be possible to appoint each recording unit only into more than one category.

Two different techniques of content analysis are available: human-coded or interpretive mode, and the computer-aided content analysis. Hence the point of this

research is that the researcher gets an impression not only about the stereotypes used, but also about the nature of the marketing message, the interpretive mode is chosen. In this way by doing the hand-coding, the researcher gets an insight of the design, overall content and impression of the website. This could not be achieved to the same level by using computer-aided analysis.

There are several possible techniques that can be used in the process of analyzing the recording units: word frequency counts (where researcher examines the highest frequency words), key word in context listings (where researcher finds out which words appear in the text and how they are used), concordances, classification of words into content categories, content categories counts (this is another approach to content analysis that counts words that have been classified into categories), retrievals based on content categories and co-occurrences. Officially, there are no rules for the use of each of these procedures. The researcher should rather tailor the methods he uses to the requirements of his research by selecting specific techniques and integrating them with other methods, substantive considerations and theories (Weber, 1990). The most appropriate way to deliver the results for the content analysis for the objective of this research is to accept the content categories count as the most fitting technique as there is a demand for the frequency of appearance of each stereotype category in the text and images on the website.

Krippendorff (2004) suggest that both qualitative and quantitative design approaches are indispensable in the process of content analysis. He also questions the validity of the distinction between the two stating that all reading of texts is qualitative, even when certain characteristics of text are later converted into numbers.

It should be mentioned that qualitative researchers argue that the body of text is unique, affords multiple interpretations and needs to be treated accordingly. As the result of these readings the conclusion was that the best way to structure the content analysis for the case being explored is to start with the qualitative analysis of text and images with the aim of rearticulating their meanings, in view of their assumed contexts and latter on transport these meanings into a quantitative content analysis form.

Although qualitative and quantitative content analysis are chronological parts of a content analysis process, findings of both for our sample will be compared at the end, unified, commented and structured into a conclusion. Linking the qualitative and quantitative results may lead to different results. The first possibility is that the results converge, mutually confirm themselves and can support the same conclusion. The second possibility is that the results focus on different aspects of an issue, but are complementary to each other and lead to a fuller picture and, finally, the third option is that the qualitative and quantitative results are contradictory (Flick, 2006).

3.1.1 Qualitative analysis of the website of the NTOS

The first step in performing content analyses is for the researcher to get an impression and understanding on the sample he or she is investigating. This goal was achieved by the observation of the characteristics and structure of the website. The website of the NTOS contains both photos and text, therefore the decision made was to systematically observe the text on each website page separately from the photos on the each website page. The results obtained from analyzing the two forms of content will at the end be integrated to form a common conclusion.

The purpose of the qualitative analysis in this research is to make an in-depth analysis of the subject being investigated and be able to understand and decode the meaning of recording units in order to assign them into already established categories (Appendix 1). In order to perform the qualitative analysis for this research, the researcher will observe the content of data present on the website, interpret it by forming an impression and at the end report this impression in the quantitative form. Observation of the text and images content of the website and categorization of recording units extracted from the research sample will enable the impression formation. Further, impressions will lead to creation of meaningful quantitative information on the website content and share of each of the stereotype groups in the online marketing message of the NTOS.

3.1.1.1 Design of the homepage of the NTOS

The homepage of the NTOS website has a dynamic component with the changing images of different stereotype groups of: monasteries, nature, music, entertainment and art, and a static part with text and navigation menus. This screen gives the first impression on what can be later on occurred when surfing through the website containing, and it creates the first vision for the website visitors of what they should expect from Serbia as a travel destination. Comments and positive critics of the BBC World, the New York Times and the Observer are put in the first plan as they are located in the space of the four out of eight changing images.

On the top of the page there are two main logos. On the left side there is a logo of the NTOS and on the right side there is the logo of Serbia. The menu bar is very simply structured in the form of a horizontal line which enables selecting between several options: destination, culture, nature, activities, events, accommodation, about Serbia, news, and also the search engine. In the research, the content of each option will be contemplated as one sampling unit.

Exhibit 3.1 Homepage design of the website of NTOS



Each item on menu bar has a sub-menu. As we click on the item destination on the menu bar, we are able to choose between the sub-menus, for instance if we click the mouse on the destination item, we are able to choose from the list of sub-menus including cities, villages, mountain resorts, spas. Selecting one of the items from the sub-menu leads to a page about the item's topic. The procedure is the same for all menu options.

For the content analyses for this research it was decided to investigate each page on the website which contains promotional information on Serbia. Each of the menu items: destinations, culture, nature, activities, events and general information on Serbia represent our sampling units, which, when put together form our research sample. The decision was made by the rule of the relevance sampling. This is a sampling technique that selects all textual units that contribute to answering the research question. It is also a non-probabilistic research technique, meaning that the resulting units of text are not meant to be representative of a population text. They are rather the population of relevant texts, excluding the textual units that do not possess relevant information (Krippendorff, 2004).

Technical information, information on the NTOS will not be involved in the research process as they do not implicate tourist information on Serbia and thus do not contribute value to the end result and perception of the marketing strategy of the NTOS and of categories of stereotypes used to project the destination image. As this technical information of the website and information on the NTOS are not connected to the destination image formation process itself, such an action is unnecessary. The page which is devoted to accommodation contains only one paragraph of text which is going to be analyzed and merged with the results of the 'General information on Serbia' menu together with the related image. The options and information on accommodation facilities will not be considered for the data sample as they contain location information of accommodation facilities and are not relevant for the topic being investigated.

3.1.1.2 Qualitative analysis: text content of the website of NTOS

The structural model of the qualitative analysis part is to look at the text content of every menu item as on one entity. In order to do so, the sub menu and all their internal links have to be accessed. With the aim of gaining an impression how Serbian tourism marketing experts try to advertise the destination related tourism products, we will observe separately the sub menus cities, villages, mountain resort and spas. Then we would study the content of the each single tourism product categorized under one of the sub menus. The same approach will be applied to the rest of the menu items

“Destination” menu contains the sub menus: cities, villages, mountain resorts and spas. The sub menu city promotes the overall image of all cities in Serbia and additionally there is an option to enter the information on Belgrade, Nis, Kragujevac and Novi Sad. Of all cities in Serbia, the NTOS decided to display only the four cities mentioned.

Visitors of the website will encounter the text information representing Serbian cities mostly by the quality of their gastronomy, cafés, bars, atmosphere and culture. Serbian capital city Belgrade is presented mostly by the stereotypes connected to its culture, art and sightseeing possibilities, with emphasis also on the attractiveness of its nightlife. Additional emphasis is put on the economic development of Serbia, the importance of Belgrade as an economic hub, renovation and development of quality accommodation facilities and the possibility to take an advantage of the mix of business and multiple free- time offers such as river excursions, shopping, dining and nightlife.

The “villages” sub-menu communicates stereotypes that are most widely related to the outstanding natural beauty and the wealth of the country side. Other impressive messages from the content of the “villages” sub-menu are that the countryside offers a great opportunity to enjoy the traditional food and relax in the homes of hospitable local people. Textual information also mentions the development of agriculture and cattle breeding as one of the main economic activities of the people living in rural regions. Folklore plays an important role in the image forming of the

sub-menu villages as folklore tradition; local song and dance customs can be frequently encountered.

Serbian mountain resorts offer is marketed as a mixture of sport and entertainment-related tourist products and the beauty of the scenery. There is a consistent promotion of winter and summer sport tourism market with variety of recreation possibilities of skiing, hiking, mountaineering, rafting and fishing, but also of the variety of flora and fauna species. The overall perceived impression of the projected destination image for the Serbian mountain resorts areas is an active and interesting holiday possibility.

The "spa" sub-menu puts special emphasis on the variety of health services and treatments. Detailed information on the types of treatment and health services is also provided.

The second menu item is "culture". It consists of the following sub-menus: "monasteries", "ethno-villages" and "historical highlights". After detailed analyses of the text it is clear that the NTOS heavily relies on the multiplicity of the religious monuments dating from the Byzantine period of Serbian culture. Additionally, in the sub-menu "monasteries", the emphasis is on the Serbian royalty dynasties, their facilities and the struggle for survival of the Serbian people and culture across centuries of wars and difficult history, from the period of Ottoman rule until the current times and the conflicts in Kosovo.

The "ethno-villages" sub menu represents the folklore and the Serbian tradition and additionally the beauty of the countryside.

"Historical highlights" page and the associated internal links present the wealth and importance of the prehistoric sites of Serbia. This information tries to connect Serbia with the rest of Europe by reference that some of the Serbian historical monuments form part of the European cultural tourist route named "Transromonica".

In the menu "nature" the NTOS has created one sub-menu for the information on five national parks and their possibilities for recreation. The second menu item is the beauty of the scenery under the name "scenic highlights" also mentioning that some of the scenic highlights are valued and recognized by the UNESCO organization.

The “activities” menu’s content attempts to produce an image of Serbia as a country with multiple and interesting recreation possibilities. An effort is made to attract skiers, hunters, fishermen, people interested in rafting, free climbing, bird watching, wine tours, mountaineering, free biking and caves. This gives Serbia an image of a country offering a wide variety of sports for tourist, in the environment where they can be surrounded by extraordinary beauty of the flora, fauna and mountain peaks. Furthermore, huge importance is attached to the Serbian wine industry, different wine producing areas and wine tours. The text highlights the Serbian wine making tradition dating back to Roman times, development of the wine industry in the region and plans for further wine product placement on the international market.

The NTOS presents the music and the cheery spirit of Serbia as a competitive advantage of the events offered the marketers. Among the most important events promoted by the NTOS are the summer festival EXIT and the trumpet festival in Guca. Still, not enough attention is paid to the importance of these widely famous events as they are very briefly described in only one paragraph. Extreme hospitality is claimed to be a main distinction of Serbian people together with the possibility to experience the joy of life daily: “In Serbia, there is always a reason to celebrate”. General impression is that the NTOS underestimated the importance of events in the tourism development and missed the opportunity to present a more detailed and differentiated information on the interesting events that take place in Serbia.

Under the sub menu accommodation a special paragraph is devoted to the topic and stereotype of hospitality of Serbian people, promising tourist a very pleasant and relaxing stay. The paragraph states: “In a Serb home, the best room, the largest slice of bread and the kindest word have always been reserved by the guest or the weary traveler. That’s the way we were brought up”. This comes from the accepted stereotype and self-perception of the Serbian people. The NTOS used this nationally wide held stereotype as a branding tool delivering a message of ensured warm welcome and feeling comfortable in the destination to the prospective tourists. At the same time, this paragraph is the only text on the page, as the lower part contains the search engine and some technical information.

The possibility for tourists to know more about the history and general information on Serbia is given in the menu “about Serbia”. Here the NTOS provides tourist with

brief description of all the important aspects of Serbian culture, history across centuries, political aspects and information on the NTOS itself. The history information contains in the largest part the medieval history, Turkish conquest period, World War I, World War II, but a very poor explanation of the recent history and development of the political situation in Serbia.

It is worthwhile to mention that marketers rely heavily on the art and its development in Serbia over centuries, from medieval ages to painting in the 19th and 20th centuries until the art of recent times. Diverse architecture schools which had an influence on the building development in Serbia are listed: School of Raska, Moravian School and Byzantine style group. Serbian architecture is presented proudly and intensively as connected to the construction of churches and monasteries, with strong emphasis on Byzantine art. Religion also plays a key role in the presentation of Serbian painting. Frescoes and mural paintings are often seen in the texts. Serbian folk art is presented thru diverse handcrafts resulting from the traditions of the past some of which have been preserved until the present times, consisting mostly of carpets, embroidery and the folk costume, jewelry producing and the roadside monuments of the village cutters.

3.1.1.3 Qualitative analysis: imagery content of the website of the NTOS

Visual imagery is used to command attention, stimulate curiosity, demonstrate product features and benefits, establish a personality for a product, associate product with certain symbols and lifestyles and anchor the brand identity in the minds of the target audience (Moriarty, 1987).

According to Sontag (2002) photography is a critical issue as 'photographs, in teaching us a new visual code, alter and enlarge our notions of what is worth looking at and what we have right to observe'. From the destination image perspective Fesenmeier and Mac Kay (1996) argue that: 'since tourism is uniquely visual, photographs are considered paramount to successfully creating and communicating an image of a destination.

These statements support the content analysis of the image content of the NTOS website as an essential component of the successful and meaningful evaluation of

the organization's marketing strategy and determining the stereotypes that are deliberately selected to represent the country in the English version of the website.

This part of research will provide an in-depth descriptive insight into the image content of the NTOS website. The sampling units remain the same, so the overview will be structured in the way that it explains and evaluates the images of each menu, each image being one recording unit. The same procedure is used for the text content.

The merit of the "destination" menu is that it abounds with images showing different types of monumental buildings, typical Serbian homes, countryside, flora and fauna and the population. The starting point of the qualitative research of images is the destination sub-menu cities. On the front page for the sub-menu cities the central image shows one of the main and most famous streets of the Serbian capital Belgrade called "Knez Mihajlova Street" in the evening (Appendix 2). This photographic illustration shows people walking while at the same time having a conversation and looking at the shop windows. The message of the illustration gives the visitors of the website an impression of tranquility and safety, at the same time of a relaxing and interesting atmosphere, of the city where something is always going on. Gallery devoted to the capital Belgrade contains photos showing the city at night, its streets, the rivers and the shore, but also monuments, fortress Kalemegdan and the streets during the day (Appendix 3). For the cities Nis, Kragujevac and Novi Sad images used represent only monuments and historical buildings (Appendix 4) with the one exception of the photo with a young child (Appendix 5), where the message is somewhat unclear. The purpose of the imagery is to communicate the sightseeing possibilities of Serbian culture and architecture, its importance, and the beauty of the scenery but tend to disregard the importance of the lively nightlife of the cities, especially Belgrade, which is well known among foreign tourist who have visited Serbia.

The "villages" sub-menu contains a large amount of photos with the topic of countryside, natural environment and traditional ways of life of people living in rural areas. Still, they do not indicate the important aspect of Serbian folklore, customs and gastronomy that could be possibly well used in the country's tourism promotion. There is a frequent occurrence of the imagery that represents the village

architecture, development of agricultural regions in the countryside, churches. Surprisingly, none of the photos shows the way people traditionally dress, hospitality of local residents and traditional Serbian country food, for which Serbian villages have good reputation.

Again, the stereotype of the wealth of the natural resources emerges in the pages devoted to Serbian mountain resorts as the most frequent, followed by the stereotype of entertainment and sport spirit of Serbian mountain tourist centers. Visual demonstration of the most popular ski resort in Serbia- “Kopaonik” is accompanied with the images of people engaged in skiing and snowboarding, development of ski lifts and certain number of ski tourists.

For the advertising of spa centers marketers chose to induct imagery with the topic of the water resources, their cleanliness, parks and flora surrounding, providing the website visitors with the atmosphere of relaxation. Nevertheless, the images create an impression of destinations with boring atmosphere, due to the unvaried content. Photos of the interior of spa establishments, or people enjoying the spa and health services and treatments are excluded, and therefore the visitors of the website can have an impression of very lonely and deserted spa centers in Serbia.

The “culture” sampling unit consists of three sub-menus devoted to “monasteries”, “ethno villages” and “historical highlights”. Not surprisingly, the imagery of the sub-menu monasteries is based on the mix of visual representation of Serbian churches, monasteries, frescoes and religious objects. These religious buildings are displayed in the context of the natural environment, beautiful nature and favorable weather conditions. It is noted that ethno villages aim to be indicated as the complex of traditional form of ethno houses. Interestingly, there is a total absence of any form of folklore clothing, objects or interior of the ethno houses or people. The consequence of such choice of image content could be an impression of emptiness, lack of hospitality and unrealistic portraying of places.

“Historical highlights” are portrayed with the photos of historical cities, archeological excavation sites mainly dating from the times of the Roman Empire that used to be situated on the terrain of today’s Serbia. Again, there is a strong presence of religion within the images’ content where Serbian churches and mosques are set forth as

possible indication of the multi- ethnicity and the democratic tendencies of the country.

Serbian natural resources in the menu “nature”, which is comprised of sub-menus “national parks” and “scenic highlights”, are illustrated as a symbol of cleanliness and non-polluted areas offering relaxation and escape. Pictures employ scenes of perfectly clean water resource formats diversifying from lakes, rivers, ponds, marshlands to waterfalls. Sports and outdoor activity possibilities in an enjoyable atmosphere are depicted showing people hunting, horse riding or simply looking over the beauty of the horizon. Few pictures show fortresses and buildings surrounded by nature, giving an overall impression of peace and perfect ambient.

“Activities” menu gives the flair of the rich offer of sports possibilities. Projected images show people of different age engaging in sports and hunting in a peaceful and natural environment. Flora and fauna also tends to be shown, with the intention of presenting Serbia as a destination of excellent conditions for sports such as hunting, or bird watching due to the diversity of animals living in the presented areas. Water resources, rocks and caves also take part in the activity possibilities image forming process and reveal doses of excitement and fun.

“Events” sampling unit is encompassed of a poor count of images when compared to the rest of menus of the website. For the most part pictures are connected to musical events, both of modern and classical music, and the rest involves sport events. Interestingly, no emphasis is put on the worldwide honored events that have taken place in Serbia in the past few years such as “Eurovision” and “Universiade 2009”.

Due to technical problems only a limited number of images were available for the research. The problem has occurred every time the website was approached. Spots designed for the placement of images were plain, only the title of the photo could be seen. However, available images will be involved in the process of content analysis.

Considered images have several topics: map and location of Serbia in relation to neighboring countries, the historical and religious heritage, traditional events heritage, and congresses and conferences taking place in Serbia. Possibly, the

purpose of the posted images was to promote ease of access and advantageous location of Serbia, importance of culture and religion for Serbian people, exciting local festivals, and recent economical development and recovery of Serbia.

3.1.2 Quantitative analysis of the website content of the NTOS

3.1.2.1 Quantitative analysis: text content of the website of the NTOS

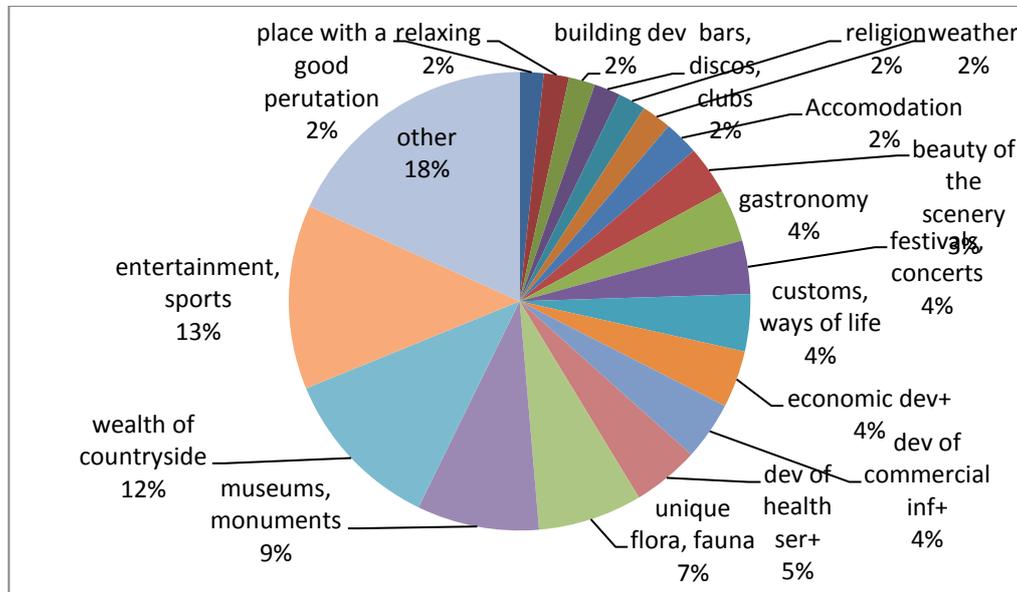
The second step in delivering the content analysis is the determination of the key semantic units in the text and decoding of their meanings by assigning them to different categories. The research population consists of 2,357 semantic units from which 319 belong to the menu of accommodation and general information on Serbia, 420 belong to the activities menu, 921 belong to the destinations menu, 466 belong to the culture menu, 14 belong to the events menu and 217 belong to the nature menu of the website.

The number of 2,357 key phrases listed above was decoded to 3,052 stereotype meanings. The amount of key phrases and decoded meanings varies as a consequence of the rule of non-exclusiveness, which allows rearticulating one key phrase (semantic unit) into more than one stereotype group.

In the building of image of the cities, villages, spas and mountains (Figure 3.1) the NTOS used 13% stereotypes that are connected to the entertainment and sports activities followed by the 12% of stereotypes representing the wealth of the countryside scenery. Additionally, historical buildings and monuments have a key role in the representation of the tourism products in these destinations, with a share of 9 %. Emphasis is put on the diversity of unique flora and fauna which was mentioned in 7% of all stereotypes. The remaining dimensions that determine the destination images in the menu “destinations” are as follows: development of health services 5%, development of commercial infrastructure, gastronomy, festivals, concerts, economic development and customs hold 4 %, beauty of the scenery 3 %, religion, good reputation, relaxation, bars and discos, building development and accommodation 2 %. The residual 18% consists of the mixture of different

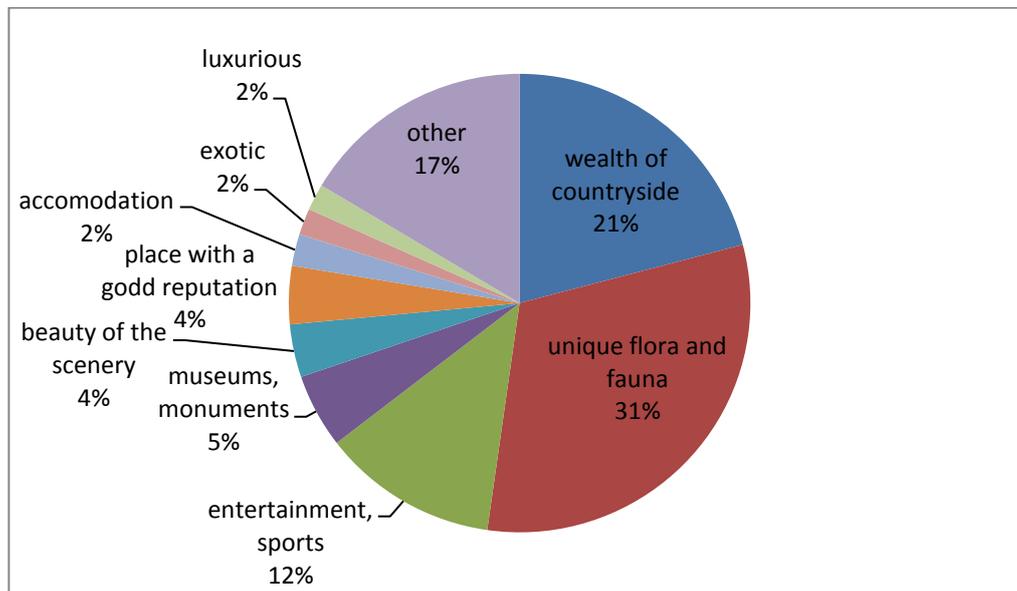
stereotype groups that individually do not have a share relevant to influence the destination image (under 2% share).

Figure 3.1 Share of stereotypes: text content of the website menu “Destinations”



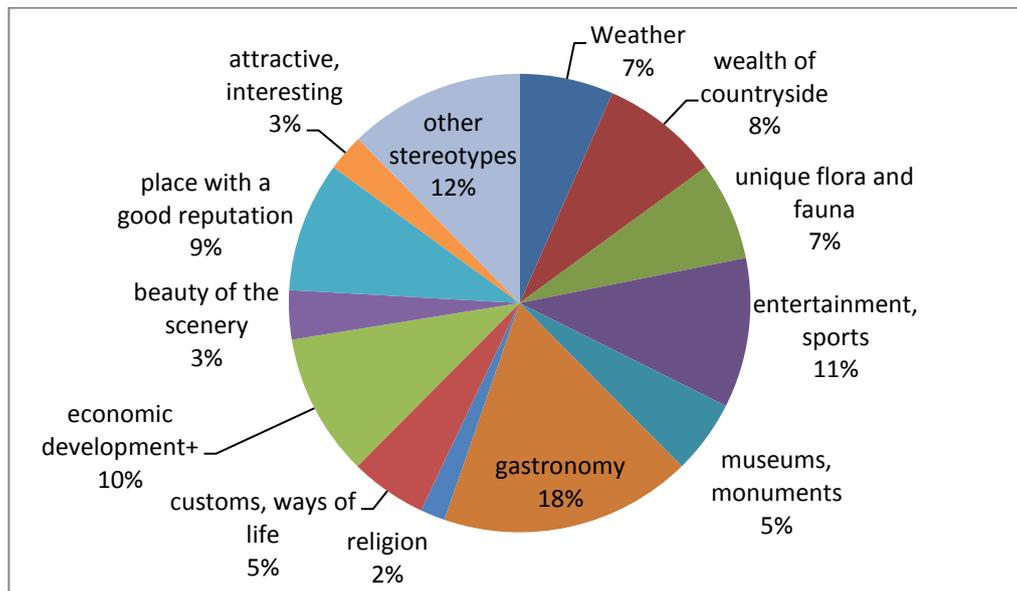
For the menu “Nature” (Figure 3.2) the largest share of key phrases mentioned in the text represented the stereotype of unique flora and fauna in their meaning with the share of 31%. The image of nature in Serbia was communicated by the wealth of countryside: mountains, lakes, gorges, forests, protected nature reserves with 21%. Sports and recreation possibilities play a significant role in forming the image of natural wealth of Serbian countryside with the share of 12%. Also, nature tends to be presented as a luxurious and exotic experience, with a significant number of protected natural heritage sites with a good reputation. In the 4% of key phrases positive stereotypes are used in order to form the stereotype of the beauty of the scenery. Although the main topic of the menu is nature the marketers insist on revealing the possibility to visit different museums, monuments and historical places that are apart from the cities present in the natural surroundings. Other most commonly used stereotype categories are: museums and historical places 5%, beauty of the scenery 4%, luxurious and exotic atmosphere of a destination with 2%.

Figure 3.2 Share of stereotypes: text content of the website menu “Nature”



In the menu “Activities”(Figure 3.3) the gastronomy stereotype was most frequently used in the text. 18% of all key phrases in the activity menu are related to the wines, rakija, local cuisine and other forms of gastronomy. As a consequence of frequent mentioning of the wine industry development in Serbia there is a 10% share of key phrases categorized in the group economic development. Extremely positive stereotypes are communicated through tributes of the Serbian wine route destinations and regions producing wine, claiming their good reputation in the 9 % of all recording units. Entertainment and sports rank second with an 11% share in the text, most of them connected to the mountain sports like skiing, rafting, free climbing, but also hunting and fishing.

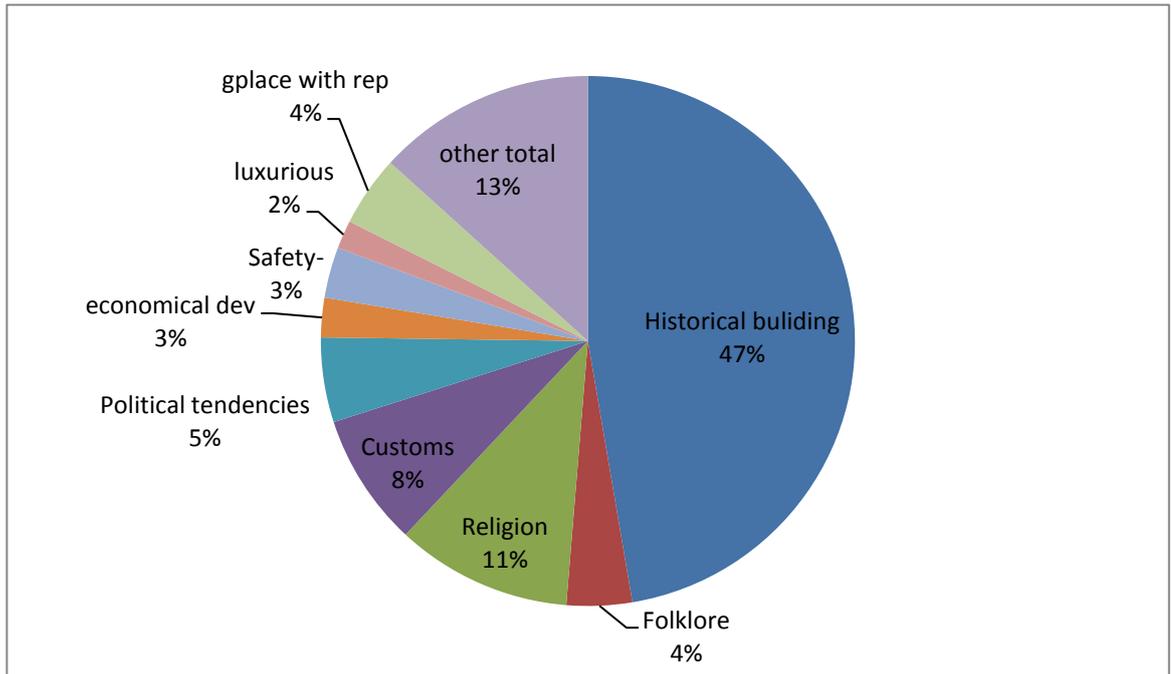
Figure 3.3 Share of stereotypes: text content of the website menu “Activities”



Wealth of countryside with the share of 8% and the uniqueness of flora and fauna with 7% share are mentioned mostly in the context of sports and activities. In that way marketers seemed to make a selling proposition of the attractiveness of doing sports in an extremely natural environment. Weather conditions are mentioned in 7% of all units, where they presented the conditions for doing winter or summer sports.

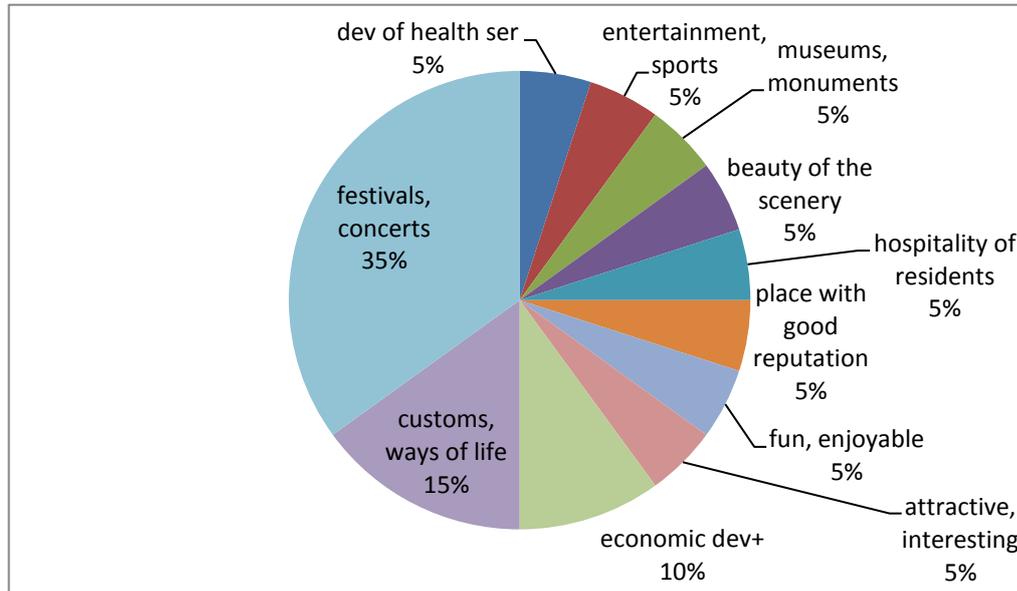
In the menu “Culture” (Figure 3.4) 47% of all the key phrases are related to the historical monuments and museums. Many of the cultural heritage sites are connected to the Serbian Orthodox church, monasteries and the architecture of religious monuments and therefore the most represented attribute of destination image is connected in some way to religion. Customs of dance, music, and ways of life of citizens are present in the 11% of content of the culture sample unit. Political tendencies of Serbia during centuries and different family dynasties are mentioned in 5% of the text. Folklore was present in only 4% of cases. The rest of the most frequently used stereotypes include: place with a good reputation 4%, negative form of the safety stereotype mostly due to frequent wars and international conflicts and luxurious atmosphere as a consequence of castles, luxurious buildings and monuments built by the various dynasties that ruled Serbia in the past. The remaining 13 % consists of the mix of other stereotypes with minor percentages.

Figure 3.4 Share of stereotypes: text content of the website menu “Culture”



Events menu (Figure 3.5) contains a very brief text of one paragraph only with a very low amount of key phrases and content to be analyzed in comparison with the other menus. The paragraph contains only 13 key phrases from which 7 phrases are devoted to different festivals and events that Serbs are proud of. Development of organization of economical and professional fairs in Serbia was mentioned in two recording units. Other destination dimensions building the image of events are: good reputation of destination, fun and enjoyable atmosphere, historical places were the events had taken place, beauty of the scenery and customs of the musical heritage. Each of these destination image stereotype categories occur one time.

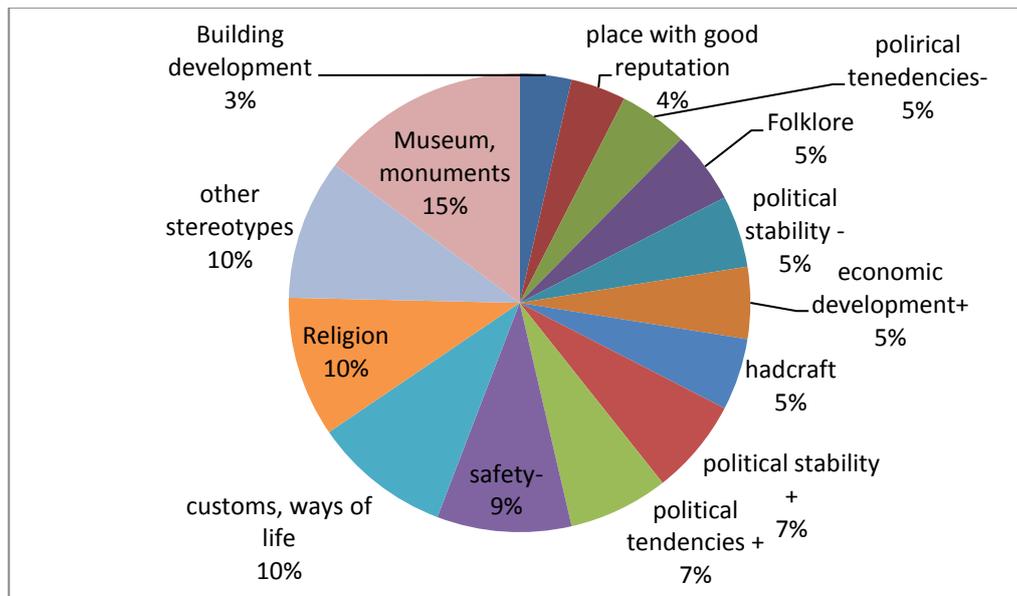
Figure 3.5 Share of stereotypes: text content of the website menu “Events”



In the menu “Accommodation” and the menu “About Serbia”(Figure 3.6) (this menu provides tourist information on Serbia) key importance is assigned to historical buildings, monuments and museums in Serbia that are mentioned in 61 stereotypes constituting 15% of the 414 stereotypes in the sampling unit. Religion stereotype is present in 10% of key phrases and ranks second in terms of importance according to the share of the frequency it holds. The NTOS provides a significant amount of information on the Serbian customs and tradition. The general information on Serbia contains a brief history of different periods: medieval times, Turkish contest, modern Serbia, Kingdom of Yugoslavia, World War II, and SFR Yugoslavia. This rich and turbulent history had an effect on the accumulation of both positive and negative stereotypes related to the political stability. Due to the wars, political and economical crisis and political murders there was a 5% share of the political instability in various periods of Serbian history. On the other side, the political and economic recovery of Serbia has a share of 7%. The political tendencies have the same ratio of the frequency of positive and negative stereotypes with positive political tendencies fostered by the development of diplomacy, signing of peace agreements and the diversity of ethnic minorities living in the country (7%) on one side, and negative stereotypes as entering wars, causing conflicts, crisis and stagnation in the development of the country (5%). Frequent wars, national conflicts, participation of Serbia in many wars contributed to the formation of a

negative stereotype representing 9% in the sampling unit's key phrases. Traditional handcraft forms, from carpentry and jewelry to making of traditional clothes and embroidery have a share of 5%.

Figure 3.6 Share of stereotypes: text content of the website menu "About Serbia"



On the level of the whole text corpus (text content of the website as a whole sample) the most significant frequency of usage was of stereotypes related to historical buildings, monuments and museums, belonging to the culture destination image dimension (Table 3.1). They are present in 16% of all key phrases of the website of the NTOS. Other most frequent stereotype categories are entertainment and sports, representing a share of 8 % of the total 3,052 stereotypes, and beauty of the countryside with the same share. Unique flora and fauna category exist in the 7%, customs and ways of life in 6%, gastronomy and positive form of the economic development trend stereotype together with religion have a share of 5%. Good reputation of tourist destinations and products of Serbia is mentioned 126 times, constituting a share of 4% of the total 3,052 stereotypes. Marketers also rely on the beauty of the scenery of the country; they included it 82 times in the text, which is 3% of all attributes. Other stereotype categories tending to constitute the image of Serbia projected by the NTOS, each with a share of 2%, are: positive form of weather stereotype claiming favorable weather conditions, positive form of stereotype relating to political tendencies, Serbian folklore, festivals and concerts

organized in Serbia, positive stereotype form connected to the development of commercial tourist infrastructure, positive form of stereotypes related to the development of health services and negative stereotype of to the safety in the country.

The remaining groups of stereotypes have a weight of less than 2% each, and they are only going to be listed in order to be distinguished from those that were not mentioned at all: beaches, good development and quality of roads, private and public transport facilities, extent of building development, hotel and self-catering accommodation, restaurants, bars, discos and clubs, ease of access to the destination (both positive and negative stereotypes), tourist centers, network of tourist information, zoos, adventure activities, night life, shopping, positive and negative stereotypes of political stability, negative stereotype form of economic development, positive form of the safety stereotype, affordable prices, attractiveness of the cities and towns, positive stereotype claiming excellent ecological conditions for certain places, hospitality and friendliness of local residents, poverty, good quality of life, language barriers. Dimensions of the destination image related to the atmosphere of the place represent a share lower than 2% include: luxurious atmosphere of the place, fashionable atmosphere of the place, family oriented destination, exotic destination, mystique destination, relaxing atmosphere, fun place, pleasant place, boring and attractive or interesting atmosphere

Table 3.1 Use of stereotype categories: text corpus content of the NTOS website

Stereotype category	Number of occurrences	Share in population
Other stereotypes <2%	596	20%
Museums, historical buildings, Monuments, etc.	483	16%
Entertainment and sports	252	8%
Wealth of countryside	251	8%
Unique flora and fauna	211	7%
Customs and ways of life	172	6%
Gastronomy	148	5%
Economic development (positive form of stereotype)	144	5%
Religion	142	5%
Place with a good reputation	126	4%
Beauty of the scenery (positive form of stereotype)	81	3%
Weather(positive form of stereotype)	68	2%
Political tendencies (positive form of stereotype)	67	2%
Folklore	65	2%
Festivals, concerts	64	2%
Development of commercial infrastructure (positive form of stereotype)	61	2%
Development of health services (positive form of stereotype)	61	2%
Safety(negative form of stereotype)	60	2%
Sample	3,052	100%

3.1.2.2 Quantitative analysis: imagery content of the website of the NTOS

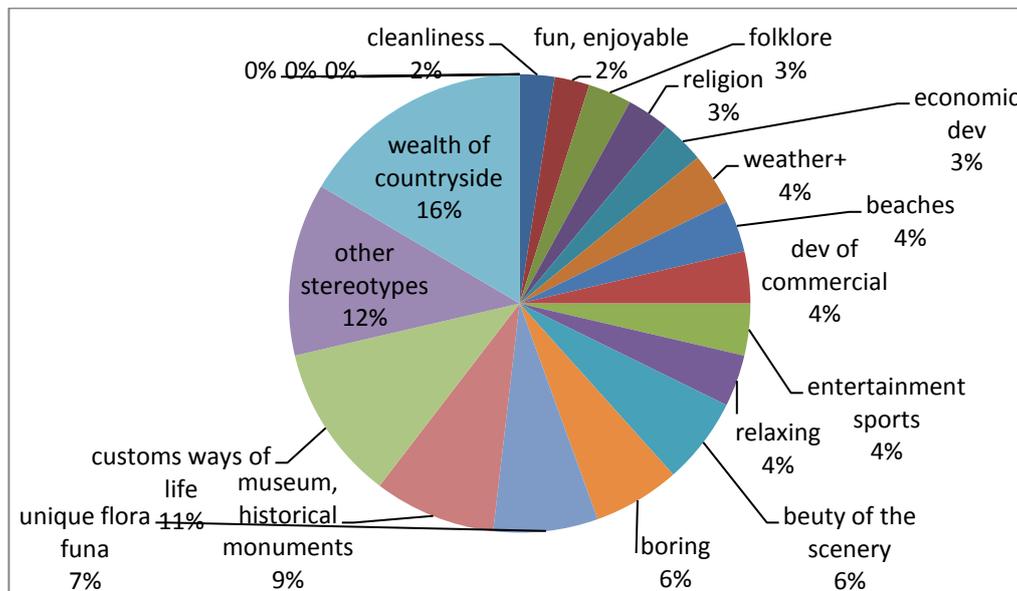
Visual imagery can also have an effect on textual components in advertisements, which affects brand awareness, or liking. In this case we would address the term brand awareness as the construct of destination image in the minds of tourists.

To study the most interesting and challenging research problems and objectives, which concentrate on the effectiveness of the marketing strategy of the NTOS, it would be interesting to list results of the part of the content analysis focusing on quantitative aspects of stereotype categories' shares and to evaluate if the text and imagery stereotypes in the website concur indeed.

Thus, comments on the immanence ratings of the established stereotype groups for this research (Table3.2) will be presented in this chapter.

For the menu “destinations”(Figure 3.7) there were 88 image recording units available for observation. Displayed pictures account for the following shares: wealth of countryside theme is present in 16% of the total number of stereotypes used, customs and ways of life represent a share of 10.90 %, museums and historical monuments constitute 8.50%, uniqueness of flora and fauna has a share of 7%, and beauty of the scenery category 6%. Perceived atmospheres of the image implication are most frequently perceived as either boring with the share of 6%, relaxing with the share of 3, 6% or fun/enjoyable with 2,40%. The share of other stereotype groups is mostly around 2.40 % to 3.60% and they refer to entertainment and sport-tourist products, positive development of commercial infrastructure, beaches, favorable weather conditions, positive trend in economic development, religion, folklore and cleanliness of the surroundings. The remaining stereotypes under “other stereotypes” have a share of less than 2% and are believed not to have a key share in the destination image construction.

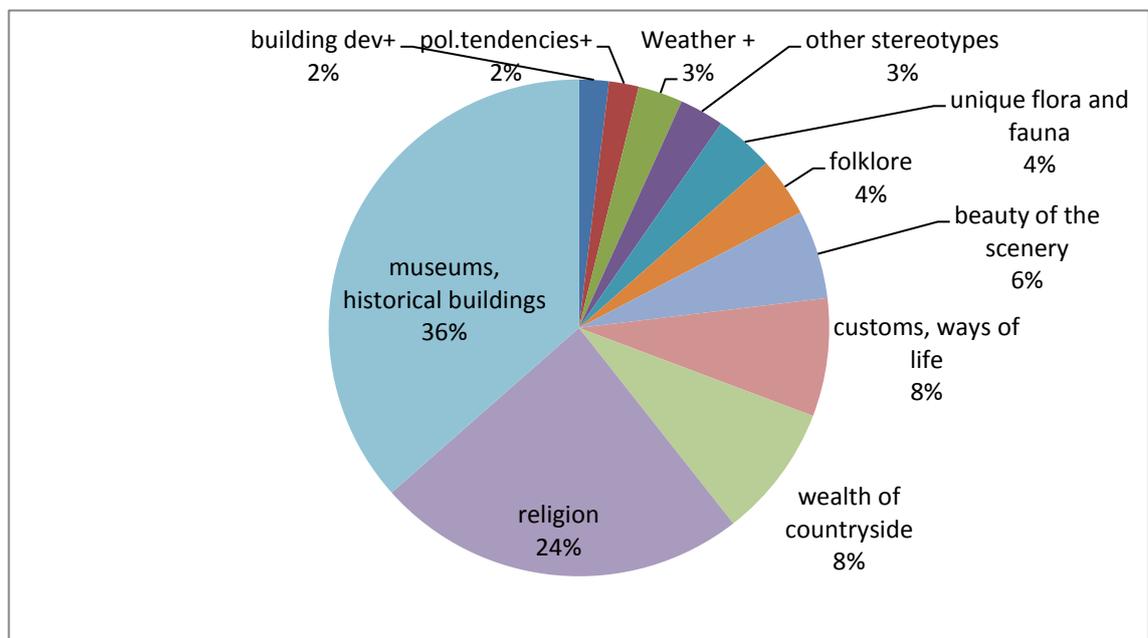
Figure3.7 Share of stereotypes: imagery content of the website menu “Destinations”



Fifty four images were analyzed in order to determine the reliance of the NTOS on certain stereotype groups in the Serbia’s culture tourist brand marketing (Figure 3.8). The predominant category with a share of 36% is the historical buildings and

monuments, followed by the religion stereotypes contributing to 24% of decoded meanings. Wealth of countryside and customs and ways of life has a share of approximately 8%, and are followed by the depiction of beauty of the scenery with 6%. Lower shares refer to folklore, and uniqueness of flora and fauna, both with a share of 4% each, good weather conditions with 3%, building development and political tendencies with 2%. The remaining stereotypes in the representation of Serbian cultural tourist offer that hold under 2% are negative form of safety category, good place reputation and mystique atmosphere of the places.

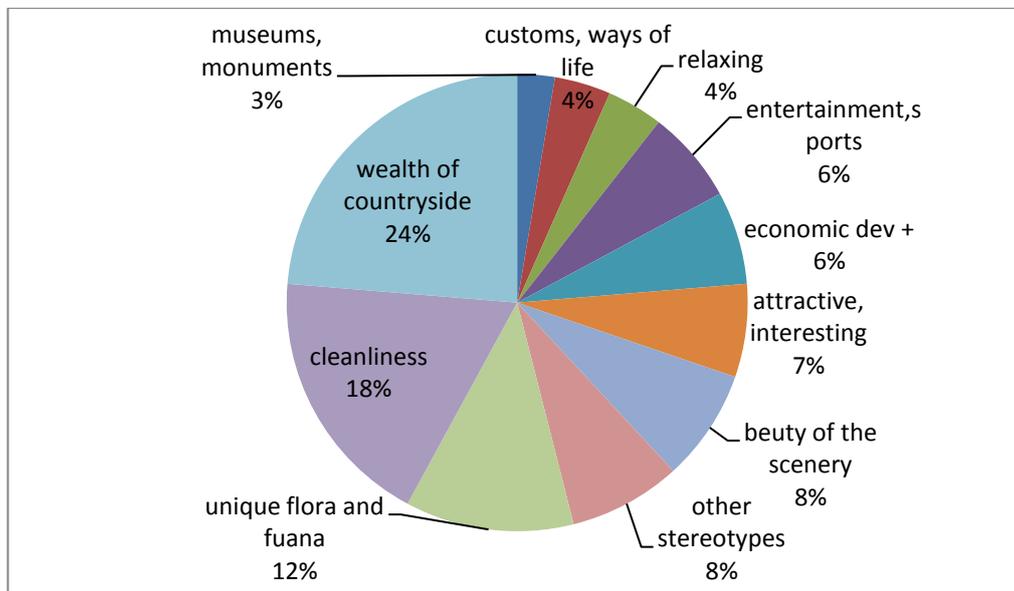
Figure 3.8 Share of stereotypes: imagery content of the website menu "Culture"



The menu devoted to "Nature in Serbia" (Figure 3.9) includes 29 images, with 76 stereotypes belonging to different stereotype groups. Wealth of the countryside occurs in the 24% of stereotypes, making it the most numerous attribute of the destination image for the sampling unit. Impact of cleanliness and ecological surrounding creates 18% of the perceived image message. Image of the nature is also affected by the frequent review (12%) of the diversity of flora and fauna species that can be found in the area. Beyond these results, it has been established that images deliver beauty of the scenery stereotype that shows up in 8%, impressions of interesting (7%) and relaxing (4%) atmospheres. Analyses also points to the impact of economical development, due to the images of agricultural regions,

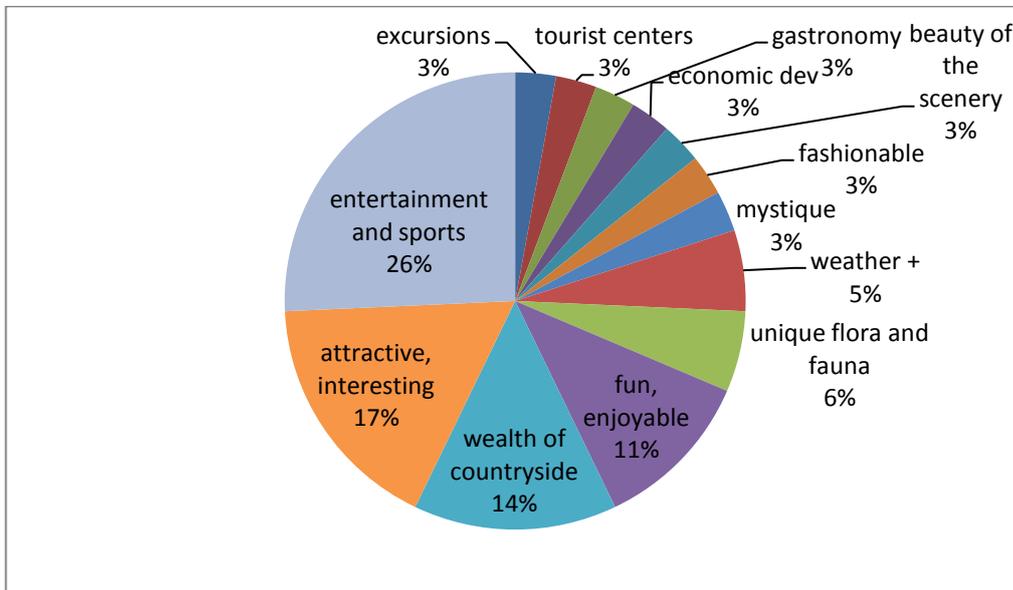
entertainment and sports activities possibilities (6%), customs of life of people living on the countryside (4%) and monuments and historical buildings (3%).

Figure 3.9 Share of stereotypes: imagery content of the website menu "Nature"



By the share size range results stereotype categories that constitute the image of the menu "activities" (Figure 3.10) are as follows: entertainment and sports possibilities (25.70%), interesting experiences (17.10%), wealth of countryside 14.20%, enjoyable atmosphere (11.40%), uniqueness of flora and fauna (5.70%), good weather conditions (5.70%). The following destination image dimensions contribute each by 2.80% to the projected image: mystique atmosphere, fashionable destinations, beauty of the scenery, economic development, gastronomy, tourist centers and excursion offer.

Figure 3.10 Share of stereotypes: imagery content of the website menu “Activities”



Unfortunately the figure of images showed in the events and general information menu is only six each, therefore not lending itself to be presented in form of shares. The “Events menu” is designed in this way on purpose by the website designer, and the lack of images in the “General information” menu is owed to the website’s technical defects. For this sake only the occurrence and categories used in both menus are going to be listed.

Imagery in the “Events” menu represents entertainment and sports possibilities stereotype, festivals and concerts, positive stereotype for the economical development, and interesting experience. Each of the mentioned stereotypes occurs two times. Following stereotypes emerge once: positive development of health services, overcrowding by people in the positive sense, and enjoyable atmosphere.

For the “General information” menu the following results have been obtained: historical buildings and monuments, and positive economical development are commented on twice per category. Accommodation, ease of access to the destination, festivals and concerts, religion, customs and ways of life, luxurious atmosphere of the place, good reputation and atmosphere of interesting- stereotypes are mentioned once per the above categories.

Table 3.2 lists the results of the content analysis of the imagery according to the stereotype categories, number of occurrences and share covering the whole population. The results in the table are obtained by unitizing the results of each section of the website in order to get information on the frequency of the overall usage of each stereotype group in the website design. This procedure enables recognizing the reliance of the NTOS on particular destination image dimensions in the marketing strategy and destination image formation process of Serbia by inclusion of visual effects.

Table 3.2 Use of stereotype categories: imagery corpus content of the NTOS website

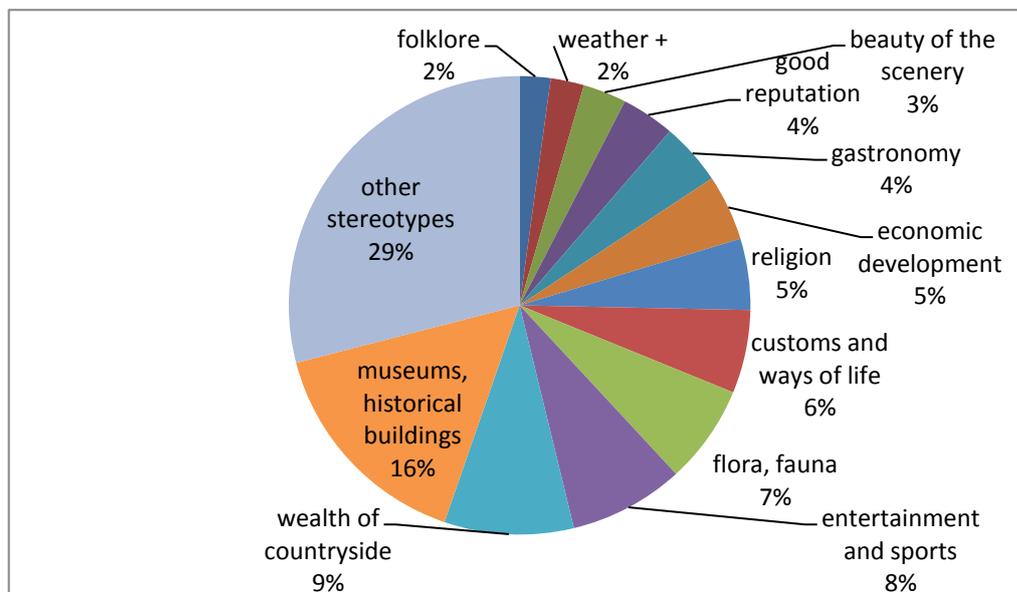
Stereotype category	Number of occurrences	Share in the population
Wealth of countryside	59	14,70%
Museums, historical buildings, Monuments, etc.	54	13,40%
Other stereotypes <2%	53	13,20%
Religion	30	7,50%
Customs and ways of life	29	7,20%
Variety of unique flora and fauna	27	6,70%
Entertainment and sports activities	24	5,90%
Beauty of the scenery	23	5,70%
Cleanliness	18	4,30%
Attractive or interesting	17	4,20%
Economic development (positive form of stereotype)	15	3,70%
Weather conditions (positive form of stereotype)	12	2,90%
Fun, enjoyable	11	2,70%
Boring	11	2,70%
Folklore	9	2,20%
Relaxing	9	2,20%
Sample	401	100%

The most frequently appearing category is the wealth of countryside. The NTOS aims at distinguishing Serbia's unique cultural identity, but does not seem to present its modern facilities. There is frequent usage of the culture stereotype referring to historical buildings and monuments (13, 20%) they even take part in the representation of natural ambient and countryside. Website image content

represents Serbia as a country where religion holds an important place, as the monasteries, churches, frescoes and Orthodox saints appear in thirty of the total of 193 images.

Finally, after gathering the analytical information on both text and image population of the website the results were unitized for the creation of the end result, which is the share of stereotypes in the general website context (see Figure 3.11). Their shares will be presented in narrative form in the conclusion part of research, where comments and analysis will help in identifying reasons for their usage and the role that they have in the process of creating the destination image of Serbia.

Figure 3.11 Share of stereotypes: whole content of the Website of NTOS



The key finding of the final results of the content analysis is that similar results were obtained as in the separate analyses of text population and imagery population. Still, the fact that the sample size of the text is much greater than that of the images has to be taken into consideration, as it strongly effects the final share composition. More explicitly, the number of recording units in the text sample is 2,357, whereas in the imagery there are 88 recording units.

The dominant theme is culture with the stereotypes of museums, historical buildings and monuments with a frequency of 16%, followed by stereotypes belonging to the category of the wealth of countryside with 9%, entertainment and sports theme with 8% share, diversity of unique flora and fauna 7 %, customs and ways of life 6%, religion 5%, economic development and gastronomy with 4% each, good reputation of places 4% of stereotype count and beauty of the scenery stereotype group with a 3% share. There is a mixture of stereotypes with a share of 2% and less. Their shares were added and presented under the “other stereotypes” result.

3.1.3 Evaluation of stereotypes used by the NTOS: positive vs. negative stereotypes

Modification and adjustments of the Beerli and Martin model (Table 1.1) into the stereotype categories model for this research (Appendix 1.) facilitated further analysis of the frequency of appearance of negative stereotypes in the marketing of Serbia as a travel destination. As already mentioned while presenting the methodology of research, it was concluded that certain stereotypes can be used in both positive and negative form. For this reason additional negative categories have been created for these stereotypes, while the stereotypes carrying only negative associations were taken as such.

As frequencies and shares of each destination image dimension have been gathered, this chapter will present comments on their usage and the context in which they are used. Evaluation will be made from the perspective of the political background of Serbia and its recent turbulent history.

Creator of the text content used attributes to add special and unique meanings to the words describing, refining to and adding value to the Serbian tourism products. Word attributes and added meanings mostly have a positive form, whereas when mentioning negative words (such as wars, national conflicts, battles) attributes are used that make the picture of the negative stereotypes even more serious. Still, negative stereotypes are rarely used and noticed in the whole text content. When used, negative stereotypes are used in the context of the suffering of Serbian people stagnation of the country, economic stagnation, turbulent history of Serbia, and

many wars Serbia faced through its history, with the exception of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in Croatia.

In the text sample, of the total of 3,052 noted stereotypes 126 carry negative associations, representing 4.12%. The issue of safety accounts for the biggest part of the negative stereotypes in the text with 60 recording units. It should be stressed though, that wars, attacks, bombings and various types of conflicts are related in the majority of cases to medieval history and the World War I and II. Issues like the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, national conflicts in Bosnia and Croatia, conflicts on Kosovo, problematic situation in Serbia in the last two decades are avoided. The only menu of the website that mentions the particularly problematic period is the general information menu. Still, the content only lightly provides information on the war and later events that caused the negative image of Serbia in the mass media and is free of any expressing of attitudes on this issue by the NTOS.

Political instability is mentioned through 20 stereotypes, but it also very modestly addresses the last two decades in Serbia. The current political situation, economical development and the current safety level were not communicated at all.

In the imagery content, the total number of negative stereotypes was communicated in 16 imagery recording units. They have a share of 3.99% of 401 of all stereotypes.

The analysis allowed for some particularly noticeable remarks concerning the underestimation of the negative stereotypes in the process of the destination image forming or re-forming. This raises the question of the benefits and disadvantages of negotiating the past to a certain degree in the marketing of Serbia over the attempt or redefining the country's image created during two decades by erasing and avoiding memories of the recent history.

In his article on post-communism tourism Light (2000) argues that the desire to construct new post communist identities has characteristics of democracy, pluralism and capitalism and has a largely Westward-looking orientation which in itself involves 'de-constructing' identities created during the socialist period. He also highlights the cases of Berlin (Germany), Budapest (Hungary) and Bucharest

(Romania) and strategies they have employed to accommodate 'communist heritage' without endangering their post- communism identities.

Lanfant et al. (1995, cited by Light, 2000) state that the theme of national identity is closely connected to tourism as one of the means by which a country presents 'itself' to the 'outer world' is through international tourism by encouraging visits of foreign tourists through increasing their knowledge and understanding of the country. An essential way to promote a destination is therefore by interpretation and promotion of national heritage, is nothing else but politics. Heritage usually associates to the meanings of 'old', but for the purpose of the mentioned paper employs a definition of 'the contemporary use of the past'. If this view on the term "heritage" was to be taken into consideration, then the history of the last two decades of the Serbian nation, attitudes towards events that caused disputes on the Serbian national identity, traits and morality of Serbian country should be addressed in the content of the NTOS website.

Serbia as a country with unstable national heritage and past is challenged in the creation of its national identity and choice of accommodating marketing strategy that will lead to both understanding and success in tourism economy. The process of re-defining the destination image of Serbia is largely frustrated by the existence of negative stereotypes of safety issues, high criminality levels and national conflicts still held by foreign travelers.

A trend of visiting the post-communist countries by foreign tourists has been recognized since 1989 (Light, 2000). This could be provoked by the fact that tourists seek experiences which are in some way differentiated from everyday life (Urry, 1990). Here, an opportunity can be recognized for Serbia to create its unique selling proposition, exciting story of the country and people that have overwhelmed its political problems, and are now ready to invite foreign tourists to assure themselves in the rich, interesting and distinguishable tourist and hospitality products and hospitality it possesses, all with a promise of safety and trustworthiness.

Hall (1999) in his article on the image projection in Central and Eastern Europe comments on the projection of the renewed brand image of Dubrovnik, which

symbolizes the 'phoenix-like' restoration of the city contains a clear message for those who attacked Dubrovnik and tried to stop Croatia on its way to independence.

Croatia is a good example of a successful and unique brand re-building, distinguishing from its neighbor countries and additionally an indirect way to express the country's attitude to the war in the territory of ex-Yugoslavia. The main slogan for Croatia in the advertising campaigns in 1998 was: 'A new welcome. An old friend'. The slogan in itself contains both an invitation to come and visit Croatia, and points to the stagnation period Croatia has seen due to national war.

Hall (1999, Table 2.) selected few examples of national destination branding of a number of countries of central and eastern Europe, among which is Serbia, with its logo: 'Landscape painted from the heart', that was at the time employed in all promotion materials of the Tourism Organization of Serbia.

According to the content analysis that was undertaken within this research, Serbia still strongly relies on the wealth of its countryside and nature as its unique selling proposition. This stereotype of the beauty of landscape is among first four most frequent stereotypes perceived in both imagery and text with 14.70 and 8 % shares, respectively.

From the results that were obtained and mentioned in the chapter on content analysis of the website sample it could be deduced that the NTOS prefers to make use practically exclusively of positive stereotypes and tries to leave behind Serbia's recent past which has been a reason of the mistrust in Serbia as a safe travel destination. The reason for such a marketing strategy decision could be legitimated by the possible thinking that the inclusion of such negative information can provoke fear and distrust in the minds of possible visitors. Still, such thinking overlooks the possibility that most of the destination images formation process can be, among other factors, influenced by autonomous information sources including mass media broadcasting news, documentaries, films, television programs (Beerli and Martin, 2004). As it was involved in the negative mass media during the last two decades, the removal of the negative stereotypes requires a relevant effort. Instead of such an approach, Serbia as a destination, and the NTOS as its most representative tourism body, should consider ways of communicating those negative stereotypes,

still held by many tourists, in new and positive ways as some of the previously noted neighboring and other countries from Central and Eastern Europe did.

4 Analysis of the marketing style used for the promotion of Serbia as a tourist destination on the website of NTOS

The importance of the destination branding has been illustrated by Olins (1999, cited by Govers and Go) who claims that 'when countries change, it can take quite a long time for re-imaging, left-over stereotypes to disappear. Branding works if it projects and reinforces a changing reality - but it can be counterproductive if it isn't rooted in fact'. Serbia has experienced quite a lot of changes in the recent times, both in terms of its political life, political changes, economical development and, especially, its tourist potential. There is, therefore, a need to create a strong brand image of the 'new' Serbia in order to erase possible left-over negative stereotypes still held as the effect of negative mass media due to wars and national conflicts.

Destination marketing is the traditional segmentation, targeting and positioning approach to the promotion of a place, sometimes including channel network decisions as well as product development.

Godin (2005) as introduction to his book discussing the power of authenticity in the world of marketing gives the following advice to all marketers that aim at designing a strong brand image:" Don't just tell me the facts, tell me a story instead. Be remarkable! Be consistent! Be authentic! Tell your story to the people who are inclined to believe it. Marketing is powerful. Use it wisely".

By all means the NTOS intends to represent Serbia with the choice of some of the most interesting tourist destinations. Positive word attributes related to the specifications of the tourist product offer of Serbia are well addressed, and also communicated actively to the visitors of the website. Still, from the observation of the sample during the qualitative analysis it can be inferred that marketers in some parts rely simply on the pure facts concerning the tourism products they are

offering, e. g. "Kopaonik is declared a national park in 1981. It is the biggest mountain in Serbia". This statement, however, does not deliver enough emotions, promises and stories that could attract tourists, and place in their minds a possibility that they would consider visiting some of the Serbian destinations.

It is important to mention that the images on the website have good quality; they communicate clearly the topics of the text they relate to. On the other hand, many illustrations of the text are lacking traits such as emotions, expression and an intention of persuasion. Likewise some parts of the text present pure information, address people rather as "objects" than "subjects". People presented in the images mostly associate to the topic of sports. In contrast with this, the majority of places are perceived as abandoned. There are also images that include people, but have a very boring appearance and do not express interesting experiences of the people illustrated. No special stories, showing the authenticity or unique selling propositions have been found in the imagery content of the website.

In the case of the NTOS the marketing strategy of the website could not be clearly associated with either an active or passive marketing style. It rather engages a neutral marketing style with the combination of pure facts and persuading statements e.g.: "Café culture second to none. From the bustle of Belgrade, to the artist communities of Novi Sad. Wherever you find yourself, Serbia's cafes guarantee a hearty espresso and colorful conversation." Although positive stereotypes are used in the majority of the content, there is a deficit of interesting stories, showing authenticity or unique selling propositions.

5 Conclusions and recommendations for future tourism promotion and evaluation of current effectiveness

Sustainable competitive advantage is generally based on either core competencies or unique resources that are superior to those possessed by competitors and difficult to imitate (Aaker, 2001).

Assuming that the analysis of the website is the most reliable way to conclude what tourist products are considered by the NTOS to be Serbia's competitive advantage, this chapter will present the final results of the content analysis along with comments aiming to conjecture the role of the dominating stereotypes in the destination image of Serbia.

The dominating theme is culture with the stereotypes of museums, historical buildings and monuments with a frequency of 16%, followed by stereotypes belonging to the category of the wealth of countryside with 9%, entertainment and sports theme with 8% share, diversity of unique flora and fauna 7 %, customs and ways of life 6%, religion 5% share, the economic development and gastronomy with 4% share each, the good reputation of places which is mentioned in 4% of stereotype count, and beauty of the scenery stereotype group with 3% share. There is a big mixture of stereotypes holding each 2% share and less. Their values were added and presented under the "other stereotypes" result.

Edell and Staellin found that very different processing occurs depending on pictorial and verbal congruencies in advertisements. Advertisements are more effective when the picture "agreed" with the textual message.

In the text sample, the most frequently used dimension of the destination image is the culture with promotion of historical buildings, monuments and museums (16%), entertainment and sports activities (8%), wealth of countryside (8%) and variety of flora and fauna (7%).

For the image content the "most popular" topics are wealth of countryside (14, 70%), museums, historical buildings and monuments (13, 40%), religion (7, 50%) and customs and ways of life (7, 20%). Still, in terms of their share, they tend to have

similar trends. Both indicate a strong reliance on culture, as a unique selling proposition. One important aspect is that emphasis is placed on the Orthodox religion and monasteries with 5% share in text and 7, 50% in images.

This trend could be a fine support for the idea of marketing Serbia as a country and destination that suffered both politically and economically and was exposed to many challenges, but still has faith and nourishes proudly its religious tradition and heritage.

A large part of the experience of the destination image of Serbia is typified by monumental cultural objects, outdoor beauty and wilderness of nature, sport favorable terrains, particularly skiing and hiking. Features in relation to nature translate into service experiences of warmth, cozy surroundings, simplicity, independence and peace. Generalized atmosphere can be described as relaxing and enjoyable. On the other side, stereotypes connected to culture characterize Serbia as a sophisticated and legacy rich destination.

Although this message is clearly perceived, the impression left behind is that it lacks a certain degree of uniqueness and a narrower marketing message construction with the focus on details and explicit tourism products that are typical for Serbia.

The wealth of countryside precedes one of the leading share sizes in both text (8% share) and image (14, 70% share) content. Sustainable competitive advantage is generally based on either core competencies or unique resources that are superior to those possessed by the competition and difficult to imitate (Aaker 2001; Johnson and Scholes 1999, cited by Govers and Go, 2009). According to Govers and Go (2009) superior resources, which might be difficult to imitate, are generally to be found in both the unique natural environment (climate, wildlife or landscape) and cultural heritage: and the physical assets, sites reflecting place roots in terms of a rich history, religious or other cultural expressions such as the arts, architecture and design.

These definitions of the competitive advantage and superior resources make it possible to assess the NTOS's marketing strategy as well directed and well rationalized, according to the choice of the stereotype groups and tourist products it

chose for the destination promotion. However, competitive advantage might be created also through core competencies - for example, host community's unique capabilities in attracting potential visitors and hosting them during their stay; service value; organization of civil life; education; or its work ethic. This combination of promotional tools is what is usually referred to as place identity or the product offering's anchor. Some consider that the essence of place marketing is the projection of this identity (Melissen, 2004, cited by Govers and Go2009).

Ideally narratives included in the place marketing material should represent rich experiences and reflect multisensory, fantasy and emotional cues (Govers and Go, 2009). Incorporating photographic material, as well as other visuals and sounds (Hoffman and Novak 1996; Shih1998, cited by Govers and Go) may contribute significantly to this. Although frequently conveyed as a stereotype, visuals in destination promotion are salient in early stages of destination evaluation and when the tourists' experience and /or involvement level is low. As such, destination decisions may be based on the symbolic elements of the destination (as conveyed in the visual imagery) rather than the actual features (Fesenmaier and Mac Kay 1996). The impression made by the imagery of the website content of the NTOS is that it shows each of the destination's traits in their explicit meaning, without imagination, differentiation and promotion of distinguishable stereotypes. The deficits of the sensational, unique elements that cannot be encountered in the advertising of other destinations provide an arid general picture.

In contrast to the good promotion of historical heritage, the website lacks the stereotype and notion of hospitality. The exception is made with a few phrases relating to this issue, but they do not communicate a sufficiently strong importance of this distinction of the Serbian people, especially not in the symbolic of images. In addition, the impression after the content analysis of the NTOS website is that people in Serbia were presented more as objects, than as subjects. Apart from the customs and ways of life of people living in rural areas, no other comments were decoded in texts or meanings in the images regarding the way that people live in cities, modern functions in culture, education, health, work and other cultural values.

High-profile events that took place in Serbia, such as the “Eurovision Song Contest 2008” and “Summer Universiade 2009” should be used in the promotion of the country and as a proof of the Serbian hospitality and ability to host important world events. Problems concerning the communication of events could be solved by an additional posting of videos. In addition, no form of video representation of Serbia was encountered in the website design during the period of the observation.

The advertising of city tourism should include more information of the nightlife, bars and restaurants, with additional photos of people. There is need to improve the choice of the image content, as the imagery has been perceived in some cases as old fashioned, and atmosphere of the photos as boring (see Appendix 6, and 7).

6 Limitations of the research

This research paper focuses exclusively on the analysis of the official English version of the website of the NTOS. From this analysis results were used to make comments on the tourism marketing strategy of Serbia.

It is possible to put forward arguments both against and in favor of such an approach. Those against are that the limitation of content provides more insight into the research area. On the other hand, the weaknesses are that research only has insight into one kind of communication, which is in this case the internet. The fact that the similar results occurred for the whole website corpus, as well as for the separate analysis of text corpus and imagery corpus should be perceived with caution. This limitation is mentioned due to the fact that the sample size of the text content is much greater than that of the imagery content and therefore it effects has a stronger effect on the final share composition. More explicitly, the number of recording units in the text sample is 2357, whereas the count of the imagery recording units is 193. Due to the differentiation of the sample the same restraints can be taken into account when discussing the congruence of the text and imagery traits of the website.

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8 Appendices

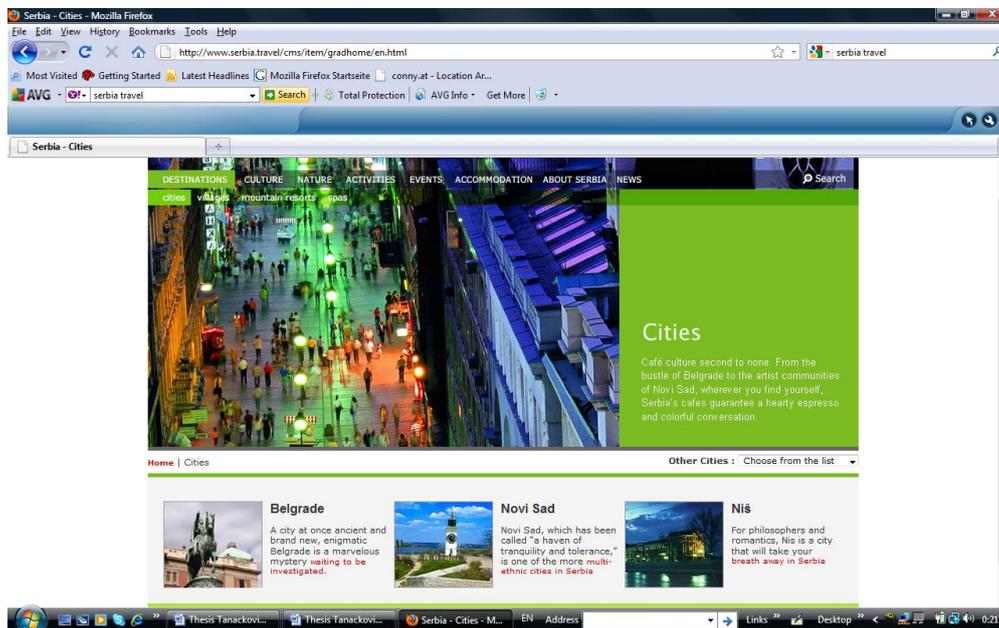
Appendix 1

Modified Model (for the purpose of this research) of Dimension/ Attributes
Determining the Perceived Destination Image

<p>Natural Resources: Favorable Weather conditions Non- favorable weather conditions Beaches(quality of seawater, sandy or rocky beaches, length of beaches, overcrowding of beaches) Wealth of countryside,(protected nature reserves, lakes, mountains, deserts, etc.) Variety of unique of flora and fauna</p>	<p>General Infrastructure: Good development and quality of roads, airports and ports Modest development and quality of roads, airports and ports Variety of private and public transport facilities Lack of private and public transport facilities Good development of health services Low development of health services Good development of communications Low development of communication Good development of commercial infrastructure Low development of commercial infrastructure High extent of building development Low extent of building development</p>	<p>Tourist Infrastructure: Hotel and self- catering accommodation(number of beds, categories, quality) Restaurants(Number, categories, quality) Bars, discos and clubs Easy of access to the destination Difficult access to the destination Excursions at the destination Tourist centers Network of tourist information</p>
<p>Tourist Leisure and recreation: Theme parks Entertainment and sports activities (golf, fishing, haunting, skiing, scuba diving, etc.) Water parks Zoos trekking adventure activities, casinos night life shopping</p>	<p>Culture, History and Art: Museums, historical buildings, monuments, etc. Festivals, concerts, etc. Handcraft Gastronomy Folklore Religion Customs and ways of life</p>	<p>Political and Economical Factors: High political stability level Low political stability level Positive political tendencies Negative political tendencies Good level of economic development Low level of economic development Low Safety(crime rate, terrorist attacks) High safety Low prices High prices</p>

Natural Environment:	Social Environment:	Atmosphere of the place:
Beauty of the scenery Attractiveness of the cities and towns Cleanliness Overcrowding No- overcrowding Air and noise pollution Non- existence of air and noise pollution Traffic congestion No traffic congestion	Hospitality and friendliness of local residents Underprivileged and poverty Good quality of life Low quality of life Language barriers	Luxurious Fashionable Place with a good reputation Family- oriented destination Exotic Mystique Relaxing Stressful Fun enjoyable Pleasant Boring Attractive or interesting

Appendix 2



Appendix 3



Appendix 4



Appendix 5



Appendix 6



Appendix 7

