

# **IMAGE OF CROATIA**

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## 1. Introduction

For decades now research proved that image has been understood as a concept that has an important role in decision process of future tourists. Image according to Baloglu et al, agree that image can be seen an overall creation and mental representation in individual's mind on knowledge or different 'beliefs, feelings and general impression about specific object or destination'. Image can be understood as having both perceptual/cognitive and affective evaluations. Perceptual/cognitive evaluation understood as having specific knowledge or beliefs about destination, and on the other hand affective evaluation explained as having special feelings or attachment to specific destination. (Baloglu et al, 1999, p.870)

Many researchers agree that image is constructed from two important influences: stimulus factors that are considered as "*that stem from the external stimulus and physical object as well as previous experience and Personal factors, on the other hand, are the characteristics (social and psychological) of the perceiver.*" (Baloglu et McCleary, 1999,870)

As topic of this research paper is going to be concentrated on Croatia and how students as part of this research formed image of Croatia as tourist destination. Development in Croatia is considered as an opportunity, as tourism in Croatia is seen as an important part of economy, 10.4% is causal for national GDP and 13.3% is considered to the national employment. Development of Croatia and its tourism began in the mid-nineteen century when Croatian coast was considered as a healthy options for people from polluted parts of Europe. With the war situations that occurred in Croatia in 90s, made tourism almost disappearing. (L.Dwyer, R.Tomljenovic, S.Corak, 2017. p.2-3).

Nowadays, Croatia is in rise of popularity as a travel destination, they are trying to bring the same vibe of 'Mediterranean as it once was', by trying to attract old guests by approaching them in nostalgic way, as it was before war occurred. (L.Dwyer, R.Tomljenović, S.Čorak, 2017. p.3). Mostly because of good geographical position, Adriatic Sea, islands and convenient climate tourism industry was well developed thanks to many attributes that country can offer. Croatia is considered popular among foreign visitors, which makes her being in one of ten EU countries to accomplish more than 90% visitation of foreign tourists. (L.Dwyer, R.Tomljenovic, S.Corak, 2017. p.2-37).

Referring to Baloglu et al image is a creation of general impression and beliefs towards some destination or place in people's mind, people are creating image of destination in their mind

that is affected by representation of different sources that can create image of destination. Image in this research paper will be explained through theory and later on investigated in form of focus groups with student as participants to answer research question.

### **1.1. Problem formulation**

Introduction presented main focus of this research paper will be the investigating the image formation and how image was formed in the minds of students that are the main participants for focus groups that will give final answer to research question which is:

*"How students formed their image of Croatia as tourist destination? How promotional video 'Croatia full of life effected their image of Croatia?"*

The particular research question will try to investigate how students formed their image, what in particular was something that got them some knowledge of Croatia they hold now. Was it some popular movie or series? Or words from family and friends? Did some of them already visited Croatia? Conducting focus groups with students will try to answer this questions that will give an answer to main research question. The second part of the research question will be around promotional video, students will be presented with promotional video from tourist board. It will be interesting to see how students evaluated the promotional video and how did it effect their image of Croatia? What was interesting and surprising? Did it effected their image in negative or positive way? What is the overall impression was it positive? Would they like to visit Croatia because of that video? All this answers will be given with conducting students in focus groups.

## **2. Literature review and theoretical framework**

In this section literature should provide readers with deeper insight and general idea on what image is, how image can be formed in the mind of the tourists and what specifically influence the image formation, followed by role of the promotional video in image formation.

### **2.1. Image and destination image formation**

Baloglu explains the general idea of image as: *"The image concept has generally been considered as an attitudinal construct consisting of an individual's mental representation of knowledge (beliefs), feelings, and global impression about an object or destination."* Many

discussions made by researchers concludes that general image is including both perceptual/cognitive and affective evaluations. It comes from understanding that perceptual/cognitive evaluations are connected to the beliefs and general understanding about destinations attractions and for affective evaluations are connected to certain emotions and affection to certain destination. General settlement argues that overall image of destination is created by both perceptual/cognitive and affective evaluations of certain destination. (Baloglu, McCleary, 1999,p.870)

From early stage of Boulding (1956) and Martineau (1958) research, they suggested that image is mainly behaviour of people is based on image more than objective reality. Many years of researchers and many image theory are created in which one suggested:".... *the world is a psychological or distorted representation of objective reality residing and existing in the mind of the individual*" (Myers, 1968, from Baloglu, 1999, p.871,). As previously explained image is understood as a construction of beliefs, emotions and ideas people hold for certain destination, it is as well seen as 'mental representation' of specific destination. Image is defined by many authors and in many different, both similar ways, as Lawson and Baud-Bovy (1977) described "*a destination image as the expression of all knowledge, impressions, prejudices and emotional thoughts an individual or group has of a particular object or place.*" (Lawson and Baud-Bovy 1977, from Baloglu, McCleary, 1999, p.871) There are many theories on what destination image is, and it can be understood from previous conclusions that it is in general what one constructs in mind, and is conducted from all set of beliefs, ideas and emotions about destination.

## **2.2 Components of the image**

Gartner (1994) proposed three components of image formation which are: cognitive, affective and conative.

*Cognitive image components* as described by Scott (1965) "*...evaluation of the known attributes of the product or the understanding of the product in an intellectual way.*" Gartner agreed on Boulding (1956) as he described cognitive components as images are constructed from the facts. Cognitive components is understood as well as set of beliefs of specific object and concludes that amount of information about the object is creating cognitive image component. Gartner explained concept of cognitive image component on city Zagreb in Croatia as Zagreb has cognitive image according to Croatia being part of ex- Yugoslavia. As he added some can have cognitive image of Zagreb in Croatia as they did previously visited it,

but as well they are people who didn't connected that Zagreb is a capital of Zagreb. In this kind of cases cognitive image is considered as what cognitive image they have of destination they considered city should be located. (Scott 1965, and Boulding 1956 from Gartner, 1994, p.194-196).

*Affective image components* as Gartner explains are connected to motivations individuals have toward certain destination as he argues with Zagreb example, if one has a construction of city as culturally different from their culture or other cities and it's exotic from other places, then individual's motivation for visiting that place is higher than for more famous and well-known destinations and countries. (Gartner, 1994, 196).

And last component of image is *conative image component*, similar to behaviour because it is considered as component that is taking action. It is considered as a stage where all information is constructed, the last thing is decision on destination, "...depends on the images developed during the cognitive stage and evaluated during the affective stage." . (Gartner, 1994, 196).

### **2.2.1 Perceptual/Cognitive and Affective Components**

For main components of the destination image according to figure 1 proposed by Baloglu, it should be understood that these two evaluations as explained previously, perceptual/cognitive components are referred to general 'beliefs and knowledge' on certain destination, and on other hand affective components are referred to general feelings towards destination. It is argued that people construct both cognitive and affective reactions and affection towards particular place or destination. (Baloglu 1998; Dann 1996; MacKay and Fesenmaier 1997, from Baloglu, McCleary, 1999,p.872)

Tuan (1975) explained the fact that image of certain destination has to be created in one person's mind without actually being present in destination or place. A lot of discussion were made regarding the topic about perceptual/cognitive and affective evaluations, but mutual opinion of numerous researchers agrees that "...*affective evaluation depends on cognitive assessment of objects and the affective responses are formed as a function of the cognitive ones*". (Tuan 1975, from Baloglu, McCleary, 1999, p.872). Regarding the fact that two of main components were divided, they in general have connection. Gartner (1993) argues that connecting image formation to the choice of the destination, Gartner suggested that cognitive components ("*defined as the sum of beliefs and knowledge of attributes of the object or*

*product*"), and that there is difference between cognitive and affective component, but that they are connected. (Gartner 1993, from Baloglu, McCleary, 1999, p.873) Baloglu explains that both of the cognitive and affective components are constructing overall image of specific place or destination. As argued overall impression depends of individual's characteristics, with combining feelings and set of beliefs together creates general approach of image. There a lot of methods for measuring overall picture, which is not a purpose of these paper, just only giving a small insight of how image is created and affected by both cognitive and affective components. (Baloglu, McCleary, 1999, p.873)

Stated by Baloglu and McCleary (1999a) and Mackay and Fesenmaier (1997) that there are multiple researchers and studies that tried to discover what factors are included in influencing image creation in individuals mind with presented/given destination. Beerli and Martin (2004) explained figure that Baloglu and McCleary proposed on how destination image is formed and what is influencing this destination image. The figure is showing a difference between non-visitor, and visiting first time and those who are visiting many times now. (Baloglu and McCleary (1999a) and Mackay and Fesenmaier (1997) in Beerli and Martin, 2004, p.660).

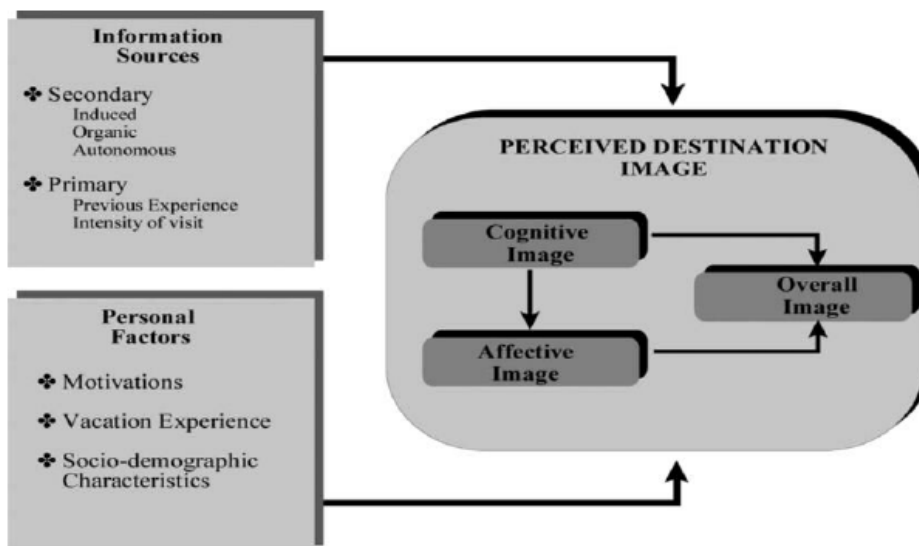


Figure 1: Model of the Formation of Destination Image (Beerli and Martin, 2004, p.660)

## 2.3 Factors influencing destination image

### 2.3.1 Information sources

Information sources are used as a marketing tool to reach with potential tourists and trying to affect their choice of destination. As figure 1 is showing factors that are included in formation



of Destination Image, as Phelps (1986) argues that destination image can be either secondary or primary, as it was shown in figure 1. As considered secondary image is based and constructed on information from different bases, and primary is considered as it is created as tourists visited destination. (Phelps 1986 from Gartner 1994, p.196). As Baloglu stated from Woodside and Lysonski (1989) they explained information sources are affecting cognitive image formation, but not the affective part of image in individual. As Um and Crompton (1990) and Um's (1993) model explained that cognitive evaluation set by beliefs, is mainly created by 'external factor' which are considered as different information collection as some promotional material or from sources like connecting with friends and family or suggested by affective word of mouth. (Um and Crompton (1990) from Baloglu, McCleary 1999, 874).

As Gunn (1972) became the first one to define ways of how destination image is created, he claims images are constructed through induced and organic. Induced images are mainly created from destination alone and are influenced by marketing determination and general promotion of destination. On other hand organic image are generally constructed by sources that are not directly connected to the destination marketing, moreover it is rather formed by different sources of media that are not connected to tourism sources of information, like documentaries, movies and many other information sources. (Gunn from Gartner, 1994, p.196). As for tourist aspiration to travel, they will search for amount of information needed and search for precise sources of information. As Gartner (1993) stated the certain amount of information individual holds can create cognitive components of image, at this point it can be concluded that amount of information tourists can find and are effected by, is eventually developing cognitive/perceptual component. (Gartner (1993) from Baloglu and McCleary, 1999, 874). Person as perceiving all of this information sources will keep a certain image of destination as their own mental representation of the place, but as argued real image is perceived when destination is visited. (Chetthamrongcha, 2017, p.2)

Gartner (1993) stands for that formation of the image can be seen as scale of numerous diverse agents of information sources that are creating image in mind of certain individual. He proposed many different agents as a) over induced agents that presented information sources from different marketing promotions, media or different travel agencies, tour operators and similar, b) covert induced, as using different famous people that are involved in presenting next, c) autonomous, as using media, movies, documentaries, television programs etc. about specific destination they are trying to present, d) organic, considers recommendation from friends and family that experienced or visited potential destination of non-visitors and lastly e)

visiting destination, that is considered the last part of image formation. (Gartner 1993 from Beerli and Martin, 2004, p.661).

To explain a little bit more detailed Gartner's agents that are affecting image formation they are divided in few categories, that can also be relevant for this research to answer what kind of image they have of Croatia, and to investigate how their image was created, then later see how promotional video can affect their previous image they had of Croatia.

- *Overt induced agents I* - considered as traditional way of destination advertisement. Promoters of destination use television, brochures, radio, billboards and similar traditional way of promoting destination, in which individual that is in touch with one of the ways of destination promotion is not confused on who the one is sending message of destination. This type of image formation is concentrated on sending message to bigger amount of people/potential visitors. (Gartner, 1994,197)
- *Overt induced agents II*- second type of agents considers that information about destination is created by tour operators, and different organisation that have aim of being included in travel decision process, but are not in direct connection with destination area. (Gartner, 1994,199)
- *Covert induced agents I*- this agents create image in a way individual is affected by famous person speaking about destination. Destination promoters in most situations consider their own way of promoting not as effective, so they rely on celebrities. A famous person will create sort of attention and interest, because using celebrity can create more effort, especially when individuals recognise celebrity and when destination name is mentioned. (Gartner, 1994,199-200)
- *Covert induced agents II*- person that is influenced is not aware that it's influenced by destination promotor. It usually consider articles, reports and stories about destination, in which person who created them had no intention on increasing or encourage traveling to this destination. (Gartner, 1994,200-201)
- *Autonomous*- considered as autonomous agents for image formation are 'independently produced news, documentaries, movies and news articles. Autonomous agents are divided in two sub-component categories which are: News and Popular Culture. Considered as most popular agent for image formations are news. As destination promoters itself are out of power and control, when it comes to creating

news about destination or reports based on new stories connected to that area, but because news are presenting destination in non-purpose way of advertising it, it is considered as really affective way for development of destination and its potential image change in the eyes of the potential visitor. Popular culture is also considered as good way of presenting place and people. Popular culture as in form of movies, documentaries, plays an important role in image formation. News reports and popular culture are considered as one of the only and most effective agents that could change image of destination in a short period and reason for that could be as people are affected by huge amount of information in short period. (Gartner, 1994,201-203)

- *Unsolicited Organic*- this agent of forming image is considered as receiving information from family, friends and in general individual that have been to a certain destination area. If individual's image of destination before unsolicited organic agents were not influenced by induced or autonomous agents, then unsolicited organic agent has an important role in creating image of destination and can affect future decision on future traveling plans of individual receiving information. (Gartner, 1994,203-204)
- *Solicited Organic*- family and friends are considered as part of solicited organic agents that is forming image, also known as "word of mouth", considered as one of the most important source of information when choosing destination, as what makes solicited organic agent specific is that the one giving information does not have any idea what outcome will be for tourists to decide. (Gartner, 1994,204)
- *Organic*- the last agent of image formation is considered as construction of image after visiting destination. It is based on personal experience and has a big role in providing unsolicited and solicited organic information as part of image formation. (Gartner, 1994, 204-205)

Gartner introduced and explained different agents that are influencing and can have effect on image formation in the mind of people and potential tourists. This agents, many of them could be useful and could influence image, but nowadays the rise of social media and new technology as a basic thing in daily life of many young people. This kind of new media is giving many opportunities but also challenges for those involved in tourism as an industry. E-WOM as "*Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) can be defined as all informal communications directed at consumers through Internet-based technology related to the usage or characteristics of particular goods and services, or their sellers*". Yoo and Gretzel

quoted in Bizirgianni et al (2013), as consumer-generated media (CGM) defined as: “*a new form of word-of-mouth that serve informational needs by offering non-commercial, detailed, experiential and up-to-date information with an access beyond the boundaries of one’s immediate social circle.* As explained electronic word of mouth and consumer-generated media are new way of sharing and experiencing information about destination or about anything nowadays, and it became a new and interesting way for young people to get information. (Yoo and Gretzel from Bizirgianni et al, 2013, p.653-654)

As for factors influencing destination image formation and construction it was mentioned and explained a role of information sources and different sources that have a role in an image formation of the individual. Baloglu and McCleary that the whole image of the destination is as well influenced by sociopsychological motivation and demographic variable.

### **2.3.2 Sociopsychological motivation and demographic variable**

Gartner (1994) argues that motivation for traveling combines "push" and specific attributes and attractions of destination considered as "pull" factors. Internal stimuli connects to the people's personal needs not being satisfied at current place of being, considered as well as push factor and for external stimuli results from different information sources of destination/place, known as pull factor. (Gartner, 1994, p.191-192). People's involvement in tourism and traveling is connected with their motivations and different reasons. Motivation is the main reason for tourist behaviour and people's choice of destination, because motivation is the reason behind all of their activities and general behaviour. Motivations as well known as sociopsychological force that influence individual to get involved in different travel/tourist activities, they are also involved and considered as an important factor of destination image formation and choice. Image of destination has a main connection and influence to the individual's motivations, as they create image of destination before and after visitation." *In the destination choice process, images are formed in relation to the motivations in a conscious or unconscious way (Moutinho 1987:18). Mayo and Jarvis (1981:30) indicated that tourist' psychological motivations influence their images of destinations.*" (Mountino 1987 and Mayo and Jarvis 1981 from Baloglu, 1999,p.875)

*"Many models of the decision process in the choice of tourist destination (e.g. Woodside & Lysonski, 1989; Um & Crompton, 1990; Stabler, 1995) show that the individuals’ personal characteristics, such as gender, age, occupation, education and social class, are internal inputs that influence the perceptions of places".* Perception as it can be understood as a

process in which individual creates a specific image of destination, based on information gathered, but as well based on information and different sources, image creation depends on stimuli related to individual's environment, characteristics and circumstances. (Beerli and Martin, 2004, p.664)

As Beerli and Martin explained also these sociodemographic factors are as well considered as personal factors and as motivation and sociodemographic factors can influence image tourists holds as their mental representation, they explained experience can have an influence on the post-visit image of certain place visited, they agreed with Schreyer, Lime and Williams (1984) as they recommended that present opinion and image are understood together with past experience, in line with connection between information received from previous travel to destination and 'the subjective interpretation of leisure trip'. Beerli and Martin explained from Mazursky (1989) that previous experience can have better influence and is considered more important than information received from external sources. "This is because, when there is past experience, the criteria for decisions are strengthened, while the need to receive information becomes weaker. Although no empirical evidence was found that directly shows how tourists' levels of past experience influence the perceived image, this variable has attracted great interest among researchers insofar as it is a good indicator of their needs, motivations, and satisfaction, and may be of great use in segmenting the markets. (Lime and Williams: 1984, Mazursky; 1989, from Beerli & Martin, 2004, p.664)

## **2.4 Role of promotional videos in image formation**

*"Among all published studies pertinent to destination image, the majority are dedicated to the measurement of destination image perceived by tourists or potential tourists and/or projected by the tourism authorities of the studied countries, cities or attractions. Indeed, considering the prominent role and influence of destination image on tourists' decision making, it is understandable why much scholarly attention has explored what sort of desired image destination marketing organizations (DMOs) select to project and how they project these images to target audiences".* As previously from Gartner's explanation on different agents that can help DMOs to form an image of potential visitors, as induced media ( brochures and television commercials), autonomous agents (movies and news) and organic media (word of mouth of previous visitors), all of this sources can help DMOs to project image they wish to present. (Leung et al, 2017, p.362-363 chapter from R.Schegg and B. Stangl)

As Gartner previously explained that different agents can differently affect image formation and have an important role in creating or changing image set by markets. Fakeye and Crompton (1991) proposed their way of understanding image formation, as it has three stages well-known as organic, induced and complex. They proposed their conceptualisation as they argue organic considerer's awareness of destination, even before promotion materials are presented, induced according to them is an image formed after promotional materials are presented and complex is image evaluated after visiting destination. (Fakeye and Crompton, 1991, 11)

Along with proposition of image formation with promotion materials, they argue that promotion can be informative, persuasive and reminding. Informative promotion provides potential tourists with enough materials and information about destination before their actual visit in order to create certain image, persuasive promotion is a stage after induced image is created and as name says to persuade future visitors of traveling to destination, and lastly reminding promotion is pointed to visitors that already experienced destination. (Fakeye and Crompton, 1991, p.11)

*"MacKay and Fesenmaier argue that visual media can serve as a miniature of pieces of information connected with places. Videos, thus, appear to be powerful marketing tools enabling the destination to communicate a variety of images in a compressed format. Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier echo and complement that videos are a powerful tool to convey people's dreams and fantasies of visiting the destination. Furthermore, they generate mental pleasures through imagination and intensify the motivation to visit the destination".* (Leung et al, 2017, p.363, chapter from R.Schegg and B. Stangl). It is suggested that images through their visuals are effecting individual's perceptions and expectations of destination, by creating associations of pictures or visuals with experiences as nature or scenery. (MacKay & Fesenmeir, 1997, p.541).

Promotional videos are often used a tool to measure image change, Boulding (1956) information can affect image in three stages, first one is receiving information is refusing to believe in showed information and individual is avoiding every information he was showed and so individuals image will not be changed. Second stage individuals is not avoiding received information, and third stage represents amount of new information received reconsideration images held and creates a complete new image of destination. It is suggested that the important part is not image change, rather how new information differences from current image hold by individual. (Boulding from Gartner, 1994, p.205)

### **3. Development of Croatia as tourist destination**

Introduction presented a short description of Croatia as destination, and importance of tourism for growth and economic stability of country. Tourism as being one of the most important factors in Croatian economy with overall expenses of 8.3 billion Euros in 2013. It can also be understood as a sector that didn't show the full potential, due to the fact that Croatia is mostly presented in "'one-dimensional' image as a 'sea, sun and summer'"(N.Telisma-Kosuta, L.Dwyer, R.Tomljenovic, S.Corak, 2017. p.67, chapter 4).

Like many other Mediterranean destination Croatia is mostly focused on "sun and the sea" factors, even though as many other Mediterranean countries they have a lot of historical facilities to offer, but mostly people are choosing to travel there because of the convenient climate, weather and costal natural attractions.(K.Orsini, V.Ostojic, 2018,p.5). Even though Croatia is seasonal country and it was presented as 'sun and sea' country, we are going to have a look at how it developed in a touristic destination that is today and what as destination it can offer to tourists, which is including starting from history and tourism in Croatia back in past, before war occurred that effected Croatia.

#### **3.1 History and development of Croatia and tourism**

As far in the history, Croatia was part of former Austro-Hungarian, stated in 1943 it was a part of Social Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Croatia was part of Yugoslavia for almost 50 years, when in 1991 Croatian Parliament adopted " *Constitutional Decision on Independence and Sovereignty of the Republic of Croatia*". Independence of Croatia, occurred in not convenient and pleasant circumstances, fall of communism in Eastern Europe, followed by Serbian hostility against Croatia and Bosnian and Hercegovina, in which circumstances Croatia ended up in a war struggling for its independence. Suffering, death, material damage and in the end recovering after all loses Croatia had to overcome due to the war that occurred. "(L.Dwyer, R.Tomljenovic, S.Corak, 2017. p.81).

During hard periods Croatia also suffered bad and stereotypic image as 'a pro-fascist and undemocratic' state in the international community. Due to bad stereotypic the international community had about Croatia is partly still present. As by this particular stereotypic, bad image of Croatia was created. Government of Croatia decided that in order to create right image of Croatia and to separate itself from other Balkan countries, they wanted to create something new that will create image of Croatia without connection to the war and other

darker parts of Croatian history, to that point tourism was a perfect opportunity and option for Croatia, as they have developed coastline and numerous islands and the long history of tourism before war occurred, as none of other ex-Yugoslavian countries. (L.Dwyer, R.Tomljenovic, S.Corak, 2017. P.81-84). Two decades later Croatia changed its image from country that was part of Yugoslavia, to country with attractive coastline and as interesting tourism destination, of course the connection to the war and Yugoslavia is still present, but the overall image of Croatia is changed and is not mainly connected only to the war. (L.Dwyer, R.Tomljenovic, S.Corak, 2017. P.85).

As stated previously, from 1991 till 1995 Croatia was affected by war, and by that situation it was inconvenient period for growth of economy and tourism in particular. Period after war was time for Croatia to restructure tourism to the higher level and higher quality, in fact Croatia had a hard time with tourism till 2000, because of post-war situation and general problems of growing Croatian economy. From 2000s Croatia started to develop tourism and achieving success as tourism destination, "Staying in the sun by the sea" (Eng., Sun, Sea, Sand) it an expression and type of tourism that is still famous in dominant world destination, but nowadays new types of tourism are trying to be developed, Croatia is trying to focus as well on new types for example: nautical tourism, rural, health, transit and other types of tourism. (Svetlacic et al, 2015, 6-7)

Even though Croatia is trying new trends, they are still considered as destination for leisure tourism, that type of tourism is usually followed by natural beauties that country can offer, as Croatian Adriatic Sea and multiple islands that follows. (Svetlacic et al, 2015, 6-7).

In 2002, Croatia developed strategy with slogan 'Mediterranean as it once was' in order to promote tourism in Croatia around the world, as it wanted to present itself as Mediterranean destination, and for 20 years, the focus was on promoting and presenting Adriatic sea, islands and coast. Nowadays, Croatia came up with the new slogan 'Croatia full of life' that will target and attract new markets and visitors which are seeking for different experience and some product changes. (L.Dwyer, R.Tomljenovic, S.Corak, 2017. P.90 chapter 5)

### **3.2. Natural attractions of Croatia**

Croatia, a small country "*...represents a meeting point of the Mediterranean and Central Europe, the Alps and the Pannonian Plain*". Due to the fact that Croatia is a quiet small country, it offers variety of nature, landscape, culture and tradition. Two main attributes



Croatia is offering as an advantage on international markets are natural attractions and multiplicity of cultural and historical inheritance. Croatia counts 6 monuments that are listed on UNESCO World Heritage List, which is also making Croatia holding a record in non-material that are protected by UNESCO. On UNESCO list monuments listed are: Greek plain in Stari Grad on island Hvar, Diocletian palace in Split, Christian Euphrasian Basilica in Porec, city core in Trogir, Renaissance Cathedral in Sibenik and Dubrovnik surrounded by city walls. (L.Dwyer, R.Tomljenovic, S.Corak, 2017. P.86 chapter 5).

With only 56.6 thousands km<sup>2</sup>. Croatia is surely not the largest country, due to the fact that just Adriatic coast is taking 1777 km of the country and with the islands and coastline 6278 km, is making Croatia one of the most unique coasts in the world. It is considered one of the cleanest Mediterranean countries in the world, and states for one of the most environmentally preserved countries in Europe. As for protected areas, Croatia counts 2 strict reserves, 8 national parks and 11 natural parks, of which 4 national parks are taking place in mountains and 4 of them are around coast and island area. (L.Dwyer, R.Tomljenovic, S.Corak, 2017. P.86-87 chapter 5).

Croatia presents a unique country with variety of natural attractions and beauty, from mountains to coastline and many islands, that is giving her a perfect opportunity for tourism further in the future. (L.Dwyer, R.Tomljenovic, S.Corak, 2017. P.87-88 chapter 5). It is showing more potential than just 'sea and sun', variety of national parks, natural parks and UNESCO monuments are offering tourists an opportunity to discover beyond sea and sun experience.

### **3.2.1 Previous researches on image of Croatia**

Previously, the short insight in Croatian situation during and after war and struggle with giving the right image of Croatia as a destination was given, in 2008 the research was made to investigate Croatian image almost 10 years after war in countries of former Yugoslavia, EU countries and GCC countries. Expected results of the research were that the image of Croatia would still be connected to the war situation, the results showed positive answers from countries of former Yugoslavia that were connecting Croatia as destination of sea and tourism. Former Yugoslavian countries are generally connecting Croatia to tourism, only Serbia beside connection to the sea and tourism connected it to the war. In particular none of results were showing bad image of Croatia, which can lead to conclusion that Croatia built a

positive image and connection to the coast and beautiful nature and tourism, and left behind a direct connection to the war. (Dwyer, R.Tomljenovic, S.Corak, 2017. P.90-92, chapter 5).

Similar research was conducted to investigate deeper results on image of Croatia by making surveys among 6 EU countries, their image on Croatia is seen as a coastal country, and with beautiful and authentic nature. Similar results were given by GCC countries, mostly research was conducted were from Emirates and Qatar, even though Croatia was not promoted so much in this countries, on question what their image of Croatia as a beautiful country, with untouched nature, sea and coast and islands. (Dwyer, R.Tomljenovic, S.Corak, 2017. P.92-93 chapter 5).

By this results Croatia is mostly recognised as beautiful destination with untouched nature, coastline and island, but also by some other characteristics like football team, history and culture, but as writers of this research concluded Croatia has more to offer then just being attractive destination, and that Croatian full potential is not fully discovered as they didn't defined their "national umbrella brand". (Dwyer, R.Tomljenovic, S.Corak, 2017. P.93-94 chapter 5).

The short explanation of researches made to measure image of Croatia, can show what people in particular think about Croatia and having previous researches can help me in my research, but as for my research, it is going to be different, as I will try to search for image tourists have on Croatia by creating focus groups and showing visual images to discover their image on Croatia.

#### **4. Methodology**

This section is focusing on philosophy of science, that is explaining philosophic explanation of understanding the people and how knowledge is created, followed by two different methods that are going to be used in order to answer the research question which qualitative method by conducting focus groups, focus on photo elicitation that will be a main focus on creating knowledge and final results.

## 4.1 Philosophy of Science

### 4.1.1 Constructivism

*"Thus the bases for discovering "how things really are" and "really work" is lost. "Reality" exist only in the context of a mental framework (construct) for thinking about it. Constructivism thus intends neither to predict and control the "real" world nor to transform it but to reconstruct the "world" at the only point at which it exist: in the minds of constructors. It is the mind that is to be transformed, not the "real" world."* (Guba, 1990, p.25-27). Guba explains that from constructivism way of seeing world is that is constructed in the mind of constructors as we can see it how students formed their image of Croatia in their minds as constructors. It is important to see where this constructions came from, as research question is how students formed their image of Croatia, for this research it is important to understand their constructions and their reconstruction of the world as in their minds as in the role of the constructors.

Constructivism explained through ontological way of seeing as relativist, *"Realities are apprehendable in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature (although elements are often shared among many individuals and even across cultures), and dependent for their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions"*. (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p.110-111) Guba and Lincoln explained that from ontological aspect of understanding constructivism is looking it as realities created as mental constructions in individuals mind, that way we can understand how students mentally constructed the image of Croatia and what effected that kind of construction that they are holding.

## 4.2 Data collection

This section is explaining the way, I will conduct and collect my data in order to answer research question. Focus groups and use of photo elicitation are going to be a way data collection is going to be conducted, instead of taking classical qualitative method of creating surveys and interviews.

### 4.2.1 Focus groups

*"Basically, focus groups are a data collection technique that combines principles of qualitative research and knowledge of small group dynamics. This approach capitalizes on the interaction among the group members to enhance the collection of deep, strongly held beliefs and perspectives."* (M.A. Carey, 2015., p. 274). Focus groups as an approach can be showed as a useful and helpful technique when it comes to collecting and examining new ideas, topics and discussing particular problems to discover certain behaviour and beliefs of people involved in focus groups. (M.A. Carey, 2015., p. 274)

Focus groups are providing a majority of data, by people expressing their opinions, feelings in their own way and words. Positive side of focus groups is the way this method can collect any type of information and data needed for research, depending on different settings, questions and majority and different types of people participating in focus groups. They can have a really specific topic or over-all topics, as focus groups are really flexible in that point, researches can choose if they want them to be structured or more in a form of unstructured group discussion. As in focus groups any materials as photos, videos, some samples and other can be used, to provide more material for more structured discussion. (D.W. Stewart, 2018, p.2)

Focus groups include many advantages, one of them consider collecting data faster and easier process than what it would be in the case of taking individual interviews. Secondly, researchers conducting focus groups have a direct interaction with participants by also giving to researcher's expressions, gestures, and because of direct interaction and the way groups are responding, researchers can get bigger amount of data, that participants are expressing in their own words. Moreover participants can affect and build on each other's responses, which may produce bigger amount of data that would be produced from only individual interviews or surveys. Lastly, data collected from focus groups is usually easier to understand for researchers, because respondents are making it more understandable by explaining their thoughts. (D.W. Stewart, 2018, p.4)

Reason for choosing focus groups as method and approach in this research, as said focus groups are good for providing bigger amount of data and people are expressing their own opinions, beliefs and feelings about certain topic, which is my aim to do in this research. By testing and measuring image of Croatia, the best way is to gather small groups that will discuss particular questions, as using videos, photos and different materials is allowed in

focus group methods, for my specific focus groups, participants are going to see promotional video of Croatia in order to create or change image of Croatia. Focus groups can be easier approach for people to open up about certain topic, then other methods as surveys or interviews. Participants may affect each other's answers and finish each other's thoughts when it comes to discussing.

#### **4.2.2. Visual methods**

Rose (2001) argues that today, world is bounded with different types of virtual technologies as film, photography, TV shows, commercials, newspapers pictures etc., all of these different types of visual technologies are showing the real picture of the world and are creating visual of the world we live in today.(G. Rose, 2001, p.6). Nowadays visual methodologies are considered as a new approach in qualitative research, by bringing majority of data, by creating and adding more meaning to traditional approach by adding more details and different data collection than in traditional method researches. (Glaw et al, 2017, p.1-2).

Photo elicitation is created as an idea of using and showing photography in basic interviews. The main difference between images and only words and questions used in interviews is the basic way of responding to these two particular ways. As Harper (2002) argues "*Thus images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness that do words; exchanges based on words alone utilize less of the brain's capacity than do exchanges in which the brain is processing images as well as words.*" Photo elicitation as argues by Harper may not collect more information, but rather explained as collecting different type of information. Elicitation as an idea in particular consider usage photography more often , but any other types of visual information as cartoons, advertisings, paintings or just any other visual image is allowed and can be used. (Harper, 2002, p.13).

*"Photo elicitation may overcome the difficulties posed by in-depth interviewing because it is anchored in an image that is understood, at least in part, by both parties. If the interview has been successful, the understanding has increased through the interview process."* (Harper, 2002, p. 20). This method can create common understanding both from researchers and participants. Researchers are having an opportunity to closely see and experience how participants are expressing their emotions connected to particular photography or visual information. (Glaw et al, 2017, p.3). As Harper is discussing that photo elicitation can produce "deep and interesting talk" between participants and researchers. (Harper, 2002, p.

23). Photo elicitation according to Harper is bringing deeper understanding and meaning in humans mind then with only words in interviews. (Harper, 2002, p. 23).

In previous section it was explained that the method for this research would be creating focus groups that will be a way image of Croatia among tourists would be discovered and measured, as previously mentioned in focus groups any way of showing any visual information is allowed, and as Stewart argued that focus groups and their participants are expressing opinion on particular topic in their own words and way of expressing theme self. By creating focus groups that are considered easier for participants to discuss on topic they have, using photo elicitation or in my case video elicitation can create deeper understanding for participants by looking at visual information, and also for me as a researcher it is creating different types of data that will in the end give an answer to my research question.

### **4.2.3 Focus Groups in Copenhagen and Aalborg**

In this research qualitative method that is going to be used, as previously said are focus groups, as my aim is to answer on the research question how students formed an image of Croatia and how promotional video effected their image of Croatia? Video is used as visual method that will help this research to get deeper insight on effect that it can have on students.

This research is going to conduct 2 focus groups, first group will be conducted in Copenhagen with 4 students, and second focus will take place in Aalborg with 4 other students. Two focus groups should give enough data to analyse the image student's hold of Croatia. First group as it is going to be in Copenhagen it will be conducted in some familiar and comfortable area where all participants are feeling comfortable and relaxed, for second focus group it will take place at Aalborg University where all student are familiar with the space. As I was considering how many people should be enough to hold a focus groups, decision was made to have 4 students in each group, as 4 students should be enough for having relaxed and on-going conversation with participants. Participants that are going to be in focus groups are 8 students 3 of them are Danish, 2 Greek students and last 3 participants are from Hungary, Czech Republic and Italy. They are aged from 24-32.

Focus groups will be presented by the topic of Croatia and will be asked multiple questions about Croatia that will hopefully bring discussion that will in the end help this research to answer problem formulation. Participants before being tested with visual method of showing

promotional video will be asked general questions about their travel habits and information they are gathering before choosing the destination. After data from focus groups is collected, recorded and transcribed, it will help to have detailed analysis that will hopefully help concluding and answering the problem formulation question.

#### **4.2.4 Promotional Video- Croatia Full of Life**

As for method of this research do go deeper on knowledge of students on Croatia as touristic destination, to understand how they have created image as their mental representation and how usage of visual methods can affect existing image of participant can it change it or create one if there was none?

Croatian touristic board came with the promotional video and slogan "Croatia Full of the Life". In their brochure they stated: "*From the stunning, unspoilt Adriatic coast to the amazing natural parks in the hinterland, Croatia has an extraordinary natural and architectural diversity — as well as beauty.*" Croatia offer as if you are seeking for island and coast experience, experiencing old cities and their history to different activities, Croatia is offering different type of experiences in every time of the year, is it summer or winter season. (Image Brochure, Croatia full of life, p.1)

As for Full of Life statement they constructed different concept that are describing this whole Full of Life story. As Croatia full of Sun, full nature, full of islands to discover, Croatia full adventures, Full of bike routes, Full of flavours, full of history and culture, full of relaxation, full of opportunities, full of trails.(Image brochure, Croatia full of life) Every part of Croatia being full of life is presented in video, touristic board took a step further and involved many famous faces as famous football players, tennis players, basketball players and actors that are presenting different cities and activities and different areas and regions of Croatia like national parks, coast, old cities and different type of food that each individual traveling to Croatia should experience.

Croatia- Full of Life: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0XbIR7e9PYM>

## **5. Analysis and discussion**

### **5.1 Before the promotional video:**

The two focus groups were conducted in Copenhagen and Aalborg in which 8 students in total evaluated their image of Croatia the way their image of Croatia was formed, what kind of agents influenced their image formation, as it was previously explained in theory section.

#### **Beliefs and emotions on Croatia**

As Baloglu explained image as "The image concept has generally been considered as an attitudinal construct consisting of an individual's mental representation of knowledge (beliefs), feelings, and global impression about an object or destination." (Baloglu, McCleary, 1999, p. 870) To see what particularly influenced and formed their image of Croatia, it is important to discover what kind of beliefs, feeling and impression they have and where they got it that eventually formed the image of Croatia they hold now. Starting off with the cognitive and affective components of the image students formed.

Participant Bc: Okay, the first thing that comes to my mind and I'm really honest, it's the cuisine, like usually if I think of Croatia, I think of palacinka (pancakes) and I think of cevapcic..." (Appendix 1)

As participant B had previous experience with Croatia as she travelled multiple times, she explained that first thing that comes to her mind she first explained food as she remembers as younger these two dishes she tried, then she explained that beaches are first and then food, this connection participant B created with food can be considered as affective component as Baloglu explained perceptual/cognitive components are referred to general 'beliefs and knowledge' on certain destination, and on other hand affective components are referred to general feelings towards destination. (Theory). As she said her general knowledge she doesn't know about culture a lot only thing that she knows about is beach and she has special feelings towards destination when it comes to food.

Participant Cc as he has a background in geography, he holds cognitive components in his mental representation of Croatia as his knowledge and beliefs comes from geography, he knows about Croatian flag, and about scenery and nature Croatia can offer. As he explained: I



don't know, probably I'm influenced by geography and my studies, and but the one of the first things that I knew, I get to know about Croatia is Dinamo- Zagreb, back in school and that capital of Croatia is Zagreb and I learned from geography, and then I knew about the scenery and about the beautiful nature " (Appendix 1) the first thing he learned about Croatia was his time back in school about Dinamo-Zagreb which is famous football national team in Croatia, which was later followed with his studies in the field of Geography.

Participant E: It's a good question, I mean after these places first the beach and sea but also, but also with family history, and I would also say personally that it's a vacation time with family and sometimes friends, but it's not only about tourism for me"(Appendix 2)

"Participant Fa: Yeah, when I Croatia I can always remember the beach, like the sea is so clear and pure, so that and like that the beach is full of rocks and not sand, that's something I can remember"(Appendix 2)

"Participant Ga: Yeah, I wanted to say the beach, because it's so different from Denmark, with the rocks on it, and also when I hear Croatia I think of Dubrovnik always, just you see it so many places, I think it's what they use to advertise for Croatia"

"Participant Fa: Yeah like for me is also vacation and maybe like family vacation, because I was there only with my family in Croatia, so"

"Participant Ac: Yeah, but you don't know about the cities, you don't talk as much about the cities, from Danish schools and stuff like that, yes so for us is more like oh we know it's there, but if we have to choose between that or another places, like it's normally Spain or Italy we go to instead...

"Participant Ha: the thing is I never seen as a tourist place to go, or a vacation place, I don't know it never come up like, when we talk about where to go it's always like Greece or Spain, Italy or Turkey or something like that"

As cognitive components are connected to special knowledge and beliefs about Croatia, many of them from previous experience know about beaches, and what Croatia can offer as tourism destination, as participant G explained that she knows also for Dubrovnik as tourists attraction in Croatia, so their knowledge because of previous experience is connected to knowledge of islands and beaches, but for those participants who have never visited Croatia they explained as they don't know a lot so they don't hold any specific beliefs, knowledges and feelings towards Croatia, for these two participants as they explained they never considered Croatia as

touristic place, they rather thought of some other places like Spain or Italy to visit rather than Croatia. For the rest of the participants as affective component they explained their feelings and particular emotions they get about Croatia is always in connection with family vacation, as Gartner connected affective component as if tourists know Zagreb or any other place is exotic, or different tourists will be more attracted and motivated (Gartner, 1994, p.196), the same way is for this two participants they have feeling of Croatia as family vacation that is also offering something that their country doesn't have. As getting more of the idea of their knowledge participants had some non-touristic knowledge

"Participant Bc: I mean they don't have euros? So about tourism for me I know that Croatia they have kune and they don't have euros that the only tourism like

"Participant Cc: I know that Croatia is the last country joining the European Union?

Besides what they said in previous explanations have any other knowledges or beliefs that would create better cognitive components for their image formation or affective components as special feelings, this is all of their beliefs, knowledge and feelings towards Croatia they have that was forming this components. Some of the participants had a knowledge of some non-touristic facts like, what type of currency is used in Croatia and when Croatia joined in European Union, even though this facts are not something that is connected to the touristic matter of Croatia, somehow it was important fact in creating some kind of image of Croatia, being familiar with currency and some facts besides tourism, can be helpful knowledge of forming image.

### ***Popular culture and new media***

As Gunn (1972) became the first one to define ways of how destination image is created, he claims images are constructed through induced and organic. Induced images are mainly created from destination alone and are influenced by marketing determination and general promotion of destination. On other hand organic image are generally constructed by sources that are not directly connected to the destination marketing, moreover it is rather formed by different sources of media that are not connected to tourism sources of information, like documentaries, movies and many other information sources. (Gartner, 1994 196). As for tourist aspiration to travel, they will search for amount of information needed and search for precise sources of information. As Gunn proposed two ways of image formation which can be

from induced and organic, intention of the research is to see what kind of information created image they hold.

"Participant Ac: Game of thrones haha it became associate, that's always like with places, or unless if I know a friend who visited there, or family, or I've been there with friends and family, I always choose location, based also on movies and series, so like oh I'm actually very interested and I find the scenery very beautiful, and then you just suddenly dig in and discover this whole thing all the history behind the place, where they are filming and stuff like that so it's also like I will go to why haha, so game of thrones is like a good thing haha" (Appendix 1)

For Participant A first thing that came to mind is series Game of Thrones which was her association, as Gartner also said as popular culture is also considered as good way of presenting place and people. Popular culture as in form of movies, documentaries, plays an important role in image formation. News reports and popular culture are considered as one of the only and most effective agents that could change image of destination in a short period and reason for that could be as people are affected by huge amount of information in short period. (Gartner, 1994,201-203) As participant A said she is usually affected by movies and series and their scenery, so as possible she was affected with Game of Thrones and their scenery in Croatia as that was her first thing that comes to mind.

As Gartner proposed popular culture in form of movies, series and documentaries as an autonomous agent that is forming image of tourists, in this case participant association with Croatia as many scenes were placed in Dubrovnik city of Croatia. There is as well new media, as social media, E-WOM that is creating and giving tourists information about destinations. As Bizirgianni explained that this kind of new media is giving many opportunities but also challenges for those involved in tourism as an industry. (Bizirgianni et al, 2013, p.653-654)

E-WOM as *"Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) can be defined as all informal communications directed at consumers through Internet-based technology related to the usage or characteristics of particular goods and services, or their sellers"*. As explained electronic word of mouth and consumer-generated media are new way of sharing and experiencing information about destination or about anything nowadays, and it became a new and interesting way for young people to get information. (Bizirgianni et al, 2013, p.653-654). To participants of focus group as Bizirgianni explained about social media and electronic word of mouth is giving an opportunity to experience something new and fresh, and through

social media and other media they are able to get better idea of destination, from someone who already experienced it.

"Participant Ga: I think for me is like travel stuff that I read and travel podcast, some of them have been to Croatia also, so then I see where they went and what they did, that's mine information about Croatia"(Appendix 2)

For participant E she explained her information of Croatia, beside personal experience are different web sites and social media as new media, that is nowadays creating information of destination, based on other people's experience and pictures: " but of course I heard about it from other web sites, social media, and advertisements" (Appendix 2), for participant G her information about Croatia and other destinations, is influenced by podcast she tend to listen, as people are in this new media and electronic word of mouth spreading information and their experience to the many people through podcasts.

As mentioned popular culture and new media are big influence on younger generations especially nowadays, as it should be mentioned how some of the participants said as their knowledge of Croatia was formed as they heard it from Eurovision and Sports.

"Participant Ac: Actually the only time every when you hear it is like Eurovision"(Appendix 1)

"Participant Bc: Ah and I know also something else from handball"(Appendix 1)

"Participant Cc: I think Croatia has a really good football team as well and probably basketball"(Appendix 1)

Eurovision and sport events are famous occasional things that are gathering many different countries, and each of them is presenting something they are good at, as for example students did mentioned that they know Croatia is good at handball and even though it is not information closely connected to Croatia as tourist destination, they are familiar that Croatia is famous in various sport as handball, and that is no matter what, giving some information that eventually is creating and forming image they hold of Croatia.

### ***Influence of advertising***

Even though not a lot students said advertisements as their source of getting information there are two participants that have come across advertisements and have felt influenced somehow. Even though there are a lot of new media, and different ways how destination can be

advertised these days, there are still somehow influences traditional way of promoting destination can have on people, and also on participants as students in these focus groups.

"Participant Ga: Yeah, I wanted to say the beach, because it's so different from Denmark, with the rocks on it, and also when I hear Croatia I think of Dubrovnik always, just you see it so many places, I think it's what they use to advertise for Croatia"(Appendix 2)

"Participant Ea: Usually I'm not seeing this very popular series, like GOT and so on, but of course I heard about it from other web sites, social media, and advertisements"(Appendix 2)

"Participant Ea: Yeah and also agencies like in the town they are offering trips to Croatia and also yeah bus trips and also"(Appendix 2)

As participant G explained that also one of the first things that comes to her mind is city of Dubrovnik as she said that city is mainly used for advertising Croatia, which we can also say that she was affected by over induced agents of image formation according to Gartner (1994) as it is traditional way of promoting destination like advertisements, brochures etc..(Gartner, 1994,197) As this participant knows that they are using Dubrovnik for promotion of Croatia in many advertisements and she saw it in so many places advertised. As well as participant G, participant E said she had and information from advertisements, and that many agencies in her city are offering different trips to Croatia, for both over induced agents in a role of image formation had some kind of influence on participants, even though it is considered traditional way, and maybe that is not as used and effective as before, it still had some effect on those two participants.

### ***School as source***

Some of the important agents are influencing formation of image students have of Croatia, but still as some participants are really close to Croatia and as history of Croatia in the past is something they had to learn in school, in particular these two students are from Czech Republic and Italy and what of influenced and formed their knowledge is school subjects, in particular history, so important part of their knowledge is formed from schools, for this type of influence only two participants said they were well known with Croatia from this source of knowledge. I think school should play important role in creating and forming image of some places, as we all know for Germany, France or Spain, not only because they are popular destinations, but also because of their history we had to learn.

Participant Bc: It depends about what in the sense the information that I got about Croatia and I'm not talking just about Croatia but like yeah Croatian history it was from history at school and I think most of the information about Croatian came from there, and also because we are really close countries but yeah so I think that the information about Croatia is from there, but I don't know for the rest" (Appendix 1).

"Participant Fa: I think I also learned quite a lot in school about Croatia, and yeah I was not searching for information, I never really need to know something extra then we learned in school, and I visited the country several times, so yeah experience and school" (Appendix 2)

### *Words from family and friends*

As Gartner proposed agents that are affecting image formation and as well as Gunn explained there are induced and organic ways of image formation, according to this participant's knowledge they got their image construction is affected by sources that are not promotional type oriented, they constructed some kind of image according to friends and family, as Gartner said that unsolicited Organic agent of forming image is considered as receiving information from family, friends and in general individual that have been to a certain destination area. If individual's image of destination before unsolicited organic agents were not influenced by induced or autonomous agents, then unsolicited organic agent has an important role in creating image of destination and can affect future decision on future traveling plans of individual receiving information." (Gartner, 1994,203-204)

"Participant Dc: I think that because I have also a friend that is also from Croatia and she showed me some pictures I think it's the beaches, it's from Pula this girl and she showed me some pictures and I think after this pictures I would love to go visit and see the beaches that are there"

"Participant Dc: For me it was you, the other friends that we have that was giving the information"(Appendix 1)

"Participant Cc: And also other people travelling to Croatia, sharing their travels"(Appendix 1)

"Participant Ac: My grandfather travelled a lot of places for work, because he worked for.... so I only heard it from passing from that"(Appendix 1)

"Participant Bc: So I can just relate okay it's not really connected, but I didn't say that also some information that I got from Croatia is from my family, because I also have relatives that are from Croatia from Istria from Pula, and that's also why I know a lot about Croatia"(Appendix 1)

"Participant Ea: Experience and friends and family"(Appendix 2)

"Participant Ea: Usually I'm not seeing this very popular series, like GOT and so on, but of course I heard about it from other web sites, social media, and advertisements"(Appendix 2)

"Participant Ha: Mine is from friends I get a little bit information from them haha and then this now I get some information and that's it"(Appendix 2)

Participants were effected by their friend and also me as Croatian I was playing a big role in giving them information about Croatia. Participant B explained she had family that is from Croatia, and that also except also being affected by history she learned in school, her family created also knowledge she has. For participant A, she said she heard from her family about Croatia as well as her Grandfather was travelling a lot and as well he travelled to Croatia. Participants C and D were affected by friends that either lived there or were travelling to destination. Students from both focus groups explained the main source of information is coming from friends that have connection to that place, from family or friends who previously travelled or from their own experience. The participant H as she is not so familiar with Croatia and she doesn't know almost anything about Croatia, except from friend that is originally from Croatia, that is where she got some kind of information, as she said she said this conversation gave her some new information that she didn't know before.

### ***Motivation for visiting Croatia***

Gartner (1994) argues that motivation for traveling combines "push" and specific attributes and attractions of destination considered as "pull" factors. Internal stimuli connects to the people's personal needs not being satisfied at current place of being, considered as well as push factor and for external stimuli results from different information sources of destination/place, knows as pull factor. (Gartner, 1994, p.191-192). One of the participants explained that her push and pull factors could be considered need for travelling by visiting her friends in their country, as well as it is pull factors because she is getting some kind of information from friends that live in destination she is planning to visit because of them. That

kind of motivation participant has, travelling to destination to visit her friends, and combining her travel needs.

"Participant Ac: Well you are there now so, I have that with Germany and couple of places in Germany, where I have my friends, so I want to go down to those places to visit my friends"(Appendix 1)

"Participant Dc: I would like to try the food" (Appendix 1)

"Participant Dc: .... I think it's the beaches, it's from Pula this girl and she showed me some pictures and I think after this pictures I would love to go visit and see the beaches that are there" (Appendix 1)

Participant A explained as her motivation for visiting places that are not so popular are friends living in that specific destination, which is also connected to her motivation about travelling to Croatia, as Baloglu explained people's involvement in tourism and traveling is connected with their motivations and different reasons. Motivation is the main reason for tourist behaviour and people's choice of destination, because motivation is the reason behind all of their activities and general behaviour. (Baloglu, 1999,p.875)

She connects food as something she would like to experience, even though she is from Greece and Croatia has similar food, she is still attached and motivated towards Croatia because of food, and she is experiencing that kind of motivation towards food and she would like to travel and experience food. As well participant D expressed her motivation towards beaches, as she saw many pictures and she felt influenced and motivated to visit some of them in the future.

### ***Experience as former of image***

As experience is one of the factors that can affect the image and is considered a tool of forming image of destination as it is formed based on the previous experience? One of the participants explained she would like to come back as soon as possible, as Croatia is offering that they don't have.

"Participant Ea: I loved it I want to go back as soon as possible because it's really close to us, and really good with economics and they have all that we need, we don't have sea and we really want sea, so yeah "



"Participant Bc: If I liked them? Yeah of course, and also the main reason why we were going to Croatia was the sea, beaches, like, yeah and there was Plitvice lakes, but it was different kind of trip, but usually it was, also from Italy, people are going to Croatia, because of the beaches, the sea sides" (Appendix 1)

"09-Participant Fa: Yeah I really liked the landscape and that it also had some kind of nature, not like, because they we went to Egypt or Turkey, but like you couldn't like leave the hotel and it was just, what I liked about Croatia was that you had so many possibilities, not just to stay on the beach but also to go for a trip or something"( Appendix 2)

"Participant Ga: Yeah, I remember it was like this island, we got to the side where there was no tourists and it was so beautiful there, it was really nice (Appendix 2)

As some of participants from these two focus groups were previously to Croatia, they have some image that they hold as their mental representation, as well as this previous experience. As it was already said " experience can have an influence on the post-visit image of certain place visited, they agreed with Schreyer, Lime and Williams (1984) as they recommended that present opinion and image are understood together with past experience, in line with connection between information received from previous travel to destination and 'the subjective interpretation of leisure trip'" . (Lime and Williams: 1984, Mazursky; 1989, from Berlii & Martin, 2004, p.664), participants present opinion have from previous experience to Croatia, one of the participants even explained that the nature is special, and as she was even in Egypt an Turkey they had to stay only in hotels, and as she remember for Croatia it offered for her a lot of possibilities and more of the nature and landscape not only beach. For them experience was beautiful and they are remember it as a nice experience and nice country, and that kind of image was formed from previous experience and visit to Croatia, that is the main factor that influenced and formed the image they hold.

## **5.2 After promotional video**

After participants evaluated what effected and formed the image they hold of Croatia, the promotional video was showed and it was important to see how promotional video effected their present image of Croatia.

### *Surprising aspects of the video*

"MacKay and Fesenmaier argue that visual media can serve as a miniature of pieces of information connected with places. Videos, thus, appear to be powerful marketing tools enabling the destination to communicate a variety of images in a compressed format.

Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier echo and complement that videos are a powerful tool to convey people's dreams and fantasies of visiting the destination. Furthermore, they generate mental pleasures through imagination and intensify the motivation to visit the destination". (Leung et al, 2017, p.363). The promotional video showed a lot of aspects of Croatia and as MacKay and Fesenmaier explains in Leung et al (2017) that visual media like videos are giving a little bit of information about destination (Leung et al, 2017, p.363) as maybe students were not familiar with many of the aspects Croatia is offering.

"Participant Cc: That Croatia has everything, can offer everything like from mountains and national parks and activities in lakes and rivers to the coast and nice, beautiful sea and islands, and sailing and then culture tourism, you can visit, architecture" (Appendix 1)

One of the participants argued that the promotional video was pressuring the side with the coast and beach as she claims is something that is attracting people, but she loved every aspect showed with the culture and something that is not known.(Appendix 1) Other participant explained that expect beach in Croatia there is much more to offer and experience: " but there is actually everything else that we actually have to offer like show every place...."(Appendix 1)

"41:45-Participant Dc: But it's good to know that you have so many things to do, in the sense that is not only touristic attraction during summer, but it would be also during winter, so I think that is a good thing"(Appendix 1 )

"Participant Ga: I think it shows a lot of variety in the country like different stuff, like a lot of activities, a lot of different stuff, I think that's nice..." (Appendix 2)

"Participant Ga: Yeah I think I saw it like full of life, life in a lot of different places, not only you go to beach or Dubrovnik there is variety"(Appendix 2)

"Participant Ha: I think it showed a lot of different things, but I think in the beginning after football players, then it was really nice when they showed a lot of the nature, and more from the above, and then it suddenly become an island where you go for concerts, massages, and I

think that's where it became more targeting for young people, but I think overall it was a lot of nice places" (Appendix 2)

"Participant Fa: Yeah, but as I only have associated Croatia with summer vacation, maybe it would be also nice to go there in spring and go hiking for example, but I never was really thinking of going for hiking trips to Croatia but"(Appendix 2)

The promotional video showed a lot of aspects of Croatia and as MacKay and Fesenmaier explains in Leung et al (2017) that visual media like videos are giving a little bit of information about destination, as maybe students were not familiar with many of the aspects Croatia is offering. They were surprised on variety this video is offering for many thing video showed, they were not familiar with which came as surprise for them. They pointed out that as they understood Croatia full of life as Croatia can offer a lot, from beaches to the culture that not a lot of people are not familiar with, and it gave information about it in a form of visual media. They say they understood Croatia is offering more than just beach, as mountains, national parks, culture, sports, architecture. They liked the way it was presented, even though they say it is pointed still on beach and one participant agree that is what attracts people, but in the same way she thinks it is nice that they are showing in this video something that is not known. One participant even she have been to Croatia before, she explained that after video she feels like she was never there, the landscape and the national parks presented got her by surprise.

### ***Confusion and denial***

Some of the participants were confused by the fact that some of the scenes video presented looked a lot like some different European destinations so in some points they were confused in what are they looking is it Croatia or not. As Croatia is influenced by a lot of culture from different countries during past times, it is not surprising that students had an idea of other cities presented and not Croatia itself. Confusion and denial also comes with a participants that understood the whole concept but kind of was in denial that it was something special.

"Participant Cc: At one point I thought that I was seeing colosseum in Rome"(Appendix 1)

"Participant Cc: I mean it's an arena and Croatia also has an arena it is well preserved, so... and another place on the coast remind me of Greece, that sand spit, standing in the sea"(Appendix 1)

"Participant A: Yeah so I understand the whole you have to know everything, all of like, the whole like 'this is what Croatia has to offer, we have mountains, we have sea, we have I mean we have everything, but at the same time is like, yeah you have everything but what's specific that makes you unique from instead of going to Greece or going to Italy, and stuff like that, what makes you unique, from other places?" (Appendix 1)

One of the participants even though she understand what the promotional video wanted to show and she got the information about some other places that she didn't know before, as she was not informed about Croatia too much, she still had an argument that what is the thing that is making Croatia different from, she was refusing the fact that the things the promotional video had to offer and show about Croatia is special, she still was explaining that national parks and nature can be found in every destination, not only Croatia. As Gartner explained that promotional video can have three different stages that information can effect image, first one is receiving information is refusing to believe in showed information and individual is avoiding every information he was showed and so individuals image will not be changed. Second stage individuals is not avoiding received information. (Theory). Even though participant did get information and it not completely avoid it, participant did refused to believe that given information was special and she expressed opinion as what is that Croatia has and not any other destination.

### ***Living like a local***

As the promotional video was expressing a strong connection as living like a local, it was important to see how participants evaluated that information, and how that concept influenced or affected them and their future traveling.

"Participant Fa: To be honest, I don't think it was very well represented in the video"(Appendix 2)

"-Participant Ga: I think it's difficult when that was shown it feels staged, I think they had idea of it a food and heritage but it was hard"(Appendix 2)

Participants of second focus group explained that the whole representation of the local life that video was trying to create to attract tourists, didn't seem like a good representation and as they explained it was all too staged and it didn't give the right image at it should for them, as the representation in their opinion was more as an act than real experience which in my opinion it can't be not staged, because it is a promotional video and for sure it should be

planned and organised with actors. The first focus group had different meaning they explained that it is something that you want to experience in every country, that charm of being a local.

"Participant Ac: ...what do you want to be? Of course the local, but that's just the trend everywhere you go you can feel that everywhere" (Appendix 1)

"Participant Bc: maybe more than beaches, because you find the beaches everywhere that is something that is more Croatian and specific"(Appendix 1)

They feel like every place you go you would like to experience the life like locals, and experience something that not all tourists go to see, as well one of the participants explained: ", I know it's like locals doing stuff and stuff, but you can also do it in every place, so you should definitely have more about the food and stuff like that, that really makes that compared to other places, I see locals doing that, because climbing a mountain, you can find a mountain other places as well" (Appendix 1) participants understood all the message that promotional video wanted to share, but she still think that they should show something that is really specific for that place as food or something similar, because as she mentioned the thing showed in video about hiking and climbing on mountains can be as well found in any other place, and she wanted to see more of locals doing different activities not only what was shown.

One of the participants expressed that even when you are travelling you don't want to go to many touristic places:" Yeah you don't want to go to places that are more touristic because you know they are going to be full of people" (Appendix 1) she thinks that experience of being the local is more accurate and offers more experience, rather than being typical tourist and visit all these crowded and touristic places.

### ***Critics and missing parts of the promotional video***

Participants expressed more of the negative things that they noticed at first, as they explained they didn't like the interaction with famous stars in the promotional video, they prefer maybe more of the normal people and not famous stars, as they feel it was pushing football team too much, as well they explained the promotional video was too long, and they don't know where would they see it except maybe in the cinema before movie starts. The other things students included as a negative thing and the thing they didn't like was that there was not variety of the age in the video, the fact that even famous people were at very young age they feel it was targeting only young people, and as one participant explained she didn't like that aspect

because also her grandparents are travelling with hiking group to Croatia, and she feels it's not only for younger people how they showed in her opinion.

"Participant Ga: And also I don't know the length, I feel like it's a good movie but I just feel it's a little bit long to, I can't imagine where I would see it it's not like a little clip you see there, it's more like if you sit in a movie and you need to see it there it's like, because it's a long promotional video, maybe" (Appendix 2)

"Participant Ea: Yeah for example also scenes, like my grandparents are travelling with hiking groups to Croatia, so it's not only just for young people, for us or a little bit older people, also families were not included, because I think it's also for family is okay destination, I would say so that's what I was kind of missing " (Appendix 2)

The other things students included as a negative thing and the thing they didn't like was that there was not variety of the age in the video, the fact that even famous people were at very young age they feel it was targeting only young people, and as one participant explained she didn't like that aspect because also her grandparents are travelling with hiking group to Croatia, and she feels it's not only for younger people how they showed in her opinion.

"Participant Fa: Yeah I totally agree, I liked the variety in the video that it showed like so many thing, but also for me, it was like a little bit too long, and I also didn't like really that whole Croatia was only represented by famous people, maybe it would be better to show like a normal people" (Appendix 2)

"Participant Gc: No, it's a little bit like promoting football team"

Involving famous people in video was not well accepted by students, as it was already discussed she thinks pushing famous stars in this video was more of the promotion for them, as she said promoting football team, she was orienting more on who was presenting the Croatia, rather than what was presented in that promotional video. As one student expressed there were too many of them as she explained:" it feel too many football starts, hidden commercial for them, if is two of them it would be okay, it just hit me" (Appendix 2)

"Participant Cc: Regarding that thing you say, I think the ones describing the video, they should have mention the places, a see a bit more, and they were just mentioning, you should visit this and visit that" (Appendix 1)

"Participant Bc: And I think there are some lacks of knowledge, because, if I don't know something I'm not really attracted to it, for example, if I don't know what that church is why should I go there? ..." (Appendix 1)

They expressed their feelings they miss more knowledge about some building and cities showed, which in my opinion one promotional video can't give, if people are interested in this place, they should discover history by informing themselves more on internet. As promotional video is just giving a general idea as Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier explained tourists should generate mental pleasures through imagination and intensify the motivation to visit the destination ((Leung et al, 2017, p.363, chapter from R.Schegg and B. Stangl) Furthermore, even though participants did express their feelings about the promotional video and it seemed they had a lot of critics on some aspects of the video.

### ***Finally thoughts***

Students finished off with the final thoughts even though they had a lot of criticism on the promotional video from football players that had a negative effect on some of the participants, as well as they wish there were more of the ages showed in the video more of the normal people not only famous and young people as the students noticed, even though it was the aim to show more aspects students were going deeper with opinions more on details in the video, than what video wanted to show, but in final thoughts students, most of them did liked the video and different aspects that video showed and gave them broader picture of Croatia as destination.

"Participant Bc: But in general it was a really good video in a sense that after the video I would definitely consider another time to go there, but maybe with the local like I would like to go with someone that knows and that can tell me what to do and how to get in touch" (Appendix 1)

"Participant Ac: But it still gave a good general idea so now I haven't seen a lot and now I finally okay so it is a lot of the same culture, just it is a mix of a bunch of cultures from Europe and now I would probably considered it a bit more, and then again because you are there, and okay it's a great place to visit to begin with and now you are there, so yeah let's, I can do it" (Appendix 1)

"Participant Bc: But it is what I said like I would go there now with a local"(Appendix 1)

"Participant Ha: Yeah it was really impressive, all this nature, and stuff, I mean I haven't even looked at pictures of Croatia, so it was new to me, but it was really nice also the city and the old building, and definitely nature those national parks and it was really nice""(Appendix 2)

"Participant Ga: I think it does that and the football players does not make me not go don't worry, and I knew there was nature, but it made me see more, of course it was all the beautiful stuff that showed in this, and maybe for the next time I would look more into nature then just going to the beaches" (Appendix 2)

After students discussed and evaluated promotional video, as Fakeye and Crompton proposed their way of understanding image promotion through three stages induced, organic and organic would consider having image before promotional video is presented, which in this case is hard to say, as students didn't have a lot of knowledge about Croatia, except for those who had previous experience, but for the rest was hard, they knew only something that they heard from friends or from some movies, but more from that they didn't know, so for induced they proposed that it is image formed after promotional materials are presented which in this case we can't say the whole image is formed, but as some of them that didn't have a lot of knowledge about Croatia for now for sure know more than they did, before promotional video is presented, complex consider construction of image after visiting destination as two participants did visit Croatia before, they still were impressed by promotional video an as one student said as she feels she was never even there. (Fakeye and Crompton, 1991, p.11)

Alongside proposition of their understanding of induced, organic and complex image formation Fakeye and Crompton even proposed that promotion can have three roles, it can be informative, persuasive, and reminding. Informative promotion is considered as giving enough information about destination, for this promotional video Croatia full of life, students did get information on inside of what more Croatia can offer rather than just beach, they were surprised with beautiful national parks, culture and heritage that was presented, also expressed their feelings by saying that it is promoting also tourism in all seasons not only in summer periods, which for them was new and informative, as they didn't know it. ((Fakeye and Crompton, 1991, p.11)) Persuasive 'after induced image is created and as name says to persuade future visitors of traveling to destination, indeed for some it created some new parts of image, for which they didn't know about and as they expressed their feeling they would like to experience and visit Croatia even more, but with local, so it did kind of persuade them



to visit it, but as much they want to visit again or first time they would like it to be more as a local experience, as video was kind of proposing that kind of story for future travellers. (Fakeye and Crompton, 1991, p.11)

## **6. Conclusion**

*How students formed their image of Croatia as tourist destination? How promotional video 'Croatia full of life effected their image of Croatia?'*

The aim of this research paper was to investigate the way students formed the image they hold of Croatia, as touristic destination, and the way promotional video effected their image of Croatia as the problem formulation stated itself. From focus groups that were conducted with 8 students in total, by deep conversations students expressed their knowledge and the way they got to hear about Croatia. Even though, students didn't have a lot of knowledge about Croatia in general, and they were not familiar with a lot of aspects of Croatia. Followed by Gartner's agents for image formation analysis was made from two focus groups that were held. So how students formed their image of Croatia as tourist destination? For the half of the students previous experience was a main thing that formed the image students have of Croatia, the best way the image can be formed is experiencing destination.

The other ways how they formed their image was listening the experiences and stories from family and friends, as many of them have friends that are from Croatia, by listening their stories of Croatia, they got some knowledge that helped them to form the image, as word of mouth is considered as a powerful tool in forming image of destination. Some of the formation came from the new media and popular culture, popular culture as a huge influence for knowing Croatia and forming image, nowadays is the Game of Thrones, the series that showed new aspects of Croatia that even participants knew for and had influence from. It should be mentioned that many of the participants formed image of Croatia based on sport events and its popularity in sports like handball and football, as well as contest Eurovision. Alongside to this agents that formed image students hold, motivation as well is considered as the way how students formed the image as motivation for travelling to certain place or trying specific food is considered as strong tool in image formation, as well as school education to get deeper knowledge on Croatian history and past.

As this agents explained in theory and analysis it could be understood that experience for half of the students was the way they formed they image of Croatia, for them and as well for the

rest was a word from family and friends, who shared their stories from Croatia, either they are from there or they visited. Big influence had sport events and Eurovision, popular TV series, alongside knowledge they got from school or motivation for trying new food.

We understood how students formed their image of Croatia, and by creating some idea how image was formed and what was used to create some kind of image, by using promotional video, aim was to see what effect on student's image it has. The promotional video tended to show a lot of different aspects of Croatia, not only beach and summer vacation as many of students thought of Croatia. Even though students had a lot of criticism on the video from famous people appearing in the promotional video, to not knowing a lot about cities and culture, to questioning what was so special in Croatia that is making her different from any other country, they did concentrated more on this bad aspects of the video and they felt like they had to give their criticism to the video. They were certainly more focusing on what was missing in the video and what they didn't like, but in my opinion when the whole idea of their answers they did have positive answers more or less, and in my opinion it did effect their image positively, as this criticism didn't in my opinion had a lot of effect on image, more on video itself. I was surprised by students being more focused on details in video like football players that some of them found unnecessary and as it is a promotional video for them, I was thinking they will be excited to see new aspects of Croatia, and they did, but they pointed more of the negative sides that for me was surprising.

Taking other aspects of answers from focus groups, it certainly did have a positive effect and did positively affected their image, as they got more of the general knowledge on different locations and national parks and what Croatia has to offer as some students didn't have a lot of knowledge and had never visited, so it was impressive for them and many of the students concluded that they would like to visit Croatia more as a local, and in different seasons, like going for hiking or discovering more of the nature. For sure this video if we don't consider a lot of criticism on the video, it didn't have a negative effect on their image of Croatia, it should be concluded that it did had a positive effect on the image and they got to learn more of what Croatia is offering as they were surprised by beautiful scenery and landscapes and got a general idea of the destination, especially those who didn't had previous experience. As maybe after this video they got more knowledge, beliefs and feelings about Croatia, as what image is stated by Baloglu and McCleary.

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## Figures

- Figure 1: Model of the Formation of Destination Image Beerli A.and.Martin J.D, 2004, Factors influencing destination image, *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 31, No. 3, pp. 657–681