

NATIONAL BRANDING AS A TOOL FOR PROMOTING A COUNTRY'S SOFT POWER

National branding as a tool for promoting a country's soft power has become increasingly important in the modern world, as countries seek to enhance their international standing and influence. National branding is the process of creating a positive image of a country in the minds of people around the world [1]. It involves various aspects of a country such as its culture, people, economy and history. One of the most effective ways of improving a country's national brand is through User-generated Content (UGC) [2]. In this research we will explore how UGC can improve a country's national brand as a part of its soft power, using the examples of UAE, USA, and Russia. Furthermore, we will discuss how Belarus can use this information to improve its national brand.

A strong nation brand is essential for economic growth, political stability, and social development. Nation branding can be achieved through various channels such as advertising, public relations, and marketing. UGC is seen as a more authentic and trustworthy form of advertising than traditional advertising methods. It allows people to share their experiences and opinions about a country which can attract more visitors and investors.

UGC marketing involves photos, videos, tweets, reviews and blogs. People tend to believe more in UGC than in traditional marketing campaigns. A study conducted by Olapic found that UGC is 35% more memorable than other media types and generates 4x higher click-through rates. Also according to a survey conducted by Stackla (a UGC platform) 86% of consumers believe that UGC is a good indicator of a brand or product's quality. Additionally, 60% of consumers say that UGC is the most authentic form of content [3].

The research work of Crowdtap (the Leading Social Influence Marketing Platform) has released a new research report on the media consumption habits of millennials, how they perceive information from various sources. The research shows that millennials say that information received through UGC is trusted 50% more than information from other media sources, including TV, newspapers and magazines [4].

UGC is an essential component of nation branding which can help to create a positive image of a country and promote its soft power. The Soft Power Index indicators illustrate how countries use soft power to achieve their national interests and strengthen their influence in the world (table 1).

Belarus can use UGC to improve its nation brand by promoting its cultural heritage, natural beauty, and lifestyle through sharing their photos which can create a buzz on social media and attract more tourists to the country, to showcase its achievements in science, technology, and innovation. Belarus has a thriving IT industry with many startups and

tech companies based in the country. By sharing success stories of local businesses and entrepreneurs a country can attract investors and encourage people to start businesses.

Country	UGC	Aim	Results	Sources
The United Arab Emirates	Instagram #Dubai #MyDubai #AbuDhabi	to promote nation brand; to encourage citizens and visitors to share experience on social media	the highest engagement rate on Instagram among all countries with 3.3% of its total population	a report by Socialbakers
	#BeMyGuest	to provide audiences even more compelling reasons to visit and revisit Dubai with friends and family from across the globe		The Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing
Russia	#WelcomeToRussia	to introduce Russian cultural traditions to international audiences	the highest social media engagement rate among all European countries	a report by eMarketer
	website “Russian Seasons”			the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
The United States of America	The “United Stories” campaign	to focus on increasing intent to visit & conversion, whilst improving brand perception	over 47,000 user-generated posts, and the content was viewed over 1.5 billion times	a public-private partnership Brand USA
	#UnitedStories			

Table 1. Examples of utilized UGC [1]

Ultimately, UGC platforms are a rapidly growing field, both in practice and in research, creating a unique feedback loop. There are ample opportunities for future research to develop new theories and analyses of how UGC is shaping the way other countries and its citizens see our country. By doing such research and exploring this topic we can make Belarus appeal to a broader audience, boost the economy of a country by increasing the demand for tourism-related goods and services, reducing the cost of advertising for firms, and increasing the demand for high-quality goods and services. This can lead to an increase in output, employment and income, ultimately generating positive externalities for the overall economy.

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