

various foreign media in order to create an attractive image of Belarus in the world tourism market.

5. Since professionalism is an important condition for the development of tourism and the rural tourism in particular it is necessary to create all conditions for local people to increase their knowledge in the sphere of tourism and to study foreign languages.

Finally, it is important to note that the final aim of developing agritourism in Belarus is to become competitive in this sphere at international level but to reach it it should be developed at our domestic market.

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“GOLDEN STANDARD” SERVICE AS THE WAY TO COMPETITIVENESS OF BELARUSIAN HOTELS

The way to perfection in business is thorny and, on a large scale, everlasting. Companies that want to become impeccable are trying to discover new possibilities to make headway. However doubts began to come in on the part of the management and subordinates, as it is not always easy to understand which innovations will be a success and which ones will be an unreasonable waste of time and resources.

The basic subject matter of the research paper under consideration is competitiveness of current Belarusian hotels. The prerequisites for the research given are as follows: statistical data, the analysis of responses given by hotel visitors as well as authors' own research.

According to the information given by Sport and Tourism Ministry, 11 hotels including multifunctional complexes with hotels are under construction in Belarus and will begin their work according to international standard of quality, hospitality and service by 2013-2014 year.

Our analysis of customers' comments showed that the majority of respondents, who at least once visited Belarusian hotels, are dissatisfied with their service and

maintenance. Most of complaints concern with the quality of hotel facilities and staff's attitude to work.

The authors also conducted an opinion poll among 50 employees who regularly go on business trips around Belarus and stop at rental apartments as well as at hotels. We were able to outline the most popular discontents with hotels in particular. Among them are: poor cleanness and amenities of the room, bad quality of meals, lack of individual approach. Yet, the majority of complaints concerned the malfunction of technical equipment, poor reception service, sloppy work of the staff and gloomy interior of hotels rolling us back to Soviet times.

Thus, the aim of this research work is to formulate recommendations for Belarusian hotels with a view to updating them to European and US standards in order to be competitive with new modern hotels. As an example of a company which meets high requirement of hospitality we took European Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company that enjoys world-wide recognition thanks to adopting a "golden standard" of service rather than following some aggressive pricing policy.

The opinion poll the authors carried out showed that most respondents are sure that Belarusian hotels have to be upgraded, which concerns all service backup.

Hereby, we worked out some recommendations in order to meet customers' requirements taking into account the above-mentioned statistical data, results of the opinion poll, analysis of customers' opinion, and the example of Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company which started being prosperous thanks to the strategy of quality management, first applied by H. Shultz, the 1st President of the company. The system implies direct and active participation of company's management as well as perfect work of personnel. All responsibilities and rules of conduct, including the rights of each employee, are described in detail in a so-called "golden standard". The adherence to the standard is regularly monitored.

The recommendations include such alterations as: change of interior and upgrade of hotel facilities; cultivation of staff's professional skills; high level of cleanness of hotel rooms, introduction of free services such as allocation of hypoallergenic bedding, additional pillows, rugs, internet access, fitness-club, etc.

The opinion poll also showed that if the above-mentioned changes were introduced to potential hotel clients, they would be ready to reconsider their opinion. In respondents' judgment, bringing such innovations into service would be reasonable as everyone wants to live in comfortable conditions, to be sure that their expectations will be met and get value for money.

This brings us to the conclusion that introduction of such "golden standard" policies can help Belarusian hotels meet competition.

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TRENDS IN THE TOURIST SECTOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS

As the branch of the global economy, tourism is now second only to the trade of oil and weapons: its annual growth of 7% outstrips that of the global economy overall, while around 10% of all investments are found in this sphere. One in eleven people are employed in the tourist industry, which creates 4% of global GDP (reaching even 11% taking into consideration other related branches).

The importance of the need to develop tourist sphere in Belarus is explained by the fact that every foreign tourist spends around \$200 – 250 in Belarus on products and services; moreover, eight tourists create enough revenue to validate a new job position. So our country should develop its tourist sector more persistently, since it has a potential to generate revenue and employment.

The most visited sights in Belarus are:

- sanatoria and spas;
- national parks and hunting farms;
- rural guesthouses;
- sights which are included into UNESCO World Heritage List (Belovezhskaya Puscha, Mir Castle, Nesvizh Palace and Gardens and a part of the Struve Geodetic Arc);
- sights related to the heroic past (especially to World War II) such as Brest Hero-Fortress, Khatyn Memorial and Victory Square in Minsk.