

- 40% of respondents believe Belarusian roads are of high quality, 25% think they are average, 35% are dissatisfied with the quality of the roads;
- 75% of the interviewed think that roadside service is undeveloped in Belarus, 25% consider it neither bad nor perfect;
- 97% would like to take up a self-drive break but they do not know how to do it.

Having analyzed these data, the author has come to the conclusion that the major challenges are: poor provision with information; lack of providers of self-drive service; insufficiently developed infrastructure, particularly roadside service; lack of attractive for tourists' itineraries.

From this perspective the author can put forward the following recommendations and suggestions:

- to increase advertising and promotion of self-drive tourism by spreading eye-catching ads, creating clubs and forums for self-drive tourists;
- to improve drive route features such as the quality of the roads, available tourist information en route, road signage to attractions and towns, accommodation, visitor information centres, vehicle repair;
- to make up convenient and exciting itineraries.

In addition, the author comes out with a project of the Belarusian self-drive website.

Carrying out this research, the author has come to the conclusion that self-drive holidays are a lucrative niche in the sphere of Belarusian tourism and hospitality and therefore there are a lot of directions to work in.

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TOURISM DESTINATION BRANDS

Tourism destinations act like corporations. They strive for investments and maximizing their profit. These are the reasons for many countries and cities to create their tourism brands to attract travellers.

American Marketing Association defines a brand as a name, a term, a sign, a symbol or a combination of these elements intended to help in the identification of the goods or services of a seller and to differentiate them from their competitors.

A destination is a place that attracts visitors for a temporary stay, including continents, countries, states, cities, villages and resort areas, and thus is a mixture of all the tourism services offered to consumers. A destination brand relates to a definite geographical region. Usually the cultural, historical and recreational values of the countries are reflected in their brands. This helps to create a unique market supply.

A brand consists of an image and a slogan, which highlight the benefits of a country. It awakens associations and impressions about a destination. It is also a promise of what to expect when you travel.

In the present research I would like to find out what associations brands could bring about in the minds of tourists and which brands travellers preferred most of all. 56 students were asked to choose the best, in their opinion, logo and slogan, and to write associations brought by the logos. 10 countries which were the most popular with tourists in 2010 (they had the highest numbers of tourist arrivals) were brought forward to be estimated. They included: France (76.8 million tourists), USA (59.7 mln), China (55.7 mln), Spain (52.7 mln), Italy (43.6 mln), Great Britain (28.1 mln), Turkey (27.0 mln), Germany (26.9 mln), Malaysia (24.6 mln), Mexico (2.4 mln). Every person had his own associations connected with a particular country. All of them in total created a tourism image of a destination.

Despite the fact that France had the first place in tourist arrivals, an undisputed leader in the survey is Spain: it collected 41% of votes in both logo and slogan competition. In students' opinion, Spanish brand is sincere, it reminds of fun and joy, and is associated with sea, sun, sand, happiness and laughter. According to the survey, China has the poorest logo, because it doesn't reflect cultural and historical

diversity of a country. The most standard and simple slogan is a Turkish one; it has no feelings and emotions.

Tourism slogans are intended to capture the attention of tourists quickly, attracting their interest, but leaving the plot of wanting to know more about the destination. Most logos contain child's pictures or animation (Spain, Mexico), flowers as national symbols or symbols of hospitality (Turkey, Ireland), and colours of national flags as key elements of nationality (Great Britain, the USA).

There are four key factors that influence an image of a tourism destination: a general country's reputation, external threats (natural disasters, social and economic effects), communication strategy on target markets, and preferences of potential travellers.

As for a Belarusian brand, it exists in reality, but it is not officially recognized. The country's name and the cornflower, a symbol of Belarus, are drawn by hand. The flower is painted in red and green – the colours of the national flag. Blue outline stands for lakes and rivers of Belarus. The slogan says: “Boundless Hospitality”. Experts consider that the logo reminds of flowering fields, blue lakes, and deep forests. They associate the brand with calmness, honesty, and nobleness. But tourists do not still know Belarus as a tourism destination; therefore all the efforts in order to promote the brand don't bear fruit. Nevertheless, professionals admit that the logo isn't overloaded with elements, and this logo is a good “transit point” in searching of an appropriate tourism brand.

A country image is like a signature. Some people have a sure signature, others have a weak one. A country with a dull and unemotional brand can hardly hope for a great number of tourist arrivals. But if a destination brand is positive, expressive and enigmatic, a country has better chances for attracting visitors and making profit from tourism.